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# Czech Republic political briefing:

## Challenges of the Czech Domestic Policy

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# Challenges of the Czech Domestic Policy

**Summary**

*The autumn 2025 elections to the Chamber of Deputies, the economic condition of the Czech Republic, and reiteration of support for introducing the Euro currency will be the most important subjects of this year according to President Petr Pavel. Coalition government politicians expressed appreciation for his attitude, while opposition representatives reproached him for not criticizing the cabinet of Petr Fiala (Civic Democratic Party - ODS) enough and for his emphasis on introducing the common European currency.*

*Disinformation campaigns are likely to escalate ahead of the elections, threatening electoral integrity and democracy. It will be one of the most serious challenges of the country. This year, with the September elections on the horizon, the prediction is that the Czech Republic would again become a focal point for disinformation campaigns, particularly aimed at sowing division and manipulating voters' perceptions.*

## Introduction

President Petr Pavel considers it essential that the Government to be formed after the elections to the lower house later this year guarantees that the Czech Republic will continue to be safe and free with functioning laws and law enforcement as well as a fair environment for both life and business. The head of state also thinks that political speech today is being reduced more and more often to marketing slogans.

Even the meaning of a fine word such as “peace”, according to the president, has become deformed by such marketing. He thinks that the actual state of the Czech Republic is far from being as bad as is sometimes thought by those basing their views on such intentionally-spread, negative sentiment. The economic situation is not bad, the head of state believes, although the Czech Republic has long lagged behind in some economic fields and real wages are growing rather slowly. The president also expresses support for introducing the euro as one of the most important goals for this year.

## The Czech President’s and the Czech PM’s fears in 2025

Czech President Petr Pavel already urged Czechs at the beginning of this year to have confidence in the future and not to be swayed by scaremongering and populism ahead of the 2025 general elections. The president expressed solidarity with those who feel exhausted by

fear of the ongoing war in Ukraine, their own unfulfilled expectations and worries about the rising cost of living.

He has a deep conviction that the real state of the country is not nearly as bad as the Czech citizens sometimes think, based on the negative sentiments spread by populists, who resort to marketing slogans and offer simple solutions. The president warns that the spread of fear contributes to people's inability to talk to each other, listen to each other and think about each other's arguments. He also points out that even the desire to live in peace had been abused by populists and now threatened to divide the nation. As a soldier, he was very aware of the value of peace and its price and urged people to look beyond the simple solutions offered and think about the consequences.

Above all the head of state stressed the importance of the upcoming general elections which would decide on the future course of the Czech Republic. He warned that in the months leading up to the elections, facts and arguments would doubtless be countered by slogans and distortions of the truth. He wishes that each Czech citizen would realize how much weight his or her vote will have in the elections. He also wishes the Czechs could look beneath labels such as liberal, national or conservative, because far more important are the real political solutions and decisions offered.

President Pavel considers it essential that the government that emerges from this year's parliamentary elections will be able to guarantee that the Czech Republic will continue to be a safe, free, and law-abiding country with a fair environment for life and business. He was aware of the fact that in the present day and age people want decisive politicians, but he pointed out that such politicians can be dangerous if their decisiveness is not complemented by democratic values, decency and reason. President Pavel warned Czechs against opening the door to authoritarianism and emphasized the need to defend and nurture freedom and democracy and he also highlighted the need to reduce inequality in living conditions across the country as one of the big challenges facing the government and promised that he personally would do his best to raise topics that have the potential to change the lives of people in the Czech Republic for the better. Besides, the head of state often expresses his view that it would benefit the Czech Republic to adopt the euro, a step that the government has so far resisted.

Similarly, to the President, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala (Civic Democratic Party) also warns against fear mongering and the dangers of authoritarianism, calling for unity, responsibility, and perseverance. While Fiala highlighted his government’s achievements and

urged citizens to resist negativity, opposition leaders dismissed the speech as overly political and lacking self-reflection.

PM Petr Fiala underscored his administration's progress, citing pension reform, reduced inflation, investments in infrastructure, and continued support for Ukraine as major milestones. He also praised the nation's response to catastrophic floods earlier in the year. He declared that the steps his government has taken were in the right direction. In a direct appeal to the public, the Prime Minister cautioned against the influence of social media critics, describing them as "fearmongers" who spread envy, hatred, and doubt.

However, opposition leaders were quick to criticize the address. Karel Havlíček, deputy leader of the opposition ANO party, accused Fiala of turning his speech into a pre-election campaign, because he missed any kind of self-reflection or willingness to admit mistakes. According to the opposition the PM's speeches this year have been used more as a campaign event before the general elections in autumn 2025. On the other side, we can say that it is difficult for him to avoid statements that will be interpreted as campaigning. Interesting point is that, in the meantime, the Prime Minister has refrained from direct attacks on the opposition, apart from vague references to political forces "peddling fear."

Nevertheless, the upcoming parliamentary elections in autumn 2025 will be very important for the Czech Republic and it could bring some surprises and changes. The citizens are not really satisfied with the current political parties and, for example, according to a recent survey, nearly half of Czech citizens would welcome a new political party focused on responsible state management, necessary reforms, and greater openness to civil society. The survey reveals that 49% of respondents would consider voting for a newly established party, with 11% being certain about their consideration and 38% leaning towards "probably yes." On the contrary, 51% would not consider supporting a new political entity in the upcoming autumn parliamentary elections.

The research shows particularly strong interest among the economically active population, including employees, entrepreneurs, and self-employed individuals, with younger demographics showing notable enthusiasm. Interestingly, the potential new party attracts interest from both coalition and opposition voters, with government party supporters showing slightly above-average interest. The highest support comes from voters under 24 years old, with coalition Spolu (ODS, TOP 09, and KDU-ČSL) voters showing 56% interest, and Pirates and Mayors supporters expressing 59% willingness to consider the new option. Even 42% of previous non-voters indicated they might support a new political entity.

However, it looks like we will able to see some ‘strange’ cooperation options this year. For example, ANO leader and former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš said that Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), currently in the parliamentary opposition alongside ANO, could possibly support a future ANO government, although the two parties have not been communicating much lately. He added that ANO would like to see the Social Democrats (SOCDEM, formerly ČSSD) or the Motorists get into the Chamber of Deputies.

Andrej Babiš ruled out forming a government with parties represented in the current cabinet, including the Pirates who left it last year. This includes the Civic Democrats (ODS), the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), TOP 09 and STAN. He also thinks that SPD with its leader, Tomio Okamura, could be tolerated in a new government and described Radim Fiala, head of the SPD parliamentary group and SPD deputy chairman, as a very reasonable MP. Andrej Babiš also said there was no need for a referendum on the Czech Republic’s withdrawal from the European Union, which SPD are calling for, because the ‘Patriots for Europe’ faction in the European Parliament, of which ANO is a member, wants to change the EU for the better.

Just to make the situation more complicated, he Czech Chamber of Deputies recently granted a police request to lift the immunity from prosecution of Tomio Okamura, leader of the already mentioned far-right party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). Okamura is being charged with incitement to racial hatred over two inflammatory posters from his party’s election campaign last year. Police are investigating Okamura for incitement of hatred against a group of people and restricting their rights and freedoms, in connection with SPD’s billboard campaign ahead of the regional and Senate elections last autumn. Police say the posters, which criticized the EU migration pact, had racist or xenophobic overtones. The reaction of Nakamura’s political party was immediate, talking about entering a new era of political criminalization and the end of democracy.

The plenary session approved the motion without the opinion of the parliament’s mandate and immunity committee, as recommendations to approve or deny the police request both failed to win a majority of votes in the committee. Okamura sent a written opinion to the committee, defending the motives for the posters. Committee deputy chair Pavel Stanek (ODS) read it out in the Chamber along with the police request. The SPD poster at the heart of the discussion featured a dark-skinned man with a bloody knife and a blood-stained shirt, along with the text “The shortcomings in the healthcare system will not be solved by imported ‘surgeons.” Critics called the advert racist and criminal complaints were filed. Okamura has repeatedly rejected the characterization of SPD as racist or xenophobic,

describing the campaign as “an allegory”. Another SPD election poster with two Roma boys smoking a cigarette triggered further criminal complaints. The image was created by artificial intelligence. The text read: “They tell us to go to school, but my parents do not care…” and “Support only for the families where children are in school!”. The SPD election posters have also been dealt with in court. Lawyer Pavla Krejčí and others she represented demanded that courts in various regions ban the posters to protect the integrity of the election campaign, but these requests were not approved. The Constitutional Court declined to intervene, finding no procedural basis to do so.

However, if we go back to the highest ranked political party of the recent polls, it is getting more obvious who will be the candidate list leaders. ANO’s candidate list in the Central Bohemia Region in the autumn general election should be led by former Czech education minister Robert Plaga. The ANO political party would also appreciate it if some other ministers of its former government would run in the parliamentary elections, such as former health minister Adam Vojtech, now ambassador to Finland. Babiš would lead the candidate list in the Moravia-Silesian Region himself. Karel Havíček, shadow prime minister and former minister of industry and trade and minister for transport, will lead the list in Prague. In the South Moravia Region, Alena Schillerová, the deputy chair of the ANO deputies’ group, will head the candidate list.

It is not a priority for the ANO movement to obtain the post of foreign minister in the next government, because they believe that the position of prime minister is key. A strong prime minister, in agreement with the president, can go to NATO meetings, is in the EU and does pragmatic foreign policy for the economic interests of the Czech Republic. According to the media, ANO’s candidates for the post of foreign minister could include shadow foreign minister and MEP Jaroslav Bzoch, former lower house speaker Radek Vondráček, or Vojtech.

A number of politicians from the government coalition criticized Babiš’ comments regarding the future government/parliament structure. Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský even said that Babiš had confessed that he hated the US and wanted more trade with China. Transport Minister Martin Kupka (ODS) accused Babiš of “labelling, insulting and whining”, adding that the former prime minister is not a leader, but a populist who simply scares people.

According to the recent STEM model, he opposition ANO are now polling at 35.3% support ahead of the Czech parliamentary elections in the autumn, more than all the remaining parties of the current governing coalition combined. The opposition Pirates, far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), and the Communist-led Stačilo! alliance would

also enter the Chamber of Deputies. ANO is slightly stronger compared to similar poll results in previous weeks. The same is true of the Spolu coalition of the Civic Democrats (ODS), Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and TOP 09, which is on 19.8% in the current model. The government Mayors and Independents (STAN) are on 10.3%.

In terms of seats, ANO would win 88 seats in the 200-seat Chamber, Spolu would win 47 MPs, and STAN 23. SPD would enter the lower house with 8.1% and 18 seats, Stačilo! ('Enough') would have 6.7% and 15 seats, and the Pirates 5.3% and nine seats. The Motorists would remain 0.5 percentage points below the 5% threshold, according to the poll, though this is within the margin of error, but we can also focus on their electoral potential, which is high and growing. The levels of recorded support for Stačilo! and the Motorists differ significantly between STEM's model and Czech Television's Kantar CZ model. According to the Kantar model, the Motorists have strengthened to 7.5%, drawing level with the Pirates, while Stačilo! would not currently make it into the lower house. According to the STEM poll, other parties remaining outside of parliament would include the Greens (2.6%), the Social Democrats (2.5%), and Přísaha ('Oath'; 2.1%).

We have to mention one more significant factor what could have impact on the upcoming elections. Disinformation platforms are gearing up to target the Czech Republic's parliamentary elections this autumn. This stark warning came from Michal Koudelka, head of the Czech Security Information Service (BIS). During a parliamentary seminar on the risks of foreign interference in the electoral process he mentioned Russian interference as a very real threat. The Czech Security Information Service operates with strict impartiality and does not interfere in domestic political competition. Regarding the spread of disinformation, propaganda, illicit financing of entities, etc., BIS focuses solely and exclusively on the activities of foreign powers directed against the security interests of the Czech Republic. Under no circumstances does it deal with regular political competition, no matter how intense it may be.

When it comes to foreign threats to democratic election processes, not just in the Czech Republic but globally, Russia stands out as the main actor. Without a doubt, just like Romania and Moldova, the Czech Republic is also among the states that are the primary targets of subversive, intelligence, informational, and cyber operations conducted and coordinated by Russian state authorities.

Czechia has not been spared from these tactics. We can point out to a notable instance during the 2023 presidential elections. In January 2023, during the presidential pre-election campaign, a fabricated video appeared in which then-presidential candidate Petr Pavel spoke

about dragging the Czech Republic into the war in Ukraine. This video had to be debunked by the presidential candidate himself. However, it was proven that its dissemination originated directly from a subject in the Russian Federation. The interference of Russia in the presidential election is, therefore, unequivocal in this case.

**Conclusion**

While the number of people in Czechia consuming disinformation remains relatively small, there is a warn that new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, could significantly increase its reach during election campaigns. It is certainly important to emphasize in this context that the number of consumers of outright disinformation content in the Czech Republic is relatively limited. However, new technologies, especially artificial intelligence, have the potential—particularly during election campaigns—to significantly expand the reach of such messaging to a much broader audience. The responsibility of intelligence services is limited to provide information to authorized recipients. Deciding how to address the issues lies with elected representative, because intelligence services provide information only to authorized recipients, but they cannot order or decide on how to address a given issue. This responsibility lies solely and unequivocally with the elected political representatives. We should all bear this in mind, and with this understanding, approach such live information or other information related to similar topics.

So, as Czechia gears up for its parliamentary elections, lessons from other countries' experiences with foreign interference underline the importance of vigilance. It is important for policymakers and the public alike to acknowledge these risks and take proactive measures to protect the integrity of the electoral process.

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