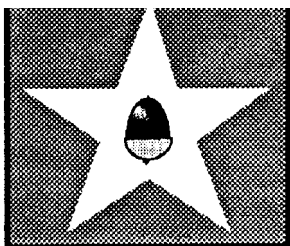


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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**The Impact of NATO Membership
in the Czech Republic:
Changing Czech Views of
Security, Military & Defence**

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The Impact of NATO Membership in the Czech Republic: Changing Czech Views of Security, Military & Defence

Ivan Gabal, Lenka Helsingová & Thomas S Szayna

This paper examines the impact of the Czech Republic's accession to NATO on the views of the Czech public toward security and defence issues and the military. The findings are based on a comprehensive questionnaire administered in 2000-01 to a random sample of over 1000 Czech adults. As far as the authors know, this was the first comprehensive effort undertaken to assess empirically the changes in attitudes toward defence in a new NATO member country. The paper also presents a causal model, estimated through a structural equation modelling programme, that discerns the deeper logic in the formation of Czech attitudes toward NATO.

The main findings are that the Czechs value and support the security that NATO membership offers. The perception of full security has strengthened the willingness of the Czechs to invest in national defence and to modernize their military. Two-thirds of the public recognizes that effective membership in NATO entails a well-performing Czech military that is integrated fully in NATO. The Czech public has a good understanding of the military's problems and is ready to support fundamental military reform, including increases in the defence budget. The caveat here is that the support is conditioned on the concern that the money be spent effectively and not be wasted away through corruption.

Even though the Czechs are highly critical of the current state of the Czech military, they retain a high level of trust in the armed forces. On the other hand, the Czechs show a high level of dissatisfaction with the performance of Czech political and constitutional bodies and they are sceptical of their effectiveness in time of crisis.

Strong support for NATO is linked to the awareness of shared responsibility and the commitment to assist allies in time of need. However, the Czechs have not fully internalized the meaning of non-Article 5 alliance operations. Without a clear knowledge of the connection between NATO's peace operations and European security, and lacking a public debate on such issues, most Czechs interpreted NATO's Operation Allied Force as a relapse into Cold War patterns of behaviour and an aggression by a military alliance against a sovereign country.

The main source of Czech hesitation toward NATO is a perception of a low level of influence that the public has on decision-making regarding security issues. The lack of transparency and public debate in the Czech decision to join NATO, exemplified by the lack of a referendum on the issue, is the

main source of the problem. In other words, shortcomings in the democratic process and democratic development of the Czech Republic continue to affect Czech attitudes and behaviour toward NATO. This is the most pertinent lesson regarding the anticipated next round of enlargement.

Introduction

The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, in the alliance's first round of post-Cold War enlargement. NATO membership represents a major change in the international affiliation of the three countries and it brings to a definitive close the period of curtailment of sovereignty imposed upon them first by Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union. The accession of the three countries to NATO represents a milestone in their integration into the trans-Atlantic community and a recognition by the long-standing NATO members that they had made a successful transition in establishing democratic political systems and market economies.

After over two years of membership in the alliance, enough time has passed to analyze critically the domestic consequences of membership in the three countries. Moreover, with NATO committed to continued enlargement and with further invitations scheduled for the NATO summit in November 2002, drawing lessons from the first round of enlargement has the potential for improving the process in the future. This paper focuses on the domestic impact of NATO membership in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic's first two years of membership in NATO have had more than their share of problems. Indeed, it is an open secret in the NATO defence community that Czech performance is the most problematic among the three members that joined in 1999. The Czech Republic has had difficulties fulfilling its obligations toward the alliance (meeting the agreed force goals) and managing its new international position. Just like the other two new members, the Czechs have faced daunting problems in proceeding with the process of restructuring a legacy Soviet-type military into an organization compatible with the major alliance members and capable of operating well in an alliance framework. But, differentiating the Czechs from the Poles and Hungarians, some foreign and security policies of the Czech Republic have seemed at times to dissent from NATO and have introduced doubts within NATO about the Czech Republic's reliability as an alliance member. These specifically Czech behavioural patterns have root causes in the attitudes of Czech citizens toward their armed forces and NATO and the peculiarities of the Czech domestic situation.

The Root Causes of Czech Problems in Adjusting to NATO

A root problem of the uninspiring Czech performance as a NATO member lies in the lack of a public debate regarding defence and military issues in the Czech Republic in general and, more specifically, about Czech responsibilities as a NATO member. Prior to accession, polls showed that Czech public support for membership was among the lowest of the ten countries aspiring to membership.¹ The way the process of accession unfolded only compounded the initial hurdle of low approval. Czech officials and politicians prepared, negotiated, and implemented the entire process, with little public involvement or debate. Right up until the NATO summit in Madrid in 1997 (when the alliance invited the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to become members), the public had a low level of knowledge regarding the

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responsibilities that came with NATO membership. The conventional wisdom in the Czech Republic is that low public involvement in the process was no accident.² There is a widely shared opinion among Czech politicians that Czech citizens have a passive or even a negative view toward military issues, national defence and alliances.³ Some Czech politicians deliberately did not wish to “irritate” the public by discussing the possibility of joining NATO and wanted to keep a “low profile” in the question of NATO membership. Their goal was not to overcome the low level of public support by pushing the bar higher, but to crawl under it. Moreover, the Czech political elite in both of the main political parties shared such a view. The main reason for the lack of a referendum on NATO membership stemmed from the doubts among the elite about the public voting in favour of NATO. Even though the opposition social-democrats included a promise of a referendum in their election campaign in mid-1998, they failed to carry through their promise after winning the elections. In turn, the recurring doubts of the ruling (until mid-1998) liberal economists regarding the utility of defence spending kept domestic discussion about NATO membership at the level of financial cost-benefit arguments.

Besides the specifically Czech low level of interest in defence issues, the elite's reluctance to engage in a public debate about the pros and cons of NATO membership also had some common post-communist roots. As in the other states of the Warsaw Pact, the 40 years of communist rule eliminated any semblance of an independent community of civilian security and defence experts. But, in contrast to Poland and Hungary, where the two-decades long period of liberalization of the communist regimes had led to an embryo of such a community by the time the regimes fell, the harsh period of communist orthodoxy persisted in Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, right up until the collapse of the regime in 1989. Not even an embryo of a community of defence and security experts showed signs of emerging when the communist regime fell. Consequently, in the 1990s, there were few politicians or security experts in the Czech Republic who could articulate the content of NATO membership and its requirements in the area of military reform and the security policy of the state. The Czech Republic lacked experts able to understand the functioning of the alliance and its decision-making and planning processes. Whatever expertise existed, it remained limited to a group of military and civilian personnel at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. In turn, these people had neither a reason nor any obvious mechanism for making NATO membership a subject of a wider public debate. In this sense, the situation in the Czech Republic was similar to but qualitatively worse than in Hungary and Poland. That may also explain why Hungary, despite an initially similar low level of public support for NATO membership, has managed its membership responsibilities better and held a referendum on the issue of NATO membership.

The low level of public support for NATO membership in the Czech Republic had led to an unflattering image of the country among some of the long-standing NATO members (especially the United States) as a likely low contributor to NATO. Czech behaviour during NATO's Operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia in 1999 strengthened that image further. Analyses of the Czech, Hungarian, and Polish performance during Operation Allied Force are unequivocal in the conclusion that the Czech Republic was more of a liability than an asset.⁴ Operation Allied Force was the first test of the Czech Republic's new international position and Czech behaviour showed that the country had major problems in living up to its new commitments. As Andrew A Michta has written: “Poland passed the test with flying colours, Hungary received only a satisfactory grade, and the Czech Republic had

problems passing at all and needed 'extensive tutoring' from Brussels and Washington even to make it."⁵

In its reaction to Operation Allied Force, the Czech Republic was divided along social and political lines, even within the highest state institutions. A majority of the Czech population opposed the operation⁶ and many officials of the government as well as members of the opposition tried to distance themselves from the responsibility for NATO's decisions. A lack of consensus at the highest levels of the Czech representative bodies persisted throughout the entire Operation. Even though the Czech Republic eventually fell in line with NATO, Czech behaviour had cast doubts upon the loyalty and reliability of the country as a NATO member and exposed the deficiencies of the country's security and political decision-making mechanisms. An example of the latter is the "Czech-Greek Peace Initiative" that put into question NATO's cohesion and resolve in its operations against Yugoslavia. The initiative was not even an expression of the consensus of the foreign policy institutions in the Czech Republic. Instead, it was an individual project of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kavan and his advisors. The initiative had not been discussed in the foreign policy and defence committees of the Parliament, with the President, or even with the leadership of the Czech armed forces. Even the government voted on the initiative after the fact.

The lack of Czech public support for Operation Allied Force has some basis in the specific and historically rooted sympathy of Czechs toward Yugoslavia. In 1939-40, Yugoslavia provided refuge and passage for Czechoslovak soldiers who left the German-occupied Czechoslovakia to fight on the side of the Allies in France and Great Britain. Tito's Yugoslavia, unlike Czechoslovakia, resisted Stalin and, in addition, assumed a clear position against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Yugoslavia also served as a place of passage for Czechoslovak emigrants after the 1968 occupation. The inability of the Czech political leadership to define the difference between Tito's and Milosevic's Yugoslavia forms an important reason for the lack of Czech support for Operation Allied Force.

But the deeper causes behind Czech indecisiveness during Operation Allied Force may be rooted in the lack of interest among the Czech public toward issues of defence and security, the armed forces, state sovereignty and Czech obligations to NATO. If that is the case, then the Czech state may have become a member of NATO but, in its mindset, the Czech public has remained outside the alliance. Or, potentially even more worrisome for NATO, the Czech public and politicians have succeeded in joining the alliance but may not be willing to make a contribution to collective defence. Either way, NATO needs to worry about the consequences of having such a member.

Research Goals

Analysis of the Czech public's view of the alliance is important for NATO not only from the perspective of dealing with the Czech Republic in any future crises but also from the standpoint of deciding which post-communist countries to bring into the alliance in the future. This paper presents the results of a research project undertaken to examine the extent to which the Czech public identifies with its newly gained position in NATO and its responsibilities as an alliance member and the ability of the Czech Republic to accept its NATO responsibilities. The project focused on the analysis of the attitudes of Czech society toward security and defence issues, the military, and toward the country's membership in NATO and the obligations ensuing from it.

The Impact of NATO Membership in the Czech Republic

The project was prepared in the autumn of 2000, when the experiences from Operation Allied Force were still fresh. First, the project team assessed the existing literature on the topic, paying special attention to existing survey research (in English and in Czech), and consulted security experts. The topic was eventually divided into several blocks, operationalized and subsequently examined in a standardized sociological survey based on a questionnaire submitted to a random sample of 1001 adult respondents (over 18 years of age) and completed in face-to-face interviews. Altogether, the survey consisted of 71 questions and six topic areas. The collection of data took place in November and December 2000 (by Median Ltd) and was followed by a systematic analysis.⁷

The project had three main goals. One, it aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the views of the Czech public on the issues of defence and security and the Czech Republic's membership in NATO. The practical purpose of this goal was to provide a factual basis for supporting discussions about issues of internal security and defence policy in the Czech Republic by focusing on the views and expectations of Czech citizens regarding defence and security. In this sense, the project had a specific goal of informing policy-makers so as to improve policy and, in a more general sense, providing a structure to a public debate on defence in the Czech Republic.

Two, the project aimed to increase the understanding of the interaction in a post-communist country between the social dynamics, the security environment, and a milestone in integration into the trans-Atlantic community. The practical purpose of this goal was to increase NATO's understanding of Czech views on defence and provide a guide for thinking in NATO about the probable impact of further enlargement choices. NATO's enlargement is not a one-way street. Enlargement affects the functioning of the alliance and changes the organization. NATO's post-Cold War enlargement involves countries that have markedly different historical experiences from many of NATO's long-standing members. In fact, some of the unpleasant "surprises" at NATO regarding the 1997-99 round of enlargement stem from NATO's simplified view of the new states as constituted exclusively of politicians and officials with whom NATO officials interact. The new members are democracies, still in the consolidation stage of their democratic political systems. They have democratic mechanisms in place but they are still working out the intricacies of democratic norms and practice. The involvement of the public in important debates of national security is not a given in such states.

Three, the study had the goal of describing and analyzing the experience of a new member of the alliance. The Czech Republic may be an outlier on some issues of defence, as compared to Poland or Hungary, but it also shares many characteristics with the other two new members. The conclusions of the study are Czech-specific but worth testing in the other two states. The practical purpose of this goal was to facilitate communication and collaboration between NATO and the new alliance members, and especially the Czech Republic.

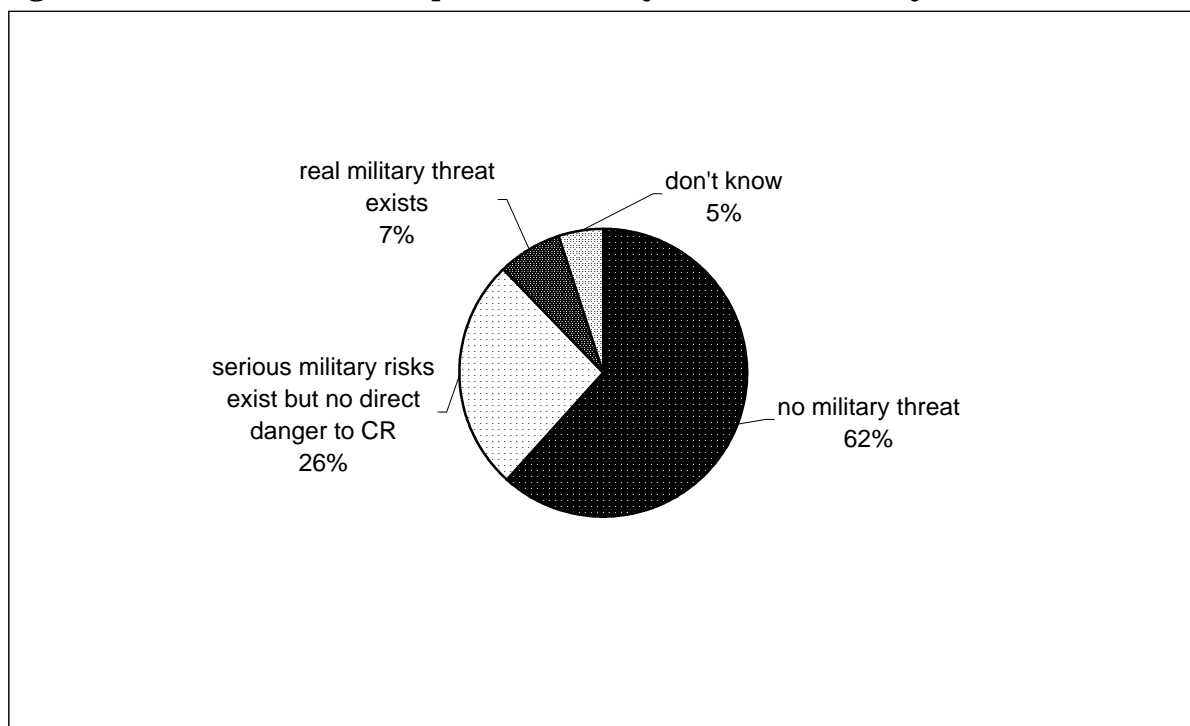
The first section of this paper examines Czech security perceptions in the context of the country's accession to NATO and their evolution since accession. Given the supposed reluctance of the Czechs to defend their country, the paper includes an exploration of the willingness of the Czechs to participate in the defence of the state. The second section focuses on the Czech military. It examines the image of the military in the Czech society, its problems, and the extent of trust in the military in a potential crisis situation. In addition, this section looks at the public perceptions of the future of the Czech armed forces in the aftermath of accession to NATO. The

third section addresses the Czech public's understanding of membership in NATO and its implications for the defence of the Czech Republic, the position of the Czech Republic in the international security environment, and Czech responsibilities to NATO. The section explores in depth the Czech reaction to NATO's Operation Allied Force and Czech views toward NATO's post-Cold War transformation and its future evolution. The paper focuses especially on the Czech public's understanding of the responsibilities and advantages resulting from Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and the extent of trust toward individual allies. The paper concludes with an examination of the Czech public's attitudes toward further enlargement of NATO and its assessment of the readiness of specific candidate countries to become members of NATO.

Czech Security Perceptions in the Context of Membership in NATO

The basic finding from the surveys is that an overwhelming majority of Czechs currently feel secure from external threat. More than half of the population is convinced that the Czech Republic does not currently face any external military threat (61%). One quarter (26%) of the respondents thinks that, although there are military risks in Europe and surrounding areas, they currently do not pose any danger to the Czech Republic. Consequently, almost ninety per cent of Czech citizens (87%) do not feel in any way externally threatened (see Figure 1). The attitude corresponds with the generally accepted assessments by security experts of the current international geopolitical position of the Czech Republic and shows common sense perceptions among the Czech public. Older people and those who disapprove of Czech membership in NATO are more likely to be concerned about potential dangers. Those who approve of Czech membership in NATO (predominantly those with high-school education or higher) tend to feel secure.

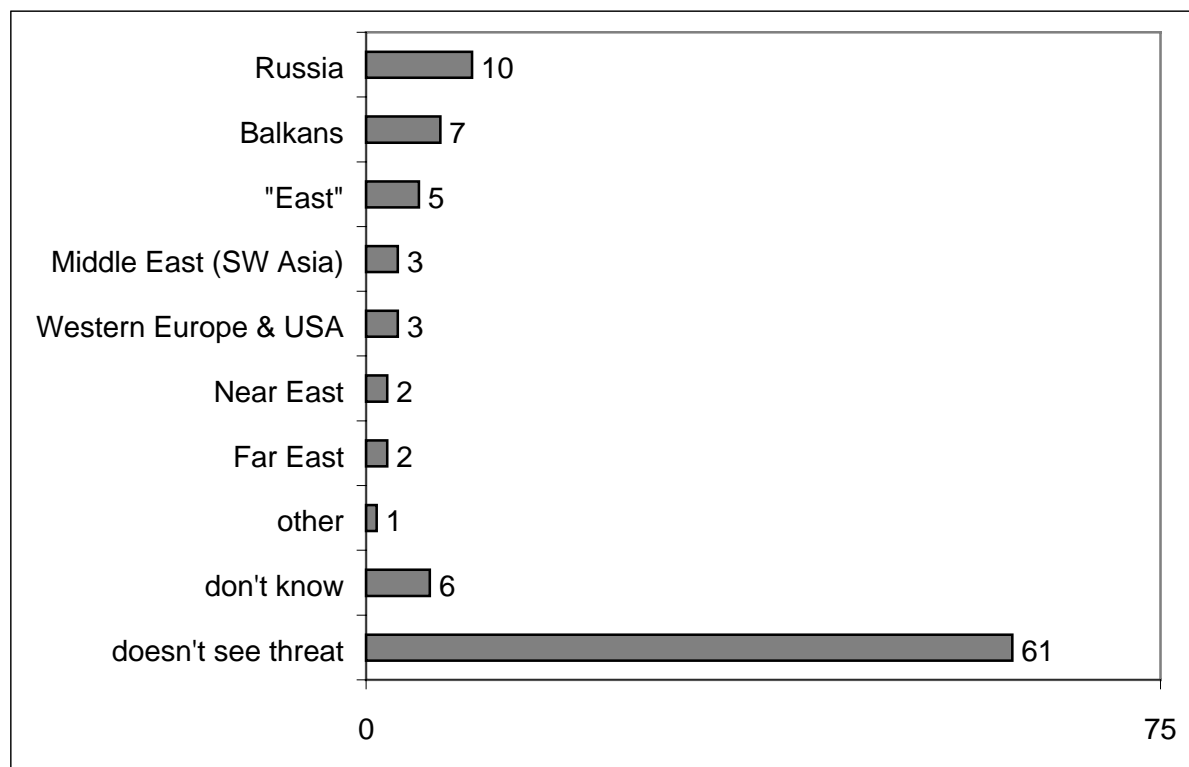
Figure 1: Does the Czech Republic face any external military threat? (%)



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Those who do not feel secure identified (in open questions) the following sources of threat most commonly: Russia (10% of the overall number of respondents), the Balkans (7%), and an area identified as "the East" (5%) (which can include Russia). All other areas appear in the responses only minimally (see Figure 2). The results indicate that, as members of NATO, the Czechs do not suffer from any exaggerated anti-Russian attitudes or sentiments derived from historical experiences. Viewed from inside NATO, Russia appears much less threatening than from the position of being non-aligned (1993-99).⁸ This effect of Czech membership is apparent when compared with data from previous years in the 1990s.

Figure 2: Perception of origin of potential threat (unprompted answers, %)



Evolution of Perceptions of Security

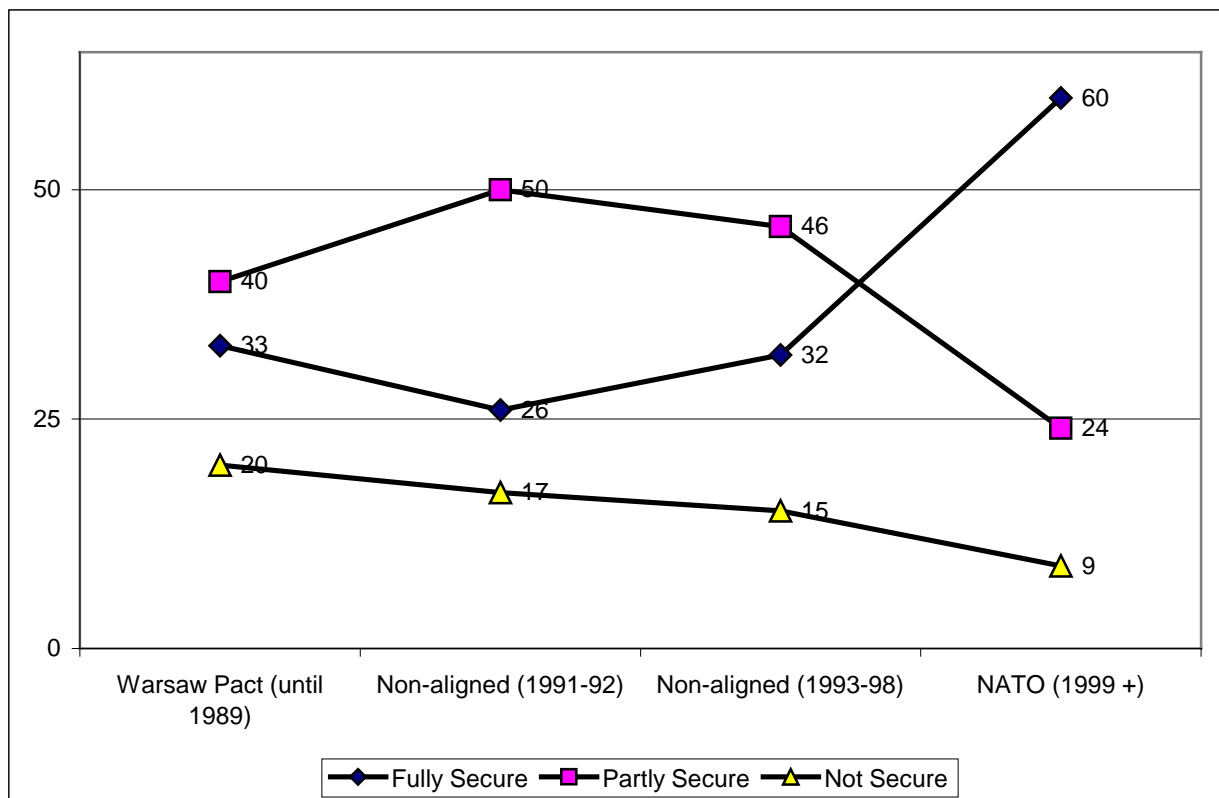
The Czech Republic, first as a part of Czechoslovakia and later as an independent state, has gone through far-reaching changes in security affiliation since the fall of the communist regime. From 1989-91, Czechoslovakia remained a member of the Warsaw Pact. Then, from 1991-92, Czechoslovakia was a federal state outside an alliance framework. From 1993-99, the Czechs had to think of security as a smaller national state still outside of an alliance framework. Until the country's accession to NATO, the perception that the country was secure from any external threats grew gradually. But the real change came in 1999 with accession to NATO, when the perception of Czechs feeling fully secure nearly doubled. Czechs see NATO membership as by far the preferred alignment for securing the country from external threats.

Previous studies show that the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War were accompanied in Czechoslovakia by a clear growth in the perception of security and a decrease in fear of a military conflict. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the communist regime, there was a marked interest in Czechoslovakia in the

Helsinki process, institutionalized through the OSCE and the Paris Accord. But there was also a unanimity of views regarding the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the regaining of full Czechoslovak sovereignty by the withdrawal of Soviet forces from its territory. Interest in NATO grew in the aftermath of the unsuccessful coup d'état in Moscow in August 1991.⁹

Retrospectively, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact led to the growth of a feeling of “partial security”, though the feeling of “full security” either declined or remained the same.¹⁰ Accession to NATO led to the most pronounced shift in perceptions of security. From its 1989-98 average of 30%, the feeling of “full security” grew to 60% upon membership in NATO (see Figure 3). The magnitude of the shift is enormous. Taking the rationale for NATO enlargement at its face value, namely the enlargement of the area of security and stability into central Europe in order to allow the central European countries to focus on the economic and political aspects of their post-communist transition, the data here indicate that enlargement was indeed successful, at least in the perceptions of the citizens of the Czech Republic.¹¹

Figure 3: Perception of security of the Czech Republic (%)



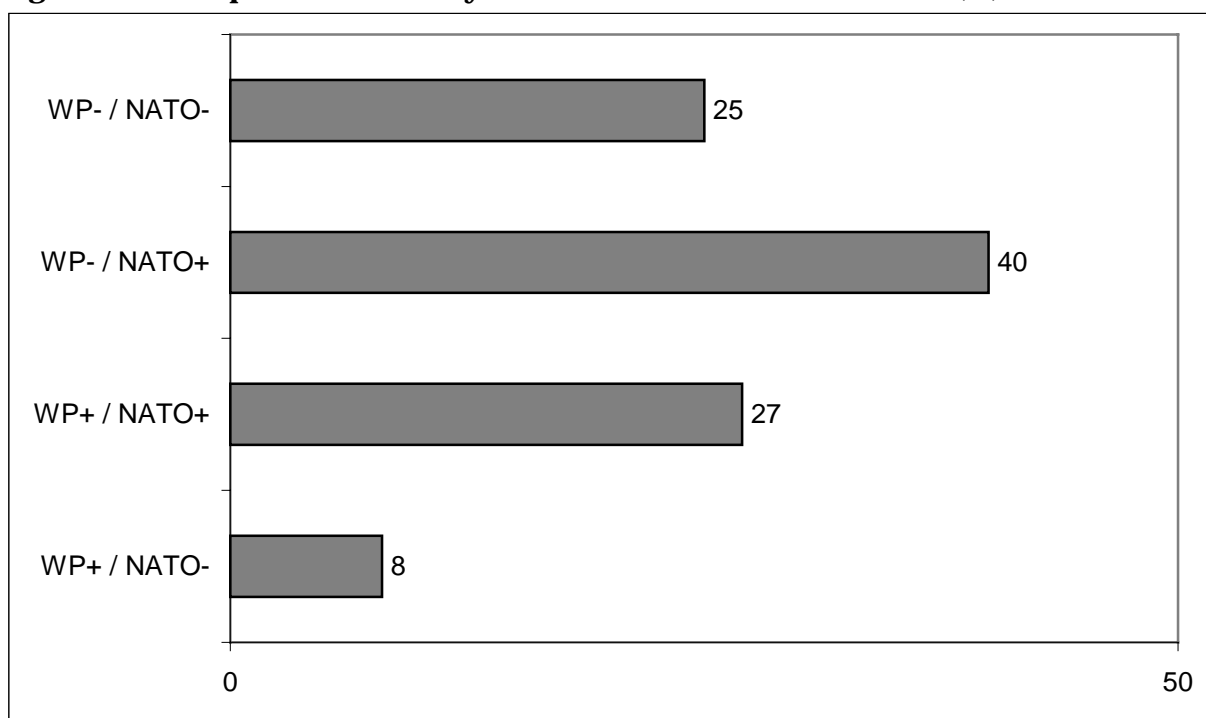
Comparing the perceptions of security during the Czech Republic’s membership in the Warsaw Pact and NATO, 40% of those who felt secure in the Warsaw Pact also feel secure in NATO. Conversely, only 8% felt secure in the Warsaw Pact but do not feel secure in NATO. The latter group consists of people who have a negative attitude toward the democratic development of the Czech Republic and who oppose the country’s membership in NATO. More than half of those who associate their feeling of security with Czech membership in NATO also identify themselves with NATO and feel a distinct sense of attachment to the organization.

However, not all Czech citizens perceive membership in NATO as an ideal security solution. There are two surprisingly large groups of people who are quite resistant to the change in the Czech Republic’s international security alignment.

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Approximately one quarter of the respondents (27%) felt secure in both the Warsaw Pact and NATO, while another quarter (25%) did not feel secure in either of them (see Figure 4). The people who did not feel secure in both organizations used the survey to express their negative attitude toward the overall evolution of the Czech Republic. They are opposed to the direction of the country's development and they assume a passive attitude when it comes to the question of their own participation in the country's defence. They view NATO as an organization that has remained virtually unchanged since the end of the Cold War. They are sceptical toward any military alliance and do not consider the joining of an alliance as a solution to the country's security problem. They prefer to rely on the Czech Republic's own defence capabilities to ensure security.

Figure 4: Perception of security under Warsaw Pact and NATO (%)



In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, perceptions of security have changed. On the one hand, the Czech public does not see the terrorist threat to the Czech Republic as all that likely. On the other hand, the terrorist attacks have had a clear impact on the perception of security in the Czech Republic, with a majority of respondents reporting a sense of fear and insecurity based on uncertainty about the future. This data was collected in December 2001, when the memory of the attacks was still fresh. The sense of insecurity may evolve in either direction, depending on the evolution of the war on terrorism and the extent of US success in controlling the terrorist threat.¹²

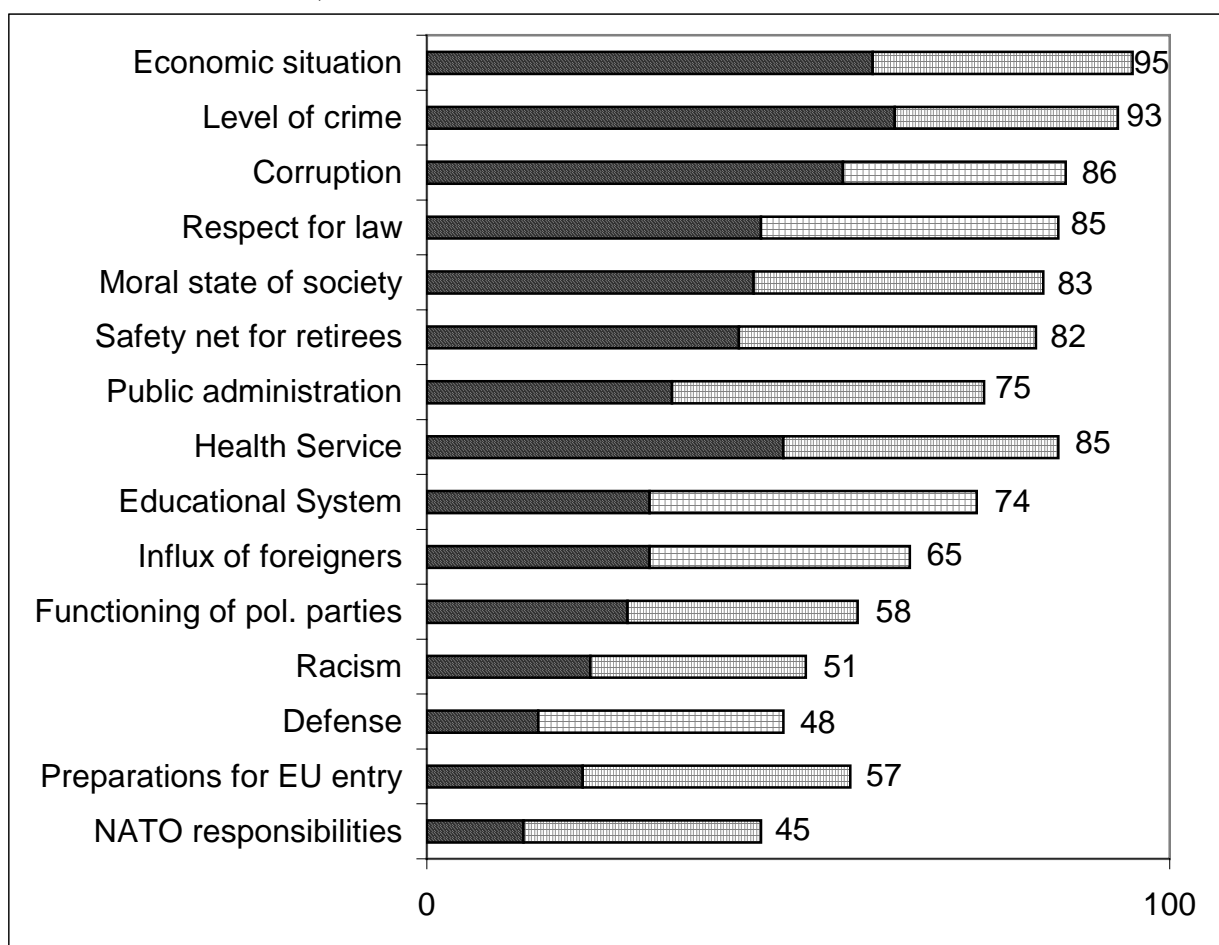
Security in the Context of Current Czech Problems and Priorities

Czech citizens perceive membership in NATO more in terms of a geopolitical shift toward the West than accession to an organization focused on collective military defence. Consequently, they see the fulfilment of NATO responsibilities more in terms of the country's preparations for EU membership rather than in terms of augmenting their armed forces or preparing a defence strategy against an external threat. They view NATO and EU as the twin pillars of the future direction of the Czech Republic's development and modernization. Increased support for

modernization of the military and efforts to improve the quality and performance of the armed forces will come when the Czech public sees the post-communist transition coming to an end and the Czech economy recovering from the shocks of the transition.

The Czech public still sees the country in a period of transformation. Ten years after the ouster of the communist regime the economic and political pillars of the communist system are gone. However, many elements of the market economy and a functioning democratic political system remain under construction. Based on factor analysis, this fact plays a decisive role in determining the public's view of all other areas and problems. The main concerns of the Czech citizens are the status of the economy, the malfunctioning of the state administration, and shortcomings in law and order (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Seriousness of problems facing the Czech Republic (very serious, somewhat serious, %)



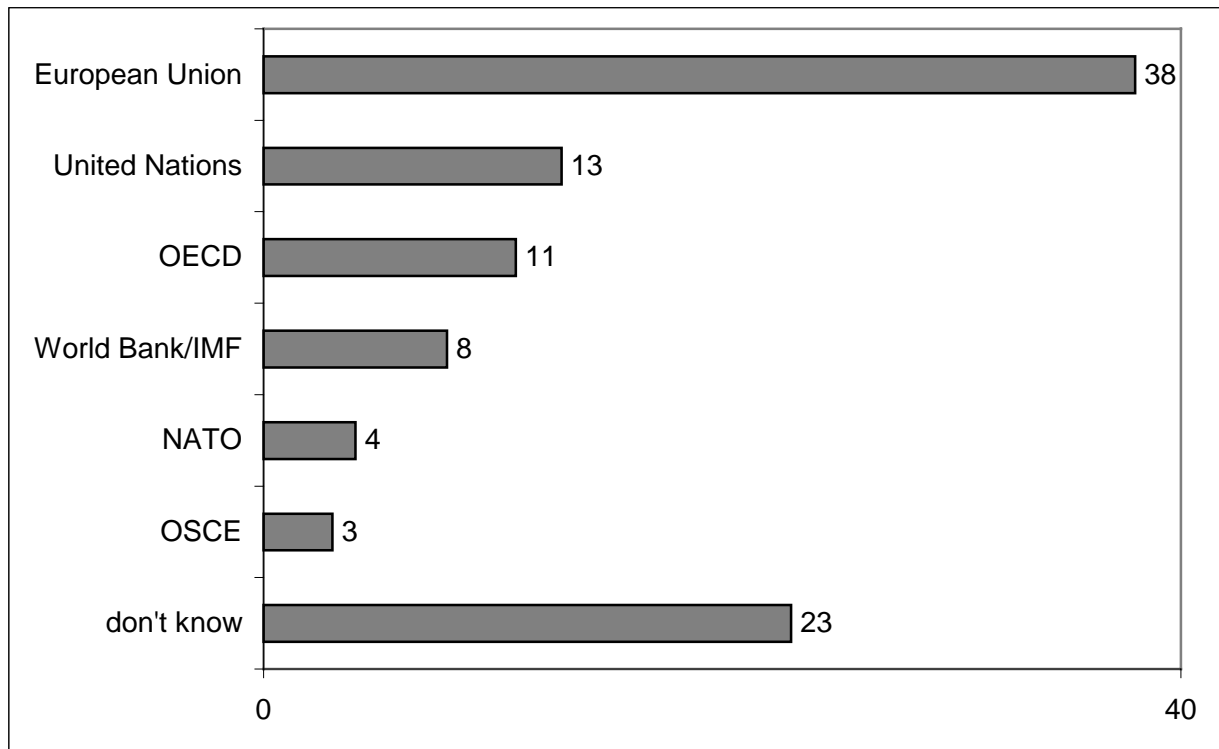
The area that Czechs perceive as most problematic can be described broadly as “definition and compliance with social rules”. This category includes issues such as the poor moral state of the society (a serious problem for 83% people, of which 44% “very serious” and 39% “somewhat serious”), high level of crime (93%, of which 63% “very serious” and 30% “somewhat serious”), the extent of corruption (86%, of which 56% “very serious” and 30% “somewhat serious”), adherence and respect for law (85%, of which 45% “very serious” and 40% “somewhat serious”), and economic situation in the country (95%, of which 60% “very serious” and 35% “somewhat serious”). Another area of concern includes “qualitative elements of the functioning

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of the public sector". More specifically, this includes dissatisfaction with the health service and healthcare system (85%, of which 48% "very serious" and 37% "somewhat serious") and the educational system (74%, of which 30% "very serious" and 44% "somewhat serious"). The third area concerns the "immigration and settlement of foreigners". The post-communist opening of the Czech society and the freer movement of people has led to the rise of fears of racist violence (51%, of which 22% "very serious" and 29% "somewhat serious") as well as the fear of immigration and settlement of foreigners (65%, of which 30% "very serious" and 35% "somewhat serious"). A surprising connection exists between this area of concern and the issue of defence against external threat. Among the interesting findings, Czechs see the influx of foreigners as a bigger risk to national security than Russia. The connection between the immigration of foreigners and security issues is one of internal security rather than xenophobia. Czechs distinguish sharply between foreigners from Europe or the United States and those from the former Soviet Union with whom they associate violent and organized crime.¹³ The results can also be interpreted as denoting that a more serious concern in the threat perception of Russia is not its military power, but the internal developments in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Czech preparations for membership in the EU (57%, of which 21% "very serious" and 36% "somewhat serious") and the fulfilment of obligations related to NATO membership (45%, of which 13% "very serious" and 32% "somewhat serious") are not priorities because both issues concern the position of the country in the international context. Respondents judged the urgency of these two areas in a similar fashion. Defence and military security of the Czech Republic (48% agree, of which 15% "very serious" and 33% "somewhat serious") and the fulfilment of Czech responsibilities toward NATO are considered least problematic when compared with other issues. This is because most citizens currently do not perceive any danger to the security of the Czech Republic. In addition, these issues do not concern directly the process of modernization and development toward the attainment of a higher standard of living, something that is curtailed by problems connected to the unfinished post-communist institutional and political transformation. Of course, NATO membership touches on these issues indirectly, in that it creates more space for the post-communist countries to focus on finding solutions to their own systemic transformation problems.

Czechs place NATO in the lowest position on the scale of international institutions that can help in assisting the Czech Republic's future development. The placement stems from a high level of security and the high intensity of other problems facing the country compared to those related to defence and security. Of the various international organizations important to the future development of the Czech Republic, most Czechs place the EU (38%) at the highest level, followed, after a significant gap, by the UN (13%), the OECD (11%), and the World Bank/IMF (8%) (see Figure 6). Four per cent of the respondents considered NATO the most important organization to the future development of the Czech Republic. OSCE (3%) came in last. Interestingly enough, nearly one quarter of respondents (23%) were unable to determine which international organization is the most important. This is unusual, considering the fact that the Czech Republic is currently strongly defined by its international context.

Figure 6: Which institutions can assist the development of the Czech Republic? (%)

The high priority accorded to the EU corresponds to its upcoming enlargement, the acceleration of Czech preparations for accession to the EU, and the hopes that Czech society has in connection with its entry to the EU. In addition, the impact of EU entry on everyday life differs from NATO's impact. NATO focuses on issues of defence and security, whereas the EU affects broadly the functioning of the entire state administration, justice and law, transparency of the market, quality of life (eg environment) and other areas. Accession to the EU entails a whole series of adjustments and problems that make life difficult for many Czechs on a daily basis. Moreover, Czech preparations for accession to the EU mean that the influence of the EU is already visible in many important areas of state administration. In any event, Czechs already take security for granted and as a context for other concerns. Those concerns, primarily economic and social, are not amenable to being solved by NATO but by other organizations.

Defence Against Armed Aggression

How would the Czech public behave in case of a military aggression against the country? There are various historical myths, based on interpretations of Czech modern history, about the supposed unwillingness and inability of the Czechs to defend themselves. But what are the real Czech attitudes toward defending their country? In order to understand the potential response of the Czechs to a military aggression against the Czech Republic and to predict citizens' behaviour in such a situation, we focused on three basic areas. The first area relates to the trust that citizens have in the institutions responsible for the country's security in case of an armed attack. The second area pertains to the specific historical experiences that underlie the perception of the meaningfulness of defence. This includes primarily the years 1938-39, when Czechoslovakia did not offer armed resistance to German occupation, and 1968, when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the "fraternal" forces of the Warsaw Pact countries. The third area concerns the personal willingness of

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Czech citizens to participate personally in the defence of the country in case of a military aggression.

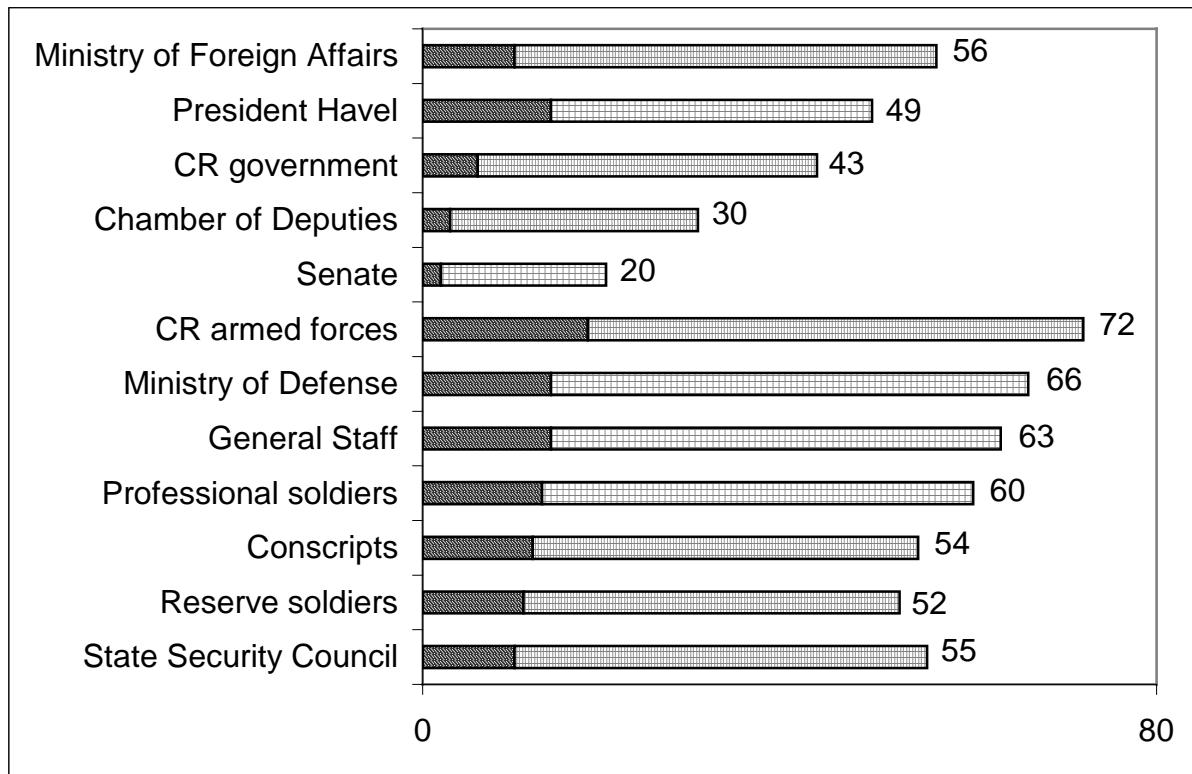
Trust in Institutions Charged with Defence of the State

Institutions responsible for defence and security have the trust of Czech citizens and they are perceived independently from political institutions. When it comes to the question of crisis management, the military currently has a higher level of trust among citizens than political and constitutional institutions. The finding is interesting since the military had been seen for a long time as a tool of the communist regime usable against the citizens. This confidence in the military is related strongly to the country's membership in NATO.

Citizens relate to the institutions responsible for defence and security by differentiating them into three groups. We determined these groups by using factor analysis. The three groups express the fact that people evaluate similarly the institutions in one group (and therefore in connection to each other) rather than in contrast to institutions in the other two groups. The analysis concerns the extent of trust that citizens have in the country's institutions in case of military aggression against the Czech Republic (see Figure 7). The first group includes political and constitutional institutions, primarily the lower house of the parliament (or the Chamber of Deputies, trusted by 30%, of which 3% "definitely trust" and 27% "somewhat trust"), the upper house of the parliament (or the Senate, trusted by 20%, of which 2% "definitely trust" and 18% "somewhat trust"), the government (43%, of which 6% "definitely trust" and 37% "somewhat trust"), the Presidency (49%, of which 14% "definitely trust" and 35% "somewhat trust"), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter MFA, trusted by 56%, of which 10% "definitely trust" and 46% "somewhat trust"). In this group, the MFA is the highest-rated governmental institution.

The second group consists of institutions directly responsible for defence, especially the General Staff (63%, of which 14% "definitely trust" and 49% "somewhat trust"), the armed forces of the Czech Republic (72%, of which 18% "definitely trust" and 54% "somewhat trust"), the Ministry of Defence (66%, of which 14% "definitely trust" and 52% "somewhat trust") and officers and professional soldiers (60%, of which 13% "definitely trust" and 47% "somewhat trust"). This group is given a significantly higher level of trust than political institutions. The third group, "conscripts and reservists in the armed forces", differs from the other two, especially in the evaluations of men. Both conscripts (54%, of which 12% "definitely trust" and 42% "somewhat trust") and reservists (53%, of which 11% "definitely trust" and 41% "somewhat trust") enjoy a relatively high level of trust among citizens; more than most of the political and constitutional institutions but less than military institutions. Two institutions, the State Security Council (55%, of which 10% "definitely trust" and 45% "somewhat trust") and the intelligence services (51%, of which 10% "definitely trust" and 41% "somewhat trust"), are problematic in our evaluation because they are viewed partly as political institutions and partly as offices of defence and security. This perception corresponds to the fact that they exist on an imagined border between the two groups. The institutions directly responsible for defence and security are most trusted by those who have a positive attitude to the general course of development of the Czech Republic. These respondents are pleased with Czech membership in NATO and they see the Czech Republic as secure.

Figure 7: Trust in institutions in case of aggression against the Czech Republic (definitely trust, somewhat trust, %)



The main observation that emerges is that the Czech public sees the military differently from the way it sees political institutions (those influenced by political elections and nominations) involved in national security. Czechs view their military as an apolitical institution entrusted with defence and security of the state. Seeing it in such a fashion probably contributes to the gradually improving position of the Czech armed forces in the eyes of the public.

Historical Experience with Defence

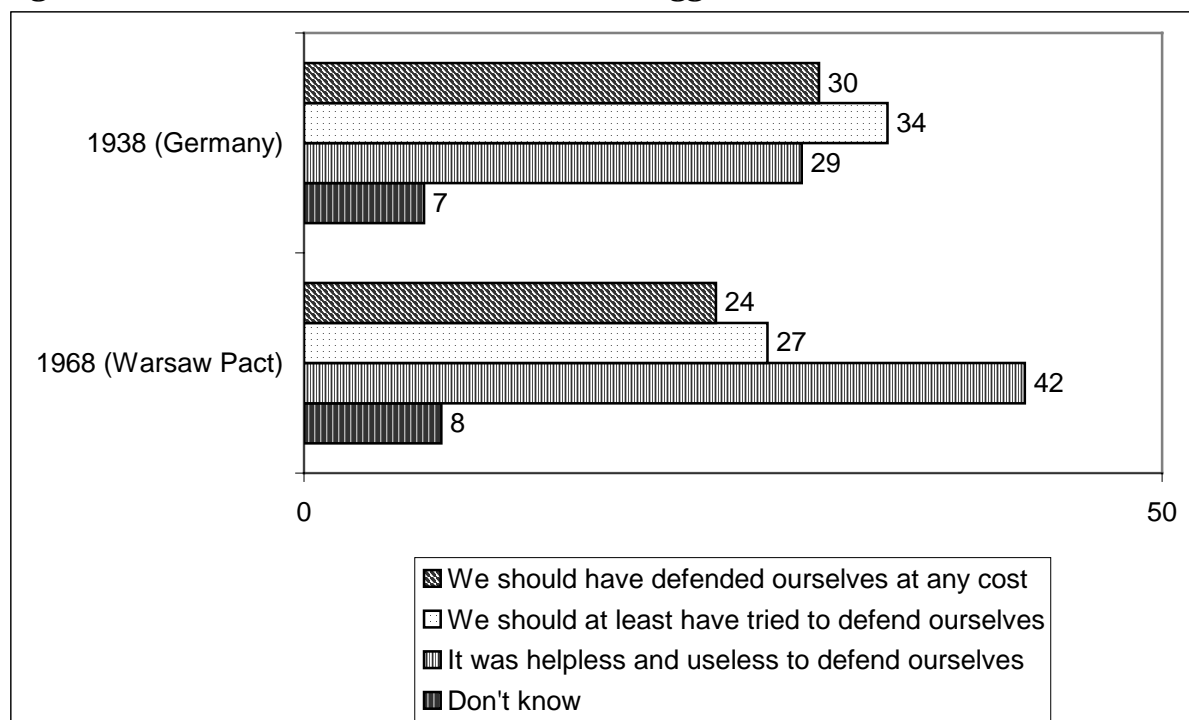
Czechoslovakia was the target of military aggression on two occasions during the 20th century, though both times Czechoslovak armed forces did not resist the aggression. The first experience took place in 1938-39. Abandoned by its allies (who then took an active role in negotiating the dismemberment of the country), in 1938 Czechoslovakia submitted to German pressure and gave up the outlying mountainous areas of Bohemia and Moravia (Sudetenland) without armed resistance. German occupation of these areas stripped Czechoslovakia of much of its defence capacity. Prior to the abandonment of the territory, Czechoslovakia had a modern and highly capable military, an extensively developed system of prepared defences in the contested territory, and popular willingness to resist aggression. Despite all these assets, the Czechoslovak government still agreed to the German territorial demands. The second aggression took place in 1968, with the Warsaw Pact crushing of the Prague Spring.

There are important differences in Czech perceptions of the appropriateness of resisting aggression, depending on whether the aggression in question refers to 1938 or 1968 (see Figure 8). Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) believe that Czechoslovakia should have resisted aggression in 1938. Only a slight majority of respondents (51%) feels the same way about 1968. Interestingly enough, those respondents who think that the Czechs should have resisted aggression on both

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occasions also state more frequently their personal willingness to take part in defending the country in the future.

Figure 8: Should the Czechs have resisted aggression in 1938 and 1968? (%)



There are important differences in the circumstances surrounding the two aggressions. In 1938-39, the citizens of the country and the state representatives were in the same situation, in that both suffered as a result of the German occupation. It is probably this common fate and common interests between the political elite and the society that has led to the ex post facto conviction among Czechs that they should have resisted the aggression militarily in 1938. In contrast, the situation in 1968 was different. Popular will to resist was not matched by the state representatives, who surrendered or worked with the invading forces. The gap between the citizens of the country and the state representatives seems to have led to the perception among Czechs that armed opposition would have been futile and would have involved fighting against not only the military forces of other countries but also fellow countrymen. Adding to the problem, the aggressors in 1968 were identified as Czechoslovakia's "allies" at the time.

It is also important to note that the occupation of 1938-39 has become part of Czech national history, as the majority of Czechs today were born after that period. The group that experienced directly the aggression in 1968 is much larger. The higher level of optimism toward the possibility of armed defence in 1938 is probably also the result of the glorification of this period, caused by the historical remoteness of the event.

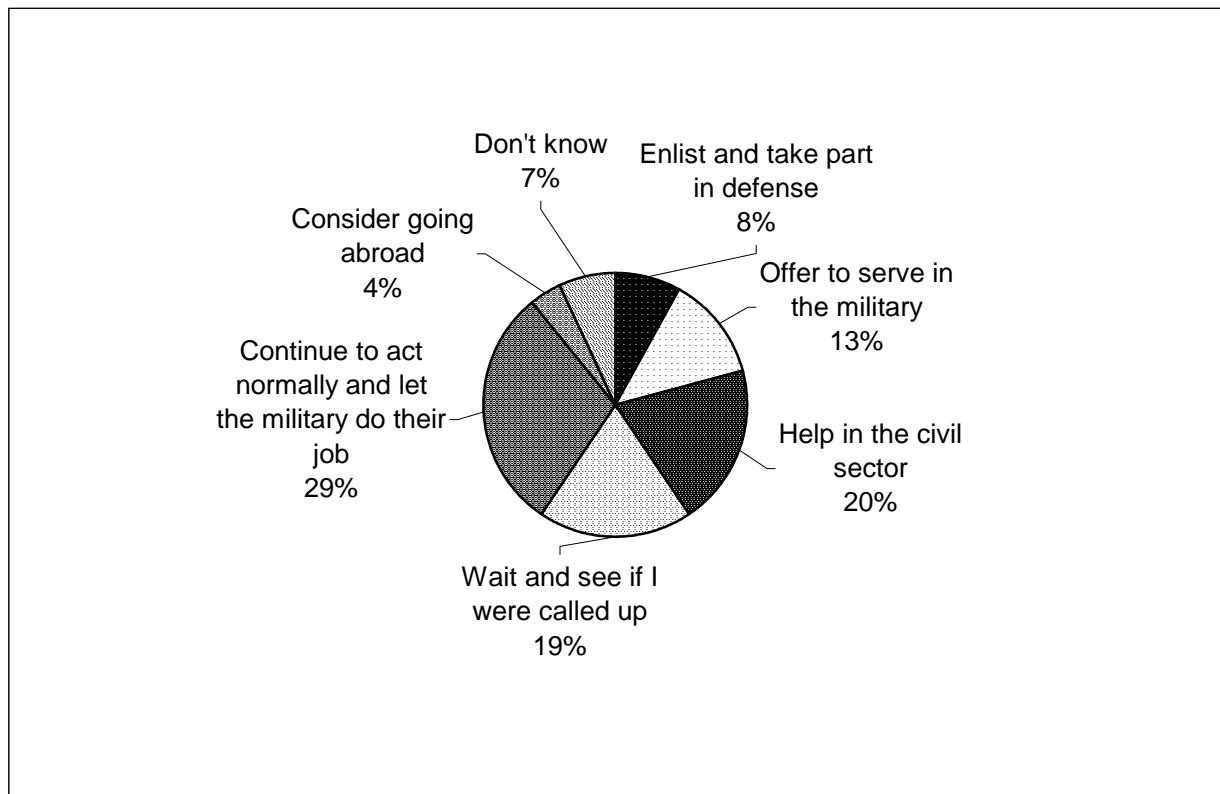
An overwhelming majority of Czech citizens think it is important not to forget the period of occupation (71%). Only one quarter of the respondents (24%) believe that Czechs should not care all that much about the occupation. A portion of the respondents views the negative historical experience as a warning for the future. The perception of a need to recall the harsh historical experiences does not impede people's motivation to defend the country and it is not an expression of a feeling of resignation concerning the issue of defence of the Czech Republic. On the contrary,

the need to recall the period of occupation is tied to greater personal willingness to defend the country in case of an attack and also to greater trust toward Czech political and military institutions in charge of the defence of the country.

Personal Willingness to Take Part in the Defence of the Country

Historical experiences aside, what are the current beliefs among Czechs regarding their own willingness to participate in the defence of the Czech Republic in the face of armed aggression? Twenty-one per cent of male respondents over 18 (corresponding to more than 800,000 people) expressed a willingness to volunteer to join the Czech armed forces and personally take part in defending the country if such a situation arose (see Figure 9). Other male respondents would either help in the civilian sector (20%), or they would wait to see if they were called up to take part in the defence (19%). Altogether, 60% of the male respondents chose one of the four answers that showed willingness to serve in the armed forces and take part in defence. A small number of respondents expressed the intent to escape abroad (7%). Since the Czech public does not associate women with service in the armed forces, the majority of women respondents (53%) not unexpectedly answered that they would “continue to behave as I did prior to the attack.”

Figure 9: What would you do in case of an aggression against the Czech Republic? (males only, %)



A closer analysis of the data shows that personal willingness to participate in defending the country is in a significant degree connected with the ability to remember the historical occupations of the country. An important factor in this respect is people's conviction that the country is following the right course of development and their perceptions of security due to membership in NATO. These elements have a positive effect on the respondents' personal willingness to participate in the country's defence. This shows that the proposition that people are not willing to fight because they feel safe is not true. The idea that the majority of Czechs feel that Czech security is protected through NATO membership and that

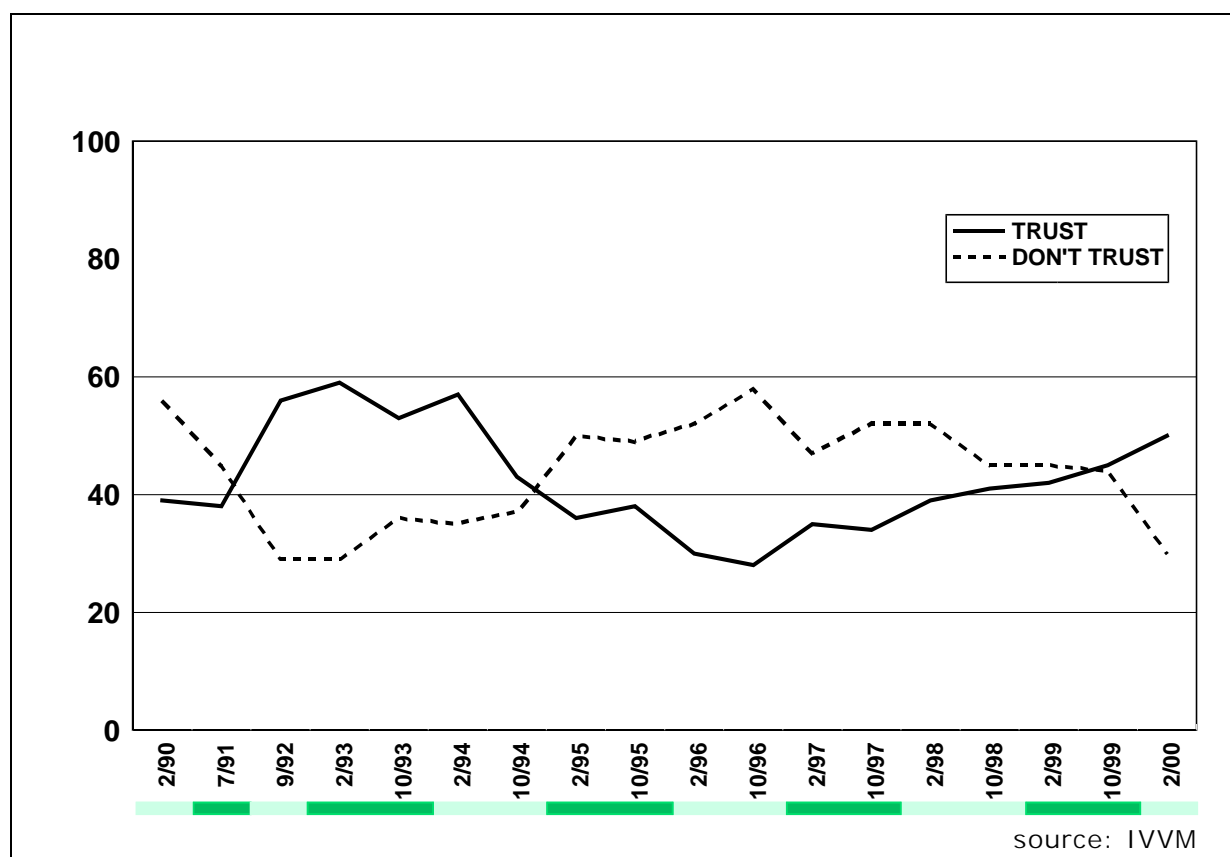
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they therefore do not need to be individually active in defence is also incorrect. On the contrary, Czech membership in NATO, the trust in the capacity of the state in the area of defence and the belief that the country is following the right course of development are key conditions that support people's personal motivation to participate in defending the country in a state of emergency. Therefore, the hypothesis that Czechs are giving up their individual responsibility for national defence to the Czech military and to the NATO allies is invalid. On the contrary, if they trust these institutions they will be willing to assume individual responsibility for their share in guaranteeing defence and security.

Attitudes Toward the Czech Armed Forces

The Czechoslovak and then Czech armed forces have gone through a difficult period of adjustment and reform during the past decade. Dealing with a drastic change in the international security environment, major reductions in size, massive cuts in budgets, and enormous turnover at the higher ranks of the officer corps presented enough difficulties. These problems were compounded by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, which also led to the splitting of the Czechoslovak military into separate Czech and Slovak armed forces. Prior to that time, the military was a truly federal institution, in which Czechs and Slovaks were integrated in all units throughout the territory of the country. Setting up the two new militaries, accomplished by the time the two new countries came into existence on 1 January 1993, was a complex task. Then, after planning for national defence outside an alliance framework, the Czech armed forces had to prepare for the country's accession to NATO and work out a plan of integration into the alliance.

Figure 10: Development of trust in Czechoslovak/Czech military (%)



Public trust in the military has grown in recent years. Because of the military's association with the communist regime, most Czechs had perceived it as a repressive force and a tool of the regime against its own people. This view is changing gradually and the public is beginning to perceive the military as a more trustworthy institution. Integration of the military into the NATO framework has helped with this change in perceptions. Figure 10 illustrates the results of public opinion surveys focusing on the changing degree of trust toward the military between 1990 and 2000.¹⁴

The growth of trust in the Czech military is especially striking in comparison with the trends in public trust in other Czech state institutions. Table 1 provides an opportunity to compare the trust of the military with that of other institutions.¹⁵

Table 1: Trust in NATO, the military & other Czech institutions (%)

	12/1994	4/1997	12/1997	3/1998	12/1998	4/1999	11/1999	2/2000
Military	32	33	-	42	43	47	49	52
NATO	48	48	52	56	54	56	57	54
Police	-	25	-	33	-	37	36	40
President	82	76	70	58	58	58	56	52
Government	65	37	21	49	51	35	21	24
Parliament	45	40	25	34	49	34	30	27

Contemporary Image of the Military in the Czech Republic

Given the communist-era negative image of the military and the evidence of gradual changes in outlook, how do the Czechs see their military after the country's accession to NATO? A majority of Czechs accepts the Czech armed forces as an imperfect but adequately functioning defence organization (66%) (see Figure 11). One quarter of the respondents (24%) believe that the military does not function well. Only 4% of the respondents are convinced that the military is in good shape. Thus, in the public's view, the military has not yet completed the required reform process and is still at an early stage of its transformation to achieve NATO standards and quality. The public image of the military is still based on what the armed forces will look like after the ongoing but not yet completed reform. There are interesting nuances within these outlooks. People with university degrees and those who are critical toward the institutions responsible for defence and security are most critical of the military. Therefore, they are criticizing not just the military (its leadership and soldiers) but also the political and constitutional institutions in charge of defence and security. These respondents are also critical of excessive military spending and they believe that the Czechs should not forget the historical experiences of foreign occupation.

Almost one third of respondents (28%) consider "obsolete equipment" to be the greatest problem currently faced by the Czech armed forces (see Figure 12). The response corresponds to the frequently voiced opinion and hope that Czech membership in NATO could help the improvement of the Czech military in this area. Another 16% of respondents considered the military's outdated infrastructure as the most pressing problem. Overall, almost half of the respondents see obsolescence as the principal problem of the Czech military today. "Poor management of funds" represents another important source of concern (23%) and

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indicates the public's perception that budgetary problems are not solely responsible for the obsolescence of the military's equipment. During the past decade, Czech media have discussed widely the incidents of corruption and incompetence in the Ministry of Defence, at least as they have accompanied the acquisition and modernization processes in the armed forces. Respondents mentioned problems in the area of personnel ("old-thinking officer corps", 13%) and training ("poor training of soldiers", 11%) less frequently.¹⁶

Figure 11: Overall Impression of the Czech Armed Forces (%)

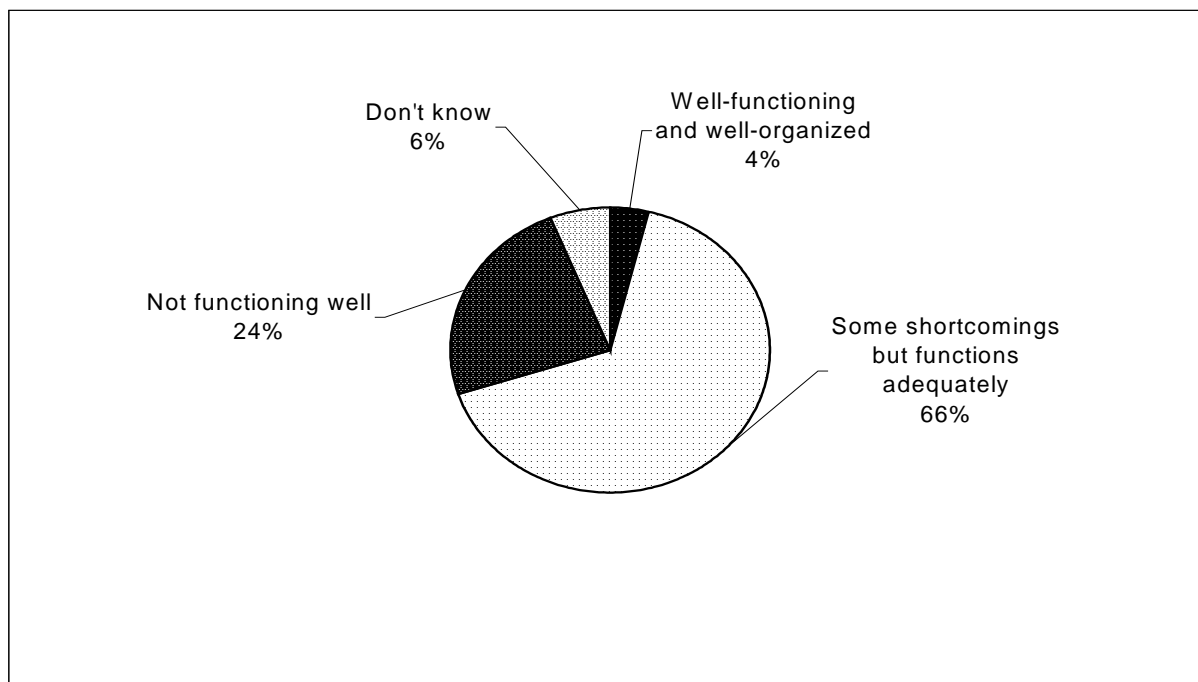
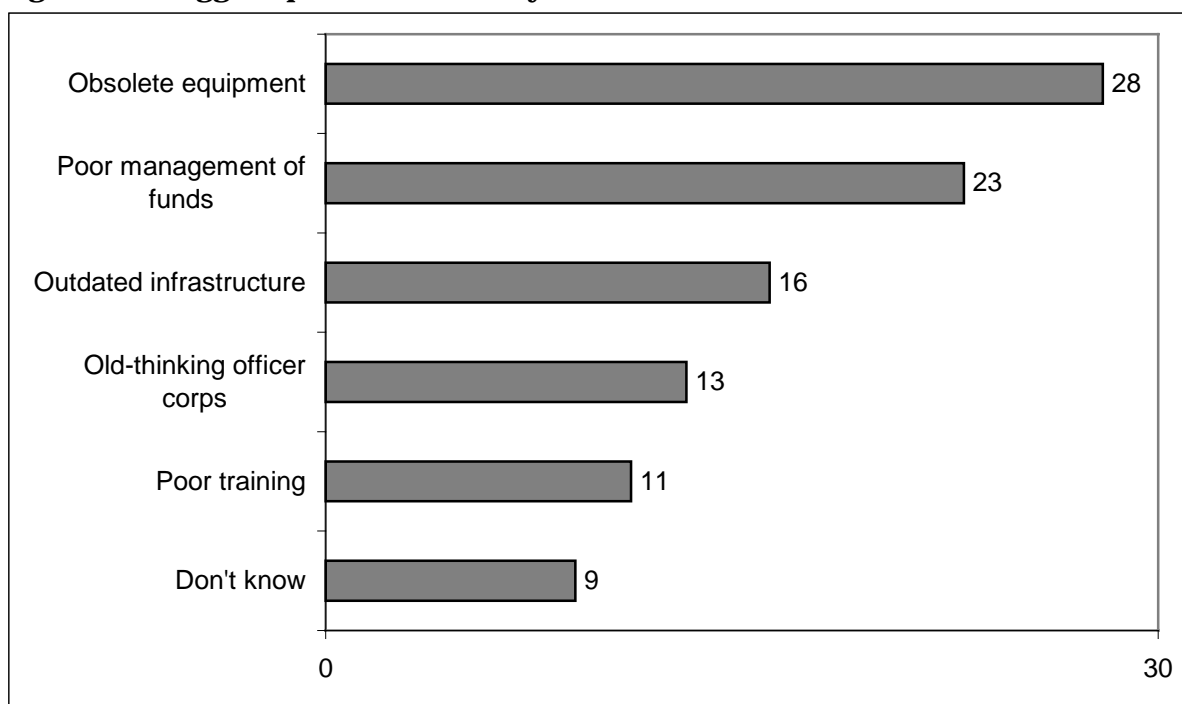


Figure 12: Biggest problem faced by the Czech Armed Forces



The respondents who felt that obsolete equipment was the military's biggest problem also felt that the military is functioning well and that it should be given more money. Interestingly, even those people who see poor management of funds as the primary problem in the military show trust toward the leadership of the military. These respondents believe that the Czech military should focus on territorial defence, it should be based on mandatory conscription, and it should not be high in cost. They are against increases in the defence budget, advocating instead better financial management using existing resources.

Views on the Preferred Shape of the Czech Armed Forces in the Future

Most Czechs see the military's future in its full integration in the system of NATO's collective defence, in its professionalization and modernization. They are prepared to support higher military spending if the military fulfils their expectations of a well-functioning organization and if the additional funds are not wasted. The majority of Czechs currently give the military carte blanche to complete its own radical reform to meet NATO standards.

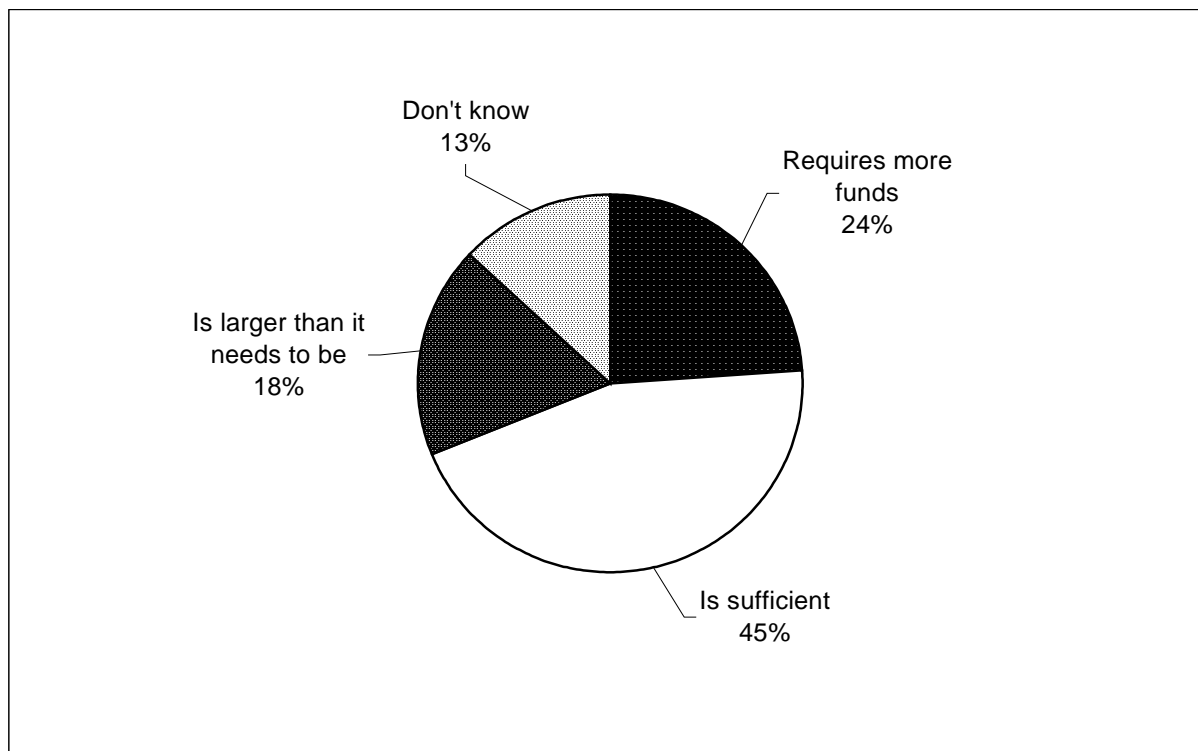
There are two principal opinions regarding the future shape of the Czech military. According to the first opinion, which is dominant, the military should be fully professional (62%) and integrated in the system of NATO's collective defence (59%), achieving higher standards at higher financial costs (53%). The second insists on a conscript-based military (33%), which would have lower standards and cost less (34%). Proponents of the second option are more frequently critical of poor management in the military.

Positive attitude to NATO-integrated, professional, and more costly armed forces is fully in agreement with the respondents' support for Czech membership in NATO. It reflects an overall positive evaluation of the development of Czech society. As other characteristics of these respondents indicate (younger, better educated, urban, and with a higher professional position), it is an attitude of those who are more satisfied in society and who enjoy a better standard of living. This same group also considers the lack of respect for law and the high crime rate to be the most pressing problems in the Czech Republic.

Defence Spending

The question of expenditures on defence plays an important role in the attitude of Czechs toward the military. In 2000, the Czech Republic's defence budget amounted to 2.2% of its Gross Domestic Product, a figure slightly above the average for NATO countries. Expenditures on defence are a sensitive matter, since most Czechs consider economic and social problems as more important.

Almost half (45%) of the respondents consider the current level of defence spending to be sufficient (see Figure 13). One quarter (24%) think that more money should be allocated for the defence budget. Less than one fifth (18%) believe that the defence budget is too high. On average, the Czech population supports increasing, rather than decreasing, the defence budget. The responses show that Czechs do not perceive Czech membership in NATO as an inexpensive way to gain the advantages of security and defence protection. They are willing to pay for defence even though they feel that the country suffers from more pressing problems in other areas.

Figure 13: What is your opinion of the defence budget (CzK 44bn in 2000) (%)

The willingness to spend money on defence increases among those who are satisfied with the Czech armed forces. If the citizens feel that the military is functioning well, then they will support further investment in it. Those who are willing to increase the defence budget are also more engaged when it comes to other security issues. They agree that NATO should be involved in “out-of-area” operations and they think that the Czech Republic should assume maximum responsibility in NATO. These people want the military to be integrated into NATO’s collective defence, professional, and having higher standards at a higher financial cost.

However, the willingness to support higher defence budgets depends heavily on the fulfilment of people’s expectations. These include the citizens’ hope that the military will transform quickly, aspire to achieve the standards of other NATO member countries, and satisfy its preferred image - a high-performing, fully functioning, reliable, modern, and professional organization.

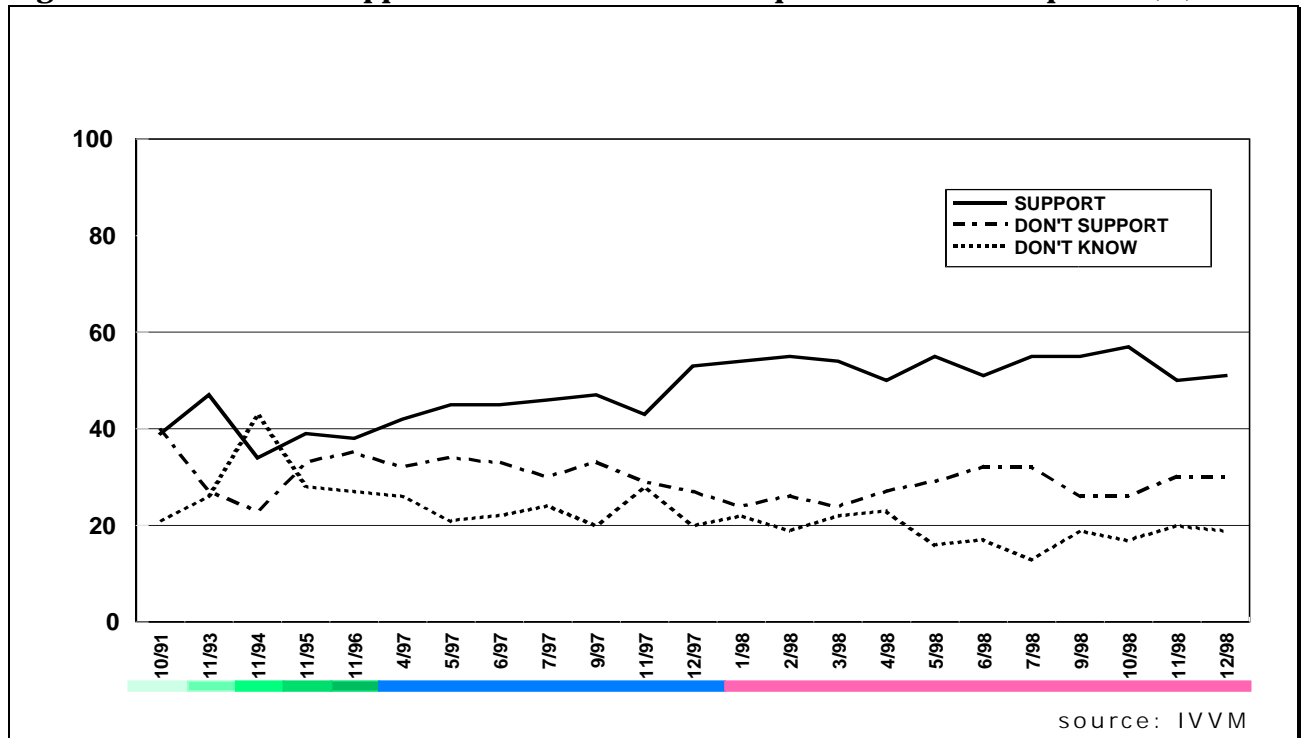
The decision calculation of citizens regarding military spending is a result of a simple formula in which the fulfilment of each component is necessary for public approval for defence spending: 1) membership in NATO; 2) integration in NATO’s collective defence; 3) professional performance and status of the military; 4) good quality and transparent management of the existing resources.

Czech Membership in NATO

Prior to NATO’s 1997 invitation to the Czech Republic, public support in the Czech Republic for NATO membership had ranked among the lowest of all the candidate countries. In September 1998, surveys showed the level of support for NATO membership to range from 55-61% (55%, IVVM; 58% STEM; and 61%, Research Department of the Ministry of Defence). Support for NATO membership has

increased since Czech accession to NATO, to 70% by the end of 2000 (see Figure 14).

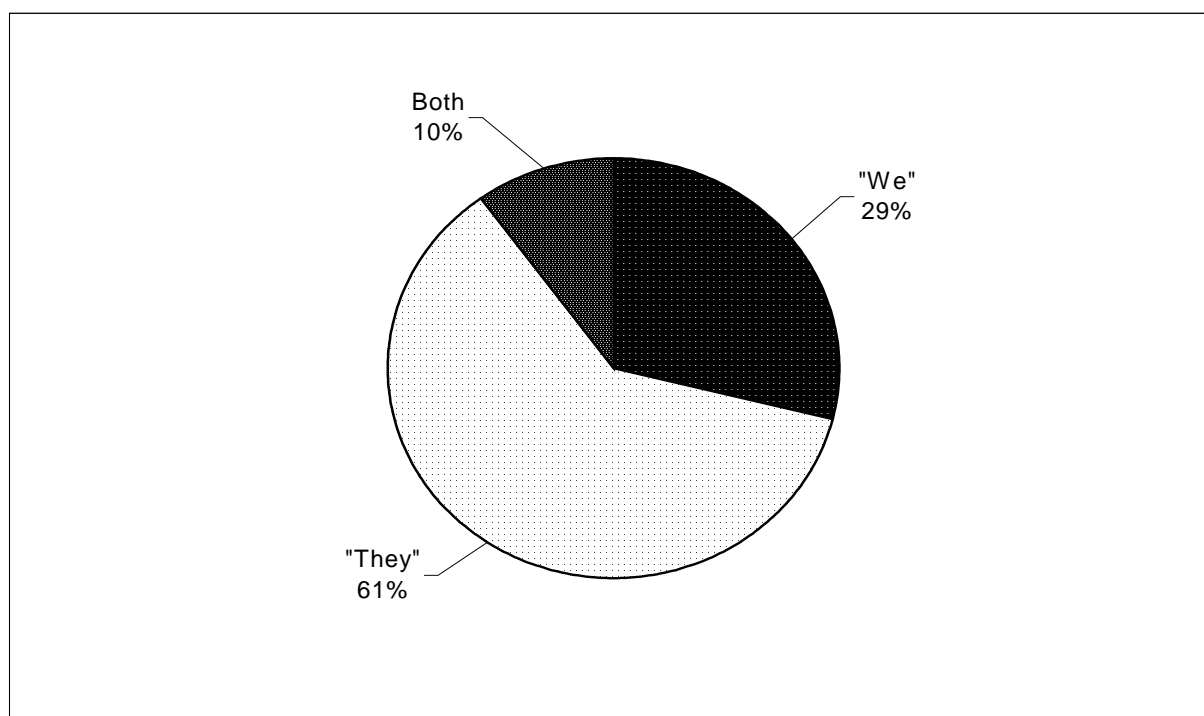
Figure 14: Trends in support for NATO membership in the Czech Republic (%)



The decision to focus Czech defence policy toward NATO was taken by the political elites, without much public debate, participation, or dissemination of information about the responsibilities that come with membership in the alliance. The political implications of such an accession to NATO are related to the principal problem that Czechs have toward NATO today. The problem is that, while support for NATO membership is growing, identification with national obligations and their implementation remains a problem. Only one third of the respondents identify with NATO in the sense of having a sense of belonging to it.

Most respondents (61%) identify NATO as “they”, seeing it as a “foreign” organization, showing little attachment to or identity with it (see Figure 15). Only 29% of the respondents refer to NATO as “we”. The remaining 10% had trouble answering the question and replied “both”, even though the response was not listed among the options.

The division of Czech citizens into two groups (along the lines of those who answered “we” or “they”) has an important differentiating effect on their other attitudes and evaluations. Those who perceive NATO as “our” organization are more positive in their evaluations of NATO’s contributions to the Czech Republic. Those who more frequently identify with Czech membership in NATO are men, people with higher education, from larger cities, and people who expect that their financial situation will improve in the future. They agree with the idea of the Czech Republic assisting other NATO members. They also value Western countries (not Czech institutions and citizens) for their efforts and interest in helping the Czech Republic accede to NATO. They trust political institutions responsible for the defence of the Czech Republic and the leadership of the Czech armed forces. They see the United States as a real partner in NATO.

Figure 15: When speaking of NATO, do you use "We" or "They"? (%)

As we discuss later, the reasons for the low level of identification among the other group (those who answered "they") are not related to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The problem is their lack of identification with non-Article 5 operations. Those who still perceive NATO as a "foreign" organization more frequently disagree with Czech membership in NATO, which they perceive as ridden with negative aspects and potential risks. They are also less optimistic when it comes to the Czech Republic's position within NATO.

Comparing the percentages of those who support Czech membership in NATO with those who identify with NATO (referring to it as "we"), there is an anomaly in that the percentage of those who currently support Czech membership in NATO (70%) is far greater than the percentage of those who identify with NATO (29%). After two years of membership, less than half of the respondents identify with Czech membership in NATO. The most likely determining reason for people's low level of identification with NATO is their lack of participation in the process of decision-making in 1997-99 about joining the organization. An overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) feel that there should have been a referendum (40% definitely agree, 31% somewhat agree). Also significant is the fact that many of these people are strong supporters of Czech membership in NATO.

The decision-making process in the Czech Republic regarding the country's accession to NATO was conducted with low consideration for public involvement, even though the decision involved major national interests. The way the process was conducted has led to many Czechs having a lack of identification with NATO in crisis situations. Their attitude to the organization is distanced and non-committal. The Czech political elite also did not use the preparatory period before accession to inform the public about the meaning of membership in NATO and the obligations and responsibilities ensuing from it. Overcoming this information deficit will take a long time and a good deal of effort because, as the results of our research indicate, those citizens who are not able to identify with NATO are no longer interested in

receiving information about the organization. From the standpoint of making the alliance function smoothly, NATO has a role to play in reducing this information deficit. The extent of low knowledge about NATO in the Czech Republic is illustrated by the fact that the percentage of respondents who knew the name of the current Secretary General of NATO (Lord Robertson, 1%) was lower than the margin of error (though 17% also gave the name of Javier Solana, signifying some recent interest in NATO).

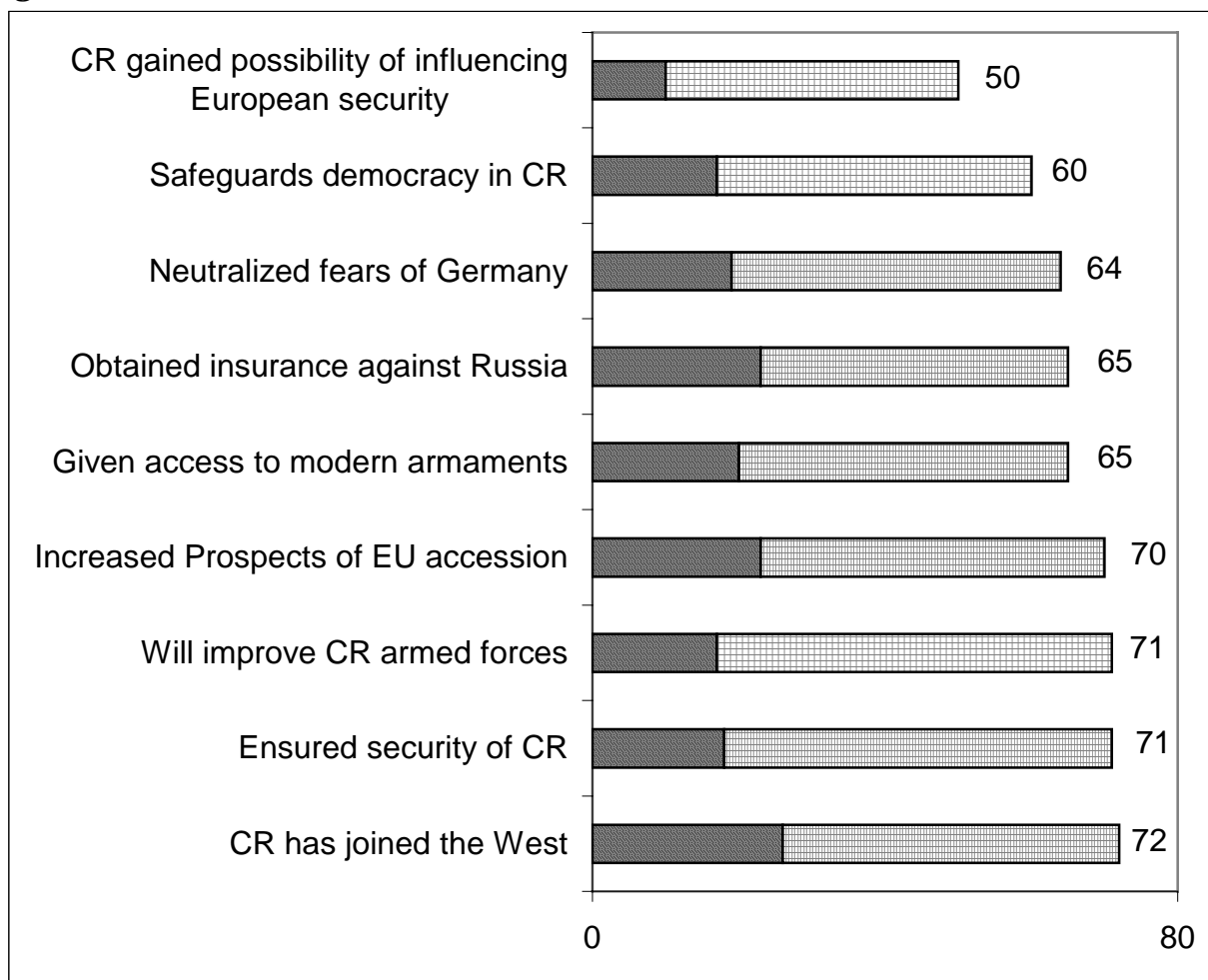
The low degree of identification with NATO played an important role in determining Czech behaviour during NATO's Operation Allied Force. The majority of Czech citizens did not support the operation and refused to assume responsibility for it. Interestingly enough, many leading Czech politicians took a similar position, even though they had been active in the process of the Czech Republic joining the Alliance. Their failure to inform the public and obtain its support for a major foreign policy decision came back to haunt them.

Perceptions of Positive & Negative Aspects of NATO Membership

Though most Czechs support their country's membership in NATO and recognize the benefits that accrue from it, they also see some of its problematic and troublesome consequences. Recognition of the positive consequences of Czech membership in NATO includes two principal areas. The first involves the improvement of the overall international situation and geopolitical position of the country (see Figure 16): joining the "West" (72%, of which 26% "definitely agree" and 46% "somewhat agree"), ensuring the security of the country (71%, of which 18% "definitely agree" and 53% "somewhat agree"), neutralizing historical fears of Germany (64%, of which 19% "definitely agree" and 45% "somewhat agree"), gaining insurance against any threat from Russia (65%, of which 23% "definitely agree" and 42% "somewhat agree"), and increasing the chances of EU membership (70%, of which 23% "definitely agree" and 47% "somewhat agree"). On the last point, it is important to note that the public is increasingly aware that the enlargement of the EU and NATO are complementary issues rather than a substitute for each other. This indicates the recognition that security is a key condition for far-reaching reforms and modernization of institutions, state administration, and the economy. The second area concerns the positive effect of membership on the internal situation in the country: modernization and increased performance levels of the national military (71%, of which 17% "definitely agree" and 54% "somewhat agree"), gaining access to otherwise unattainable modern military technology (65%, of which 20% "definitely agree" and 45% "somewhat agree"), making defence and security less dependent on the present condition and performance of the national military (57%, of which 11% "definitely agree" and 46% "somewhat agree"), creating financial opportunities for Czech industry (60%, of which 18% "definitely agree" and 42% "somewhat agree").

The positive evaluations of Czech membership in NATO have three features worth stressing. One, Czechs consider NATO membership a suitable way to increase the performance level of the Czech military; Czechs see it not as a way to eliminate their military but as a means to overcome the military's currently unsatisfactory condition. Two, Czechs perceive accession to NATO primarily as a move toward the West rather than a move against Russia; viewing Russia from inside NATO's protective shield has contributed to seeing Russia from a perspective not characterized by fear and animosity. Three, NATO has neutralized the historical Czech traumas felt toward Germany.

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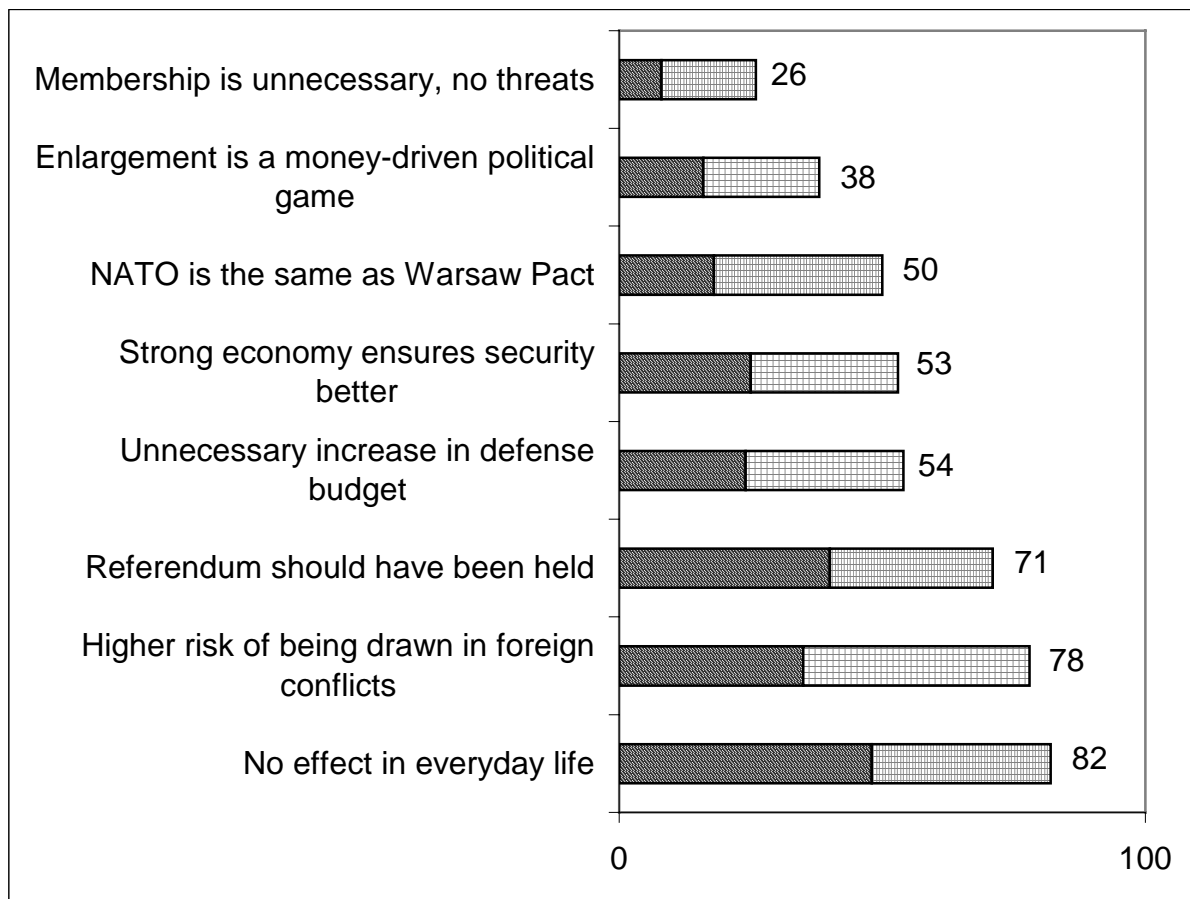
Figure 16: Positive aspects of NATO membership (definitely agree, somewhat agree, %)

Supporters and the opponents of Czech membership in NATO agree on the problematic aspects of membership (see Figure 17). Most Czechs feel that membership in NATO has very little impact on their everyday life (82%, of which 48% “definitely agree” and 34% “somewhat agree”). Even though the majority of people began to have a “full feeling of security” only after the Czech Republic joined NATO, this security already has become an integral part of life, “invisible” amongst the daily concerns. Nevertheless, Czechs are also concerned that their membership in NATO increases the risks for the Czech Republic to become drawn into foreign military conflicts (78%, of which 35% “definitely agree” and 43% “somewhat agree”) and increases unnecessarily defence spending (54%, of which 24% “definitely agree” and 30% “somewhat agree”). In this respect, the distrust toward a lack of transparency of NATO actions in potential conflicts is most significant. The increased risks for the Czech Republic becoming part of conflicts concerning other countries is a logical result of accession to an organization that engages in conflicts in which the Czech Republic as a country with an independent defence agenda would not otherwise participate. An additional important element here is the low participation or the lack of trust in the transparency of Czech political decision-making in the area of defence and security.

Notably, half of the respondents (50%, of which 18% “definitely agree” and 32% “somewhat agree”) justified their low support for NATO membership with the argument that NATO is analogous to the Warsaw Pact. The idea has complicated

roots, with the most significant being the rejection of “out-of- area” peace operations because they can be perceived as NATO’s aggression against non-member countries. The problem here does not concern the question of European security, but the issue of intervention in the development of non-member countries whose problems are not perceived by the Czechs as related to European security. On this point Czech society has a historical burden stemming from the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, namely a conservative attitude to interventions by military alliances, especially led by a superpower, in the internal affairs of other countries. In general, Czechs evaluate peace operations positively. However, they see Operation Allied Force as having crossed the limits of “peace operations.” This operation has led to an alternative viewpoint among the Czechs that a peace operation can also be a matter of an “arbitrary licence” of the West, stemming from the interests of the main NATO members. In comparing NATO to the Warsaw Pact, the Czechs are also expressing their aversion to military alliances, seeing them as a necessary evil.

Figure 17: Problematic aspects of Czech membership in NATO (definitely agree, somewhat agree, %)



To a certain extent, Czech society is still searching for its relationship to NATO. The view oscillates between an active and responsible position with natural allies and a more controversial and passive position as a manipulated party in a military alliance which nevertheless provides for Czech security.

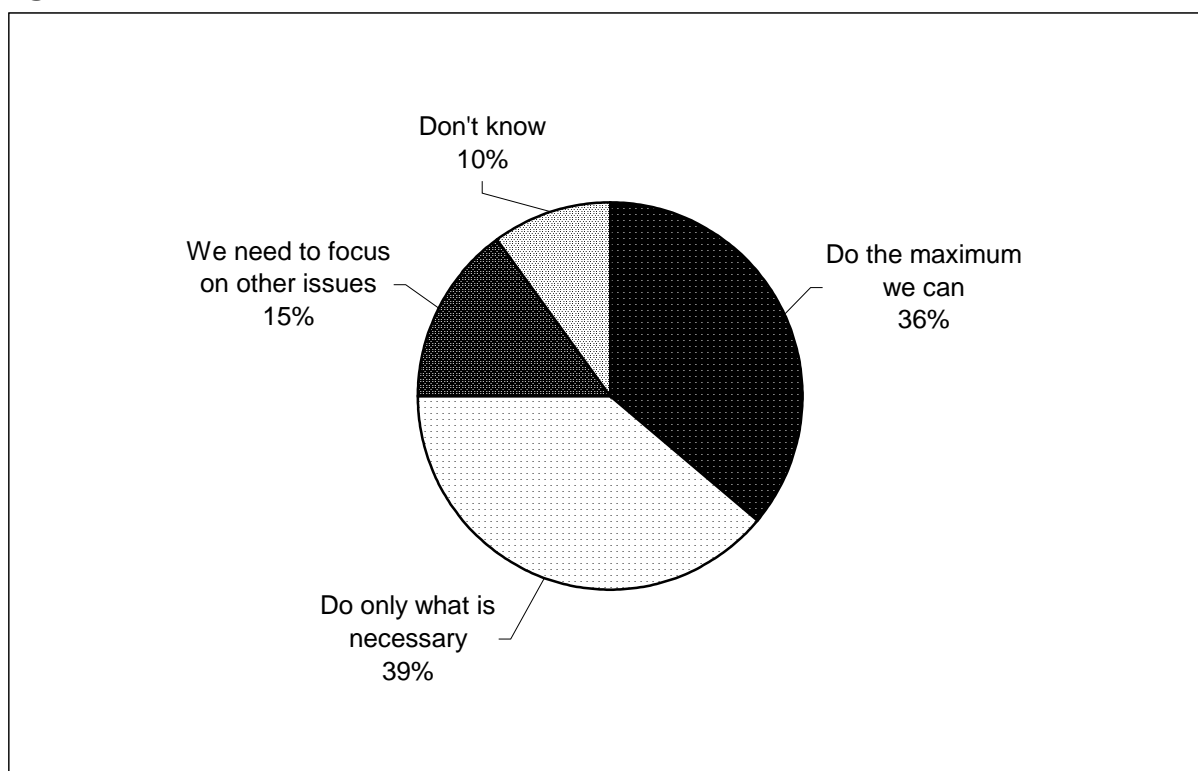
Perceptions of How the Czech Republic Should Act in NATO

The range of opinions regarding the content and quality of the Czech membership in NATO comes across in the area of involvement and participation of the Czech

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Republic in NATO. The basic question relates to the citizens' opinion on the desired level of activity that the Czech Republic should aim for in NATO. More than one third (36%) of Czechs think that the Czech Republic should do the maximum (see Figure 18). Their agreement with this view is linked to their deeper ability to identify with NATO. In this respect, the supporters of maximum Czech involvement can also accept risks ensuing from membership. The risks include being involved in an operation such as Operation Allied Force, willingness to defend other NATO allies, and support for increased military spending. The supporters see the future Czech military as a fully professionalized component of NATO's system of collective defence. On average, they are more willing to participate personally in defending the country in case of aggression.

Figure 18: How active should the Czechs be in NATO? (%)



In contrast, 39% of respondents state that the Czech Republic should do only what is necessary. In other words, they support a minimal Czech role. Still another 15% think that, now that the country has joined NATO, the Czech Republic should focus on other issues. To some extent, this answer represents an expression of resignation of those who disagree with Czech membership in NATO.

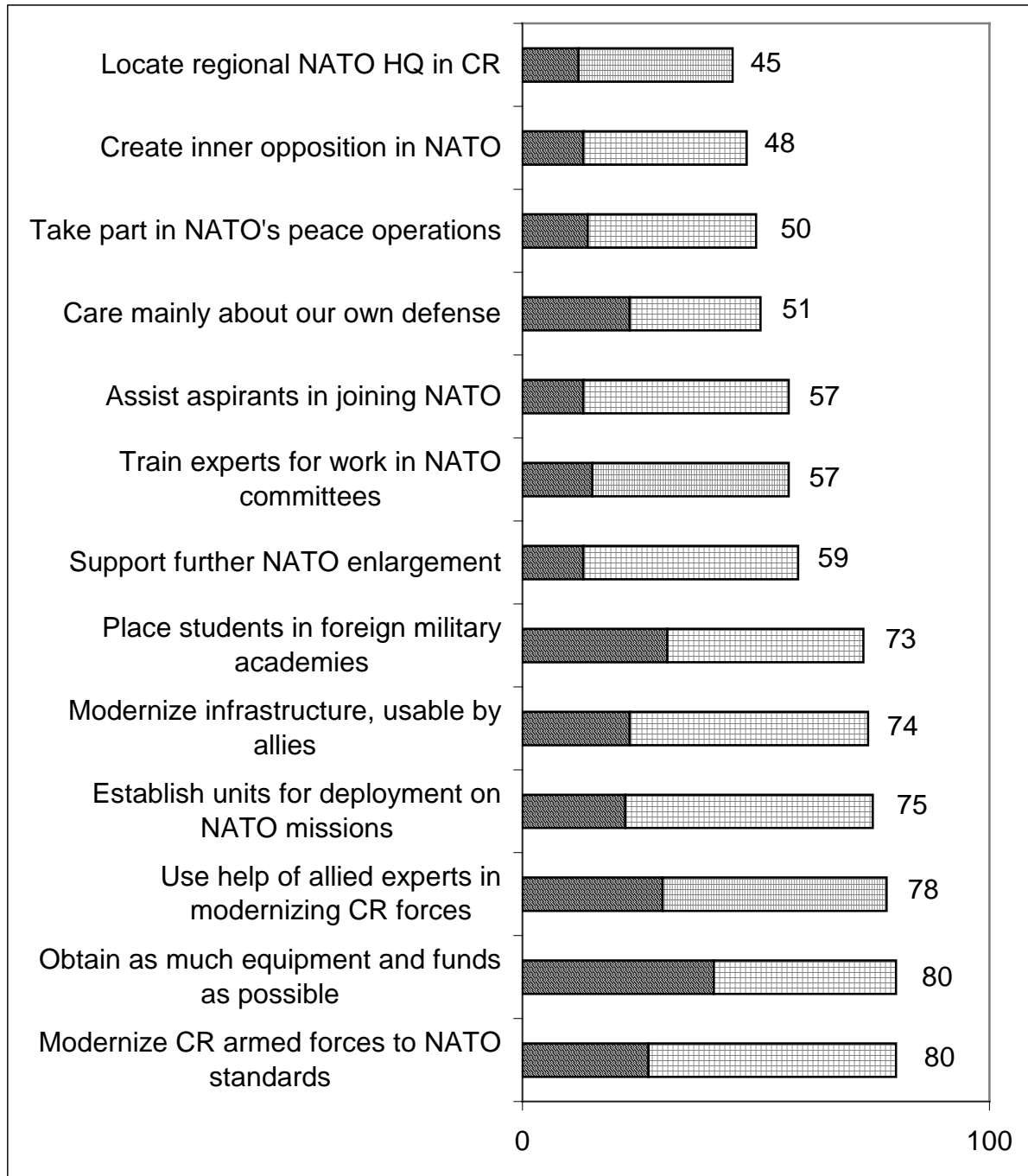
The main distinction between those who think that the Czech Republic should do the maximum and those who think that the country should do only what is necessary lies in their willingness to support out-of-area operations. The former view NATO's out-of-area operations as part of the Czech responsibility for European security, whereas the latter view such operations as aggression and a continuation of Cold War patterns of behaviour.

Actions of the Czech Republic in NATO

When asked about the specific actions that the Czech Republic should take as part of its NATO membership, respondents most frequently mentioned the wish to

modernize the Czech armed forces and its equipment up to NATO standards (80%, of which 27% “definitely yes” and 53% “somewhat yes”) and the desire to obtain as much military equipment, technology and financial support from NATO as possible (80%, of which 41% “definitely yes” and 39% “somewhat yes”) (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Agreement with Czech forms of participation in NATO (definitely agree, somewhat agree, %)



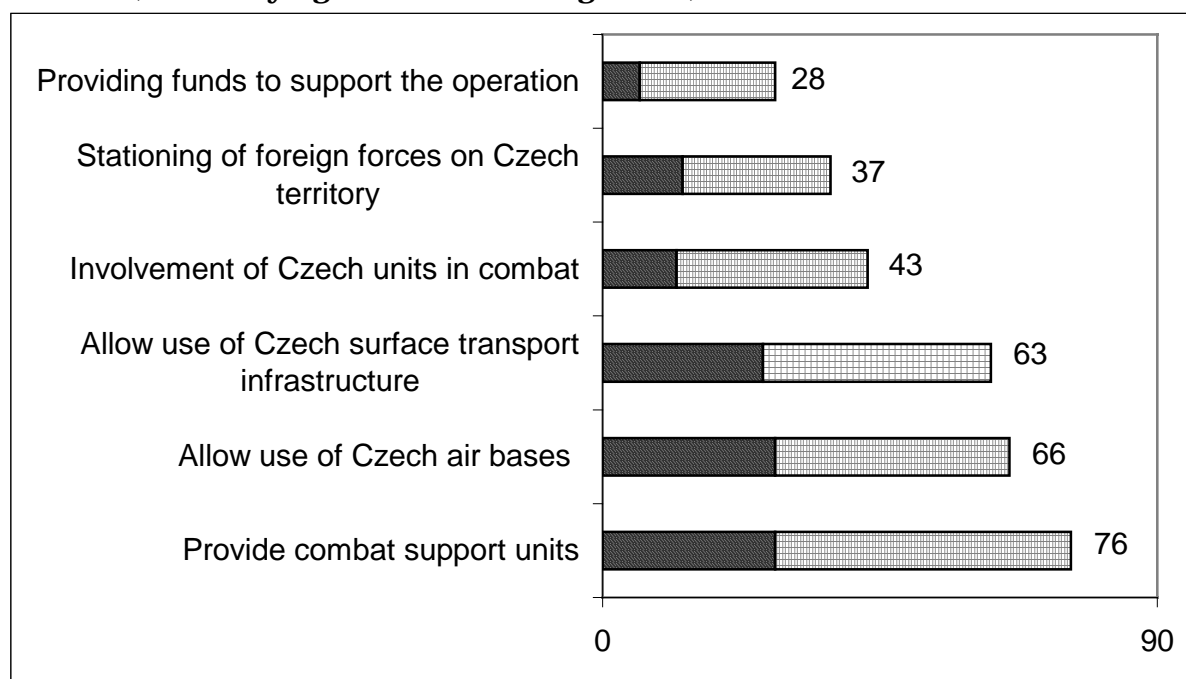
These priorities are followed by the willingness to use allied experts in the training and modernization of the Czech armed forces (78%, of which 30% “definitely yes” and 48% “somewhat yes”), and the preference for establishing units capable of deployment to defend other NATO members (75%, of which 22% “definitely yes” and 53% “somewhat yes”), for modernizing Czech infrastructure so as to accommodate the needs of allied armed forces coming to the assistance of the Czech Republic

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(74%, of which 23% “definitely yes” and 51% “somewhat yes”), and for placing as many Czech students in foreign military schools as possible (73%, of which 31% “definitely yes” and 42% “somewhat yes”). In short, the public places priority on the measures that improve the performance of the Czech military and allow it to reach the standards prevalent in the alliance.

The respondents were less favourably disposed toward the possibility of NATO locating a regional headquarters in the Czech Republic (45%, of which 12% “definitely yes” and 33% “somewhat yes”) or the potential for Czech participation in NATO’s peace operations (50%, of which 14% “definitely yes” and 36% “somewhat yes”). Probably showing a legacy of the post-1968 Warsaw Pact era, the Czech public remains sensitive to the presence of foreign troops on its territory. But the question of participating fully in NATO’s out-of-area operations remains among the most controversial items. The problematic area concerns operations outside Article 5. A majority of respondents (51%, of which 23% “definitely yes” and 28% “somewhat yes”) supported the statement that the Czech Republic should focus primarily on its own defence needs. The caveat here is that a Czech battalion has taken part in NATO’s IFOR and SFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The unit has received a great deal of attention by the Czech media and the Czech public has greeted the unit’s participation positively. Thus, when confronted with practical obligations, Czech society reacts more positively than the above figures suggest. In this sense, the scepticism that the survey indicates may be high at a theoretical level, but actual support for Czech participation in a specific NATO operation may diverge greatly from that level, depending on the case and circumstances surrounding it.

Figure 20: Agreement with Czech role in a hypothetical NATO operation in the Balkans (definitely agree, somewhat agree, %)



Cautious attitudes also come out in the replies to the question of specific Czech contributions to NATO’s peace operations (see Figure 20). The majority of respondents were willing to provide combat support units (76%, of which 28% “definitely yes” and 48% “somewhat yes”), allow the use of Czech air bases (66%, of which 28% “definitely yes” and 38% “somewhat yes”), and allow the use of Czech

surface transport infrastructure (63%, of which 26% “definitely yes” and 37% “somewhat yes”). But a majority was opposed to more active forms of participation, such as sending Czech combat units into action.

Czech actions in NATO that bring benefits to the country but also entail costs (modernizing the armed forces, establishing units capable of deployment to defend other NATO members) are supported by respondents who prefer to see the Czech Republic play an active role in NATO. These respondents agree with the statement that the Czech Republic should do its maximum in NATO. They also believe that the Czech Republic should help other NATO members in case of need and they think that other allies would assist the Czech Republic in case of need. They think that NATO should be involved in out-of-area operations and they support its further enlargement. These respondents also expected that membership in NATO would have consequences such as Operation Allied Force and they perceive NATO as “our” organization. They see the Czech military in the future as an organization integrated into NATO’s collective defence, fully professional, and expensive. They are willing to participate personally in the defence of the country. They trust the constitutional and military institutions in charge of Czech defence. They put priority on the need to fulfil Czech responsibilities in NATO and to prepare for Czech entry into the EU.

Czech Behaviour During Operation Allied Force

Only days after the accession of the Czech Republic to NATO, the alliance launched Operation Allied Force in response to the conflict in Kosovo. The operation evoked a sharp reaction among the Czech public and its political elites, causing internal and external difficulties for the Czechs. Of the three new member states, the Czech public adopted the most critical attitude toward NATO’s air campaign.¹⁷

Operation Allied Force came largely as a surprise to Czech society and caught it unprepared for such a situation. Retrospectively, three equally represented groups of people with different opinions can be distinguished. A plurality (34%) of the respondents did not expect anything like Operation Allied Force when they thought of the responsibilities that came with NATO membership (see Figure 21). Another 30% were aware that Czech membership would involve certain responsibilities but did not expect that the Czech Republic would need to fulfil them so soon and facing such an intensive operation. Only 27% stated that they expected involvement in such an operation. There were many respondents with a critical attitude toward NATO within the last group. These “bad prophets” felt justified in their predictions that Czech membership in NATO would involve many risks and entail negative consequences. They are also not all that enthusiastic about Czech membership in NATO. They accept, even if grudgingly, the responsibilities of NATO membership after the accession of the Czech Republic to the alliance but they remain critical of NATO’s peace operations.

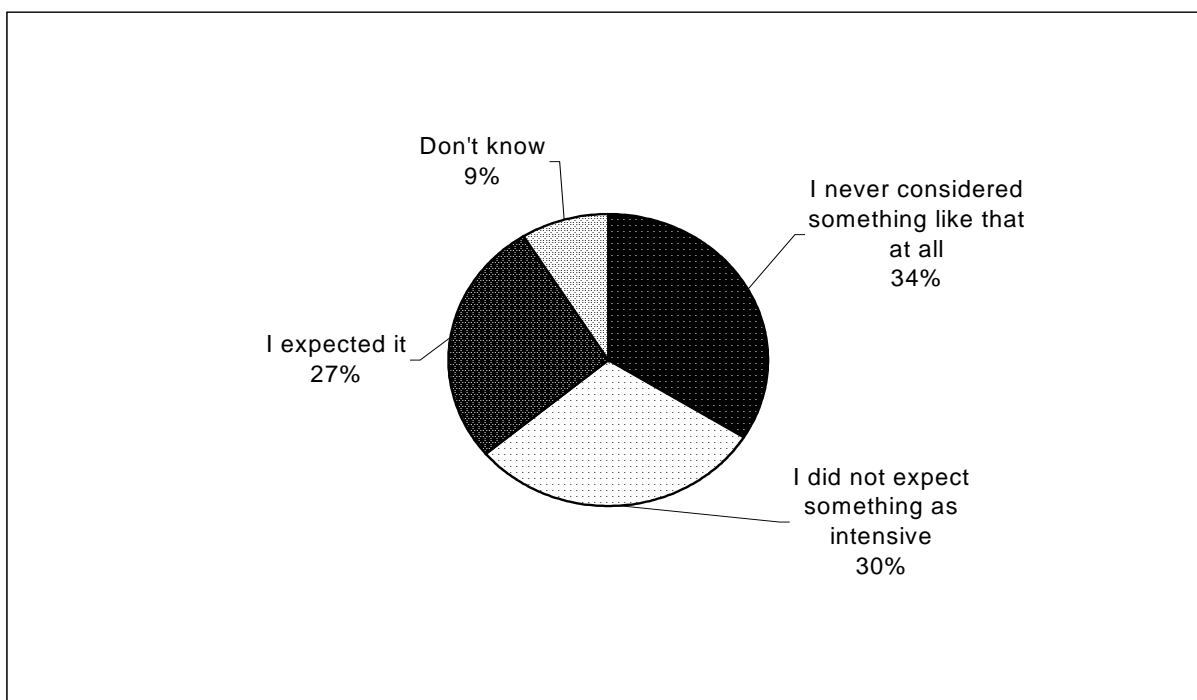
The disenchantment of the Czech public during the operation was tied closely to the lack of clarity among Czechs about the meaning of Czech membership in NATO. Discussions in the Czech Republic prior to accession focused on security guarantees and costs rather than on responsibilities ensuing from membership. The content of membership was presented to the Czech public in an incomplete, shallow, and overly optimistic form.

A plurality of the respondents (31%) felt that the Czech Republic passed satisfactorily the test in Kosovo as a new member of NATO. These respondents are

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the same people who fully identify with Czech membership in NATO and who support NATO's active engagement in out-of-area peace operations. Another 16% thought that the Czechs fulfilled their basic commitments but could have done more. Many respondents (22%) thought that the Czech Republic met its responsibilities but did so with substantial difficulties. Only 4% agreed with the statement that the Czech Republic was primarily a burden to the alliance during the operation. Many of the respondents (14%) remained completely opposed to the operation, saying that the Czech Republic should have stopped the bombing campaign.

Figure 21: At the time we joined NATO, did you consider that by doing so we also took on such responsibilities as participation in Operation Allied Force? (%)



The picture that emerges is that most respondents came out satisfied with Czech performance during Operation Allied Force. Only a small percentage of the respondents took a critical position toward the dominant Czech attitude toward the operation and the dissenting role that the Czech Republic played in NATO during the operation. If almost one third of the citizens believe that the Czech Republic performed well and fulfilled all of its responsibilities, despite the problematic diplomatic steps that the Czechs took (most of all, the Czech-Greek Peace Initiative, put together on the Czech side by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Kavan), then we can infer that the media and the political elite have created an incomplete and distorted portrayal of the situation. Complicating matters further, at the official level political, diplomatic, and military representatives from NATO and from individual major allied countries repeatedly assured the Czech public that the country fulfilled its new role very well. Such comments may have been meant to downplay the dissatisfaction at NATO with the Czech Republic and to portray an image of unity within the organization but they do not represent the real assessment of Czech performance by NATO and by the major members of the alliance. The official reassurances carry much weight in the Czech context and, because they were not accompanied by any critical and retrospective analysis of

Czech behaviour during the operation by the Czech media, they may have strengthened the mistaken sense of self-satisfaction with Czech performance.

The misperceptions of Czech performance during Operation Allied Force also bring out other sources of the Czechs' problematic attitudes toward NATO. For example, those who view Czech membership most positively seem to have a distorted view of the Czech ability to participate adequately in the alliance's activities. The lack of accurate assessments and evaluations of the Czech performance in NATO makes it harder for Czech society to assess realistically the Czech performance in NATO and evaluate NATO itself as an organization.

Czech Views of NATO's Adaption & Contemporary Role in International Security

How do the Czechs view NATO in relation to its historical roots in the Cold War? Do they believe that NATO has adapted to the new situation and followed strategies that correspond to the existing security problems in Europe? Or are they sceptical that NATO has changed much since the end of the Cold War? What kind of a role in international security should NATO play, according to the Czechs?

The citizens of the Czech Republic have a predominantly positive view of NATO's adaptation. A large majority of the respondents (72%) feel that NATO either has adapted fully (33%) or partially (39%) to the new security situation in Europe. Only 13% of the respondents felt that NATO has not changed much since the end of the Cold War. Attitudes toward this topic are connected strongly with attitudes toward potential NATO operations. Those who view NATO exclusively as a territorial defence organization of the Western countries do not accept the alliance's out-of-area operations. They consider these actions a relapse to Cold War patterns of behaviour. On the other hand, a significant majority of Czechs (80%, of which 47% "definitely yes" and 33% "somewhat yes") want NATO to be a guarantor of international security. However, the manner in which NATO should fulfil this role is a contested and still undecided issue among the Czech public. Those who agree that NATO should play the role of an institution guaranteeing international security also support NATO's out-of-area operations and agree with further enlargement of NATO. They believe that the United States is carrying out successfully its role, assumed after the Cold War, as the only superpower and the primary linchpin of international security.

Focusing on the question of narrow or broad scope of NATO's role in international security leads to discrepant answers. The majority of Czechs think that NATO should focus on European security, including areas outside NATO member states (53%, of which 18% "definitely yes" and 35% "somewhat yes"). But an even larger majority think that NATO should focus primarily on defence of member countries (62%, of which 28% "definitely yes" and 34% "somewhat yes"). The results show that the Czech public is aware of NATO's assumption of greater responsibility for European security and, in that way, also of the Czech share in this responsibility. But the Czechs find it difficult to decide how to go about fulfilling this responsibility and how to define the "new NATO" mission in Europe. When it comes to the question of responsibilities and tasks that the Czechs may need to undertake, the Czechs do not understand NATO well. They interpret NATO's transformation from the reference point of Cold War politics and the military aggression they experienced under the guise of "fraternal assistance" by the Warsaw Pact.

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A large portion of the Czech public does not understand the meaning of involvement in operations outside NATO member states as well as the meaning of involvement “only” on the territory of NATO member-states. In this way, a portion of the public shows its lack of understanding of the contemporary international security situation. The reaction of the Czech public to Operation Allied Force was a consequence of such a lack of understanding concerning NATO’s use of its military muscle outside its territory and its action against another sovereign state with means not acceptable to the Czech public. Thinking of the consequences of NATO’s potential action or inaction is not a strong feature of the Czechs. A possible explanation is that the Czech Republic had been cut off for years from the possibility of actively participating in international security and a segment of the population feels lost in the current situation. Czech politicians also share some responsibility for the lack of understanding on the part of the Czech public. But it is probably also the case that many Czech politicians suffer from the same lack of understanding of NATO’s new missions.

The basic question that needs to be addressed is: did the Czech Republic join NATO to gain security by becoming a part of a strong alliance with a well developed defence system, or did the Czech Republic join a strong alliance of states that have a sense of shared responsibility for the security of the Euro-Atlantic space and are willing to take action to uphold this security? A portion of the Czech public sees the former choice as a more accurate description of the Czech motivation for joining NATO. Consequently, the Czechs have been described as “free riders” (contribute nothing) or at least “easy riders” (contribute little) in the alliance. Is that an accurate description of the Czech role in NATO?

Are the Czechs “Free Riders” in NATO?

A primary issue when talking about NATO security guarantees is the question of trust pertaining to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Ultimately, assistance from allies in case of aggression against a member-state is based on mutual trust that all member-states will meet their commitments. To what extent do the Czechs trust their NATO allies and can the other NATO allies trust the Czechs?

The Czech public has a strong overall level of trust toward the NATO allies, even though the extent of trust toward individual members varies. Fully 83% of the respondents (34% “definitely yes” and 49% “somewhat yes”) believe that the NATO allies would assist the Czech Republic if the country faced a military aggression. Trust in the allies is supported by the respondents’ positive attitude to Czech membership in NATO, favourable evaluation of the consequences of Czech membership, above average support for NATO’s out-of-area operations, and an opinion that NATO has adapted well to the new international security environment.

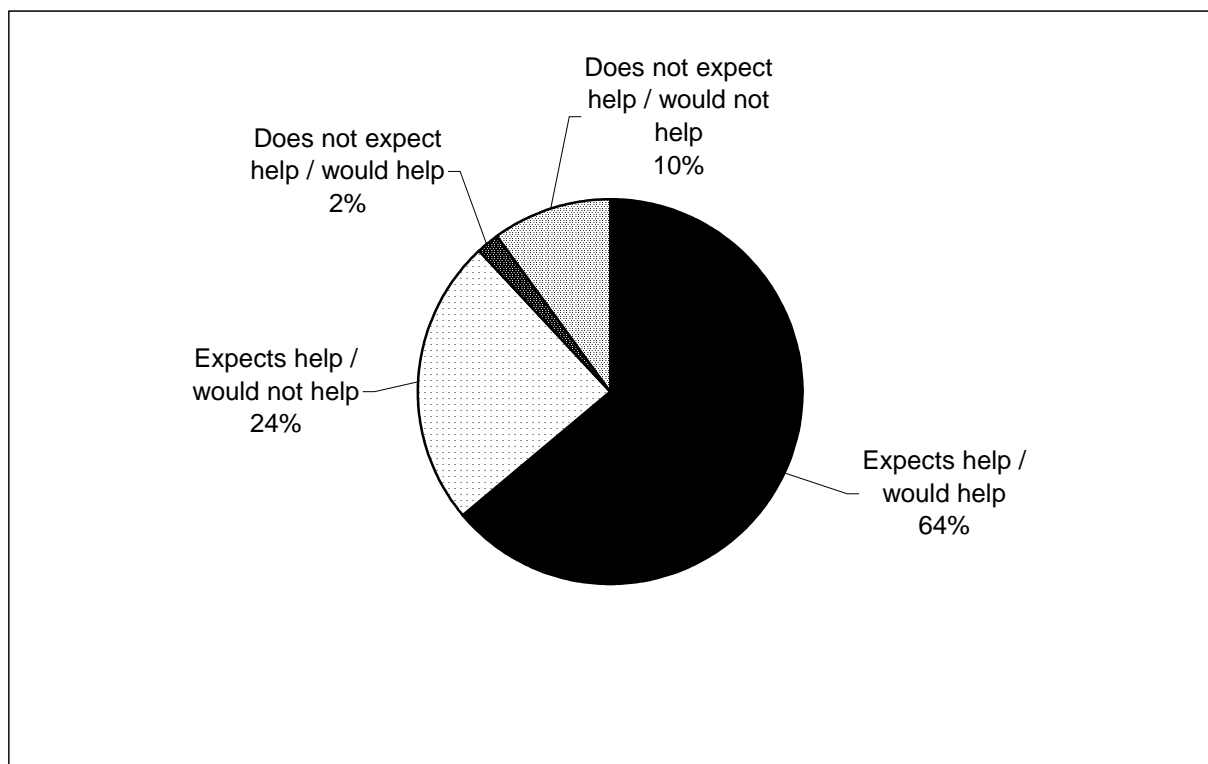
Historical experience plays an important role here, since it is perceived as a lesson learned rather than a discouragement for the future. The respondents who trust that the NATO allies would assist the Czech Republic in case of aggression tend to stress the need to remember the past experience with occupation. They do not distrust those allies with whom the Czechs have had a bad historical experience, such as the Germans. Those who trust the NATO allies also trust the Czech defence and security institutions. The synergy of defence and security capacity from Czech sources and from the NATO allies amounts to an important element of the public’s trust in the validity of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

Notably, the percentage of those who trust that the NATO allies would assist the Czech Republic in case of aggression is higher by 13% than the percentage of those who support Czech membership in NATO. Even those who do not support Czech membership in NATO still trust the NATO allies to some extent.

The percentage of those who state willingness to help another NATO member in case of an aggression against it is lower than the percentage of those who trust that the NATO allies would come to the assistance of the Czech Republic in such a contingency. A majority (60%, of which 18% “definitely yes” and 42% “somewhat yes”) of the respondents were willing to support the participation of Czech units in defence of another NATO ally (with “Hungary or Greece” identified in the question as the countries needing assistance). The difference of 23% in replies to the two questions is potentially troubling.

The respondents who declare their willingness to help other NATO allies think that the Czech Republic should do its maximum in NATO. They trust the NATO allies as well as the Czech defence and security institutions and they approve of further NATO enlargement. A higher percentage of the respondents also understood the negative and risky consequences that Czech membership entails.

Figure 22: Do you expect allies to help in case of a crisis? Are you willing to assist other allies in case of a crisis? (%)



Juxtaposing the replies to questions of trust in the allies and willingness to assist the allies shows that the majority of Czechs perceive Czech membership as a clear guarantee of security and as a two-way street (see Figure 22). Almost two-thirds (64%) of the respondents expect allies to assist and would assist the allies. One-tenth of the respondents (10%) have a strongly pessimistic and negative attitude toward the alliance; they would neither assist the allies nor do they expect assistance from them. A few of the respondents (2%) have an altruistic attitude, in that they do not expect the allies to assist the Czechs but still would assist the

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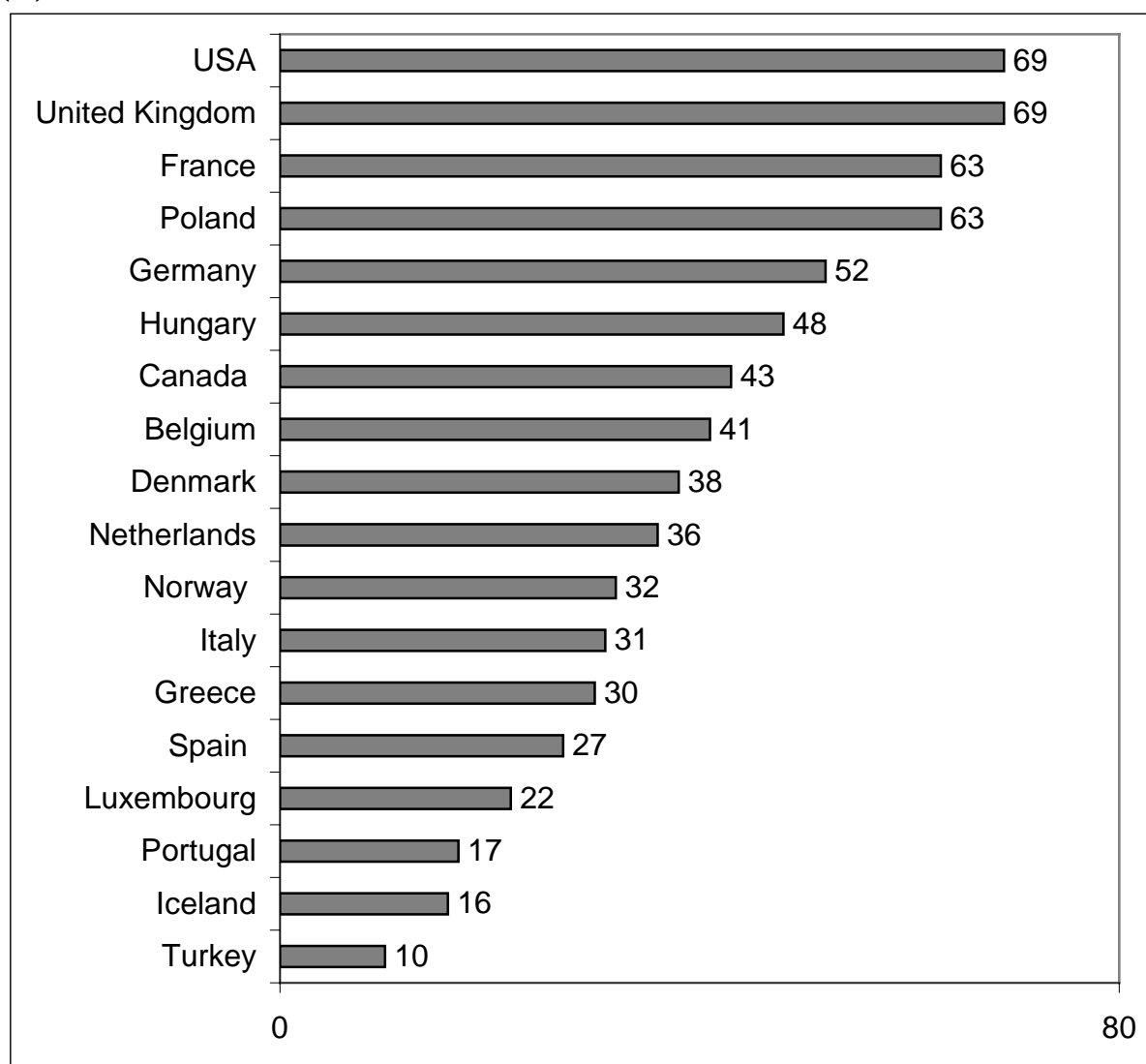
allies in case of need. One quarter (24%) of the respondents expressed a “free rider” attitude. They expect assistance from the allies but they do not wish to assist them.

Overall, the results do not support the assertion that the Czechs are “free riders”. Fully two-thirds of the respondents would assist allies in case of need, and almost all of them see Czech membership in NATO as a symmetrical relationship.

Which Countries do the Czechs Trust the Most?

In case of aggression against the Czech Republic, the Czechs show the greatest level of trust in the main NATO countries for assistance. A large majority of respondents feel that they can rely on assistance from the United States (69%) and the United Kingdom (69%), followed by France (63%) and Poland (63%) (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Czech reliance on assistance from specific allies in case of crisis (%)



The Poles have a high recognition among the Czechs for their traditionally positive attitude toward the military and defence issues and the fact that they resisted aggression during the 20th century even in seemingly hopeless situations. In addition, the enlargement of NATO has strengthened the interest and trust in

regional defence collaboration and Czech defence cooperation with Poland has grown. It is also important that the Czechs feel as high a degree of trust (or at least comparable) toward a new NATO member as they do toward the original major members of the alliance. The views of the Czechs toward Poles do not seem negatively influenced in any significant fashion by the historical memory of Czech-Polish tensions (1920, 1939) or Poland's participation in the Warsaw Pact aggression against Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Germany (52%) is the only other NATO member that the majority of Czechs trust will assist the Czechs in case of aggression. For the first time in recent history, the Czechs perceive Germany as an ally. This is an enormous change in Czech attitudes toward Germany. Czechs showed less trust in the likelihood of the other smaller allies coming to the aid of the Czech Republic.

In the logic of evaluations of trust toward the NATO allies in case of aggression, Czechs perceive the United States, the United Kingdom, and France as belonging to one group. The majority of respondents tend to perceive these countries in a similar fashion when it comes to the question of trustworthiness in case of aggression against the Czech Republic. The second group includes Poland and Hungary. Another group includes the countries that the Czechs see as being less likely to assist the Czech Republic.

In short, the Czechs show greatest trust in NATO's principal trans-Atlantic members. In fact, a close trans-Atlantic relationship is fundamental to the Czechs' understanding of national security and defence. Czechs perceive the United States as a principal guarantor of security and an overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the United States has performed well in its position as a sole superpower and a linchpin of international security (74%, of which 20% "definitely well" and 54% "somewhat well"). The Czechs perceive NATO as a unified organization and they do not show great awareness of the internal divisions within NATO between the North American and European members nor do they seem deeply aware of - or able to assume a clear position on - the issue of an EU defence identity divergent from that of NATO. Though a majority of Czechs believe that the European countries are capable of using their military power jointly and independently of the United States (56%, of which 17% "definitely agree" and 39% "somewhat agree"), they also do not believe that the Europeans are able yet to face major security pressures (including those from Russia) without relying on the United States (38% believe they can, 49% believe they cannot).

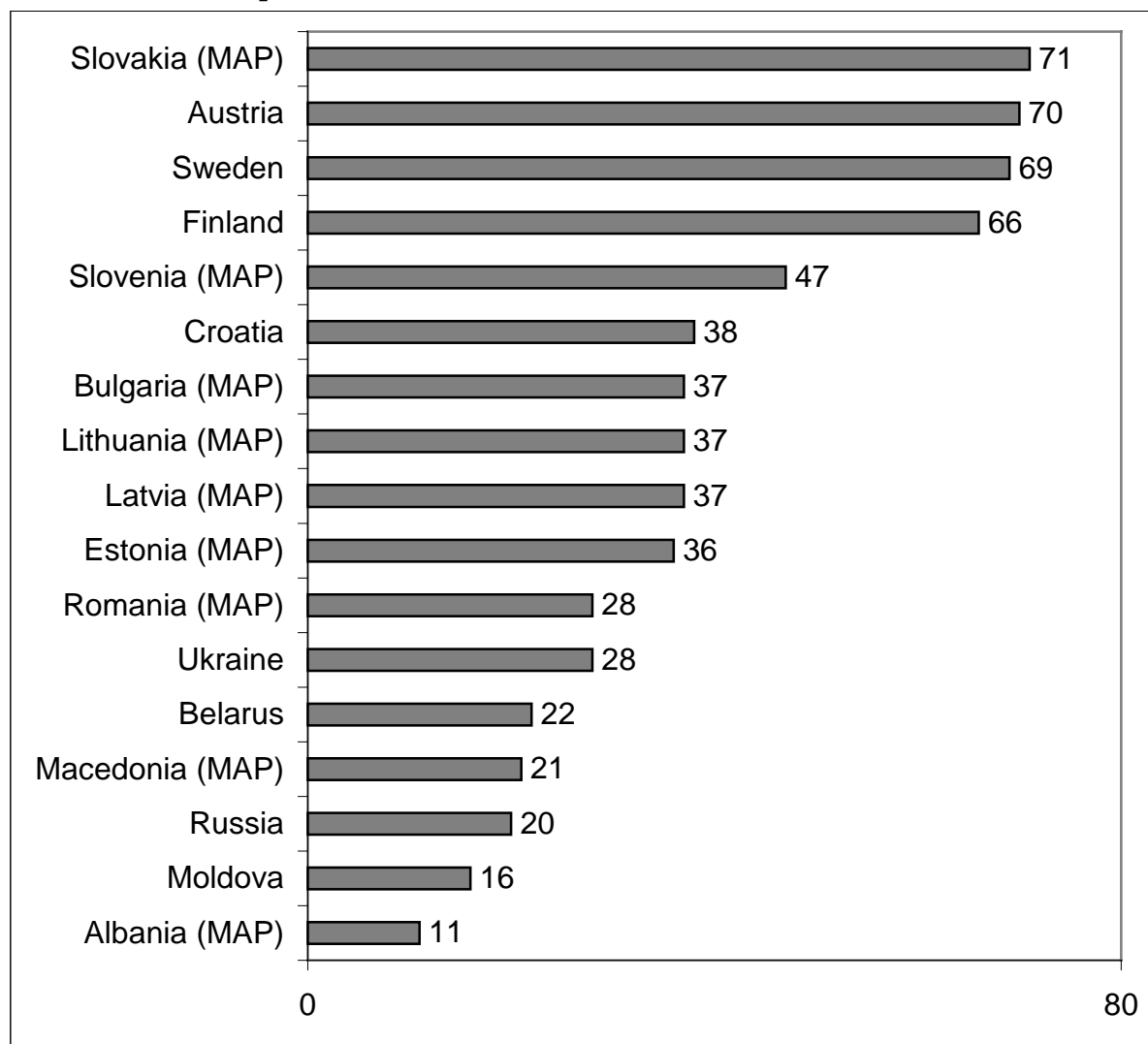
Czech Attitudes Toward the Further Enlargement of NATO

How do the new members evaluate the further enlargement of the Alliance? Is it true that, in the context of the national rivalries common in central Europe, once a country joins NATO and gains the specific security guarantees its willingness to proceed with further enlargement decreases? Is such a decrease in support especially likely among the states that joined NATO in 1999 because they themselves are struggling with meeting the requirements and responsibilities of membership? The questions are not theoretical. NATO's concern about the potential for new members to use their membership position to block further enlargement led to the insertion of a specific requirement into NATO's Study on Enlargement that new members would keep the door open to further enlargement.¹⁸ Survey results show that Czechs overwhelmingly support further NATO enlargement, with 64% of the respondents in favour of new members joining NATO in the "next 2 to 5 years" (of which 16% "definitely yes" and 48% "somewhat yes").

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Only one fifth of the respondents (21%, of which 6 “definitely no” and 15% “somewhat no”) opposed further enlargement. In general, the Czechs show a good deal of understanding for the security concerns of the countries either aspiring or in a position to join NATO, although the support varies greatly depending on the specific candidate country (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Which countries do you consider as eligible candidates for possible NATO membership in the next decade? (%)



The Czechs give the highest degree of support and approval to Slovakia (72%). The figure is far greater than any other Membership Action Programme (MAP) country (the long list of post-communist aspirants to NATO). The next highest MAP country, Slovenia, has the approval of 47% of the respondents, a huge difference of 25 per cent between the two states. The results indicate that the majority of Czechs still see Slovakia as a country close to the Czech Republic, whose stability and security are matters of deep Czech national interest. The high support does not stem from any explicit geopolitical calculations or an effort to secure the Czech Republic's eastern border, since the Czechs already feel a high degree of security even without Slovakia in NATO. The Czechs simply see the Slovaks as “relatives”, despite the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, for which the Czechs often blame the Slovaks. This perception, combined with extensive military cooperation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1998 (the ouster from power of the authoritarian-leaning Vladimir Meciar in Slovakia) is a phenomenon directly

opposite from the relations that have characterized the successor states to former Yugoslavia.

Czech support for the accession of Estonia (36%), Latvia (37%), and Lithuania (37%) to NATO is much lower. Lower familiarity with these countries is one probable factor. Another factor is Russian opposition, which the Czechs take seriously, to these countries (rather than Slovakia) joining NATO. The Czechs exhibit similarly sceptical views toward the accession of the Balkan aspirants to NATO, with Croatia (38%) and Bulgaria (37%) the top two countries from the region. Support for Croatia is notable, in that the country is not even in MAP. Czech support diminishes further for Romania (28%), Macedonia (21%) and Albania (11%). Czechs tend to perceive the political and economic situation in these countries as unstable, making these countries appear risky as NATO members.

Although they are not official candidates for NATO, the countries that are members of the EU but not in NATO: Austria (70%), Sweden (69%) and Finland (66%), received some of the highest support from the respondents. The high support stems from the Czechs' view of NATO as an integrated system of European security. They see EU states as part of this system of security, even those that, from a Czech perspective, may be problematic and sometimes outside the norms of contemporary European politics.

The respondents also had a low level of support for Russian membership in NATO (20%). Though the support is low, there are many other countries that the Czechs evaluated more negatively. Indeed, the fact that one-fifth of the respondents support Russian membership in NATO is remarkable and indicates that many Czechs are already able to view Russia with a certain degree of detachment from their historical experiences with the Russians. The detachment may stem from the security offered by the Czech membership in NATO.

The Causal Model

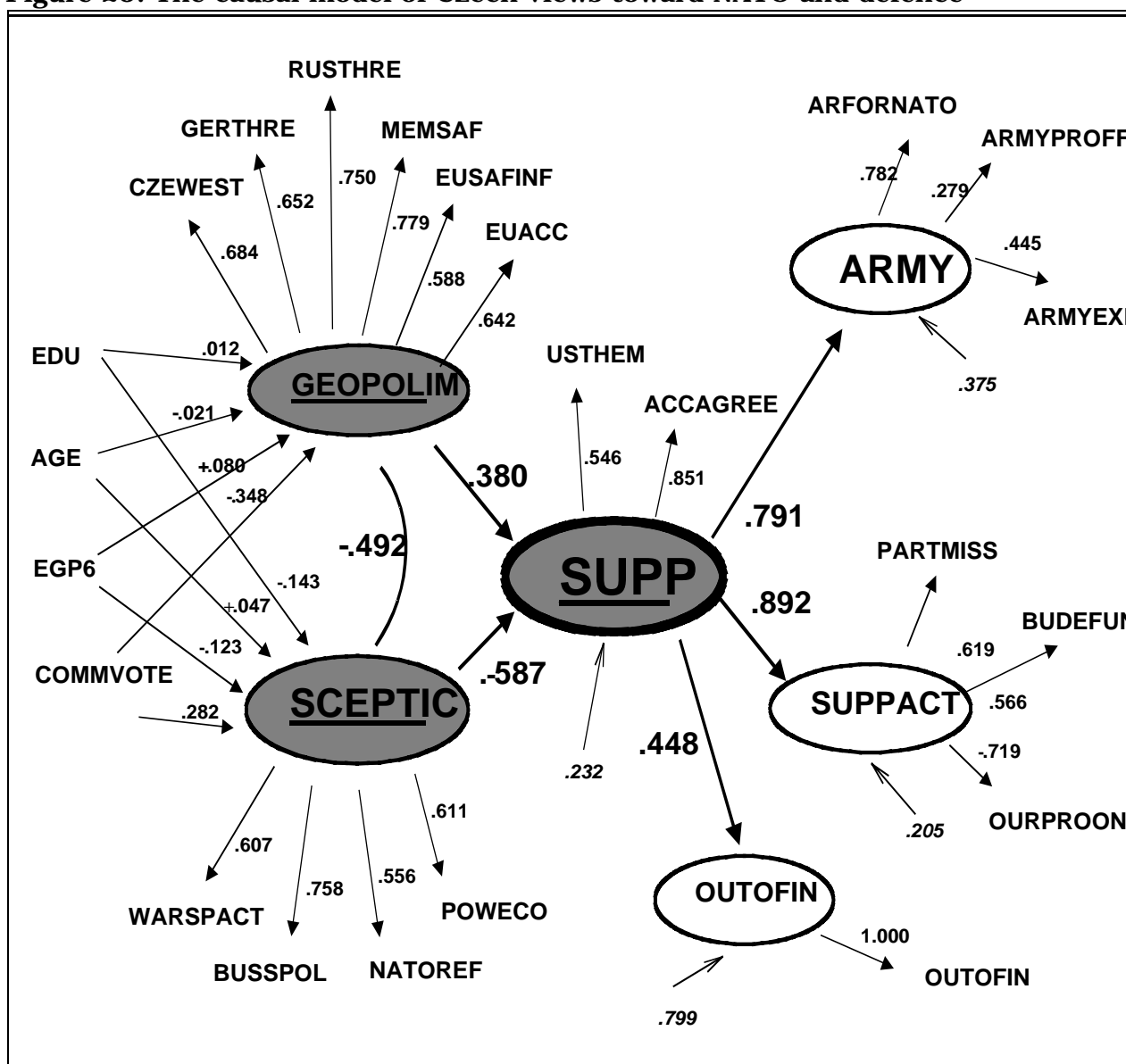
What is the deeper logic in the formation of attitudes in the Czech society toward NATO? We can distinguish consistent causal structure in the data that explains the conditions for the variation in Czech attitudes to NATO as well as the effect of these attitudes on other Czech views toward defence, the armed forces, and patterns of preferred behaviour in NATO. To do so, we constructed a causal model by analyzing the results of the survey research. The model shows complex roots behind the Czech attitude to NATO membership and equally complex effects of the attitude on the position of the Czech public on other issues.

This model was estimated by LISREL, a structural equation modelling programme that computes parameters that may be considered regression coefficients. The programme enables the user to estimate latent variables (a process similar to factor analysis), which are run simultaneously with all other estimations, minimizing the total sum of error in the model. The results of this model are the following: $X^2 = 589.6$ with 250 degrees of freedom, which corresponds to significance level $p = .000$. This means that the original correlation matrix and the matrix reproduced by this model did not differ significantly. The GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) was .917 (this should be greater than .900), the RMSR (Root Mean Square Residual) was .048 (this should be lower than .100), and the number of cases used to compute the input correlation matrix was 542. Figure 25 depicts the model.

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At the most fundamental level, support for Czech membership in NATO helps to form a sense of identification with NATO (“we”/“they” perception). This is also how the basic analyzed variable is constructed. The variance of support for NATO membership is dependent to a decisive extent on the mutual ratio between two opposite attitudes. The first attitude involves the appreciation of geopolitical and security benefits of Czech membership. The other attitude is characterized by a sceptical view of NATO as an insufficiently democratic, non-transparent institution, whose decisions cannot be influenced by the will of ordinary citizens. According to this second attitude, NATO is a relic of the Cold War and the Czech Republic is only a manipulated element of it. Sceptical arguments that are critical of NATO decrease support for Czech membership in the alliance. The awareness of positive geopolitical implications of accession to NATO (in terms of improvement in the Czech Republic’s international position and security) increases the support for membership.

Figure 25: The causal model of Czech views toward NATO and defence



Explanation of abbreviations: **SUPP** - support of membership in NATO, **USTHEM** - we or they, **ACCAGREE** - agree with membership, **GEOPOLIM** - geopolitical perception, **CZEWEST** - NATO - CR joint the West, **GERTHRE** - NATO - neutralization of German threat,

RUSTHRE - NATO - neutralization of Russian threat, **MEMSAF** - NATO - gaining security through membership, **EUSAINF** - membership in NATO makes it possible for the CR to influence European security, **EUACC** - membership in NATO increases the chances for EU membership, **SCEPTIC** - sceptical perception, **WARSPACT** - NATO is similar to the Warsaw Pact, **BUSSPOL** - NATO is only a big business and a political game, **NATOREF** - there should have been a referendum about joining NATO, **POWECO** - strong economy would be more beneficial for us than NATO membership, **EDU** - education of the respondent, **AGE** - age, **EGP6** - professional position, **COMMVOTE** - communist voters, **ARFONATO** - military - only defence of the CR vs collective in NATO, **ARMYPROFF** - military - more costly professionalization vs mandatory conscription, **ARMYEXP** - military - better more costly vs less, **SUPPACT** - support of activities, **PARTMISS** - participation in peacekeeping missions, **BUDEFUN** - building defence unites, **OURPROON** - we should only care about our own defence needs, **OUTOFINT** - out-of-area operations.

The range of positive geopolitical implications of Czech membership in NATO covers both the elimination of traumatic historical threats (Germany, Russia), as well as a safe anchoring of the country in the West and the West European community. The geopolitical shift and the anchoring of the Czech Republic represent a solid base for the support of Czech membership in NATO. Doubts about behaviour, transparency and internal democracy of NATO or, in other words, doubts about the actual meaning of the security guarantee, are a potential basis for scepticism in the evaluation of NATO actions. Not surprisingly, the sceptical and untrusting attitude is held by the less educated members of the population, having a lower professional standing and less ability to identify the geopolitical implications of the country's security. This attitude is also strongly supported by the communist political orientation of the respondents, which is the strongest source of reservations toward otherwise widely accepted geopolitical and security contributions of Czech accession to NATO. It is important here to stress the importance of higher education and a higher level of professional standing for the ability to identify the positive consequences of NATO membership and to resist communist ideology. Acceptance of communist ideology leads to an outlook that sees an identical foundation of the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Higher education and professional standing also has the effect of resisting a more cynical approach toward security as something being founded on economic strength and financial power. A potential lesson for other new member and aspirant countries is that support for NATO membership and the fulfilment of national responsibilities in NATO rely on the educational capital and the higher socio-professional elite in the population. The support is sensitive to the character and strength of the communist party.

Support for Czech membership in NATO is a causal basis for a whole set of attitudes toward defence, the military and participation in NATO's peace operations. Trust in and support for the alliance are decisive for positive attitudes toward the reform of the military and increased defence spending. Support for both decreases without support for Czech membership in NATO. The level of acceptance of NATO also determines people's attitudes to the setting up of military forces for the purposes of collective defence, NATO peace operations and NATO's out-of-area operations.

Our model indicates the central role that NATO plays in determining the attitudes of the Czechs toward security, defence, security and the military. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the fact that attitudes toward NATO are derived from a much more complex system of historical, security and international connections and the experiences of Czech society.

Czech society has not remained outside of NATO. On the contrary, it has integrated NATO into its own historical experiences in the area of security, defence and the

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military. NATO has become a central challenge for the Czechs to define anew their national security and their share of responsibility for European security. This is also the main challenge of NATO membership for Czech society, Czech politics and even for the Czech military. Only once that is done can the Czechs be considered valid actors in the system of collective defence. Czech society has begun to move in that direction. Czech politics and the Czech military may not even have moved that far.

Conclusions

Czechs value and support the security that NATO membership offers. A major portion of the Czech public gained a feeling of full security with the country's accession to NATO. The feeling of full security forms the basis for overcoming the Czech historical traumas related to the major international actors that had exerted control over central Europe during the past two centuries (Germany and Russia), for the creation of national capabilities that contribute to the provision (rather than just consumption) of security, and for improving the country's prospects for successful integration into the EU. Regarding the last point, Czech membership in NATO improves its uneasy and asymmetrical position during the accession negotiations with the European Union.

Taking at face value NATO's justification of enlargement as a move aimed to establish a feeling of full security in the post-communist countries of central Europe so as to allow them to deal with completing successfully the post-communist transformation and putting in place the conditions for successful long-term development, we can say that survey research shows that enlargement has been a success in the Czech Republic. As far as we know, this is the first comprehensive effort that has aimed to address this question. Similar efforts are in order in Poland and Hungary, though we suspect that such efforts will show similar results. In fact, the Czech Republic is the "difficult case" of the three new members because security concerns were lower in the Czech Republic than in Poland and Hungary prior to accession to NATO.

Interestingly enough, some of the fears expressed in NATO prior to the 1997-99 round of enlargement have not come true. For example, the Czech perception of Russia has moved from one of a predatory adversary to one of potential partner. Similarly, Czechs support further enlargement of NATO. Although they are selective as to the countries that they wish to accede to NATO in the near-term, their views of the readiness of specific countries do not diverge greatly from mainstream opinions in NATO.

The perception of full security and support for NATO membership has not weakened the willingness of the Czechs to invest in national defence and to modernize their military or their willingness to participate personally in the country's defence in case of aggression. In fact, the results are just the opposite. With the country's membership in NATO, Czech society gained incentives for improving their own defence capabilities. Two thirds of the people recognize that effective membership in NATO entails a well-performing Czech military that is integrated fully in NATO's system of collective defence. The public has a good understanding of the military's limitations and is ready to support fundamental military reform, including increases in the defence budget. If anything, Czech taxpayers give their military carte blanche to pursue comprehensive reform in order

to achieve the standards of the militaries of NATO allies. The only concern they have is that the money be spent wisely and not wasted in corrupt schemes.

Even though the Czechs are highly critical of the current state of the Czech military, they retain a high level of trust in the specific military institutions in charge of defence (General Staff, Ministry of Defence, the officer corps) in case of an emergency or a crisis. Instead, most Czechs see the main source of problems in the national security apparatus in the unsatisfactory crisis-management abilities and performance of political and constitutional bodies (government, parliament, president). This is a problem because trust toward the institutions in charge of the country's defence is an important condition for the willingness of the citizens to participate personally in that defence.

Strong support for NATO is linked to the awareness of a shared responsibility under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty concerning the promise to assist allies in case of need. However, the full meaning of alliance operations has not been internalized, especially when it comes to non-Article 5 military operations. The willingness to support the participation of Czech combat units in such missions is considerably lower than the willingness to support allies in an Article 5 contingency. Without a clear knowledge of the connection between NATO's peace operations and European security and lacking a public debate on such issues, most Czechs perceive operations such as Allied Force as a relapse into Cold War-era patterns of behaviour and an aggression of a military alliance against a sovereign country. Such perceptions stem from the passivity of Czech politicians and, to some extent, from the manner in which NATO's leadership has treated the new member countries.

The main source of hesitations the Czechs have toward NATO, shared by an overwhelming majority of the Czechs (80%) and even by those who fully support Czech membership, is a perception of a low level of influence that the public has on decision-making about security issues. Examples include primarily the perception of a lack of transparency and of low democratic standards of behaviour in the process of reaching the decision about the Czech Republic's accession to NATO (most people would have preferred a referendum), as well as concerns that Czech membership in NATO can draw the country into military conflicts without a possibility to influence the decision-making process.

The Czech experience shows that accession to NATO is a strong test of maturity not only for politicians and soldiers, but also, and perhaps primarily, for society and citizens.

During the 1997-99 round of NATO enlargement, the stress in the Czech Republic in the public domain was that the possibility of joining NATO was a unique opportunity that the Czech Republic could not afford to miss. Consequently, the Czech citizen was left in a passive situation. A better approach is to see the entire accession process as a gradual process of democratic maturity in the country, rather than a momentary event.

Lessons from the Czech accession to NATO have relevance for the next round of enlargement, both for potential members as well as for NATO. The alliance is taking on as members countries that have historical experiences different from those of long-standing NATO members. NATO has an interest in obtaining quality information about the political environment in the candidate countries. Governments and politicians of the candidate countries are not necessarily a

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reliable source of information, since they have incentives to portray the situation in as good a light as possible in order to advance their goal of accession. But ultimately, the taxpayers in the candidate countries need to make good on the commitments that accession to NATO represents. When these taxpayers are neither consulted about their views on accession nor informed properly about the costs of accession, as happened in the Czech Republic, both the quality of the new member's membership is damaged and NATO has to deal with embarrassments that are potentially damaging to its operations. This is a lesson learned from the manner of Czech accession to NATO and one that should not need to be relearned elsewhere.

ENDNOTES

¹ Tatiana Kostandinova, "East European Public Support for NATO Membership: Fears and Aspirations", *Journal of Peace Research*, 37:2 (2000), pp235-249.

² This is also the view generally shared by analysts of the Czech political scene, see Matthew Rhodes, "Czech Malaise and Europe", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:2 (March/April 2000), pp57-66. In itself, this touches on an even deeper issue of the quality of the Czech democracy; see Magdalena Hadjisky, "The Failure of the Participatory Democracy in the Czech Republic", *West European Politics*, 24:3 (July 2001), pp43-64.

³ There is some validity to this view; Stefan Sarvas, "Attitudes of the Czech Public toward National Security, the Military, and NATO Membership", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11:3 (September 1998), pp56-88; Roman Blasek, "Perception of Security Risks by the Population of the Czech Republic", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11:3 (September 1998), pp89-96; Jiri Hodny, "The Prestige of Professional Czech Soldiers in the Eyes of the General Public", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11:3 (September 1998), pp97-104.

⁴ Ryan C Hendrickson, "NATO's Visegrad Allies: The First Test in Kosovo", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 13:2 (June 2000), pp25-38.

⁵ Andrew A Michta, "Conclusion: Making the Pieces Fit", in Andrew A Michta, ed, *America's New Allies: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in NATO*, Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1999, p196.

⁶ Public opinion surveys conducted by various polling agencies show a gradual decrease in the number of those who supported the NATO air campaign to 31%, with 62% against it. IVVM, 1999.

⁷ The project was sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and it was carried out by Gabal Analysis & Consulting (Gabal A&C), a Czech analytical firm.

⁸ According to the Centre for Empirical Research (STEM), opinion that Russia is the biggest threat to the Czech Republic decreased between 1994-1997 from 57% to 49%. The number is high because of the formulation of the question, whereby the respondent is asked: "Which country represents the biggest military threat to our republic?" and he/she has to choose from the following responses: Russia, Germany, the Balkans, or other country.

⁹ See Ivan Gabal, "The Atlantic Community after Communism: Czechoslovak Public Opinion Perspectives", paper presented at the conference "The Atlantic Community After Communism", Knoke Heist, Belgium, September 23-25, 1992.

¹⁰ We treat the statement "our security was only partial and fragile" as a feeling of "partial security", while the statement "we were safe" represents "full security".

¹¹ Correlated with NATO accession, there was an acceleration of foreign direct investment in the Czech Republic. The acceleration may be related to the increased "hard" security.

¹² In answer to the question "Do you think there is a threat of a terrorist attack against our country?" the responses were: 5% definitely yes, 24% rather yes, 48% rather no, 23% definitely no. In answer to the question "Do you feel fear and insecurity about what may happen in the future?" the responses were: 23% definitely yes, 40% rather yes, 23% rather no, 14% definitely no. Surveys by Gabal Analysis & Consulting.

¹³ Ivan Gabal, ed, *Etnicke mensiny ve stredni Evropu: Konflikt nebo integrace?* (Ethnic Minorities in Central Europe: Conflict or Integration?) Praha: G + G, 1999.

¹⁴ The surveys were conducted by IVVM (Institute for Research of Public Opinion). Currently, the institute is named CVVM (Centre for Research of Public Opinion).

¹⁵ The surveys were conducted by STEM, a public opinion research organization.

¹⁶ This was a multiple-choice question, asking the respondents to choose only one option.

¹⁷ According to polls, 56% of Czechs opposed the attack in April 1999, 59% in May and 62% in June. There was also an increasing number of those who did not know how to address the problem. IVVM (similar results by STEM.)

¹⁸ Study on NATO Enlargement, September 1995, paragraph 30, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9501.htm>.

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