

## A SMALL COUNTRY BUT MASSIVE AID: ANALYSIS OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY AND ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE DURING THE ONGOING WAR

 Artur Boháč

Technical University of Liberec,  
Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education, Department of Geography,  
Komenského 314/2, 460 05 Liberec, Czech Republic

e-mail: [artur.bohac@tul.cz](mailto:artur.bohac@tul.cz)

### Abstract

This article aims to assess how Czechia has shaped and implemented its policy toward Ukraine during the war, with particular attention to the interaction between political discourse and material assistance. Using securitization theory, it examines political, military, economic, and humanitarian support framing. A case study methodology based on official documents, statistics, and secondary sources shows that Czechia became one of Ukraine's most active supporters relative to its size and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The study highlights the securitization of the topic and frames the Russian invasion as a Central European threat. The conclusion emphasizes the uniqueness of Czech initiatives and the implications for domestic politics and international commitments.

### Keywords

Geopolitics; Securitization; Military assistance; Humanitarian aid; Economic support.

### Introduction

Czechia has demonstrated significant support for Ukraine following the Russian invasion. Research indicates the invasion has fostered positive emotions towards Ukraine (Klicperova-Baker & Urban, 2023). Still, the situation is more complex than it seems at first. Economically, the invasion has affected Czechia, straining household incomes (Vochozka et al., 2023). The number of Ukrainian flags in the Czech cities significantly decreased compared to the months immediately after the invasion.

Nevertheless, Otakar Foltýn, governmental coordinator of strategic communication, said:

*“Czechs as citizens are the best in collecting resources to help Ukraine in terms of value per number of inhabitants. Czechia was the first country to provide Ukraine with tanks and heavy artillery. We certainly have nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to helping out.”* (LUCKYLUKECZ, 2024).

Czechia is a compelling case study for understanding how small and mid-sized countries can act as proactive foreign policy players during international crises.

It should be mentioned that studies on the Czech government's and society's position (Gardocki, 2023; Kazharski, 2023; Szőke & Kusica, 2023; Czyż, 2024; Kaniok & Hloušek, 2024) are available. However, they mainly focus on the general attitude of the Visegrád Group (V4) or the European Union (EU), not the specifics of the Czech context.

The primary goal of this article is to assess how Czechia has shaped and implemented its policy toward Ukraine in times of war, with particular attention to the interaction between political discourse and material assistance within securitization practices.

This text summarizes events between February 24, 2022, and September 24, 2024. The end date, September 24, 2024, was selected to provide a clearly delimited and consistent temporal scope for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It ensures that the study captures long-term development, while avoiding the risk of fragmentary treatment of more recent but still unfolding events. The article is focused on aid to the Ukrainian territory, not on help for Ukrainian immigrants to Czechia. Rather than listing the funds provided, the text outlines trends and strategies. The research is designed as a case study grounded in desk research and analysis of official documents, statistics, public statements, and secondary literature.

The article is structured as follows. Section 1 discusses the main theoretical frameworks and scholarly debates on foreign aid, and especially securitization. Section 2 explains the case study approach and data reliability challenges. Section 3 outlines Czech assistance in four domains: political, military, economic, and humanitarian. Section 4 contextualizes these findings within the securitization framework. Section “Conclusion” reflects on the sustainability of Czech support and its broader implications for European security.

## **1 Literature Review**

Recent scholarship has examined the political, security, and societal consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine from various perspectives. Gardocki (2023) highlights the consistency of the Czech government’s pro-Ukraine stance, noting broad institutional alignment in the war’s early phase. Czyż (2024) situates Czechia within the broader V4 context, stressing its relative activism compared to Hungary’s obstructionist policies. Kazharski (2023), by contrast, draws attention to discourses of normalization of Russian aggression in Central Europe, which contrasts with the strongly securitized approach of Czech policy. Kaniok and Hloušek (2024) further demonstrate that Czech political parties have maintained continuity in their foreign policy positions, despite domestic polarization. Beyond Central Europe, Szőke and Kusica (2023) underscore the significance of military assistance as a key marker of credibility for small states in European security structures.

Whereas previous studies have often focused on single domains, such as military deliveries (Szőke & Kusica, 2023) or political party stances (Kaniok & Hloušek, 2024), this article aims to provide a comprehensive picture of Czech foreign policy. The literature presents different points of view. Some authors emphasize the resilience of Czech democracy and its alignment with the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) principles (Gardocki, 2023; Kaniok & Hloušek, 2024), while others highlight divisions and risks of normalization or fatigue in Central European politics (Kazharski, 2023). The present article builds on these debates by emphasizing securitization as a unifying lens to interpret Czech foreign policy.

Securitization is a theoretical framework within security studies that seeks to explain how specific issues are framed as existential threats, legitimizing extraordinary measures to address them. The idea was advanced by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998), which articulated the process by which political actors transform issues into matters of security through speech acts and discourse. This transformation allows these issues to be removed from everyday political discourse and placed into a context where emergency measures can be justified. At its core, securitization involves three critical components: the securitizing actor, the audience, and the securitized issue concerning the referent object (entity claimed to require protection). The securitizing actor, often a political leader or state representative, articulates a perceived threat to the audience (including the general public, political institutions, or international actors). The

success of this process hinges on the acceptance of the threat by the audience, which legitimizes the adoption of exceptional policies or measures to counter the identified threat (Floyd, 2015; Côté, 2016).

This dynamic illustrates the intersubjective nature of securitization, where the construction of security is not merely a top-down process but involves the perceptions and reactions of the audience (Balzacq et al., 2015). The text draws on techniques and degrees of securitization to capture mechanism-level variation such as legal designations, budgetary exceptions, emergency language, routinization, and de-securitization.

Foreign aid has long been pivotal in international relations. Many factors, including political, economic, and social considerations, influence its dynamics. Foreign aid, especially military aid, can be provided publicly or secretly. Western countries' current open support of Ukraine is reminiscent of foreign aid during the Cold War proxy conflicts (Morgenthau, 1962).

## **2 Methodology**

This interdisciplinary text is a case study grounded in thorough desk research of secondary sources from the social sciences. Since the war only fully emerged in February 2022, it has not been widely covered in academic literature. Thus, online news, reports, statistics, support trackers, polls, and official statements were frequently used. Information is drawn only from reputable sources, except for specific samples from controversial sources. Czech aid is commonly delivered in cooperation with other countries, integrations, and companies, and is, therefore, quite challenging to monitor in detail. Similar problems emerge when distinguishing between financial, military, or humanitarian aid. In such cases, the author tries to identify the primary purpose. Moreover, he identifies a similar problem as the Institute for the World Economy in Kiel (Kiel Institut, 2024): the discrepancy between commitments and deliveries. Due to the frequent concealment of deliveries because of security issues or delays, it is better to focus on commitments.

The research article attempts to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: How did Czech political actors securitize Russia's war in Ukraine between 2022 and 2024, and which mechanisms were employed to justify promised support?

RQ2: What forms of promised assistance were articulated, and how were they linked to the securitizing moves?

All the listed online sources were last visited and checked on September 30, 2024.

This article's language and style have been refined using ChatGPT for clarity and consistency.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 Modern History of Czech-Ukrainian Relations**

Following 1989, Czechoslovakia's democratic and economic transition served as a model for Ukraine (Oliynyk-Dunn et al., 2017). The split of Czechoslovakia did not alter policies toward Ukraine. Relations strengthened in the late 1990s and 2000s as both pursued EU and NATO ties. Czechia joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, providing a framework for closer cooperation. The 2014 Revolution of Dignity marked a turning point. Czech leaders like Karel Schwarzenberg and Michael Kocáb supported protestors, and the government offered humanitarian and military aid. Between 2014 and 2018, Czechia provided over 13 million euros in assistance (Velvyslanectví České republiky v Kyjevě, 2022). Trade and migration also deepened links, and many Ukrainian students studied in Czechia. After Russia's full-scale

invasion, Czechia hosted 570,000 Ukrainians by August 2024, including 200,000 who had lived there before (Atlas předsudků, 2024).

From the securitization perspective, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the Donbas war shaped the Czech political discourse. It alternated between risk- and threat-oriented framings of Ukraine, shaped by EU and NATO positions and domestic coalitions. Early statements employed conflict and crisis, with selective references to international law and European security. Securitizing moves notably through energy-security and sanctions framings have emerged. By 2021 and the revelation of the alleged Russian sabotage in Vrbětice, Czech discourse increasingly connected Russia's posture to existential risks for the EU (Kaniok & Hloušek, 2024). Thus, the post-February 2022 surge should be seen as an acceleration and consolidation of pre-existing trajectories.

### 3.2 Political Support

Political support is analyzed first because it is a condition for other types of aid. Czech support has been manifested through various political actions, including diplomatic engagement, legislative measures, and active participation in international coalitions to assist Ukraine in its defense against invasion. The State Security Council implemented strict sanctions against Russia, including suspending visa issuance for Russian citizens and expelling several Russian diplomats. Recognizing that Russia was engaged not only in physical conflict but also in a hybrid war within the information sphere led to the blockage of eight allegedly pro-Russian websites with Czech web domains. The Czech government also declared a state of emergency to accept Ukrainian refugees and help Ukraine more effectively. The government coordinated its steps in the Ukrainian crisis with the EU, NATO, and bilateral negotiations. At the beginning of July 2022, the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU, lasting half a year, began. It dealt with security, energy, and migration challenges, among other vital issues. Several official meetings of European representatives and numerous conferences took place in Prague. Generally, aid to Ukraine was still being discussed at the NATO and EU levels. Most EU states support Ukraine, but Hungary, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and, since October 2023, Slovakia, led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, with their hesitant attitude, disrupted European unity and relations within the V4.

The Czech government belongs to the liberal-conservative and pro-Western part of the Czech political spectrum. It comprises five political parties: the Civic Democratic Party, TOP09 – Tradition, Responsibility and Prosperity, the Christian Democratic Party, the Czech Pirate Party, and the Mayors and Independents Party. Other crucial positions in the Czech political system are occupied by representatives of the above parties or their supporters. The president, Petr Pavel, is pro-governmental, the president of the Senate of the Parliament (Miloš Vystrčil) represents the Civic Party, and the president of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament (Markéta Pekarová Adamová) is a leader of TOP09. However, this dominance does not fully reflect the distribution of voter preferences and opinions in the Czech society. During the crucial elections for the Chamber of Deputies in 2021, governmental parties won by a narrow margin. In other, less critical elections for the European Parliament, Senate, and regional governments, opposition parties prevailed. The popularity of Prime Minister Petr Fiala and his government is shallow (Jindrová, 2024). ANO represents the political opposition in parliament – Action of Dissatisfied Citizens, a technocratic populist party led by billionaire Andrej Babiš, and the extreme right-wing “Freedom and Direct Democracy Party”. In the last year, the return of the Czech communists and their coalition “Stačilo!” (“It was enough!”), was witnessed as they succeeded in less critical elections.

Regarding aid to Ukraine, the Ministries of Defense, led by Jana Černochová (Civic Democratic Party), and Foreign Affairs, led by Jan Lipavský (Czech Pirate Party), are crucial. Tomáš Pojar,

governmental advisor for national security, is also worth mentioning. Moreover, Tomáš Kopečný became the governmental representative for the reconstruction of Ukraine. This position was created in January 2023.

In the autumn of 2022, large anti-governmental protests emerged. They were held in Wenceslas Square in Prague, attended by thousands of people. They pointed to the pauperization of Czech citizens or, more concretely, to inflation and the rise of energy prices, and questioned the necessity of Czech support for Ukraine. Organizers and speakers of these protests were connected to the “Freedom and Direct Democracy” and “It was enough!” parties and non-parliamentary subjects. The message of the protests and related organizations and websites is that the conflict in Ukraine was not Russia’s but the West’s fault. The West wanted to conquer Russia and gain its natural resources. The Ukrainian army and cooperating battalions terrorized the Russian-speaking population in Eastern Ukraine in the 2010s. Suspicious biological laboratories existed in Ukraine under the US patronage until the Russian intervention. A significant part of Ukrainian society and politicians have sympathy for nazism. Ukrainians were the main invading force to Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Ukrainian immigrants abuse Czech hospitality (AE News, 2023). On the other hand, the pro-Ukrainian public manifestations emerged on Wenceslas Square during the anniversaries of the Russian invasion in February. They were attended by key Czech (pro)governmental persons, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Gift for Putin (Dárek pro Putina, 2024), celebrities, and people from the Ukrainian Embassy.

The ANO Party, the most potent political force in Czechia and the former leading governmental party, led by Andrej Babiš, was cautious in criticism. Andrej Babiš outlined that too much attention and funding are devoted to Ukraine concerning the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU, while pointing to other urgent problems. The Czech engagement in the Ukrainian question was more directly condemned by the Freedom and Direct Democracy, and “It was enough!”. Communists criticized the war in Ukraine through the lens of peace, which was also popular in former Eastern Bloc propaganda.

During the Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine was openly supported by Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and President Miloš Zeman, followed by Zeman’s successor, Petr Pavel. Miloš Zeman supported Ukraine, despite being suspected of above-standard relations with Russia and China and previously downplaying the annexation of Crimea and the fighting in eastern Ukraine. Generally, the aggression was condemned by all crucial political persons in Czechia. The Chamber of Deputies passed a resolution condemning the Russian invasion and expressing solidarity with Ukraine (Petrůšek & Kudrnáč, 2023).

Petr Fiala and the prime ministers of Slovenia and Poland visited Kyiv by train on March 15, 2022, and met with President Volodymyr Zelensky and other representatives of Ukraine. The Ukrainian side acknowledged this previously classified trip with gratitude and received a positive response in the Czech and foreign media. This journey occurred when Kyiv was directly threatened by the Russian army, which made the visit symbolic and courageous.

During Petr Fiala’s visit to Kyiv on September 16, 2022, he agreed with Volodymyr Zelensky on the need to intensify sanctions against Russia and to establish a special tribunal to deal with Russian crimes against Ukraine. The tribunal should draw up a compensation mechanism to ensure that the damages caused in Ukraine will be paid for from Russian assets. Moreover, Petr Fiala declared that Czechia is ready to take over the patronage of the Dnipropetrovsk Region and its reconstruction. Volodymyr Zelensky awarded him the first Order of Yaroslav the Wise. Later, the order was also granted to Markéta Pekarová Adamová and Miloš Vystrčil. In return, Volodymyr Zelenskyy received the Order of the White Lion in Czechia.

In April 2023, Czech President Petr Pavel and Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová made a symbolic one-day visit to Ukraine, specifically to towns heavily impacted by the conflict with Russia, including Borodianka and Bucha. These locations witnessed severe atrocities during the early stages of the war, and their visit served as a symbol of solidarity with Ukraine (Pražský hrad, 2023). In June 2023, Czechia was first visited by Volodymyr Zelenskyy. In March 2024, the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament adopted a resolution on security threats to the country. It designates the Russian regime as terrorist and expansionist (Poslanecká sněmovna, 2024).

Later, in July 2024, the Ukrainian government returned to Prague for talks with the Czech cabinet on involving Czech companies in reconstructing war-torn Ukraine. The latest Czech-Ukrainian agreement of July 18, 2024 (Vláda České republiky, 2024), signed by Petr Fiala and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is worth paying attention to. In addition to non-acceptance of the Russian annexation of Ukrainian territories, it also confirms long-term Czech support in the following matters: security and defense; economic stability, resilience, and reconstruction; sustainable development; technical and financial support and reforms; political cooperation; bilateral relations and European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

### **3.3 Military Assistance**

Czechia has engaged in multilateral initiatives aimed at supporting Ukraine's defense capabilities. Czechia became one of the first countries to deliver military aid, showcasing its proactive stance in supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Szóke & Kusica, 2023). As a member of NATO, Czechia's support for Ukraine aligns with the alliance's broader objectives of deterring Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. The provision of military aid assists Ukraine and reinforces the region's security architecture, thereby contributing to the stability of NATO's eastern flank.

The supplied equipment spans a broad range. 94,860 cannon and howitzer cartridges were shipped, including 10,000 this year. In the previous two years, 62 tanks, 131 infantry fighting vehicles, 26 reconnaissance chemical vehicles, 16 complete special air defense vehicles, 47 cars, 13 howitzers, 12 rocket launchers, 4,900 rocket launchers, 645 anti-tank missiles, 8,022 armored vehicles, 128 mortars, 17,400 mines for mortars, 435 anti-aircraft weapons, 41,258 firearms and over 4.2 million cartridges were donated (MOČR, 2024a). The Czech support also encompasses material aid, professional training, advisory assistance, and equipment repairs. In the observed period, almost 0.3 billion euros of material were sent from army warehouses to Ukraine. Czechia has sent approximately two-thirds of its heavy weaponry (Oryx, 2024).

The government immediately sent 16 million euros' worth of military equipment and weapons to Ukraine on February 27, 2022. Equipment included handguns with ammunition and artillery ammunition. The donated material was determined based on a list of Ukrainian partners. On December 1, 2022, the Czech Parliament approved Ukraine's request to train Ukrainian soldiers, committing to training up to 4,000 troops. According to Jana Černochová, the initial training focused on mechanized battalion skills and training for medical, chemical, and engineering specialists. The program was conducted in the Military Area of Libavá and included instruction on shooting techniques with military rifles, driving combat vehicles, and other tactical skills. She highlighted that the program benefits both Czech and Ukrainian soldiers, allowing the Czechs to gain valuable insights from Ukrainian combat experience, as some trainees had frontline experience while others were handling weapons for the first time (MOČR, 2023). The Army of the Czech Republic trained various Ukrainian specialists, such as engineering troops, chemical army, healthcare units, and mechanized battalions within the European Union Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM). A total of 3,240 soldiers have already undergone training on Czech territory (MOČR, 2024b). Czechia receives reimbursements from

the EU for this form of aid. So far, in 2024, it has received 10 million euros and over 1.5 million euros for training Ukrainian soldiers. These reimbursements will continue until 2027.

The war in Ukraine brought economic growth to the Czech producers and exporters of military equipment. As part of the aid, licenses for the export of military equipment were issued to Czech companies. In January 2023, Petr Fiala visited the Excalibur Group and wrote on one of their modernized T-72 tanks the message “*to brave defenders of Ukraine*” (Zuntych, 2023). These T-72 tanks were some of the main pieces of heavy equipment provided to Ukraine. In 2023, Czechia undertook to provide Ukraine with 90 T-72 tanks. Moreover, during the shelling of the Russian city of Belgorod by Ukrainian forces in December 2023, Czech weapons, specifically the Dana howitzer and the RM-15 Vampire rocket launcher, proved to be effective. The shelling allegedly had civil casualties and angered Russian diplomacy, which demanded an explanation from Czechia about the supplies of lethal weapons to Ukraine (iDNES.cz & ČTK, 2023).

In February 2024, Petr Fiala developed a unique initiative for the special EU Summit on Ukraine in Paris. Its goal is to buy artillery ammunition from countries outside the EU and replace slow ammunition production in Europe. In layperson’s terms, the Czech government is supposed to have an overview of loose ammunition worth 1.29 billion euros. Czech representatives said that they have located sources of hundreds of thousands of pieces of artillery ammunition abroad, which could be delivered to Ukraine in weeks if they secure financing with partners in the United States of America (USA) and the EU. Some states publicly declare their involvement in the initiative, while others do so under the condition of anonymity. Czech representatives do not provide details about the sources of ammunition, the number of pieces, and the amount purchased, and they intentionally create a network of speculation and disinformation to confuse the Russian regime (Bauer, 2024). For hundreds of millions of euros, Czechia buys hundreds of thousands of large-caliber ammunition on virtually all continents. The companies Czechoslovak Group and STV Group also produce ammunition themselves. Česká zbrojovka and the Omnipol group are also involved in the initiative. The government initiative also benefits from the contacts of Czech arms companies in the countries in the Global South, where they have to compete with Russian offers. Thanks to the initiative, Czechia earned the respect of Western countries, as documented by the statements of Joe Biden, Ursula von der Leyen, and David Cameron (Otto, 2024). Further confirmation of its success is Czechia’s ability to purchase ammunition for Ukraine with the income from frozen Russian assets in the EU. Generally, earlier initiatives (British, Estonian) were not as successful as the Czech initiative because, despite having the budget, they were not focused on the Global South. The money for military aid that Czechia supplies to Ukraine does not come from the Czech state budget. Instead, foreign partners like the USA, Netherlands, and Denmark pay for arms deliveries.

The Czech Ministry of Defense, the Ukrainian Embassy, scientist Dana Drábová, journalist Martin Ondráček, and entrepreneur and billionaire Dalibor Dědek launched the online initiative known as the Gift for Putin. This initiative aims to raise funds for Ukrainian military equipment. The Ministry of Defense oversees the procurement and transportation of the equipment to Ukraine, working closely with the Ukrainian Embassy. The platform has been quite successful. Under the auspices of the Czech Ministry of Defense, military equipment is purchased from Czech manufacturers and suppliers following the requirements of the Ukrainian army. The raised funds are used to buy essential military gear, including drones, T-72 tanks, and Model 58 machine guns. Additionally, the platform operates as an e-shop with pro-Ukrainian merchandise (Dárek pro Putina, 2024). The success of the Gift for Putin initiative led to the foundation of the Endowment Fund for Ukraine, which is focused more on general aid and the restoration of critical infrastructure.

Drones equipped with plastic explosives were collected during the Operation Drönbumm campaign on the Gift for Putin website. One of the most famous pieces of military equipment

bought using the collected funds is the model T-72 tank Tomáš, named after the first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, for 1.2 million euros, and 15 pieces of the mobile air defense system Viktor. At the time of writing, the aid collection is focused on buying a Sikorsky UH-60A Black Hawk helicopter named Čestmír. Three hundred thirty aid collections connected to Ukraine have been made on the Donio (2024) portal, which has often been used to assist ill or poor people since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, and over 175,000 euros have been collected so far.

### **3.4 Economic Assistance**

One of the primary forms of economic assistance has been direct financial aid. Czechia's strategy includes grants and loans to stabilize the Ukrainian economy, which the war has severely impacted. In addition to direct financial assistance, Czechia has focused on supporting the reconstruction of critical infrastructure in Ukraine, as the war has caused extensive damage to infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and public utilities. Moreover, Czechia has promoted trade relations with Ukraine.

Czechia significantly increased agricultural product exports from Ukraine after the Russian invasion (Křovák, 2024). Importing cheap Ukrainian grain, forbidden in several European countries, within the EU's liberalization of imports from Ukraine, and strengthening the EU's green agenda, angered the Czech farmers. In cooperation with anti-governmental individuals, they organized protests against the government in February and March 2024. In July 2023, the cabinet approved the Ukraine Fund to ensure short-term business ventures in Ukraine. The Export Guarantee and Insurance Corporation (EGAP) has insured 20 projects worth approximately 16.5 million euros, primarily in the agriculture and food industries.

Cooperation in energy policy is also vital. Russian attacks have heavily targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure, making its restoration a strategic priority for maintaining the country's defense capabilities. Czech companies have long been supplying energy materials to Ukraine, and the government aims to strengthen the collaboration further. It also seeks to expand cooperation in the energy sector, covering areas such as the storage and supply of gas or oil from non-Russian sources, the development of nuclear energy, renewable energy sources, and hydrogen production.

The Czech Ministry of Finance, in response to inquiries from both the professional and general public, confirmed its clear intention to extend until 2026 the possibility of tax-deductible assistance to Ukraine on tax measures related to the armed conflict in Ukraine caused by the invasion of the Russian Federation. Financial donations, for example, to Czech organizers of public benefit collections, are legally deductible from the tax base. Since 2022, deducting gratuitous contributions to support Ukraine's defense efforts has also been possible. Additionally, tax deductions are allowed for donations made directly to Ukraine in 2022 or to Ukrainian non-profit organizations (MFČR, 2024).

### **3.5 Humanitarian Assistance**

Humanitarian assistance has taken various forms, including providing essential supplies, medical aid, and support for refugees, reflecting a strong commitment to alleviating the suffering caused by the conflict. One of the primary avenues of humanitarian assistance has been the delivery of essential goods and services to those affected by the war. The Czech government and NGOs have mobilized resources to provide displaced individuals and families with food, clothing, and hygiene products. It also lobbied for increased support from the EU and other international bodies, emphasizing the need for a coordinated response to the humanitarian crisis.



Czechia has formalized a contract to provide medical assistance to Ukrainian soldiers, allowing treatment within its territory. Czechia has also sent four shipments of medical supplies in coordination with partners such as the Fire Rescue Service. This aid was provided under the umbrella of the MEDEVAC program. It is a permanent health humanitarian program of Czechia, which, since 1993, has focused on providing medical care to vulnerable groups of the population in regions affected by migration, burdened by many refugees, or in places where specialized professional care is unavailable.

In addition, Czechia has pledged 1 million euros through the Help on the Spot program, directed by the Red Cross, with funds specifically earmarked for medical care and essential support in Ukraine. This includes 64,000 euros for the burn center in Lviv for medical equipment needs after recent bombings, 64,000 euros for a Kyiv hospital for gauzes, bandages, and surgical supplies, and 12,000 euros for needles, cannulas, and thermodecks, which were handed over to the Ukrainian Embassy in Czechia. Czechia has also supplied Ukraine with 22 gasoline and diesel fuel tankers valued at 1.6 million euros. Contributions totaling 2 million euros have been made in the form of ballistic protection, optical equipment, and other small military items. Also, 34,000 euros were allocated for 52 ballistic vests, transferred from the Czech General Directorate of Customs to their Ukrainian counterparts (MZV, 2025).

A humanitarian aid package of 560,000 euros for non-perishable food was approved on April 6, sourced from the State Material Reserves Administration. Additionally, 84,000 euros have been allocated for materials to support the evacuation of museum collections and cultural heritage. Several regional governments also cooperated with Ukraine, not only by hoisting the Ukrainian flag but also by helping refugees. The Vysočina Region sent durable food to the Uzhhorod Region, and the Central Bohemian Region participated in charity collections organized by Czech NGOs. Several churches active in Czechia also participated in humanitarian collections.

Trauma packages were sent to Ukraine through the Czech branch of the Red Cross. The Fire Rescue Service donated six firefighting vehicles to Ukraine, which it had retired from its fleet. Thanks to donations from private donors, all these vehicles had ladders and platforms, and they were expanded further by two power stations and two lighting towers. The total value of the donation was 180,000 euros. In 2022, the Czech Red Cross provided Ukraine with medical vehicles, supplies, and equipment valued at approximately 4 million euros. Following the invasion, the organization has delivered aid worth 5 million euros within 10 months, with a total material weight of 416.1 tons (Český červený kříž, 2023). This aid included medical supplies, hospital equipment, medicine, water purification systems, and personal protective gear. The provision of ambulances and other vehicles was also significant. In addition to providing material aid, the organization dispatched medical teams to operate directly in Ukraine. Moreover, it launched a public fundraising campaign that raised over 12 million euros.

Together with a team from Prague, the Ukrainian Embassy launched an online fundraising campaign to support children's hospitals in Kyiv. The goal was to raise sufficient funds to purchase essential medical equipment. The Ukrainian Ministry of Health oversees allocating and procuring items purchased with donations. Many humanitarian aid collections on Donio (2024) focused on Ukrainian hospitals, schools, and individuals with a tragic fate. People in Need, one of the most famous Czech NGOs, helps Ukraine primarily through individual material aid to people or education facilities (Člověk v tísni, 2024). Czech billionaire and founder of the internet search engine Seznam.cz, Ivo Lukačovič, twice sent 4 million euros to People in Need's collections for Ukraine, firstly after the massacre in Bucha and then after the bombing of a children's oncologic hospital in Kyiv.

### 3.6 Czech Aid to Ukraine in Numbers and Comparison to Other Countries

By August 2024, Czech aid to Ukraine and its population will correspond to roughly 4.5 billion euros. This amount is based on data from the domestic Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and data from the Ukraine Support Tracker prepared by the Kiel Institut (2024). Based on the author's experience, the institute provides the best information about aid to Ukraine, especially with the possibility of comparing all 41 involved countries. Overall, Czech assistance can be divided into two essential parts. The first is the aid that Czechia provided directly on its territory, namely to Ukrainian refugees. The second is the aid that Czechia transferred to Ukraine – experts from the Kiel Institut (2024) estimated it to be 2.6 billion euros. The mentioned data for aid to Ukraine includes the military, financial, and humanitarian assistance that individual countries have transferred (or are guaranteed to transfer) to Ukraine since February 24, 2022. Total Czech aid to Ukraine, i.e., the sum of the financial expression of its two mentioned parts, thus exceeded 4.5 billion euros in the middle of 2024. Czechia is in 11th place among countries aiding Ukraine in terms of GDP and 15th place in absolute numbers. Baltic and North European states are at the top of the list of donors, likely due to their proximity to Russia. Of the countries geographically distant from Russian danger, only the Netherlands is more active than Czechia. The EU, which attempts to frame and coordinate assistance to Ukraine, provides a reliable source showing the statistics and other information regarding the aid of the member states (European Council, 2024). The information is divided into economic, military, and humanitarian assistance, reception of refugees, investigation and prosecution of war crimes, and protection of children. Table 1 depicts the comparison of the assistance of selected Central European countries.

*Tab. 1: Czech support in comparative perspective*

| Country  | Relative aid to Ukraine<br>[Index per GDP*] | Main characteristics                              |
|----------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Czechia  | 9                                           | High per capita, early heavy weapons, NGOs active |
| Poland   | 8                                           | Largest refugee host, consistent military aid     |
| Germany  | 4                                           | Largest donor in absolute terms, slower start     |
| Slovakia | 5                                           | Significant despite having a smaller capacity     |
| Hungary  | 2                                           | Minimal support, political obstructionism         |

\* This is not a direct official indicator, but rather an author-constructed index designed to compare the relative share of support each country provides concerning the size of its economy (GDP). For easier comparison, this share is rescaled to a scale where 10 indicates the highest relative level of support among the countries under study.  
*Source: Own using (Kiel Institut, 2024)*

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Research Question 1 (RQ1)

Czechia's support is driven by the securitization of the Ukrainian question, portraying the war as an existential threat to Central Europe. This framing legitimized extraordinary measures, prioritized foreign commitments over domestic popularity, and reflected the government's pro-Western orientation. Historical experiences with the Soviet Union, with Russia's dominant position, particularly the 1968 invasion, also reinforced this stance.

Taken together, the evidence shows a two-stage trajectory. From 2014 to 2021, Czech discourse was fragmented and episodic. By late 2021, parliamentary debate and ministerial communications increasingly referenced sovereignty, international-law violations, and alliance solidarity, thickening the preconditions for a consolidated securitization. After February 2022, securitization intensified and consolidated. The executive and both chambers framed Russia's aggression as an existential threat to European order and Czech interests, and audience

acceptance materialized through formal acts and rapid administrative uptake. Crucially, these speech acts were coupled with named commitments. For example, as early as February 27, 2022, the government announced 16 million euros of military support, signaling that extraordinary measures were necessary and immediately actionable. Similar coupling recurs in subsequent months across domains. Public commitment is a performative extension of the speech act in securitization terms.

Four mechanisms linking speech acts to promised measures were identified. Legal-normative included formal resolutions and joint statements that codified the threat and legitimate exceptional steps (the Chamber of Deputies’ resolution labelling the Russian regime terroristic). Budgetary-procedural involved off-cycle reallocations, fast-track releases from the state stocks, and special appropriations linked to named instruments. Institutional included activation or scaling of dedicated programs, e.g., the MEDEVAC framework (contracted treatment of Ukrainian soldiers, multiple consignments of medical supplies) and State Material Reserves releases. Narrative included threat cues (aggression, existential threat), alliance solidarity, and civilian-protection ethics.

By 2023-2024, the emergency frame will be routinized. Repeated commitments migrated into standard program lines and budget chapters (stable humanitarian pipelines, longer-horizon training), indicating de-exceptionalization without de-securitization. Securitization succeeded when existential stakes and referent objects were explicit, promised measures were named, quantified, and time-bound, and an identifiable audience (parliament, cabinet, allied partners) signaled uptake. In a small or mid-sized state, the speech-commitment coupling is a pragmatic pathway from rhetoric to policy.

Regarding the general public as part of the audience, it is polarized. A liberal, pro-Western camp dominates the government, while opposition parties, far-right and far-left groups, and protest movements criticize aid as neglecting domestic needs. Large-scale protests highlighted dissatisfaction with inflation and energy prices, while pro-Ukraine demonstrations underscored civil solidarity. The controversy reflects a divide between liberal-globalist and conservative-nationalist segments of society.

#### 4.2 Research Question 2 (RQ2)

Aid was comprehensive and multifaceted, as can be seen in Table 2. Textually, assistance forms were not isolated. They appeared as co-announced packages with explicit threat cues and legality frames, generating speech-instrument bundles that audiences can endorse. Over time, repetition of this coupling mechanism fostered audience habituation. The same categories of promise (MEDEVAC consignments, standardized humanitarian lines, training quotas) reappeared within ordinary programming.

**Tab. 2:** *Forms of Czech assistance to Ukraine (2022-2024)*

| Dimension    | Examples of support                                                                      | Key actors                                        |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Political    | Diplomatic visits, parliamentary resolutions, and EU Council presidency agenda.          | Government, Parliament, Presidency.               |
| Military     | Weapons delivery (light and heavy), training of soldiers, and global ammunition project. | Ministry of Defense, Army, NGOs (Gift for Putin). |
| Economic     | Direct financial aid, export insurance, nuclear cooperation, and trade facilitation.     | Government, EGAP, Czech companies.                |
| Humanitarian | Refugee reception, MEDEVAC program, Red Cross relief, NGO crowdfunding.                  | Ministry of Interior, NGOs, and civil society.    |

Source: Own

Military and financial promises communicate geopolitical resolve to allied and defense audiences. Humanitarian promises mobilized civil society and municipal partners. Table 2 shows that the diversified portfolio observed in 2022-2024 distributes political and fiscal load, increasing the durability of support.

The findings confirm that Czechia has played an unusually active role in assisting Ukraine, especially relative to its size and GDP. However, this fact contains vulnerabilities: while international recognition has strengthened Czechia's reputation as one of the most prominent supporters of Ukraine, domestic polarization and economic fatigue cast doubt on the long-term sustainability of such policies.

Compared to other authors, the results align with Gardocki (2023), who emphasized the consistency of Czech governmental support, and Czyż (2024), who noted Czechia's activism within the V4 context. At the same time, this article nuances their conclusions by highlighting the unique Czech initiatives, such as global ammunition procurement, which receive less attention in existing literature. Unlike Kazharski (2023), who described elements of normalization of the Russian invasion in Central Europe, this study demonstrates that Czechia diverges from this pattern, adopting a strong anti-Russian stance. The critique of findings thus lies in the balance between activism abroad and controversy at home, which remains a central theme requiring further research.

### **4.3 Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited by its focus on commitments rather than on actual deliveries, which introduces uncertainty, as reporting lags and restricted access affect accuracy. The case study design restricts the generalizability of findings beyond the Czech context, even though comparisons are suggested.

## **Conclusion**

Czechia's support for Ukraine following the Russian invasion has been multifaceted and comprehensive. It addresses not only Ukraine's immediate needs but also reflects a broader commitment to upholding human rights, democratic values, and a functioning economy in the face of aggression. The Ukrainian question is highly securitized in Czechia despite the country not neighboring Russia. Czech political elites consistently framed Russia's aggression as an existential threat to European order and Czech national interests, and this framing did not remain rhetorical. Public speech acts were immediately paired with named, quantified, and time-bound commitments, converting exceptional language into implementable measures. Empirically, four mechanisms described in the Discussion underpinned this process.

Two implications follow. First, publicly promising specific measures is a performative extension of the speech act that helps transform emergency rhetoric into sustained policy. Second, routinized sustainability means that assistance can be maintained at lower rhetorical cost, mitigating fatigue even as domestic politics polarize.

The liberal and pro-Western governments play the leading role in securitization. Securitization is not without controversy, from the limitation or banning of the media sharing alternative explanations of the war to employment problems or even prosecution for people sharing these narratives. Generally, the accusation of being pro-Russian is one of the most potent weapons on the Czech domestic political scene.

The inevitable exhaustion from helping Ukraine is noticeable in Czech society. It is related to the negative economic development of the last few years and the presence of more than half a million Ukrainians on Czech territory. Ukrainians are culturally and linguistically similar to

Czechs but mostly form closed communities. Moreover, some groups suspect them of abusing the Czech social system. These issues lead to the growing popularity of opposition, which might announce the restriction or outright cessation of aid to Ukraine and Ukrainians residing in Czechia. Despite criticism, the Czech government has maintained its pro-Ukraine stance, emphasizing the strategic importance of supporting Ukraine's sovereignty. Nevertheless, future policy sustainability will depend on electoral outcomes, EU and NATO frameworks, and the balance between foreign commitments and domestic demands.

The support for Ukraine is split into various sectors and can be further divided by the type of supporter. Activity is observed in supranational integrations with Czech involvement, the central government, regional governments, NGOs, churches, crowdfunding campaigns, and active individuals, including philanthropic billionaires.

Czechia stands out from other countries that support Ukraine in several ways. The most important is the Czech initiative to buy weapons worldwide, with some degree of seller secrecy. Other unique campaigns are focused on crowdfunding for military equipment using typical Czech gallows humor. Grassroots initiatives such as the Gift for Putin highlighted the Czech public's role in mobilizing resources for Ukraine. In conclusion, Czechia has demonstrated substantial support for Ukraine in response to Russian aggression. Its commitments have been reflected through multilateral engagements, bilateral agreements, and proactive initiatives within NATO and the EU frameworks.

Future studies should expand on several areas that remain underexplored. First, a systematic comparative analysis between Czechia and other European states would provide insights into whether Czechia's activism is unique or part of a broader regional pattern. Second, longitudinal research assessing how sustainable Czech support is over time is needed. Third, the role of grassroots initiatives and civil society, such as crowdfunding campaigns, should be investigated more thoroughly.

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## MALÁ ZEMĚ, ALE VELIKÁ POMOC: ANALÝZA ČESKÉ ZAHRANIČNÍ POLITIKY A POMOCI UKRAJINĚ BĚHEM PROBÍHAJÍCÍ VÁLKY

Cílem tohoto článku je zhodnotit, jak Česko formovalo a realizovalo svou politiku vůči Ukrajině během války, se zvláštním zřetelem na interakci mezi politickým diskurzem a materiální pomocí. S využitím teorie sekuritizace zkoumá rámec politické, vojenské, ekonomické a humanitární podpory. Metodika případové studie založená na oficiálních dokumentech, statistikách a sekundárních zdrojích ukazuje, že Česko se stalo jedním z neaktivnějších podporovatelů Ukrajiny v poměru k jeho velikosti a hrubému domácímu produktu (HDP). Studie zdůrazňuje sekuritizaci tématu a rámcuje ruskou invazi jako středoevropskou hrozbu. Závěr zdůrazňuje jedinečnost českých iniciativ a jejich dopady na domácí politiku a mezinárodní závazky.

## EIN KLEINES LAND, ABER EINE GROßE HILFE: ANALYSE DER TSCHECHISCHEN AUßENPOLITIK UND DER HILFE FÜR DIE UKRAINE WÄHREND DES AKTUELLEN KRIEGES

Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, zu bewerten, wie Tschechien seine Politik gegenüber der Ukraine während des Krieges gestaltet und umgesetzt hat, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wechselwirkung zwischen politischem Diskurs und materieller Hilfe. Unter Verwendung der Securitization-Theorie untersucht er den Rahmen der politischen, militärischen, wirtschaftlichen und humanitären Unterstützung. Die auf offiziellen Dokumenten, Statistiken und Sekundärquellen basierende Fallstudienmethodik zeigt, dass Tschechien im Verhältnis zu seiner Größe und seinem Bruttoinlandsprodukt (BIP) zu einem der aktivsten Unterstützer der Ukraine geworden ist. Die Studie betont die Securitization des Themas und stellt die russische Invasion als eine mitteleuropäische Bedrohung dar. Die Schlussfolgerung unterstreicht die Einzigartigkeit der tschechischen Initiativen und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Innenpolitik und die internationalen Verpflichtungen.

## MAŁY KRAJ, ALE OGROMNA POMOC: ANALIZA CZESKIEJ POLITYKI ZAGRANICZNEJ I WSPARCIA DLA UKRAINY PODCZAS TRWAJĄCEJ WOJNY

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest podsumowanie, w jaki sposób Czechy kształtowały i realizowały swoją politykę wobec Ukrainy w czasie wojny, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem interakcji pomiędzy dyskursem politycznym a pomocą materialną. Wykorzystując teorię sekurytyzacji, bada ramy wsparcia politycznego, wojskowego, gospodarczego i humanitarnego. Studium przypadku oparte na oficjalnych dokumentach, statystykach i źródłach wtórnych pokazuje, że Czechy stały się jednym z najbardziej aktywnych krajów wspomagających Ukrainę w stosunku do swojej wielkości i produktu krajowego brutto (PKB). Badanie podkreśla sekurytyzację tematu i przedstawia rosyjską agresję jako zagrożenie dla Europy Środkowej. Wnioski akcentują wyjątkowość czeskich inicjatyw oraz ich konsekwencje dla polityki wewnętrznej i zobowiązań międzynarodowych.