




## **Weekly Briefing**

**Czech Republic external relations briefing:  
Liberal Revisionism And Its Impacts  
on the Czech-Chinese Partnership  
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# **Liberal Revisionism And Its Impacts on the Czech-Chinese Partnership**

## **Summary**

*The ongoing revision of the Czech foreign policy entails increasing turbulences in the Czech-Chinese strategic partnership, strong animosities in relation to Russia and a high level of volatility and uncertainties as far as the relations with those countries that do not belong to the Western camp are concerned in general. The briefing analyses the recent dynamics of the Czech China policy including the controversial actions regarding the Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet issues. The explicit support for separatist entities backed by certain domestic political forces is put into a broader context of the government's external revisionism and its connections with US interests.*

## **Introduction**

The relations between the Czech Republic and China were elevated to the level of strategic partnership in 2016 during President Xi Jinping's visit to Prague which brought the peak of the bilateral relations and entailed the participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-CEEC cooperation mechanism and a wide array of joint projects. In 2018, however, a long-term offensive aimed against the strategic partnership with Beijing began. Given the fact that the then cabinet, headed by Andrej Babiš, tended to an independent and pragmatic position, the anti-Chinese activities remained limited to several parliamentary actors, media, and NGOs. Nevertheless, last year's events brought about an unprecedented constellation when the liberal democratic coalition dominated nearly all decisive state bodies.

## **Strategic partnership undermined**

The current power constellation enabled the revision of the national foreign policy, problematising the Czech-Chinese cooperation at the same time. The anti-Chinese agenda can be built upon the pioneering official visit to Taiwan made by Senate chairman Miloš Vystrčil, the second-highest constitutional representative, in 2020. It marked the beginning of high-level *political* exchanges between Prague and Taipei. In 2021, a delegation led by Foreign Minister

Joseph Wu arrived in the Czech Republic. The courtship intensified in July 2022 when the chairman of the Taiwanese parliament You Si-kun visited Prague shortly before Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taipei. These high-level contacts contradicting the One China principle are but the most visible demonstration of the revision of the Czech foreign policy. You Si-kun was invited by the chairman Vystrčil following the 2020 Czech visit to Taipei, the main issues being the expansion of cooperation in the field of economic exchange, research and development, new technologies, semiconductors manufacturing, electromobility, smart engineering, science or culture.<sup>1</sup>

You made a speech at the Senate plenum in which he highlighted the shared commitment to „universal values of freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law“ while lambasting the CPC for „internal oppression“, „external expansionism“ and an alleged „seeking a global dominance“.<sup>2</sup> Domestic supporters of political relations with Taipei, headed by Miloš Vystrčil, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security Pavel Fischer and chair of the Committee on Education, Science, Culture, Human Rights and Petitions Jiří Drahoš, made use of the official visit to move their agenda further. At the July meeting of the Foreign Committee, a resolution was adopted asserting that Taiwan was a „subject of international law“ and that the Czech Republic had its own One China policy.<sup>3</sup> These formulations create conditions for recognising Taiwan as an independent, sovereign state. Not by coincidence, Pavel Fischer explicitly stated that Taiwan is as sovereign country as the Czech Republic.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Czech „hawks“ in action**

You Si-kun's visit to Prague was repaid by the Senate in September when a delegation led by Jiří Drahoš spent a week in Taiwan. The Czech representatives met President Tsai Ing-wen and concluded six memoranda regarding semiconductors, scholarships for the Czech students, research, and culture. Both sides discussed the plans for the establishment of a joint centre focusing on research into and development of smart chips in the Czech Republic as well

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<sup>1</sup> Faldynová, L. (2022, July 18). *Na pozvání předsedy Senátu dorazila do Prahy parlamentní delegace z Taiwanu*. Senát Parlamentu České republiky. [https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke\\_dni=18.7.2022&O=13&id=3428&from=M](https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke_dni=18.7.2022&O=13&id=3428&from=M).

<sup>2</sup> *Vystoupení předsedy Legislativního dvora Taiwanu You Si-kuna* (2022, July 20). Senát Parlamentu České republiky. <https://www.senat.cz/informace/galerie/vidiogalerie/video.php?id=1000>.

<sup>3</sup> *196. usnesení z 29. schůze, konané dne 19. července 2022 k návštěvě předsedy tchajwanského parlamentu a rozvoji vztahů mezi ČR a Tchaj-wanem* (2022, July 19). Senát Parlamentu České republiky. <https://www.senat.cz/xqw/webdav/pssenat/original/104618/87726>.

<sup>4</sup> Fischer, P. (2022, July 29). *Česko-tchajwanské přátelství*. Pavel Fischer. <https://www.pavelfischer.cz/14436-cesko-tchajwanske-pratelstvi/>.

as for opening a direct air route between Prague and Taipei.<sup>5</sup> It is also expected that at least two Taiwanese banks – Taiwan Cooperative Bank and Export-Import Bank – will open branches in the Czech Republic.<sup>6</sup> These facts corroborate that the relations with Taipei are on the upswing, being accompanied by non-friendly actions towards Beijing.

The Czech government conducts a controversial policy not only in relation to Taiwan but also to Xinjiang and Tibet. In November 2021, the General Assembly of the World Uyghur Congress was held in Prague. This self-proclaimed, separatist entity, which considers itself a legitimate government, was hosted by Prague Mayor Zdeněk Hřib and the event was actively supported by Pavel Fischer, the chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security. The assembly was accompanied by a wide array of PR events including conferences and public discussions with support from the US.<sup>7</sup> In August 2022, the upper chamber of the Czech Parliament invited Tibetan separatist leader Penpa Tsering to discuss the support for „occupied Tibet“ including the establishment of the office of the EU representative for Tibet as well as the preparation of a conference on Tibet within the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU.<sup>8</sup> Tsering held talks with the head of the Chamber of Deputies Markéta Pekarová Adamová who stressed the importance of the ongoing revision of the Czech foreign policy which entailed the global enforcement of Western human rights and liberal democracy.<sup>9</sup> It is Pekarová Adamová who has recently called upon the EU and its member states to establish a „global democratic alliance“ against those who undermine the West-defined rules-based order.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Černá, E. (2022, September 26). *Výsledkem cesty předsedy školského výboru na Taiwan je mj. šest podepsaných memorand o spolupráci.* Senát Parlamentu České republiky. [https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke\\_dni=26.9.2022&O=13&id=3466&from=M](https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke_dni=26.9.2022&O=13&id=3466&from=M).

<sup>6</sup> Ehl, M. (2021, October 26). *Tchajwanské banky už hledají kanceláře v Praze. Výrobce čipů i další ostrovní firmy sondují terén.* Hospodářské noviny. <https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-66991170-tchajwanske-banky-uz-hledaji-kancelare-v-praze-vyrobce-cipu-i-dalsi-ostrovnii-firmy-sonduji-teren>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ujgurové si v Praze zvolí vedení svého kongresu, čínská strana je proti* (2021, November 12). ČTK. <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/ujgurove-si-v-praze-zvoli-vedeni-sveho-kongresu-cinska-strana-je-proti/2117295>.

<sup>8</sup> Černá, E. (2022, August 30). *Tématem jednání s předsedou tibetské exilové vlády Tseringem v Senátu bylo i jmenování zmocněnce pro otázky okupovaného Tibetu na evropské úrovni.* Senát Parlamentu České republiky. [https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke\\_dni=26.9.2022&O=13&id=3449&from=M](https://www.senat.cz/zpravodajstvi/zprava.php?ke_dni=26.9.2022&O=13&id=3449&from=M).

<sup>9</sup> Pekarová Adamová, M. (2022, August 30). *Předsedkyně PS na jednání s tibetským vůdcem diskutovala porušování lidských práv v Číně.* Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky. <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/detail.sqw?id=6147&z=16365>.

<sup>10</sup> *Vytvoříme celosvětovou alianci demokratických sil, navrhuje Pekarová Adamová* (2022, September 05). iDNES.cz. [https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/globalni-aliance-democraticke-sily-evropska-unie-pekaro-va-adamova.A220905\\_102405\\_domaci\\_misl](https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/globalni-aliance-democraticke-sily-evropska-unie-pekaro-va-adamova.A220905_102405_domaci_misl).

## **An international hub for opposition**

The reassessment of the Czech-Chinese strategic partnership goes hand in hand with the suspension of relations with Russia, internal securitisation and authoritarian turn. The revisionist ethos of the liberal policies refers to the heritage of the first Czech president Václav Havel who marginalised sovereignist aspirations of the country and sought a firm transatlantic unity with Washington. The Czech liberal establishment aspires to be recognised as the leading actor in the global enforcement of Western human rights and liberal democracy. Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský calls for the establishment of an international criminal tribunal to judge the alleged Russian crimes, complete isolation and military defeat of Russia. In the meantime, the Czech version of the Magnitski Act was passed in June. The government tolerated a conference of Russian separatists who arrived in Prague a month later to declare the need for destruction of the Russian Federation, its division into separate units and demilitarisation. The event was attended by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavel Klimkin, Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev or Belarussian opposition representatives who are involved in subversive military activities against the legitimate governments in Belarus and Russia.<sup>11</sup> The separatist conference and a wide array of other events of this kind indicate the real intentions of hawkish circles from the Western countries that seek to dismantle Russia with the aim to maintain their hegemony. It is more than obvious which scenario would materialise in the case of their success not only in Russia but in China too.

At the same time, Belarussian opposition activities are not only tolerated but even supported officially. The highest constitutional representatives meet the president of the self-proclaimed Coordination Council Svetlana Tichanovskaia repeatedly, preparing the establishment of a headquarters for the Belarussian opposition in Prague, and considering the plan of forming parallel diplomatic structures, which applies not only to Belarus but also to China in relation to Taiwan. Recently it has been revealed that the Czech territory is used by the military wing of the Coordination Council for training diversionists to overthrow Alexander Lukashenko. The organisation is engaged in the conflict in Ukraine and cooperates with Ukrainian security forces.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Šídlová, T. (2022, July 20). *S tichým souhlasem státu. V Praze se bude řešit budoucnost Ruska*. Seznam Zprávy. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-do-prahy-miri-vip-rusti-disidenti-akci-sleduje-ceska-policie-209305>.

<sup>12</sup> Rokos, M. (2022, July 28). *Za zpomalení Rusů jim prostřelují nohy. V Praze cvičí na svržení Lukašenka*. Seznam Zprávy. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/zahranicni-provadeji-diverzni-akce-proti-lukasenkovi-a-putinovi-trenuji-i-v-praze-209918>.

The Czech liberal cabinet supports the US discourse and actively responds to hawkish tendencies among the US establishment to raise its value. The March Joint Statement from the U.S.-Czech Republic Strategic Dialogue defines the basis of the current rapprochement and the Czech role in the US global policies.<sup>13</sup> The Czech China policy coincides with the US Indo-Pacific doctrine with its emphasis on the US engagement in the region, the concept of indivisibility of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security, as well as the *global* role of NATO. Through this prism does the Czech Foreign Minister interpret the Indo-Pacific as a new battlefield between democracies and autocracies, as a “place where the destiny of our freedom, values and our way of life will be decided”.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

The Czech liberal revisionism has both its internal and external causes. As far as China is concerned, the ongoing revision should be assessed in terms of the US initiatives aimed at containment of the socialist major power. The conceptual and legal framework for this strategy was set by security and military doctrines, Donald Trump’s *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative Act* and especially Joe Biden’s *Strategic Competition Act of 2021*. These embody the US bipartisan consensus that in turn stimulates revisionism in liberal democracies. The principal goals of the future Czech governments are, therefore, clear: to refuse hegemonism as an international practice, carry out a pragmatic redefinition of the foreign policy, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, and last but not least adapt the country to the conditions of global polycentrism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Joint Statement from the U.S.-Czech Republic Strategic Dialogue* (2022, March 30). U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-from-the-u-s-czech-republic-strategic-dialogue/>.

<sup>14</sup> Lipavský, J. (2022, June 13). „Skutečná demokracie“ a proč Indo-Pacifik nemůžeme pouštět ze zřetele. *Hospodářské noviny*. <https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-67080810-bdquo-skutecna-demokracie-ldquo-a-proc-indo-pacifik-nemuzeme-poustet-ze-zretele>.

<sup>15</sup> Zemánek, L. (2022). Russia’s Sovereignty and Emergence of Pragmatic Polycentrism. *Governance and Politics*, 1(1), 63–99. <https://www.gp-mgimo.ru/jour/article/view/7/7>.