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Not only Unidas Podemos (GUE-NGL) abstained from the left camp. The four MPs of Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left) integrated in the governing left-wing formation made clear their rejection to the entry of both Scandinavian nations and voted against. [EPA-EFE/STEPHANIE LECOCQ]

Introduction

By Sarah Černíková

The March issue of our regular newsletter is dedicated to the themes connected to one topic - NATO. First of all, we took a closer look at the importance of drones in modern conflicts, specifically in the Russo-Ukrainian war, and what implications the usage of these drones has for NATO. The role of drones in the Russo-Ukrainian war is significant, and that is why it deserves our attention from many points of view.

What you should have noticed is the CSC interview with our guest. For this issue, we questioned CSC CEO Tomáš Kolomazník. We talked about the Czech Republic's membership in NATO, which celebrated 25 years on the 12th of March. We dived into today's importance of membership in NATO for the Czech Republic or the future challenges connected with the support of the Czech Republic's membership. Tomáš also talked about the preparedness of the alliance to accept new member states at the end 90'.

We would also like to highlight the news from the CSC world. Members of our team were part of significant events such as the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to NATO, where CEOs Zdeněk Rod and Tomáš Kolomazník participated. Also, there was a security conference in Lublin where Sarah Černíková and Tomáš Kolomazník presented their views on the problems of national security. Lastly, we invite you to read an article by Zdeněk Rod for the Rand, which is focused on the Czech Republic's defence and its ties to NATO.

Drone War in Russo-Ukrainian War: Implications for NATO

By Antonin Nenutil

The Ukrainian battlespace features the most intensive use of drones in a military conflict in history, marking a shift in warfare tactics and technology. Although this drone war is not the first war of its kind, nor the first war in which drones play an important role or the first in which both sides employ them. However, it is the first major conflict where drones are playing a crucial role and where they are being used on a massive scale. The Royal United Services Institute estimates that Ukraine loses 10,000 drones annually, indicating how many are in use. This event thus constitutes a significant change in military conflicts, which may pose several security implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Importance of drones in Ukraine's war

Looking at Ukraine, we can see the importance of drones just by counting how many different drone systems are being used there. These drone systems range from the very small of only 12 centimetres to drones with wingspans of over 15 meters. Small systems played an increasingly important role in the Russo-Ukrainian war. Among these, we can count systems like quadcopters or other rotor drones, mainly produced by companies such as the Chinese DJI. More excellent armed systems, such as the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 or, on the Russian side, the Orion drone, carry missiles which can be used to attack troops on the ground. Surveillance and reconnaissance are the most natural uses of drones. All drones carry photo, video, or other data collection sensors, which allow forces to locate enemy bases, observe troop movements, and choose targets. Closely linked to surveillance is the ability of drones to document attacks, which can also provide helpful material for propaganda purposes. Finally and most importantly, drones help direct and conduct strikes. At the beginning of the war, Ukrainian forces used armed military drones such as the TB2 to target the Russian convoy headed for Kyiv. A TB2 drone may also have been used to distract the defences of the Russian flagship Moskva while naval missiles attacked and ultimately sank it. Intelligence gathered by drones is also used to direct artillery and other strikes.

However, the most remarkable aspect of drone use in this conflict is the fact that a large number of drones were of civilian origin. Possibly, most of these drones were initially designed for commercial purposes or hobbyists. They are, therefore, available in large numbers, at low cost, and are easy to use. As they are not built for war, these drones tend not to survive for a long time in the battlespace – but given their price and availability, their loss is not as big a problem as the loss of other types of military equipment. Several drone strikes have been conducted not only on the battlefield but also in Moscow and other places in Russia. Militarily, their impact has been limited, but they send a message to Russia that the war could come back on its soil. Drones are easy targets as they are usually not built to evade aerial defences. They fly low and slowly and can often be destroyed with a single hit. However, combatting drones can be difficult as one needs to have suitable drone defence systems in the right place at the right time.

The term “drone” does not necessarily refer to airborne systems, but most drones fly. Maritime drones also exist, and they are starting to play a greater role as Ukraine uses them more often to attack the Russian fleet in the Black Sea.



A Ukrainian soldier launches a drone at the frontline close to Bakhmut, Ukraine, Sunday, Aug. 20, 2023. Libkos—AP

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Implications for NATO regarding the drone war in Ukraine

Even though drones proved their worth in Ukraine, NATO officials at the annual Munich Security Conference happening in February this year said that these advances also come with risks. Officials at the event warned it would become more challenging for NATO to establish control over air space in conflict zones because of the technology. Thus, the proliferation of drones means European nations need to bolster air defences. However, with the rapidly increasing role of drones in armed conflicts, NATO countries should improve their military capacities by investing in defensive drone systems. There are two main ways to down a drone – kinetically and electronically. The first means shooting down a drone with bullets, rockets, or similar. The second means jamming or interrupting the signal between the drone and its operator. A more advanced version of this approach is to hack the drone and take over its command. Besides these, net throwers, drones that fight drones, and even birds of prey trained to take out rogue hobbyist drones can intercept drones. The counter-drone market is a multibillion-dollar growing business opportunity which NATO members should not oversee.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has demonstrated that innovations in drone technology can change the balance of power in the air defence domain. Russia seeks to build pockets of air superiority and bolster its drone production and anti-drone defences. With Iran's help, Russia recently finished constructing a drone factory in Tatarstan, where it could produce an estimated six thousand Shahed-136 prototypes (renamed the Geran-2 by Moscow) by mid-2025. This expanded drone production could counter Russia's shortage of drones on the front lines and turn the tide of the conflict in its favour. The world drone market is on track to grow in the coming years, and Ukraine may become an important hub for their development and manufacturing. Joint private-public partnerships have led to developing or repurposing drones for military use. If Ukraine wins the war, NATO countries should be prepared to invest massively in this market and, by doing so, improve bilateral economic relations with Ukraine, as it may be profitable for both sides. The Ukrainian drone industry is on track to become a serious international player once the war ends, able to export systems that are combat-proven.

Lessons to learn from NATO

NATO members may also learn a couple of lessons from Ukraine's conflict. First, private industry matters, as it provides decisive capabilities. Throughout the war, it has provided crucial systems and services to Ukrainians and

their armed forces. These companies' most visible roles have been in internet connectivity (Starlink/SpaceX) and cloud computing and cyber (Amazon et al.).

Other companies have provided hardware such as drones (Chinese DJI) or software to improve legacy systems. NATO members should, therefore, clearly define which capabilities they are comfortable buying from private firms and in which areas they should develop their capabilities. Also, to guarantee smooth cooperation with the private sector, NATO members should extend the number of commercial systems, equipment, and even actors in their military exercises.

Another critical lesson is related to the relationship between civil society and technology. Technology has enabled and motivated individuals to take part in the war effort. Civil society and individuals in Ukraine have been highly involved in the war, and their involvement is often directly linked to new technologies. Finally, NATO member states should realize that regarding the threat of Russia, quality and quantity matter. The Western approach to military technology has been 'quality over quantity' for years. To counter the numerical advantage of its opponents, NATO put its efforts into developing better and more sophisticated weapons. While this logic still holds to some extent, the war in Ukraine has been a reminder that quantity can have a quality of its own, and this also applies to the drone industry and its massive use in the current conflict.



File photo. A NATO Global Hawk drone is on display at National Stadium in Warsaw, Poland, 7 July 2016. [Rainer Jensen/EPA/EFE]

INTERVIEW WITH...

Our CEO Tomáš Kolomazník: Czech Republic 25 years in NATO



On 12.3. we commemorated 25 years since joining the Alliance. How is this step significant from today's point of view?

The entry of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary marked the actual beginning of the integration of the former Soviet bloc states into the Euro-Atlantic structures. It was a factual confirmation of the fall of the Iron Curtain. Membership had not only a security significance, but also an economic one. We became a member of a stable community and thus opened the door to foreign investors. We have thus created a better position within the framework of the negotiations for accession to the European Union.

Was the decision to expand easy, was there consensus on the number of new members?

The expansion process was not easy. The new candidates were largely unknown to the Alliance. Membership preceded participation in the Partnership for Peace program, which was such a precursor to membership in the Alliance. This year marks 30 years since its creation. It is also significant that the first exercise took place in the Czech Republic.

Within the Alliance, the number of new members was discussed for a very long time, at the Madrid summit in 1997 it was not clear for a long time how many members NATO would expand, apart from the mentioned 3 states, Romania or the Baltics were also in play. In the end, the three mentioned states remained in the game.

The problem was with the reaction of Russia, which reserved the right of veto. The Alliance has been negotiating with Russia for a long time to set up relations. Some conclusions were reached in the late 1990s, but the subsequent rift in 1999 caused by NATO's military campaign in the Balkans interrupted these efforts. It was not until 2002 that the NATO-Russia Committee was established. This platform brought better communication with Russia.

INTERVIEW

How can the membership of the Czech Republic be evaluated for the entire 25 years, have we been a reliable member of the Alliance?

Membership was a big challenge for the Czech Republic, especially for the Army of the Czech Republic.

In the early years, when we were satisfied that we became members, we had to proceed with a large-scale reform and professionalization of the armed forces in order to be able to respond to the threats of the time, which were, especially after 9/11. 2001 associated with the fight against international terrorism.

The Czech Republic, especially due to the fact that a social democratic government was in power at the time, still hesitated, for example, to get directly involved in the international coalition in the attack on Iraq.

In the following period, we became active participants in a number of international missions.

On the other hand, there was a reduction in defense spending and a reduction in investment in the military. The Czech Republic thus became a “black passenger in the Alliance” and did not fulfill the commitment of 2% of defense spending for a long time.

But the war in Ukraine was the last warning for us that it is necessary to reconsider the approach to the army.

The Czech Republic started the modernization of the Army of the Czech Republic, legalized military spending at 2% and became one of the leading countries in helping Ukraine.

What challenges await us in the future?

The good news, however, is that 71% of Czechs would still favour NATO membership in the event of a vote. 3/4 see it as a guarantor of our security, and the same number agree that we should help it in the event of an attack on another member country, as shown by the latest research within the [NATO tracker](#).

The bad news is that only 24% of the Czech population thinks we should increase defense spending. Thus, we are among the countries with the most minor support; only Iceland is behind us. It will, therefore, be challenging for the government of the Czech Republic to convince the Czech population of the necessity of increasing defense spending.

It is similar to Ukraine’s support. Only 43% of Czechs favour further support; only Hungary is behind us.

The Czech government and political representation will have to make a great effort to convince the Czech population of their actions and thus gain more support in increasing the military budget and supporting Ukraine.



Konference Naše bezpečnost není samozřejmost u příležitosti 25. výročí vstupu Česka do NATO 12. března 2024. Na snímku premiér Petr Fiala.

News and Events

Conference in Poland

Tomáš Kolomazník and Sarah Černíková participated in a conference in Lublin, Poland, on the topic “Transfer of experience: Polish-Czech perspective on the problems of internal security of Poland and the Czech Republic”.

The conference was organized by the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and was sponsored by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

🎤 **Tomáš Kolomazník** spoke on the topic: Strategic communication as a tool for eliminating disinformation narratives, its advantages and limits

🎤 **Sarah Černíková** had a contribution on the topic: Organized crime: The fight against the production of methamphetamine in the Czech Republic



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News and Events

25 years in NATO conference

On March 12, the 11th national conference Our Security Cannot Be Taken For Granted was held at Prague Castle on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to NATO. Czech President Petr Pavel and William Jefferson Clinton, 42nd President of the United States of America spoke at the conference. Among foreign guests were Javier Solana, former NATO Secretary General (1999–2003) and Lord Robertson, former NATO Secretary General (1999–2003).



Publication

Our CEO, Zdeněk Rod, offered his point of view on the topic, "As Europe's Peace Unravels, Czech Republic Ties Its Defence More Tightly to NATO," for the research organization Rand. He, with his colleagues, highlighted the importance of Czech ties to NATO in defence at the time of the 25th anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to NATO.



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