

Zdeněk Rod:¹ The Czech Defence outlook after the Russian invasion to Ukraine²

Executive Summary

- The Russian invasion of Ukraine has significantly transformed Czechia's defence and security posture through threat perceptions focusing more on Russia and a greater emphasis on societal involvement in national defence. Before the invasion, the Czech Armed Forces faced substantial underfunding, with defence spending at 1.39% of GDP in 2021, personnel shortages, outdated equipment, and a lack of strategic foresight. Since then, the Fiala government has turned national defence into a priority.
- Since 2022 Czechia has developed a new security and defence strategy to tackle 21st century challenges. The country is procuring modern military assets, such as 5th generation fighter jets, and has actively supported Ukraine's defence, including through a special ammunition initiative. Recruitment has also intensified.
- A primary concern is defence spending of at least 2% of GDP can be sustained. According to many, Czechia should eventually surpass the 2% benchmark to address complex threats effectively. Despite government pledges to meet this target, recent allocations raise doubts about NATO's recognition of the spending as sufficient.
- Manpower is another critical issue. The Czech Army aims to expand to 30,000 professional soldiers and 10,000 reservists by 2030, but recruitment remains challenging. The decline in public connection to the military since the end of compulsory service in 2004 and perceptions of low salaries for lower-ranking soldiers hinder recruitment. To overcome these obstacles, the Czech Army needs to improve strategic communication aimed at younger generations, highlighting the benefits of military service.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has profoundly reshaped the Czech defence and security posture through altering threat perceptions and elevating the role of society in national defence. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Petr Fiala, the current government recognised that defence must take utmost priority, a shift from previous approaches. Prior to the 2022 invasion, the Czech Armed Forces suffered from significant underfunding, with defence spending in 2021 at only 1.39% of GDP.³ The military also faced shortages in personnel – especially conscripts – along with outdated equipment and a lack of strategic foresight necessary for addressing the complexities of 21st century warfare.

However, in nearly two years much has changed. Czechia adopted a new security and defence strategy, charting a course to address the challenges of the 21st century security landscape. The country has commenced the procurement of modern military equipment, including 5th generation fighter jets, and has played a significant role in supporting Ukraine's defence, notably through a special ammunition initiative. Additionally, recruitment efforts for new soldiers have been stepped up, among other reforms. While the overall process of modernisation is not without its challenges, the Czech experience provides valuable insights for mid-sized nations seeking to modernise their defence capabilities and adapt to shifting security paradigms.

This paper aims at providing the international policy and decision-

¹ Zdeněk Rod (zdenekr@ff.zcu.cz) is a research and teaching fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

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³ [Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries \(2014–2023\)](#). [online], NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2023. Source: nato.int [23 09 2024].



making community with a comprehensive understanding of Czech defence strategies and the challenges that lie ahead. The following sections will delve into specific initiatives that have been shaping Czech defence policy since 2022, offering insights into the country's evolving military priorities, structural reforms, and geopolitical responses to emerging threats. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to inform international partners and stakeholders about the direction and ambitions of Czech defence efforts in the face of an increasingly complex security landscape.

Redefining defence: Czechia's 2023 Strategy for Modern Security Challenges

The new Czech Defence Strategy⁴, published in October 2023, marks a significant shift in its security policy, driven by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For the first time, the strategy explicitly names Russia as the principal security threat, reflecting a much more direct approach compared to previous strategies. In response to this threat, the Czech government committed to increasing defence spending to 2% of GDP – for the first time since joining NATO – and is modernising its armed forces by purchasing advanced military equipment, including F-35 stealth fighters from the United States. The strategy also emphasises deepening bilateral defence cooperation with key allies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, and Slovakia.

In contrast to the 2017 Defence Strategy⁵, which merely hinted at Russia's ambitions and made no mention of China, the new strategy explicitly identifies both Russia and China as security challenges. This aligns the Czech position more closely with NATO's stance, underscoring Russia as 'the most serious threat' while acknowledging China's role in presenting hybrid threats to European security.⁶

The strategy also signals a paradigm shift in military preparedness, preparing the country for the possibility of a protracted, high-intensity conflict with Russia. This involves not only building combat-ready forces but also enhancing the country's capacity to support allied forces, a notable departure from the post-Cold War focus on counterinsurgency and stabilisation missions. Czech efforts will contribute to NATO's broader collective defence and deterrence strategy, as agreed in recent NATO summits.⁷

Additionally, the strategy adopted a whole-of-government and 'whole-of-society' approach to national defence, drawing inspiration from models used by frontline NATO states such as Finland and the Baltic nations. This approach seeks to enhance societal resilience by engaging public authorities, private and non-profit sectors, and educational institutions in building the nation's defensive capabilities. It aims to instil a greater recognition of defence as a fundamental state responsibility, enhancing civilian preparedness in line with NATO's Article 3.⁸

In terms of defence expenditure, Czechia has committed to maintaining at least 2% of GDP for defence spending, with plans outlined in the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept 2035. This includes strengthening international cooperation, adopting emerging technologies, and investing in personnel and skills development. The purchase of 24 F-35 fighter jets is a key element of this modernisation, enhancing the country's ability to contribute to NATO operations and defend its airspace.⁹

Finally, the strategy reaffirms Czech commitment to NATO and Ukraine amidst rising populism and anti-NATO sentiment in parts of Central Europe. With neighbouring Slovakia's new government reducing support for Ukraine and Hungary obstructing EU aid, Czech continued leadership on defence issues, including munitions support for Ukraine, provides crucial reassurance to its Western allies.¹⁰

⁴ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#). [online], Czech Ministry of Defence, 2023. Source: acr.army.cz [23 09 2024]; Rod, Z. – Black, J. – Palicka, O.: [As Europe's Peace Unravels, Czech Republic Ties Its Defence More Tightly to NATO](#). [online], 2024. Source: rand.org [23 09 2024]

⁵ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#). [online], Czech Ministry of Defence, 2017. Source: acr.army.cz [23 09 2024]

⁶ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), *ibid.*

⁷ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), *ibid.*

⁸ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), *ibid.*

⁹ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), *ibid.*

¹⁰ [Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), *ibid.*



The 2035 Development Concept of the Czech Armed Forces (KVAČR 2035)

The 2035 Development Concept of the Czech Armed Forces (KVAČR 2035)¹¹, approved by the Czech government on 20 December 2023, raises significant questions regarding its strategic coherence and feasibility. This document is a key part of the Czech Ministry of Defence's hierarchy of long-term planning. It follows the Long-Term Defence Outlook, which provided a broader framework for developing Czech armed forces. However, initially scheduled for revision, the long-term outlook review had been postponed, leading to concerns about the conceptual basis of KVAČR 2035.

KVAČR 2035 sets an ambitious goal for the Czech Army: to prepare for a high-intensity, long-term defensive war against a technologically advanced nuclear-armed adversary. This objective aligns with NATO's New Force Model. Yet, questions persist about whether the concept is underpinned by comprehensive analysis, especially concerning lessons learned from the Ukraine war and NATO's operational plans.¹²

The strategy outlines six key goals: developing human capital, enhancing readiness, digitalisation, effective operations in all domains, improving international cooperation, and agile innovation. However, while the goals are set from 2024 to 2035, the absence of precise, measurable benchmarks leaves many of them vague, complicating the assessment of progress.

Furthermore, KVAČR 2035 prioritises critical military investments, including completing a mechanised brigade, acquiring F-35 fighter jets, and strengthening air defences. Yet, delays in procuring armoured vehicles and tanks, as well as insufficient detail on air defence capabilities leave critical aspects of the plan open to doubt. The absence of immediate plans to acquire rocket launchers is particularly concerning, as they have proven highly effective in modern conflicts.

Personnel challenges are another area of concern. Despite plans to expand the army to 30,000 professional soldiers and 10,000 reservists by 2030, recruitment and retention issues – compounded by an ageing force and reductions in pay – are likely to impede these targets. Moreover, the current reliance on outdated equipment and the slow progress in modernisation could leave the Czech military vulnerable in the near term.¹³

The mobilisation framework, essential for a long-term, high-intensity conflict, needs to be addressed in detail. The current system may require up to a year to fully mobilise, which could prove problematic given the immediacy of modern threats. Reforms to the conscription process and legal adjustments to the mobilisation framework are necessary but still need to be addressed.¹⁴

Overall, KVAČR 2035 presents a forward-thinking vision for the Czech military, yet it also highlights significant strategic coherence, feasibility, and resource allocation gaps. If not addressed, these issues may undermine the very goals the concept seeks to achieve.

However, not all political figures are aligned with the vision presented in the KVAČR 2035. Examining the parliamentary defence committee, Lubomír Metnar, the committee's chairman, articulated significant reservations. Metnar contended that the document fails to sufficiently analyse global security conflicts, most notably the war in Ukraine, and criticises its approval in the absence of a long-term defence outlook, which should have underpinned its formulation. In his view, apart from the procurement of F-35 fighter jets, the KVAČR 2035 offers scant clarity regarding crucial modernisation initiatives, such as missile systems and the expansion of air defence capabilities. Despite a marked increase in the defence budget, Metnar found the postponement of key projects like tanks and air defence systems unjustified. He also highlighted inefficiencies in acquisition management, expressing particular concern about the allocation of nearly CZK 16 billion to the F-35 programme in 2024. Furthermore, Metnar criticised the strategy for neglecting the issue of insufficient ground-based air defence coverage across the Czech Republic and failing to address the potential of the nation joining Germany's European Sky Shield Initiative. His concerns

¹¹ [Koncepte výstavby Armády České republiky 2035 \(KVAČR 2035\) \[Concept for the Construction of the Army of the Czech Republic 2035\]](#). [online], Czech Ministry of Defence, 2023. Source: acr.army.cz [24 09 2024]

¹² [Koncepte výstavby Armády České republiky 2035 \(KVAČR 2035\) \[Concept for the Construction of the Army of the Czech Republic 2035\]](#), *ibid.*

¹³ [Koncepte výstavby Armády České republiky 2035 \(KVAČR 2035\) \[Concept for the Construction of the Army of the Czech Republic 2035\]](#), *ibid.*

¹⁴ [Koncepte výstavby Armády České republiky 2035 \(KVAČR 2035\) \[Concept for the Construction of the Army of the Czech Republic 2035\]](#), *ibid.*



extended to the persistent challenges in military recruitment. With only 219 professional soldiers added to the force in 2022, Metnar saw this as a worrying shortfall given the ambition to reach a total of 30,000 by 2030. He also pointed to high attrition rates and an ageing military personnel base as further hurdles. Additionally, the decision to freeze soldiers' pay, even in the context of an expanded budget, appeared to him as a contradictory and problematic move.¹⁵

In contrast, Josef Flek, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, expressed support for KVAČR 2035's increased emphasis on NATO cooperation and its focus on rapid deployment and full combat readiness. He believed that the strategy incorporates valuable lessons from the war in Ukraine, where the weaknesses and strengths of the Czech military were evaluated. For Flek, the strategy is a step forward in ensuring preparedness to confront technologically advanced adversaries. Jan Hofmann, another Vice-Chairman, acknowledged that KVAČR 2035 builds on insights from the war in Ukraine and addresses the need for all-weather army operations, expanded intelligence capabilities, and updated equipment acquisitions, all while ensuring the strategy is financially sustainable under the 2% of GDP defence expenditure.¹⁶

However, Pavel Růžička, Vice-Chairman, took a more critical stance, questioning the military's preparedness for a potential war with Russia. He argued that many crucial projects, such as the infantry fighting vehicle, battle tanks, and air defence systems, have been delayed for years, leaving Czechia vulnerable. He found the prioritization of the F-35 problematic, believing that the military should first focus on developing a heavy brigade and air defence, before investing in supersonic aircraft. Moreover, Růžička lamented on the lack of concrete lessons drawn from the Ukraine conflict in the KVAČR, especially in terms of military hardware like salvo rocket launchers, which he believed should be reintroduced.¹⁷

Further members of the committee also expressed their opinion on KVAČR 2035. Stanislav Blaha, member of the committee, viewed KVAČR 2035 as a significant improvement over earlier strategies, particularly in its clarity and focus on modernizing the Czech Armed Forces in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, aligning with the country's financial and operational capabilities. Jiří Horák shared a similar view, stressing the importance of the 2% GDP defence budget allocation for long-term planning and the need for investments in both equipment and human resources. Michaela Opltová highlighted the strategy's responsiveness to current threats, particularly from Russia, and its realistic assessment of the army's strengths and weaknesses. However, Radovan Vích criticized the heavy financial burden imposed by the F-35 acquisition and argued that KVAČR 2035 lacks practical measures to build a wartime-capable, all-weather military, calling it 'more declarative than actionable'.¹⁸

In sum, KVAČR 2035 has sparked a debate among defence committee members about its effectiveness in addressing the immediate and long-term defence needs of Czechia. While some applaud the increased focus on NATO cooperation, rapid deployment, and financial realism, others raise concerns about delayed projects, recruitment challenges, and the prioritization of expensive acquisitions like the F-35 over more pressing defence needs. The lessons from the war in Ukraine, and how well they are reflected in the KVAČR, remain a key point of contention.¹⁹

A Vision of Future Warfare beyond 2040

Following the events of February 2024, the command of the Czech Armed Forces revealed a new document titled 'A Vision of Future Warfare of the Czech Armed Forces beyond 2040'. The document outlines the strategic vision for the Czech Armed Forces' future operations beyond 2040, emphasizing the need for thorough preparation and technological advancements to succeed in future conflicts. It underscores the importance of NATO membership and the EU's defence policies, but also stresses the necessity for the

¹⁵ [Koncept výstavby AČR 2035 vyvolává řadu otázek \[The construction concept of the ACR 2035 raises a number of questions\]](#), CZ Defence, 2013. Source: czdefence.cz [24 09 2024]

¹⁶ [Koncept výstavby AČR 2035 vyvolává řadu otázek \[The construction concept of the ACR 2035 raises a number of questions\]](#), *ibid.*

¹⁷ [Koncept výstavby AČR 2035 vyvolává řadu otázek \[The construction concept of the ACR 2035 raises a number of questions\]](#), *ibid.*

¹⁸ [Koncept výstavby AČR 2035 vyvolává řadu otázek \[The construction concept of the ACR 2035 raises a number of questions\]](#), *ibid.*

¹⁹ [Koncept výstavby AČR 2035 vyvolává řadu otázek \[The construction concept of the ACR 2035 raises a number of questions\]](#), *ibid.*



Czech Army to develop independent military capabilities. The document also forecasts that the Czech Armed Forces must operate in complex, multidimensional environments, leveraging technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous systems, and multi-domain (land, sea, air, space, and cyber) integration. It highlights the increasing threats of hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, and weapons of mass destruction.²⁰

The document also offers details concerning critical combat functions, including manoeuvring, kinetic and non-kinetic operations, command and control, intelligence, information operations, force protection, and sustainability. These functions will rely heavily on AI and autonomous systems for rapid decision-making, coordination, and precision in operations. The Czech Armed Forces must maintain cognitive superiority and be capable of operating against sophisticated enemy strategies.²¹

The document also addresses the future challenges of recruiting and maintaining military personnel in the face of demographic changes, rising weapon system costs, and evolving threats. It underscores the Czech Armed Forces' reliance on advanced technologies like AI, smart logistics, and quantum technologies to enhance essential capabilities such as preparedness, deployment, engagement, sustainability, and force protection. These technologies are key to provide preparedness for future challenges.²²

Lastly, according to the document, the Czech Armed Forces' evolution is crucial to ensure operational superiority in future conflicts. Technological innovation, interoperability with allies, and cognitive superiority will be tested in the face of high-intensity warfare. Success will depend on the ability to quickly adapt personnel, technology, and doctrine to evolving threats.²³

The modernization of the Czech Armed Forces

When discussing the transformation of Czech defence policy since 2022, it is also vital to outline the modernization of the Czech Armed Forces as it is undergoing a significant modernization, replacing aging Soviet-era legacy equipment that is often over 40 years old. Some of this equipment has already been donated to Ukraine, and the Czech Republic will receive compensation for military supplies sent to the country. The modernization is expected to cost hundreds of billions of Czech korunas, with the most expensive item being the purchase of 24 U.S. F-35 fighter jets. These modernization efforts are critical for enhancing the Czech Armed Forces' operational capabilities and ensuring readiness to address future security challenges. The following modernization items had been announced publicly²⁴:

1. **F-35 Lightning II fighter jets:** The Czech Republic will spend approximately 150 billion CZK on these fifth-generation aircrafts, with deliveries starting in 2031 and concluding by 2035. Total costs, including related infrastructure and training, are estimated at 322 billion CZK, making this the most expensive military procurement in Czech history.
2. **CV90 infantry fighting vehicles:** Sweden's CV90 vehicles will be acquired for 59.7 billion CZK, with the first ten pieces expected in 2026 and full delivery by 2030. The Czech industry will participate in repair and production, with 40% of the project benefiting local companies.
3. **Leopard 2A8 tanks:** The most advanced German tanks will be purchased for over 52 billion CZK. The Army aims to acquire 77 tanks, bringing the total to 122 by 2030. Czechia will also receive Leopard 2A4 tanks as a donation from Germany as compensation for support to Ukraine.
4. **Helicopters:** Eight UH-1Y Venom and four AH-1Z Viper helicopters had recently been acquired with deliveries completed in June 2024. Additional older helicopters will also be received as military aid from the U.S.

²⁰ [Vize budoucího válčení AČR po roce 2040 \[A Vision of Future Warfare of the Czech Army after 2040\]](#). [online] Velení Armády České republiky, 2024. Source: mocr.army.cz [25 09 2024]

²¹ [Vize budoucího válčení AČR po roce 2040 \[A Vision of Future Warfare of the Czech Army after 2040\]](#), ibid.

²² [Vize budoucího válčení AČR po roce 2040 \[A Vision of Future Warfare of the Czech Army after 2040\]](#), ibid

²³ [Vize budoucího válčení AČR po roce 2040 \[A Vision of Future Warfare of the Czech Army after 2040\]](#), ibid

²⁴ [Česká armáda modernizuje za stovky miliard \[The Czech army is modernizing for hundreds of billions\]](#). [online], ČT24, 2024. Source: ct24.ceskatelevize.cz [25 09 2024].



5. **SPYDER air defence systems:** Four batteries will be purchased from Israel for 13.7 billion CZK, with deliveries expected by 2026.
6. **Tatra T-815 trucks:** A contract for up to 872 off-road vehicles is planned, with the first deliveries expected next year.
7. **Caesar self-propelled howitzers:** 62 howitzers will be procured from France, with the first units arriving this year and the final ones by 2026.

Developing the Czech Air Forces beyond 2027

As highlighted above, the modernization of the tactical air force is a key priority. In a declassified document²⁵ the command of the Czech Armed Forces discusses which form the tactical air force should take after 2027. It discusses the need for a transition from the current JAS-39 C/D Gripen systems to F-35s, as the lease of the Gripen jets will end, and logistics support for this system is expected to cease by 2035. The document emphasizes the necessity of planning for the future structure of the Czech Air Force's tactical aviation, recommending an upgrade to 5th generation fighter jets and the integration of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to address existing gaps in operational capabilities. This recommendation is based on analysing national defence tasks, NATO commitments, and the impact of emerging technologies and warfare trends.

The document also evaluates the technological advancements and financial costs of potential aircraft systems, stressing the paramount importance of integrating a high-tech, data-driven combat aircraft that can maintain superiority on future battlefields. It highlights the increasing complexity of the operational environment, where rapid decision-making, cognitive superiority, and real-time data processing will be essential for success. Furthermore, the document underlines the necessity of aligning Czech tactical aviation capabilities with NATO's strategic concepts, particularly in air and missile defence, ensuring that the Czech Air Force remains a crucial player in both national defence and in NATO's collective defence.²⁶

Looking forward, the document outlines a long-term vision, where the Czech Air Force will primarily operate 5th generation fighter jets by 2040, gradually replacing the Gripen and subsonic L-159 aircraft. The integration of UAVs will further enhance strategic deterrence and ensure Czech Republic's sovereignty. In conclusion, the document serves as a strategic assessment and recommendation for upgrading the Czech Air Force's aviation capabilities, aiming to meet future defence requirements while keeping pace with modern warfare developments and fulfilling NATO obligations.²⁷

The military reserve force

Extending the number of military reservists has become another key priority. Currently, the Czech Armed Forces comprise of nearly 28,000 professional soldiers and only 4,300 reservists,²⁸ while by the end of 2030, the Czech Army aims to have 10,000 reservists at its disposal.²⁹

However, it turns out that Czech people are reluctant to join military reservists. That is why the armed forces have adjusted their strategic communication towards the public to broaden its understanding of what benefits being an army reservist brings into their lives. Miroslav Hlaváč, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, emphasised that homeland defence must be a collective endeavour, also involving the broader society alongside professional soldiers. Drawing on lessons from the conflict in Ukraine, he highlighted the indispensability of well-prepared reserves for any nation's armed forces. While service in the active

²⁵ Podoba taktického letectva po roce 2027 [The Form of the Tactical Air Force of the Czech Army After 2027], Velení AČR, 2024.

²⁶ Podoba taktického letectva po roce 2027 [The Form of the Tactical Air Force of the Czech Army After 2027], Velení AČR, 2024.

²⁷ Podoba taktického letectva po roce 2027 [The Form of the Tactical Air Force of the Czech Army After 2027], Velení AČR, 2024.

²⁸ Počet profesionálních vojáků i záloh Armády ČR roste [The number of professional soldiers and reservists of the Army of the Czech Republic is growing]. [online], Central European Digital Media Observatory, 2024. Source: cedmohub.eu [25 09 2024]

²⁹ Jak fungují aktivní zálohy? Armáda v nich chce do roku 2030 mít deset tisíc lidí [How do active backups work? The army wants to have ten thousand people in them by 2030]. [online], CT24, 2024. Source: CT24.ceskatelevize.cz [25 09 2024]



reserves is compensated, including annual bonuses based on performance, further incentives are being considered to entice recruits. Notably, the Czech Republic faces the gradual loss of citizens with military training due to abolishing conscription in 2004. In response, there are discussions about introducing mechanisms such as administrative conscription or voluntary temporary service to replenish the ranks. President Petr Pavel has expressed support for such measures, underscoring that homeland defence is not solely the responsibility of the professional military but a societal duty.³⁰

The Armed Forces decided to focus on high school and university students to attract young people. Regarding high school students, a new initiative³¹ had been launched to attract more young people, specifically targeting adult high school students through a unique voluntary military training programme. Previously, such training was restricted to those who had completed their secondary education. This shifting initiative serves the goal of engaging with younger generations in a manner more attuned to their needs and preferences. The training took place during summer break. Unlike the standard voluntary military training held at the Vyškov Military Academy, this programme catered specifically to those young recruits, who conducted the typical procedures: receiving call-up orders, taking the oath, and becoming reservists. Medical examinations, part of the recruitment process, are also mandatory. On top of that, after completing the training, the students received a remuneration of approximately 30.000 CZK (approximately 1200 euros).

The military is also in close contact with universities. For instance, The Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University has introduced an intriguing new initiative for its students: starting from the upcoming academic year, students will be able to earn academic credits for participating in the training exercises of the Czech Army's active reserves. The initiative introduces an optional course through which students can earn credits for completing at least seven days of active reserve training. Although launched by the Faculty of Social Sciences, this course is available to students from all faculties of Charles University.³²

Conclusions and remaining challenges

Since February 2022, the Czech Ministry of Defence and the Czech Armed Forces have undertaken a series of rapid transformations, driven by new geopolitical realities in Eastern Europe, particularly in response to Russian expansionism. Several key strategic documents and initiatives have been launched since, but significant challenges remain.

First, it is crucial that successive Czech governments prioritise national and homeland defence by committing to sustained defence spending of at least 2% of GDP over a long period – ideally 15 to 20 years. National security advisor Tomáš Pojar³³ underscored the necessity of maintaining this level of spending, calling it an 'absolute minimum'. He warned that failure to meet this threshold could result in far greater future expenditures, potentially rising to five or six percent of GDP. Pojar further emphasised that without the ability to defend the country, any discussion of sovereignty or autonomy is meaningless. This focus on security extends beyond military readiness to include internal safety and stability as well. General Karel Řehka³⁴, the Chief of the General Staff, shared a similar view on defence spending. According to Řehka, Czechia must eventually exceed the 2% GDP benchmark, as merely meeting this target will not suffice in the face of increasingly complex threats. He highlighted the importance of translating strategic decisions into practical actions. However, despite these warnings, there are concerns about the ability to fulfil even the 2% commitment. Although the government pledged to meet this target for the first time this year, only 154 billion korunas have been allocated to defence, raising doubts as to whether NATO will recognise this spending as sufficient.

³⁰ [Jak fungují aktivní zálohy? Armáda v nich chce do roku 2030 mít deset tisíc lidí](#) [How do active backups work? The army wants to have ten thousand people in them by 2030]. [online], *ibid*

³¹ [Dobrovolné vojenské cvičení nově i pro středoškoláky](#) [Voluntary military exercises for high school students as well]. [online], Czech Ministry of Defence, 2024. Source: acr.army.cz [25 09 2024]

³² [Kredity jako motivace pro vstup do aktivní zálohy? Mohou přesvědčit váhající studenty, míní strakonický záložák](#) [Credits as a motivation to enter an active reserve? They can convince hesitant students, says the staunch reserve]. [online], Czech Ministry of Defence, 2023. Source: acr.army.cz [25 09 2024]

³³ [Armáda ČR \[Czech Army\]](#). [online], Deník N, 2024. Source: denikn.cz [25 09 2024]

³⁴ [Martin Fendrych: Řehka chce, abychom dávali na obranu víc než 2 procenta HDP. Zatím to nehrozí](#) [Martin Fendrych: Řehka wants us to spend more than 2 percent of GDP on defense. There is no danger yet]. [online], Český Rozhlas, 2024. Source: plus.rozhlas.cz [25 09 2024]



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Second, while financial resources are essential, manpower remains a critical issue. By 2030, the Czech Armed Forces aim to increase the number of troops to 30,000 professional soldiers and 10,000 reservists.³⁵ However, recruitment has been challenging. One major factor is the diminished public connection to the military, which has waned since the abolition of compulsory military service in 2004. Another challenge is the perception of inadequate salaries, particularly for lower-ranking soldiers, which may deter potential recruits. To address these issues, the Czech Army must engage in more effective strategic communication, particularly towards younger generations and the working population. This effort should clearly articulate both the material and non-material benefits of military service, providing a compelling case for joining the armed forces. Without such efforts, attracting both professional soldiers and reservists will continue to be a struggle.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in reshaping Czech defence policy and strategy, long-term financial commitments and enhanced recruitment efforts will be essential for ensuring the nation's security in the years to come.

³⁵ Rekrutační cíle 2030 a konkurenceschopnost AČR na trhu práce – lidské zdroje se musejí stát reálnou prioritou [2030 recruitment goals and the competitiveness of the ACR on the labor market – human resources must become a real priority]. [online], CZ Defence, 2024. Source: czdefence.cz [25 09 2024]



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Edited by:
Tamás Csiki Varga

Contact:

1581 Budapest, P.O. Box. 15.

Phone: 00 36 1 432-90-92

E-mail: jli@uni-nke.hu

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