

February 2021

OCCASIONAL
PAPER

Volume 1, Number 2

Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic During the Radar Debate and Beyond

Dr. Michaela Dodge



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

**Russia's Influence Operations in
the Czech Republic During the
Radar Debate and Beyond**

Michaela Dodge, Ph.D.

National Institute Press®

Published by
National Institute Press®
9302 Lee Highway, Suite 750
Fairfax, Virginia 22031

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Executive Summary

This *Occasional Paper* details Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic after the end of the Cold War, with a particular focus on its activities during U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation in the 2007/2008 timeframe. While the Czech public and parliamentarians knew precious little about these early cooperative efforts, the Russian Federation was able to utilize networks built during the Cold War and throughout the 1990s to spread disinformation.

Russia's influence operations during U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions and negotiations have not been well mapped to date. There are several reasons for this situation. First, being public about Russia's influence activities on Czech territory has been extremely politically sensitive due to the continued involvement of some Czech politicians with the Russian Federation on both local and national levels. Second, Russia's disinformation campaign has been aimed at delegitimizing any suggestion that Russia meddles in Czech politics. Russia has managed to penetrate the Czech media and public discussions, giving the Russian government the opportunity to spread propaganda in ways that are not easily traceable, which makes its disinformation more believable to the Czech public – which generally sees Russia as a malign actor. Third, it is extremely difficult to trace sources of funding of the public movement against U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation and activities in the Czech Republic back to the Russian Federation, even though these movements were evidently well funded and organized from the beginning of the more visible part of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense discussions, which started in summer 2006. Fifth, the Czech Republic's joining

This *Occasional Paper* is adapted from the author's, "U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation: Lessons learned and way forward for others," *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 39, issue 3, pp. 288-298, and her book, *U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation: Alliance Politics in Action* (National Institute Press, 2020).

the European Union's Schengen Area (where citizens of any of the participant states can travel freely) makes it more difficult for the Czech intelligence services to trace the movement of suspicious people in and out of the Czech Republic. Fifth, Russia benefits from a comprehensive network consisting of agents and pro-Russian Czechs, ready to conduct intelligence and influence operations at the command of Russia's leadership. It also benefits from knowledge of the Czech operating environment, laws, and culture.

While Russia's intelligence activities focused on organized crime and were not particularly well coordinated within the Russian Federation in the early 1990s, the late 1990s brought concerns over the Russian Federation's efforts to regain its superpower status and influence in Central Europe. Due to Putin's patronage, Russia's intelligence services were eventually able to penetrate large parts of the Russian economy and state, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between state and private business activities. The fluidity of agencies that execute influence operations and their interchangeability make it more difficult for Western intelligence services to counter them.

During the early 2000s, Russia's intelligence services focused on building a system of "influence agencies" through which the Russian Federation could influence the Czech government's decisions on a local level, spread disinformation, delegitimize the Czech government if needed by sowing mistrust among the Czechs in the Czech government's decisions, and make foreign allies and partners question the trustworthiness of the Czech Republic as an ally. Russia activated this infrastructure to counter U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation and prevent the Czech Republic from deploying a U.S. X-band radar on its territory. In its tasks, Russia's intelligence operatives have the advantage of being protected by diplomatic immunity.

There are also many more Russian intelligence operatives posing as diplomats in the Czech Republic than the other way around. That makes it hard for the Czech Republic to take retaliatory measures against them should the Czech Republic wish to keep its diplomatic presence in Russia. Additionally, the Russian Federation built its presence among the media, and in the Czech political sphere, particularly among Czech politicians, including Members of Parliament and their assistants, and members of political parties responsible for their respective party's foreign policy and security agendas. They also learned to draw on networks developed by Russia's organized crime organizations, active even in the early 1990s.

Once the discussion about the Czech Republic potentially hosting a component of a U.S. radar system became public in summer 2006, the Russian Federation made it a diplomatic and intelligence priority to stop the U.S. radar deployment to the Czech Republic. Countering Russia's disinformation proved very difficult for the Czech government largely due to the technical nature of arguments in support of ballistic missile defense cooperation with the United States, security classification of some information regarding an X-band radar that made it harder to counter disinformation factually, and a general lack of understanding of defense issues among the Czech population. The Czech government found itself surprised by the strength of Russia's opposition to U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation, which left it unprepared to deal with Russia's disinformation campaign. Russia's influence operations on Czech territory continued even after the Obama Administration's cancellation in 2009 of the plan to place an X-band radar in the Czech Republic. After the cancellation, Russia's intelligence services went back to focusing on obtaining economic advantages for the Russian Federation, strengthening their influence in the Czech

government, and undermining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Ukraine, and the European Union.

The Czech Republic serves as a “testing laboratory” for influence operations that are then implemented throughout NATO countries when they prove effective, which makes it even more important to understand what the Russian Federation is doing. This *Occasional Paper* illustrates some of the methods, tactics, and factors that made Russia’s anti-radar success possible, which is a prerequisite for countering its future influence operations and increasing society’s resilience to their influence. It underscores that Russia thinks long-term and prefers to have a networked infrastructure ready to execute influence operations rather than building it up *after* the need arises. In stark contrast to before, Russia’s influence operations today would utilize social media in a manner not available in the Czech Republic a decade ago.

To counter Russia’s influence operations, states must craft a persuasive message to compete with Russia-peddled stories. They can conduct their own influence operations, although bureaucratic stove-piping and an inability to utilize a full spectrum of tools available (including illegal ones) are likely going to make them less effective in the short-run than those of the Russian Federation, even if democracies have advantages in the long-run. States also ought to invest in digital literacy campaigns educating citizens on influence operations and helping them recognize them in the media and online. Education in critical thinking is a worthwhile investment regardless of the benefit of increasing societal resilience against Russia’s influence operations.

Introduction

A few years after the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, the Czech Republic emerged as a key candidate for hosting an X-band radar, a component of a U.S. long-range ballistic missile defense system. The Czech Republic negotiated a basing agreement and a Status of Forces Agreement with the United States in 2007 and 2008.¹ These negotiations presented an opportunity for the Russian Federation to conduct influence operations to paint U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation in a negative light. This *Occasional Paper* is organized in the following manner: first, it provides context relevant the topic of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation. Second, it details Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic after the end of the Cold War, with a particular emphasis on the 2007/2008 timeframe. Lastly, this *Occasional Paper* recommends policy steps that the United States and allies can take to increase their resilience to Russia's influence operations.

¹ Throughout the text, the words "X-band radar" and "radar" are used interchangeably if the context is a U.S. ballistic missile defense component in the Czech Republic.

U.S. Czech-Missile Defense Cooperation Background

The informal part of U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation spanned the time frame from September 2002 to January 2007, when the United States formally requested that the Czech Republic host a U.S. X-band radar on its territory.² The Czech public and parliamentarians knew precious little about these early cooperative efforts. Consequentially, their understanding of ballistic missile defense systems was largely perfunctory, a fact that undoubtedly made it easier for the Russian Federation to manipulate information about the radar.

Initial missile defense discussions between the United States and the Czech government, with the Czech Ministry of Defense being the primary point of contact on the Czech side, were concerned with technical problems related to stationing a component of a U.S. missile defense system in one of the Czech armed services' military training areas. These initial discussions "were very small, quiet, and carefully crafted," according to a George W. Bush Administration official.³ At the time, not many people appreciated how important the missile defense issue would become in relations between the two countries and the "long-term consequences that such cooperation could

² The United States announced its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in December 2001. The Bush Administration officials briefed allies (and other countries) on the rationale for the U.S. withdrawal. The Czech media noticed the withdrawal with a passing interest.

³ Author interview with Ambassador J.D. Crouch, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 2001 to 2003, and Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor from March 2005 to June 2007, by phone, January 11, 2019.

have.”⁴ According to one Bush Administration official, “representatives of the Czech government expressed a rather robust willingness to participate in U.S. missile defense plans.”⁵ This view, however, was not shared by all Czech political parties, particularly not by the Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), which has historically opposed any cooperation with the United States due to its anti-Americanism and affinity for the Russian Federation.⁶

Czech Defense Minister Jaroslav Tvrdík of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) said he welcomed expert-level technical consultations about ballistic missile defense and expressed interest in Czech participation in the U.S. program during his September 2002 visit to Washington, D.C. Despite the exploratory and non-committal character of these discussions, Defense Minister Tvrdík seemed to indicate that other NATO states, as well as other allied countries, would benefit from ballistic missile defense capabilities.⁷ In October 2002, Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda of the Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People’s Party (KDU-ČSL) informed the press that the government had not decided one way or

⁴ Author interview with Karel Ulík, desk officer for Ballistic Missile Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction Policy at the Defense Policy Department of the Czech Ministry of Defense from 2002 to 2007, WhatsApp video conference, January 12, 2019.

⁵ Author interview with David Trachtenberg, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 2001 to 2003, in person, January 6, 2019.

⁶ Stanislav Houdek, Zuzana Janská, and Pavel Otto, “Česko může hostit americké rakety, tvrdí v USA” (The Czech Republic Can Host U.S. Interceptors, So They Say in the United States), *Hospodářské noviny*, October 3, 2002, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-11601640-cesko-muze-hostit-americke-rakety-tvrdi-v-usa>.

⁷ “Tvrdík: V USA jsem nic nesliboval” (Tvrdík: I Did Not Promise Anything in the United States), *Hospodářské noviny*, September 20, 2002, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-11530250-tvrdik-v-US-jsem-nic-nesliboval>.

another whether it would participate in a U.S. ballistic missile defense system, but that it had a “generally positive” attitude toward the project.⁸ The Czech Republic also supported NATO’s decision to initiate a NATO missile defense feasibility study in November 2002.⁹ The study examined “options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centers against the full range of missile threats...consistent with the indivisibility of Allied security.”¹⁰ In March 2003, Defense Minister Tvrdík argued that the Czech Republic potentially hosting elements of a U.S. missile defense system would increase NATO and European Union (EU) security.¹¹ The Czech 2003 *National Security Strategy* noted that the government would seek out an opportunity to participate in projects or systems designed to protect Czech territory from weapons of mass destruction and the consequences of ballistic missile proliferation.¹² In the context of discussing the document, Foreign Minister Svoboda stated that he was counting on the Czech Republic participating in U.S. missile defense

⁸ Ibid. “Ujist’uji všechny, že nikdy Česká republika neřekla ústy žádného člena vlády, že jsme se rozhodli pro tu, či onu participaci (na projektu)” (“Let me assure you all that no representative of the Czech government has ever promised to participate one way or another (on the missile defense project), and “obecně příznivý přístup” (“generally positive attitude”).

⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO Prague Summit Declaration,” November 21, 2002, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), “Zahraněních politika České republiky dokumenty 3/2003,” (Czech Foreign Policy Documents 3/2003), https://www.mzv.cz/public/7f/c0/a2/23088_14945_Dok3_2003.doc.

¹² “Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky” (National Security Strategy of the Czech Republic), 2003, p. 12.

plans even though the document did not specifically mention the United States in this context.¹³

In September 2003, the United States provided the Czech Ministry of Defense with technical requirements that a potential missile defense site in the Czech Republic would have to meet to host a U.S. base.¹⁴ In October 2003, Foreign Minister Svoboda stated that the United States did not offer the Czech Republic an opportunity to participate in a ballistic missile defense plan but that the discussions about this issue were “serious and sensitive.”¹⁵ In February 2004, the Czech government acknowledged ongoing technical discussions on missile defense and gave Defense Minister Miroslav Kostelka a mandate to continue such discussions to include “preliminary technical and technical-organizational” information regarding a potential missile defense host site.¹⁶ The Czech Ministry of Defense provided the United States with information about three locations that would be most suitable for hosting a missile defense site based on technical parameters requested by the

¹³ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), “Zahraníčních politika České republiky data 7-8/2003,” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 7-8/2003), https://www.mzv.cz/public/ea/3e/8b/23102_14945_Data78_2003.doc

¹⁴ Government of the Czech Republic, “Anti-Missile Defence in the Czech Republic,” September 22, 2009, <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/anti-missile-defence-in-the-czech-republic--61942/>.

¹⁵ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), “Zahraníčních politika České republiky data 10/2003,” (Czech Foreign Policy Data 10/2003), https://www.mzv.cz/public/c9/e1/81/23110_14945_Data10_2003.doc

¹⁶ Government of the Czech Republic, “Usnesení vlády České Republiky č. 119” (Government Resolution No. 119), February 4, 2004, https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/4C0C759480015142C12571B6006BD017.

Americans in the previous rounds of discussions.¹⁷ The parameters had to do with the geological structure of the surrounding ground and supporting infrastructure.¹⁸ Despite this progress, Foreign Minister Svoboda denied the existence of ballistic missile defense negotiations, even as he admitted the existence of expert-level discussions.¹⁹ It is clear that missile defense discussions between the United States and the Czech Republic were maturing and becoming more involved.

In March 2006, the Czech press reported that the Czech Republic was one of three European candidates to host elements of a U.S. missile defense system.²⁰ Two months later, the Czech press reported on a U.S. plan to build a ballistic missile defense site with 10 interceptors in Europe.²¹ These reports marked the beginning of public discussions about U.S. missile defense plans in Europe and about a potential role that the Czech Republic could play in them. The reports generated initial interest in the issue among the Czech population. The Russian Federation's

¹⁷ Czech Ministry of Defense, "Chronologie vývoje projektu protiraketové obrany USA" (Chronology of U.S. Missile Defense Programs), <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=8781>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahranichní politika České republiky data 7-8/2004" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 7-8/2004), August 2004, https://www.mzv.cz/public/eb/f6/65/23146_14945_Data78_2004.doc.

²⁰ The other two candidates were Poland and, somewhat less seriously, the United Kingdom. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahranichní politika České republiky data 3/2006," (Czech Foreign Policy Data 3/2006), March 2006, https://www.mzv.cz/public/74/15/11/73274_491937_Data_mesicnik_u_ZP2006_03.pdf.

²¹ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahranichní politika České republiky data 5/2006" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 5/2006), May 2006, https://www.mzv.cz/public/fb/50/60/73282_491940_Data_mesicniku_ZP2006_05.pdf.

initial reaction to these reports was negative.²² In August 2006, the civic movement “No Bases Initiative” was founded to “fight against the placement of a U.S. missile defense base on the Czech territory, in a non-violent matter.”²³

The Social Democratic party, leading different iterations of coalition government since 1998, lost the June 2006 elections. In hindsight, the June 2006 elections to the Czech Chamber of Deputies were a pivotal moment in the history of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation. More broadly, they were important for the future direction of Czech foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The Social Democrats narrowly lost these elections and talks about forming a potential coalition between them and the victorious Civic Democratic Party (ODS) broke down. Consequently, the Social Democrats became an opposition party – and with the shift came a reassessment of the party’s previous foreign and defense policy.

The lame duck government hosted U.S. officials and technical experts that assessed the suitability of selected locations on Czech territory for a potential U.S. missile defense site.²⁴ The outgoing government publicly acknowledged the ongoing technical-organizational consultations regarding ballistic missile defense with the United States.²⁵ It also requested that the Minister of Foreign

²² Ibid.

²³ Author translation from Czech. “Vznik společenské iniciativy Ne základnám,” (Founding of the No Bases Initiative), August 1, 2006, http://www.nezakladnam.cz/cs/106_vznik-spolecenske-iniciativy-ne-zakladnam.

²⁴ Radek Honzák, “Američané chtějí základnu v Česku už od května” (Americans Wanted the Base in the Czech Republic Since May) *Hospodářské noviny* (Economic Newspaper), August 8, 2006, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-19045630-americane-chteji-zakladnu-v-cesku-uz-od-kvetna>.

²⁵ Government of the Czech Republic, “Usnesení vlády České Republiky č. 929” (Government Resolution No. 929), July 26, 2006,

Affairs and Minister of Defense submit a joint recommendation on how the government should respond if asked to host missile defense elements (at this point in time, it was not clear what U.S. missile defense plans were exactly) in Czech locations surveyed by the United States.²⁶

The Civic Democrats, election winners now tasked with assembling a government that would obtain the Chamber of Deputies' approval, were unable to do so until January 9, 2007. Political volatility that marked the Civic Democrats' first unsuccessful attempt at assembling the government permeated the rest of the cabinet's duration until May 8, 2009, and negatively impacted U.S.-Czech missile defense negotiations.²⁷ The Czech government did not have a broad mandate that would allow it to present its position as an agreement across the political spectrum and avoid politicization of the missile defense issue.

Immediately following the Social Democrats' election loss, the party became split on the question of continued U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation. About a third of the ČSSD's members were reportedly in favor of the Czech Republic hosting a U.S. radar, as was the party's position when in power in the years prior.²⁸ Once firmly in the opposition, however, the Czech Social Democrats criticized the ODS-led government for continuing to pursue ballistic missile defense cooperation with the United States,

https://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/WebGovRes/CBA2A2543790623DC12571CE0047EDE2?OpenDocument.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The first proposed government was voted down in the Czech Chamber of Deputies on October 3, 2006.

²⁸ Viliam Buchert, "Radar v Brdech podporuje stále více voličů zelených i ČSSD" (Radar in Brdy's Support Among the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party Voters Increasing), *MF Dnes*, October 6, 2008, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/radar-v-brdech-podporuje-stale-vice-volicu-zelenych-i-cssd.A081006_080812_domaci_jte.

the very same cooperation they oversaw for years.²⁹ The Civic Democrats criticized the ČSSD's departure from its previous support for U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation as contrary to Czech interests, pointing out that the Czech Social Democrats had worked on advancing U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation for years.³⁰

Eventually, the ČSSD fully distanced itself from its previous support for Czech participation in a U.S. ballistic missile defense program, arguing that the "unilateral" project, without a broader implementation agreement and a "clear" mission, was not in the Czech Republic's interests and that the potential geopolitical and military impacts of the project were too unclear for the government to commit to a plan.³¹ The change of stance did not cost the party any political capital because the previous governments were secretive about their interactions with the Americans and severely limited the flow of information to the general

²⁹ There were intra-party disagreements over whether to support the plan. For example, Social Democrat Miroslav Svoboda agreed that the Czech Republic should host a U.S. radar site: Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Zahraněních politika České republiky data 4/2007" (Czech Foreign Policy Data 4/2007), April 2007, https://www.mzv.cz/public/dc/49/79/73320_491964_Data_mesicnik_u_ZP2007_04.pdf.

³⁰ "Paroubek: ČSSD nechce základnu USA" (Paroubek: Czech Social Democratic Party Does Not Want a U.S. Missile Base), *Hospodářské noviny* (Economic Newspaper), September 5, 2006, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-19225330-paroubek-cssd-nechce-zakladnu-usa>.

³¹ Jan Červenka, "Americké protiraketové základny v ČR a Polsku z pohledu domácí veřejnosti" (U.S. Missile Defense Bases in the Czech Republic and Poland from the Perspective of the Public), *Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění* (Public Opinion Research Centre), September 10, 2007, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c3/a1136/f28/%c4%8cervenka,%20Jan.%20Americk%c3%a9%20protiraketov%c3%a9%20z%c3%a1kladny%20v%20%c4%8cR%20a%20Polsku%20z%20pohledu%20dom%c3%a1c%c3%ad%20ve%c5%99ejnosti.pdf, p. 4.

public and a majority of parliamentarians in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.³² Neither did the Czech Social Democrats inform Czech President Václav Klaus (who held the office from 2003 to 2013) about ongoing discussions with the United States until two months after the June 2006 elections.³³

Having the Social Democratic Party, the second-largest political party at the time, in opposition to U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation meant more legitimacy and prominence for those who opposed such cooperation – and was an enabler for Russia's influence operations.

In September 2006, the United States reportedly expressed a preference to the Czech government for a two-site ballistic missile defense option.³⁴ In December 2006, newly sworn-in U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recommended that the United States deploy 10 two-stage GMD interceptors in Poland and a radar installation in the Czech Republic.³⁵ The system was intended to protect the U.S. homeland and parts of Europe from North Korean and

³² "Zápis z 8. společné schůze zahraničního výboru, výboru pro obranu, výboru pro bezpečnost a ústavně právního výboru" (Record from the 8th Joint Session of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defense, Security, and Constitutional and Legal Affairs), January 31, 2007, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwivlZDZqcjAhUshOAKHT8ICDQQFjADegQIBhAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.psp.cz%2Fsqw%2Ftext%2Forig2.sqw%3Fidd%3D8721&usg=AOvVaw1yNiLKue_eqaMLUsnK4RF6.

³³ "Klaus podpořil referendum o radaru" (Klaus Expressed Support for a Referendum on a Radar), *Novinky.cz*, June 13, 2007, <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/116961-klaus-podporil-referendum-o-radaru.html>.

³⁴ "Zápis z 8. společné schůze zahraničního výboru, výboru pro obranu, výboru pro bezpečnost a ústavně právního výboru," (Record from the 8th Joint Session of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defense, Security, and Constitutional and Legal Affairs).

³⁵ Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Vintage, 2015), p. 159.

Iranian ballistic missiles.³⁶ Since the Czech government would have a difficult time sustaining support for missile defense interceptors (a two-stage variant of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense interceptor being deployed to Alaska and California at the time), it welcomed an opportunity to host a politically relatively less contentious radar.

On January 19, 2007, the United States announced its interest in starting negotiations about Czech involvement in U.S. ballistic missile defense plans.³⁷ The announcement marked the formal beginning of missile defense negotiations between the two countries. Concurrently, the Czech government started limited communications and outreach efforts to help familiarize the Czech people and their political representatives with the missile defense issue. According to one academic participant in the public discussion about missile defense, "Politicians were largely ignorant of the issue and were not interested in the issue."³⁸ The same held true for the public.

Protracted negotiations were marked by the Czech government's political instability and the public's rising opposition to the project. In April 2008, the Czech Republic and the United States announced the conclusion of negotiations on the placement of a U.S. radar in the Czech Republic at the NATO Bucharest Summit.³⁹ The joint

³⁶ The United States deployed long-range interceptors at two additional sites in California and Alaska.

³⁷ "Chronologie vývoje projektu protiraketové obrany USA," (Chronology of U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Programs).

³⁸ Author interview with Petr Suchý, Head of the Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

³⁹ "Česko se dohodlo s USA na radaru, smlouvu podepíše za měsíc" (The Czech Republic and the United States Agreed on a Radar, the Agreement Will Be Signed in a Month), *Natoaktual.cz*, April 3, 2008, <http://www.natoaktual.cz/cesko-se-dohodlo-s-usa-na-radaru->

announcement confirmed that a U.S. radar on Czech territory would be connected to other elements of a missile defense system in the United States and Europe and that U.S.-Czech security cooperation was an important contribution to NATO's collective security.⁴⁰ The Czech government approved a separate Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on September 10, 2008.⁴¹ The SOFA was signed by Secretary Gates and Minister of Defense Vlasta Parkanová on September 19, 2008, in London.⁴² The Czech Senate gave its consent to the ratification of the BMDA and the SOFA on November 27, 2008, with 49 Senators voting in favor of, and 32 against, the agreement.⁴³ The timing of the vote signaled to the Americans the Czech government's hope that the Obama Administration, which was to take office in January 2009, would not cancel the plan, even

smlouvu-podepise-za-mesic-pm7-
/na_zpravy.aspx?c=A080403_155553_na_cr_m02.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Vláda schválila smlouvu SOFA, radar i půda pod ním zůstane Česku" (The Government Approved the SOFA, Radar, and the Soil Underneath Will Remain Czech), *iDnes.cz*, September 10, 2008, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/vlada-schvalila-smlouvu-sofa-radar-i-puda-pod-nim-zustane-cesku.A080910_142601_domaci_klu.

⁴² "Parkanová podepsala smlouvu o pobytu amerických vojáků v ČR" (Parkanová Signed an Agreement Regulating U.S. Troops' Stay in the Czech Republic), *iDnes.cz*, September 19, 2008, <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/150035-parkanova-podepsala-smlouvu-o-pobytu-americkych-vojaku-v-cr.html>.

⁴³ Senát (Senate), "Vládní návrh, kterým se předkládá Parlamentu České republiky k vyslovení souhlasu s ratifikací Dohoda mezi Českou republikou a Spojenými státy americkými o zřízení radarové stanice protiraketové obrany Spojených států v České republice, podepsaná dne 8. července 2008 v Praze" (Government Proposal for the Parliament of the Czech Republic to Consent to Ratification of the Agreement Between the Czech Republic and the United States on Building a U.S. Radar Station in the Czech Republic, Signed on July 8, 2008, in Prague), November 27, 2008, <https://www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/hlasy?G=9432&O=7>.

though Candidate Obama announced during his campaign: “I will cut tens of billions of dollars in wasteful spending. I will cut investments in unproven missile defense systems.”⁴⁴

On March 25, 2009, the Civic Democratic Party-led government faced its fifth vote of no-confidence in the Czech Chamber of Deputies—which succeeded. The government was toppled due to corruption scandals, supporting unpopular steps like lowering government support for families with children, increasing out-of-pocket health care fees, and supporting the radar.⁴⁵ The fall of the Topolánek government was also a public relations gift to opponents of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation—and to the Russian Federation. The “caretaker” government was supposed to rule only until preliminary elections notionally scheduled for fall 2009, but ended up serving the remainder of the regular electoral term until the October 2010 elections.⁴⁶ The ratification of the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement and SOFA in the Chamber of Deputies stalled because the provisional government did not have a mandate to solve such a controversial issue.⁴⁷ Then, in September 2009, the Obama

⁴⁴ Angie Drobnic Holan, “Obama Wants to Reduce Stockpiles, Not Disarm,” *Politifact*, July 15, 2008, <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2008/jul/15/chain-email/obama-wants-to-reduce-stockpiles-not-disarm/>.

⁴⁵ “Koaliční vláda padla kvůli aférám, krizi a radaru” (The Coalition Government Fell Due to Crises and the Radar), *Deník.cz*, March 25, 2009, https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/vlada-pad-neduvera-afery-krize-radar20090325.html.

⁴⁶ “Úřednická vláda pod vedením Jana Fischera končí” (The Bureaucratic Cabinet Under the Leadership of Jan Fischer Ends), *iRozhlas*, July 12, 2010, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/urednicka-vlada-pod-vedenim-jana-fischera-konci_201007121648_mkopp.

⁴⁷ “Fischer: O vládě budu mít jasno ve čtvrtek” (Fischer: I Will Be Clear About the Government on Thursday), *Česká televize* (Czech Television),

Administration announced its decision to abandon the plan to build a radar site in the Czech Republic and place interceptors in Poland.⁴⁸ Instead, the Obama Administration spearheaded the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), which called for a deployment of sea- and land-based versions of Standard Missile-3 interceptors and accompanying advanced sensors – none of which would be placed in the Czech Republic.⁴⁹ According to the polls, a vast majority of the Czech general public welcomed the Obama Administration's decision, even including most supporters of the radar plan, perhaps because they were tired of all the controversy the radar had caused.⁵⁰

October and November 2009 marked what the Czech media dubbed a U.S. “diplomatic offensive” in the Czech Republic.⁵¹ In October 2009, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden visited the Czech Republic and welcomed the fact that the

April 25, 2009, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/1410558-fischer-ovlade-budu-mit-jasno-ve-ctvrtek>.

⁴⁸ Ken Dilanian, “Obama Scraps Bush Missile-Defense Plan,” ABC News, N/A, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-scraps-bush-missile-defense-plan/story?id=8604357>.

⁴⁹ Jesse Lee, “Stronger, Smarter, and Swifter Defenses,” The White House, September 17, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/09/17/stronger-smarter-and-swifter-defenses>.

⁵⁰ Jan Červenka, “Jak občané hodnotí rozhodnutí vlády USA odstoupit od plánu na vybudování protiraketové radarové základny v ČR?” (How Do Czech Citizens Assess the Cancellation of the U.S. Decision to Build a Radar in the Czech Republic?), Public Opinion Research Centre, November 30, 2009, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a655/f9/100971s_pm91130a.pdf.

⁵¹ “Američané posílají do Česka tři delegace kvůli protiraketové obraně” (Americans Send Three Delegations to the Czech Republic Because of Missile Defense), *iDnes.cz*, November 4, 2009, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/americane-posilaji-do-ceska-tri-delegace-kvuli-protiraketove-obrane.A091104_115248_domaci_jw.

Czech Republic was standing by to participate in the Obama Administration's missile defense plan.⁵² The United States made the formal offer to the Czech government to host a U.S. early warning data center in November 2009.⁵³ An early warning data center would not require an international agreement with the United States and did not involve a permanent U.S. presence on Czech territory, saving the government the trouble of another society-wide debate.⁵⁴ The Czech government rejected the center in June 2011 on the grounds that it would not make any real contribution to a U.S. (or NATO) ballistic missile defense system and was too expensive for the Czech Republic.⁵⁵

⁵² "Biden: USA a Česko budou jednat o raketách v listopadu," (Biden: The United States and the Czech Republic Will Negotiate Rockets in November), *Aktuálně.cz*, October 23, 2009, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahranici/biden-usa-a-cesko-budou-jednat-o-raketach-v-listopadu/r~i:article:650969/>.

⁵³ Judy Dempsey and Dan Bilefsky, "Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull Out of U.S. Missile Defense Project," *New York Times*, June 15, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/16/world/europe/16shield.html>. In the Czech original: "velitelství kosmických válek."

⁵⁴ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), "Zahraněních politika České republiky dokumenty 7-8/2010" (Czech Foreign Policy Documents 7-8/2010), https://www.mzv.cz/public/e1/44/d1/991028_920007_Dokumenty_mesicniku_ZP2010_07_08.doc.

⁵⁵ Dempsey and Bilefsky, "Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull Out of U.S. Missile Defense Project."

Russia's Influence Operations in the Czech Republic after the End of the Cold War

Until recently, Russia's influence operations on Czech territory during the radar debate were largely an untold aspect of the U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation story. There are several reasons for this.

First, being public about Russia's influence activities on Czech territory has been extremely politically sensitive due to the continued involvement of some Czech politicians with the Russian Federation on both local and national levels. Second, Russia's disinformation campaign has been aimed at delegitimizing any suggestions that Russia meddles in Czech politics. Russia has managed to penetrate the Czech media and public discussions, giving the Russian government the opportunity to spread propaganda in ways that are not easily traceable, which makes its disinformation more believable to the Czech public – which generally sees Russia as a malign actor. Third, it is extremely difficult to trace sources of funding for anti-radar movements and activities in the Czech Republic back to the Russian Federation, even though these movements were evidently well funded and organized from the beginning of the more visible part of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense discussions, which started in summer 2006. Fourth, the Czech Republic's joining the Schengen Area on December 21, 2007, made it more difficult for the Czech intelligence services to trace the movement of suspicious people in and out of the Czech Republic.⁵⁶ Fifth, Russia spent more than a decade building a comprehensive network consisting of agents and pro-Russian Czechs, ready to conduct intelligence and influence operations at the command of Russia's leadership. According to the Czech Security

⁵⁶ The Schengen Area is a border-free area within which the citizens of 26 European countries may travel freely without passports.

Information Service's reports cited below, this infrastructure was activated during U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense negotiations and discussions. In building that infrastructure, Russia often made use of relationships that existed before the fall of the Berlin Wall and was able to draw on its familiarity with the environment in the Czech Republic.

The following section describes Russia's activities prior to U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation. Understanding Russia's methods, tactics, and factors that made its anti-radar success possible is a prerequisite for countering Russia's future influence operations and increasing society's resilience to them. It is important to keep in mind, however, that details of Russia's activities and the names of personalities involved are still not widely known.

Czech intelligence services have been concerned about Russia's activities on Czech territory since the end of the Cold War.⁵⁷ While Russia's intelligence activities focused on organized crime and were not particularly well coordinated within the Russian Federation in the early 1990s, the late 1990s brought concerns over the Russian Federation's "efforts to regain its superpower status and influence in Central Europe; an effort that is not justified by references to ideologies like during the Cold War but to power

⁵⁷ During the Cold War, Czech intelligence services collaborated closely with those of the Soviet Union against those Czechs who presented a potential problem for the Soviet regime, leaving the institution with a need to rebuild its credibility and public trust in a democratic state. In an October 2019 poll, 47 percent of respondents trusts the Czech Security Information Service, its best result in modern history. Only 17 percent of respondents trusted the institution in February 1995. Jan Červenka, "Tisková zpráva: Důvěra vybraným institucím – říjen a listopad 2019" (Press Release: Public Trust and Selected Institutions--October and November 2019), Český statistický úřad (Czech Statistical Office), December 10, 2019, https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5063/f9/pi191210.pdf.

politics.”⁵⁸ Vladimir Putin’s ascendancy to power resulted in an increase in Russia’s intelligence services’ importance, funding, and activities. With Putin’s patronage, Russia’s intelligence services were eventually able to penetrate large parts of the Russian economy and state, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between state and private business activities.⁵⁹ A key data point to remember is that in Russia (and by extension, its activities abroad), intelligence activities are not strictly separated from business or diplomatic activities, like in the United States or other democratic societies.

Russia’s activities in the late 1990s focused on fomenting a resurgence of left-wing radicalism on Czech territory. Russia reportedly utilized left-wing movements to try to shape Czech public opinion and obtain support for Russia’s political and power interests in the Central European region.⁶⁰ The specifics of these activities, and of the individuals involved, are still a matter of debate. The primary focus of Russia’s intelligence services has been to help the Russian Federation obtain economic influence in Czech strategic industries, particularly in the energy sector, due to the Czech Republic’s dependence on Russian energy supplies. Heavy industry has been another industry of interest to the Russian Federation.

⁵⁸ Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 1998 a 1999” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 1998 and 1999), 1999, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/zprava-o-cinnosti-za-rok-1998-a-1999.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2008-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 1998 a 1999” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 1998 and 1999).

During the early 2000s, Russia's intelligence services focused on building a system of "influence agencies," through which the Russian Federation could influence the Czech government's decisions on a local level, spread disinformation, delegitimize the Czech government if needed by sowing public mistrust in the government's decisions, and make foreign allies and partners question the trustworthiness of the Czech Republic as an ally.⁶¹ Russian intelligence services actively recruited Czech citizens to create opportunities for them to penetrate Czech government and private spheres utilizing contacts the KGB developed during the Cold War. In some instances, the cooperation between former KGB affiliates and Russian intelligence services continued seamlessly.⁶² It is apparent that Russia had built the information infrastructure that it activated during the U.S.-Czech radar discussions years before, when ballistic missile defense issues were but an afterthought in Czech foreign and defense policy.

The Russian Federation's intelligence services have always been the most active foreign intelligence services operating in the Czech Republic.⁶³ Their activities go well beyond the activities of any other foreign intelligence

⁶¹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2000," (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2000), June 1, 2001, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/vyrocnizprava-2000.pdf>.

⁶² Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2009-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁶³ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004), 2005, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/vyrocnizprava-bezpecnostni-informacni-sluzby-za-rok-2004.pdf>.

services on Czech territory with regard to the scale of operations and the number of operatives on the territory.⁶⁴ The Russian Federation has been exercising aggressive political influence to get its intelligence operatives accredited as diplomats in the Czech Republic, including those expelled from other democratic nations, and threatened disproportionate retaliatory measures when the Czech government considered not accrediting them.⁶⁵ That is why a large number of Russia's intelligence officers in the Czech Republic are protected by diplomatic immunity, which makes it easier for them to bribe, threaten, and corrupt Czechs.⁶⁶ Their numbers have traditionally been unusually high relative to Russian career diplomats; about half of the Russian Federation's diplomatic representation in the Czech Republic consists of intelligence officers.⁶⁷

The disparity in the number of Russia's intelligence officers in the Czech Republic and Czech diplomats in Russia makes it very difficult for the Czech government to address Russia's activities that are incompatible with diplomatic conventions even when these activities are uncovered.⁶⁸ When the Czech Republic banishes Russian

⁶⁴ "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004).

⁶⁷ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2005" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2005), 2006, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/vyrocnizprava-bezpecnostni-informacni-sluzby-za-rok-2005.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2010" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2010), 2011, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2010-vz-cz.pdf>.

intelligence officers for espionage, Russia can banish the same number of Czech diplomats from Russia—a problematic situation, since a much larger number of Russian intelligence officers in the Czech Republic than Czech diplomats in Russia means that the Czech Republic could be left without any diplomatic presence in Russia.

The situation has been exacerbated by the Czech Republic's participation in the Schengen Area, which allows the Russian Federation's officers to leave the country at a minute's notice in case of problems.⁶⁹ When that happens, the removed Russian officers are replaced immediately, putting the Czech counterintelligence officers in a position of dealing with an unknown, rather than a known, evil.

In addition to Russian intelligence officers working in the Czech Republic under the pretense of being career diplomats, the Russian Federation sends intelligence officers as tourists and academics. The Russian Federation retaliated against Czech diplomats when the Czech government refused to grant visas to Russian intelligence officers posing as academics and tourists in 2013.⁷⁰

The Czech Republic does not have good options for dealing with the disparity. If it wants to maintain its diplomatic presence in the Russian Federation, it must continue accepting Russia's intelligence officers as diplomats (or grant them visas as "students" or "scientists"). The Czech intelligence services are under-resourced relative to the number of targets, and while they

⁶⁹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2012-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2013" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2013), 2014, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2013-vz-cz.pdf>.

generally maintain good working relationships with allied intelligence services, these too run into the problem of too many targets. Under such circumstances, it is likely that some of Russia's activities slip under the radar despite the best counterintelligence efforts.

In 2000, the Russian disinformation campaign focused on questioning the benefits of the Czech Republic's membership in NATO and on arguing that costs associated with the Czech Republic's foreign missions and military modernization would be better spent on social programs. In Russia's mind, the Czech Republic joining NATO was a grievance and a threat to Russia's interests—but also an opportunity for Russia to tap into pre-existing networks on Czech territory and create new channels through which Russia could obtain information and influence about what it perceives as its adversaries in NATO. To that end, Russia's intelligence officers tried to penetrate the Czech Ministry of Defense. That was a natural avenue of penetration for the Russian Federation. More specifically, today's Czech Army is a legacy institution to the Czechoslovak Army that closely collaborated with the Soviet Union. The Czech Army transformed and professionalized in the 1990s, in no small part thanks to the Czech Republic joining NATO, but some of its old Communist-trained cadres remained in place. Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová referred to them in a 2008 interview, pointing to differences between this “old guard” and a new generation of officers that joined the Czech Army after the end of the Cold War.⁷¹

⁷¹ Jiří Kubík, “Parkanová: Milenec by mi prošel, písnička o radaru ne” (Parkanová: I Could Get Away with a Lover, But Not with a Song About a Radar), *MF Dnes*, July 20, 2008, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/parkanova-milenec-by-mi-prosel-pisnicka-o-radaru-ne.A080719_160539_domaci_abr.

Russia's Influence Operations During the U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Negotiations and Discussions

The 2003 Czech National Security Strategy noted ballistic-missile and weapons-of-mass-destruction proliferation as a threat to Czech interests, but the document did not mention the United States or potential ballistic missile defense cooperation with it.⁷² It is likely that the Russian Federation knew even about the early U.S.-Czech missile defense discussions, even though the primary goal of Russian intelligence officers was to advance Russian economic interests on Czech territory.⁷³

Russia's diplomatic mission also focused on creating a positive image of Russia among Czech citizens by organizing public cultural activities and supporting pro-Russian media on Czech territory. Russia reportedly used public cultural activities to seek out sympathetic Czech citizens to recruit for the Russian intelligence services.⁷⁴ Russia also focused on penetrating the Czech journalistic scene. Even today, Russian-speaking journalists accredited in the Czech Republic are often Russian intelligence officers and are active in spreading disinformation and propaganda

⁷² Czech Government, "Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky" (Czech National Security Strategy), 2003, https://www.dataplan.info/img_upload/7bdb1584e3b8a53d337518d988763f8d/bezpecnostni-strategie-cr.pdf.

⁷³ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2004" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2004), 2005.

⁷⁴ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2005" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2005), 2005.

among the rest of the Czech media.⁷⁵ Russia's intelligence activities over time resulted in the Czech media's general lack of resistance to Russia's influence and propaganda, helping to create a permissive environment for Russian influence operations.⁷⁶ This certainly is not to suggest that all Czech media are controlled by the Russians, but evidence of Russia's influence in the Czech media sphere is in plain sight: a lack of solid and serious reporting, with few exceptions, on Russia's influence operations during the radar debate and discussions between the Czech Republic and the United States.

Russia has no trouble recruiting people willing to cooperate with it in the Czech Republic. Its intelligence services have been particularly interested in former Czechoslovak Communist Party members who obtained professional success in the economic, political, or public spheres, and people who obtained education in the Soviet Union, on the presumption that they are more likely to cooperate due to their positive experience during formative student years. It is worth noting that only those with the correct party "pedigree" were permitted and selected to study in the Soviet Union during the Communist era. Another pool of interesting candidates for the Russian intelligence services has been Czech citizens of Russian origin and Russians living in the Czech Republic long-term, and former members of the KGB who kept their network in the Czech Republic fresh and continue to draw on its for their business activities.⁷⁷ There really is no such thing as a

⁷⁵ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2003" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2003), 2004, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní->

former KGB intelligence officer, as even these “former” officers are expected to continue to work to benefit the Russian Federation and be active in its intelligence operations.⁷⁸

For the radar site, the United States planned on using a military training area formerly occupied by the Warsaw Pact military. This meant that the Russian Federation could activate former members of the Warsaw Pact military who often retired in the vicinity of what became a Czech Army military training area after the fall of the Soviet Union. These people were generally more sympathetic to the Russian Federation than to the United States; after all, they had prepared for all of their professional military careers to fight the United States.⁷⁹

Russia's intelligence officers managed to build an extensive network of contacts in the Czech political sphere, particularly among Czech politicians, including Members of Parliament and their assistants, and members of political parties responsible for their respective party's foreign policy and security agendas.⁸⁰ The challenge for Czech government workers and politicians has been that Russian intelligence services have multiple missions. For example, Russia's Federal Security Service's main task is domestic intelligence activities, but it also conducts counter-

zpravy/vyrocnizprava-bezpecnostni-informacni-sluzby-za-rok-2003.pdf.

⁷⁸ “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006” (Czech Security Information Service, 2007), <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2006-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Karel Ferschmann, “Starostové chtěli informace o radaru aneb jak to skutečně bylo,” *Obec Němčovice* (blog), September 23, 2007, <https://www.nemcovice.cz/starostove-chteli-informace-o-radaru-aneb-jak-to-skutecne-bylo/>.

⁸⁰ Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

intelligence operations and can perform intelligence-related work abroad. This means that what might appear as a legitimate interaction with a Russian intelligence officer on an area of a common interest (for example, counterterrorism) might serve other, nefarious, purposes about which a Czech target has no idea.⁸¹ Similarly, interactions between Czech scientists and their Russian counterparts can advance Russia's interests without a Czech target knowing.⁸² These overlapping agendas further underscore the point regarding Russia's lack of clear lines between legitimate intelligence activities and covert influence operations—a point hard to comprehend in democratic societies with comparatively clearly outlined responsibilities and obligations among different parts of the government and the society.

Russian intelligence services also learned to draw on networks developed by Russia's organized crime, active even in the early 1990s, during times of forced relative inactivity for the Russian intelligence services, a result of the lack of resources and chaos in the period after the break-up of the Soviet Union.⁸³ These networks have been valuable for identifying individuals willing to sell out and provide certain benefits, or access to Russia's intelligence services. Russia's organized crime has been generally focused on economic crime and on targeting local governance structures (to obtain advantages for Russian-backed firms in competitions for government contracts, or to legalize the

⁸¹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

⁸² Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

⁸³ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2005" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2005), 2006.

stay of certain personnel on Czech territory). Russian organized crime has used Czech citizens as fronts for its interaction with Czech government institutions, as legal advisors, and as fronts for purchasing real estate. Organized crime groups benefit from historical roots to Czech territory, knowledge of laws and norms that are applicable to foreigners, ties to official structures, and know-how about how to corrupt Czech officials and citizens.⁸⁴

The Czech Security Service's 2007 annual report hints at a nefarious connection between Czech politics and business, stating that organized crime utilized "financial experts and people with extensive client ties to certain former and current politicians and high-level government officials."⁸⁵ (The report does not specify who these financial experts and other people were.)

Russia's comprehensive activities mean that it is likely that Russian intelligence services have used these networks for the purposes of influencing perceptions of U.S.-Czech radar negotiations on multiple levels simultaneously. The connection between Russia's organized crime and Czech local levels of governance is troubling because evidence of Czech officials' improper conduct in connection to Russia's organized crime can leave them vulnerable to blackmail by Russian intelligence officers.⁸⁶ These connections also

⁸⁴ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2002" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2002), June 1, 2003), <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/vyrocnizprava-2002.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2007-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2010" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2010), 2011.

present a long-term threat to Czech democracy and to the alliance with the United States, because local politics is a source for future high-level government officials. Compromising materials, even several years old, can afford Russia a great deal of influence among future top politicians.⁸⁷

U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense discussions had become a matter of public knowledge by summer 2006. The Russian Federation made it a diplomatic and intelligence priority to stop the U.S. radar deployment to the Czech Republic.⁸⁸ The Czech Security Service's 2006 annual report broadly refers to Russia's "active measures" campaign and lists its execution as one of Russia's significant priorities for that year.⁸⁹ Russia's active measures encompassed manipulation of media events, publications, and reports, as well as abuse of cultural and social events to support Russia's power-politics interests on Czech territory.⁹⁰ It is plausible that Russian intelligence services took advantage of the rising "No Bases Initiative" movement founded in summer 2006. The movement organized public demonstrations in several Czech cities and organized public petitions against a radar. These events were extensively covered in the Czech media. The No Bases Initiative was also suspected of accepting Russian money and or

⁸⁷ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2011" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2011), 2012, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2011-vz-cz.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Military Intelligence Service, "Výroční zpráva o činnosti Vojenského zpravodajství 2008" (Annual Report of the Military Intelligence Agency), 2009, <https://www.vzcr.cz/uploads/41-Vyrocní-zprava-2008.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2006" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2006), 2007.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

significant media help from firms potentially affiliated with the Russian Federation.⁹¹

Russia was joined in its anti-radar campaign by an unlikely partner after the June 2006 elections to the Czech Chamber of Deputies. The Czech Social Democratic Party lost to the Civic Democratic Party and became an opposition party. The loss marked the beginning of the end of the Social Democrats' support for ballistic missile defense cooperation with the United States – and the beginning of the end of a Czech non-partisan agreement on a pro-American and transatlantic direction of Czech foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. In this context, it is important to recall that the Czech government led by the Social Democrats had *endorsed* ballistic missile defense cooperation with the United States prior to 2006, oversaw technical discussions between the two countries, and narrowed down a potential site selection for a U.S. ballistic missile defense component on Czech territory. The Social Democrats' previous support for the U.S. radar made it easier to deflect (rare) accusations of Russia's undue influence activities regarding the radar.

Russia continued its activities against a potential U.S. radar deployment on Czech territory in 2007. Russia's activities were focused on contacting, infiltrating, and influencing groups and individuals, particularly those active in civic movements, politics, and the media, who could affect Czech public opinion.⁹² In 2007, the Czech Security Service judged Russia's active measures as

⁹¹ ČTK and Jan Markovič, "Rusko nás neplatí, popírají odpůrci radaru reportáž ČT" (The Russians Are Not Giving Us Money, Opponents of the Radar Dispute Czech Television's News Segment), *MF Dnes*, November 27, 2007, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/rusko-nas-neplatí-popiraji-odpurci-radaru-reportaz-ct.A071127_124402_domaci_mr.

⁹² Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008.

“reaching an extremely high intensity and sophistication.”⁹³ The Czech Security Service also made clear that a majority of members of these movements were unwitting collaborators and exploited victims rather than willing collaborators.⁹⁴ Russia’s influence on these segments of the population can be seen by their rather uninformed parroting of Russia’s talking points against a U.S. ballistic missile defense system, sometimes also appearing in the misinformed arguments that the U.S. arms control community makes to influence the domestic debate on ballistic missile defense in the United States.

The following exchange (translated from Czech by the author of this *Occasional Paper*) between Defense Minister Parkanová and a Czech journalist, published in *iDnes.cz* in 2008, illustrates the difficulties of speaking openly about Russia’s involvement in anti-radar activities:

[In response to the journalist’s question about why the government’s radar campaign isn’t particularly effective in changing the Czechs’ minds]

Defense Minister Parkanová: “...Then we add scare tactics, targeted disinformation campaigns, which were not spontaneous but organized from somewhere.”

Journalist: “From where? By whom? Do you know something we don’t?”

Defense Minister Parkanová: “Now I’m getting myself into a dumb situation in which I’ll either have to be secretive or accuse one of the superpowers. I almost need to backtrack. Or I’ll be in a position of a character from *Yes, Minister* [the British TV comedy series] who would say, whenever

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

he'd get in trouble, that it was a matter of a state secret. But seriously, there are things that cannot be made public, but it is impossible to not see them."⁹⁵

It is clear that the superpower that Defense Minister Parkanová meant was the Russian Federation. The key question is why the Czech government wouldn't make public evidence of Russia's involvement in anti-radar and anti-American campaigns.

Countering Russia's disinformation proved very difficult for the Czech government largely due to the technical nature of arguments in support of ballistic missile defense cooperation with the United States, the security classification of some information regarding an X-band radar that made it harder to factually counter disinformation, and a general lack of understanding of defense issues among the Czech population. The Czech government found itself surprised by the strength of Russia's opposition to U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation, which left it unprepared to deal with Russia's disinformation campaign.

Russia's broader goal was to restore its influence in former Warsaw Pact countries and to strengthen isolationist sentiment in the United States. Russia's efforts in that respect were independent of the outcome of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense negotiations.⁹⁶ Russia's early influence efforts and its engagement on the issue of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation make the Czech government's lack of preparedness regarding its own

⁹⁵ Jiří Kubík, "Parkanová: Milenec by mi prošel, písnička o radaru ne" (Parkanová: I Could Get Away with a Lover, But Not with a Song About a Radar).

⁹⁶ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2007" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2007), 2008.

communication efforts regarding U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation even less comprehensible.

Russia's exploitation of civic movements and internationalist movements continued in 2008, but the Russian Federation conducted fewer active measures that year because it did not want to draw undue attention to its invasion of Georgia.⁹⁷ To the pro-transatlantic segment of Czech politics, Russia's invasion of Georgia underscored the dangers of Russia's political influence on Czech territory and the importance of hosting a U.S. radar as a hedge against it. The sentiment was particularly strong due to the 70th anniversary of the Munich Agreement, the 60th anniversary of the Communist take-over of Czechoslovakia, and the 40th anniversary of Czechoslovakia's occupation by the Warsaw Pact army. After Russia's invasion and occupation of Georgia, the Czech government completely failed to capitalize on the public's anti-Russian sentiments to make a stronger case for U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation as a hedge against Russian aggression.

The Czech Security Service's 2009 annual report offered what could be read as a subtle rebuttal to the Obama Administration's "reset" policy with Russia. The report stated that the Czech Security Information Service "does not get to pick its adversaries, nor does it dictate how they operate. They pick the Czech Republic and methods of their works, regardless of the state of the world in its many changes and varieties, and with an emphasis on their own interests and needs."⁹⁸ The report also classified Russia's intelligence activities on Czech territory as "contrarian and

⁹⁷ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2008" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2008), 2009.

⁹⁸ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010.

at times adversarial.”⁹⁹ The Czech presidency of the European Union led to an increase in Russia’s intelligence officers’ attempts to connect with Czech politicians.

Russia’s attempts to influence Russian expatriates living in the Czech Republic were particularly notable in 2009.¹⁰⁰ At that point in time, the Russians could draw on a variety of connections in Czech local government and resources to make life “uncomfortable” for civic organizations that were not interested in serving Russia’s government’s interests.¹⁰¹ On the bright side, a significant portion of the Russian-speaking community on Czech territory seems uninterested in catering to Vladimir Putin’s whims.¹⁰²

U.S.-Czech missile defense cooperation would undoubtedly open another opportunity for Russia to potentially obtain more information about the U.S. and Czech high-tech and defense sectors. In the Czech Republic, Russia’s task of turning people to cooperate with it is made easier by a general lack of loyalty to the Czech state by some Czechs, including those who work for the government.¹⁰³ That makes them more likely to collaborate to advance Russia’s questionable interests, which in turns undermines the public’s belief in the Czech government.¹⁰⁴ Russia’s use of institutions, lobbying and networking companies, unions, and law firms that exercise influence on Russia’s behalf exacerbates these problems.¹⁰⁵ The Czech Republic has a relatively primitive regulatory environment regarding

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Czech Security Information Service, “Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012” (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

functioning and transparency of non-profit organizations, which makes it easier to abuse them to advance Russia's influence under the guise of legitimate activities.

Another aspect of the problem is the general Czech inability to clearly condemn collaboration with authoritarian and foreign powers and the so called relativization of truth. The Czech Republic did not go through decommunization after the end of the Cold War, and a large majority of Communist officials was never held accountable for their participation and maintenance of Czechoslovakia as an authoritarian state subjected to Soviet influence during the Cold War. Today, similar tendencies are apparent in a general Czech unwillingness to condemn the re-entry of people with questionable career histories to civil service.¹⁰⁶ It is a vicious cycle. Frustration with the Czech government and the state of civil service can motivate some to collaborate with Russia's intelligence officers, making the repetition of the entire cycle easier during the next go-around.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Russia's Influence Operations after the Radar Debate

After the demise of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation announced by President Obama in September 2009, Russia's intelligence activities strengthened focus on their traditional priority of boosting prospects for Russia's economy and obtaining influence in strategic industries via acquisition of selected firms and shares in them (particularly in the energy sector). These activities increased with respect to Russia's efforts to obtain insight into Czech research and development efforts and access to Czech or EU funding for projects of Russia's interest.¹⁰⁸

Russia has also refocused its efforts on obtaining access to and influence in companies active in the energy sector, particularly as it relates to the nuclear, gas, and oil industries.¹⁰⁹ Russian companies invested in these activities were connected to Russia's administrative government structures in a not entirely transparent manner.¹¹⁰

Russia has also been interested in exercising influence over Czech government and bureaucratic institutions through indirect channels, e.g., through lobbying and networking organizations, with a broader goal to undermine the legitimacy of the Czech political system and the Czechs' faith in their government institutions. To further that goal, Russia continued to penetrate the Czech media sphere with the intent of relativizing truth and

¹⁰⁸ Czech Security Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2009" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2009), 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2012" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2012), 2013, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocní-zpravy/2012-vz-cz.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

objectivity. Regionalization and decentralization of the government apparatus makes exercising this kind of influence relatively easier. In the case of the Czech Republic, a lack of loyalty to Czech institutions on the part of some Czech bureaucrats and government employees makes the exercise of Russia's malign influence easier.¹¹¹ Additionally, the Russian Federation worked to increase its control of organizations and nonprofit organizations that serve the Russian-speaking community in the Czech Republic by supporting those who have a favorable opinion of President Putin and his policies to these organizations' leadership positions.¹¹²

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russia's influence operations in the Czech Republic included an effort to compromise the Ukrainian government, in addition to a long-standing goal of weakening NATO's internal integrity.¹¹³ The Czech Republic was not the primary target of Russia's activities but felt their fall out due to Russia's hybrid warfare campaign against Ukraine, NATO, and the European Union.¹¹⁴ The 2017 report notes an additional factor that makes the Czechs particularly susceptible to

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2014" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2014), 2015, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2014-vz-cz.pdf>.

¹¹³ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2015" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2015), 2016, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2015-vz-cz.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2016" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2016), 2017, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2016-vz-cz.pdf>.

Russian influence operations, which is the fact that modern history taught in Czech schools is taught from a pro-Russian point of view, thus laying a foundation for effective Russian influence operations.¹¹⁵

Russia's influence operations continue today in similar shapes and forms and the Czech Republic is undoubtedly not the only target of Russia's influence operations efforts.

¹¹⁵ Czech Security and Information Service, "Bezpečnostní informační služba: Zpráva o činnosti za rok 2017" (Annual Report of the Security Information Service for 2017), 2018, <https://www.bis.cz/public/site/bis.cz/content/vyrocnizpravy/2017-vz-cz.pdf>.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

The Russian Federation was able to claim success in the case of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation. There are several factors that make this case unique and that made Russia's job easier. The Czech Republic serves as a "testing laboratory" for influence operations that are then implemented throughout NATO countries when they prove effective.¹¹⁶

The environment in the Czech Republic is unusually permissive with respect to collaboration with Russian intelligence officers at all levels of the government and in the public, business, and private spheres. This largely has to do with pre-existing relations, a consequence of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. Pre-existing relations make people more susceptible to collaboration. An additional unique aspect of the Central and Eastern European region is penetration by Russia's organized crime networks and subsequent utilization of these networks by Russian intelligence. This factor will continue to play an important role in the future as local politics feeds national politics. It is likely that Russia has been attempting to build similar networks in other allied countries, including the United States. The Czech case indicates that Russia thinks long-term and prefers to have a networked infrastructure ready to execute influence operations rather than building it up *after* the need arises.

The fragile situation after the June 2006 election resulted in the Czech Social Democrats distancing themselves from their previous active support of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile

¹¹⁶ Ondřej Golis, "V Česku probíhá informační válka, jsme testovací laboratoři Ruska, přiznává brigádní generál Řehka" (There is an information war in the Czech Republic, states Brigadier General Řehka), August 31, 2018, *iRozhlas*, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/karel-rehka-informacni-valka-rusko-armada-rozhovor_1808310600_ogo.

defense cooperation, giving legitimacy to those who opposed it, and making it easier for the Russian Federation to spread disinformation about this cooperation—such as the radar being aimed at Russia’s ballistic missiles. Jiří Paroubek, leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party, and the previous government’s prime minister, latched on to any visible issue, which happened to be the radar issue in this case, to distinguish himself from Miroslav Topolánek, the successor prime minister and leader of the Civic Democratic Party. Between January 2007 and March 2009 when the Czech government fell, the fragile government coalition faced no fewer than five no-confidence votes. As these no-confidence votes piled up, the government grew weaker and internally more divided, making the prospects of obtaining parliamentary consent to ballistic missile defense agreements with the United States increasingly difficult. The whole episode was a “luck of the draw” rather than a pre-meditated precise scenario run by the Russian intelligence services. The Russian intelligence services, however, were able to exploit the situation and seized the opportunity cleverly.

One difference between Russia’s operations in the Czech Republic during the radar discussions and negotiations is that social media were relatively nascent, and so Russia could not fully utilize their potential. Russia was involved in producing online content and ensuring that its story lines were visible, but social media today are undoubtedly a more significant and cheaper toolkit in Russia’s intelligence operations than they were 10 years ago and would likely be used more prominently in future influence operations. Disseminating information has become cheaper and Russia has been investing in troll farms, bots, and utilization of social media.

The Czech government’s silence regarding Russia’s influence operations on its territory was puzzling. At the early stages of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense

cooperation in the early 2000s, it is possible that the Czech government felt some pressure, even if informal, from the United States to avoid drawing attention to Russia as a problem, as the United States was interested in pursuing its own cooperative policy toward Russia, including finding joint solutions to ballistic missile threats. After Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, the Czech government's silence regarding Russia's influence activities in the Czech Republic was a missed opportunity to draw attention to them.

Additionally, the Czech government's communications strategy was faced with a complex problem: missile defense policy was not a familiar topic of discussion in the Czech Republic outside of a small defense community and efforts to simplify the message led to a cacophony of voices and messages that ended up confusing the public rather than explaining the issue well. For example, the Czech government hoped that by tying the missile defense project to NATO, which traditionally had a high level of public support, some of that support would "rub off" on the radar project. Instead, introducing overlapping arguments created confusion, which made it difficult for Czech government officials to be clear about the nature of U.S.-Czech ballistic missile defense cooperation in the NATO context. This lack of clarity then undermined the Czech government's credibility because to the Czech public, the government's position appeared inconsistent.

The United States could offer only limited help to counter Russia's influence operations on Czech territory. There are simply too many targets to focus on in the Czech Republic due to the massive presence of Russian intelligence operatives, and it is easy for them to slip under the radar. Russia is geographically much closer to the Czech Republic than is the United States and has been able to preserve its connections from the Cold War-era. The United States to some degree lacks historical connections to the

Czech Republic, although today, the United States has undoubtedly more links to the Czech Republic than during the Cold War.

This case underscores the need for U.S. intelligence and law enforcement to keep track of Russia's activities and its potential influence on U.S. allies. Russia's ultimate goal is to undermine and weaken NATO and to that end, Russia is pursuing a comprehensive strategy, including influence operations. Russia's leaders are unlikely to care how they will achieve their goals, whether weakening NATO as a whole or through weakening each of the member states. It is reasonable to assume that Russia is attempting to use similar measures and employing similar tactics in other countries, including the United States. Social media and interconnectivity allow it to utilize its intelligence networks in a collaborative and mutually enforcing manner. Influence operations are but one tool in Russia's comprehensive tool kit that includes threats, blackmail, and even chemical weapons use.¹¹⁷

To counter Russia's influence operations, states must craft a persuasive message to compete with Russia-peddled stories. Some of Russia's stories were retold by members of the arms control community and then used in the Czech Republic to add credibility to Russia's propaganda without making it look like it originated in Russia. For example, Czech opponents of ballistic missile defense cooperation met with U.S. and other international activists opposing U.S. missile defense programs who repeated Russia's message on the issue, and then these Czech opponents presented their arguments with added credibility in the Czech Republic for having met with international activists.

¹¹⁷ Scott Barsotti, "The Putin Problem: Ambassador Mendelson Talks Policy, Propaganda, and Russian Politics," *Carnegie Mellon University Heinz College*, October 2018, <https://www.heinz.cmu.edu/media/2018/October/the-putin-problem>.

If given an opportunity, Russia would likely utilize similar approaches in the future.

Additionally, states have options of their own. They can conduct their own influence operations, although bureaucratic stove-piping and inability to utilize a full spectrum of tools available (including illegal ones) will likely make them less effective in the short-run than those of the Russian Federation, even if democracies have particular advantages in the long-run.¹¹⁸ States also ought to invest in digital literacy campaigns educating citizens on influence operations and helping their citizens to recognize other actors' malign activities in the media and online. Education in critical thinking is a worthwhile investment regardless of the benefit of increasing the societal resilience against Russia's influence operations.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Kroenig, *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the U.S. and China* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020).

About the Author

Dr. Michaela Dodge is a Research Scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy. Prior to joining the National Institute, Dr. Dodge worked at The Heritage Foundation from 2010-2019. She left Heritage to serve as Senator Jon Kyl's Senior Defense Policy Advisor from October to December 2018. Her last position at Heritage was a Research Fellow for Missile Defense and Nuclear Deterrence.

Dr. Dodge's work focuses on U.S. nuclear weapons and missile defense policy, nuclear forces modernization, deterrence and assurance, and arms control. Additionally, she was a Publius Fellow at the Claremont Institute in 2011 and participated in the Center for Strategic and International Studies PONI Nuclear Scholars Initiative Program.

Dr. Dodge received a Ph.D. from George Mason University in 2019. She earned her Master of Science in Defense and Strategic Studies degree from Missouri State University in 2011. At Missouri State, Dr. Dodge was awarded the Ulrike Schumacher Memorial Scholarship for two years. She received a bachelor's degree in international relations and defense and strategic studies from Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

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