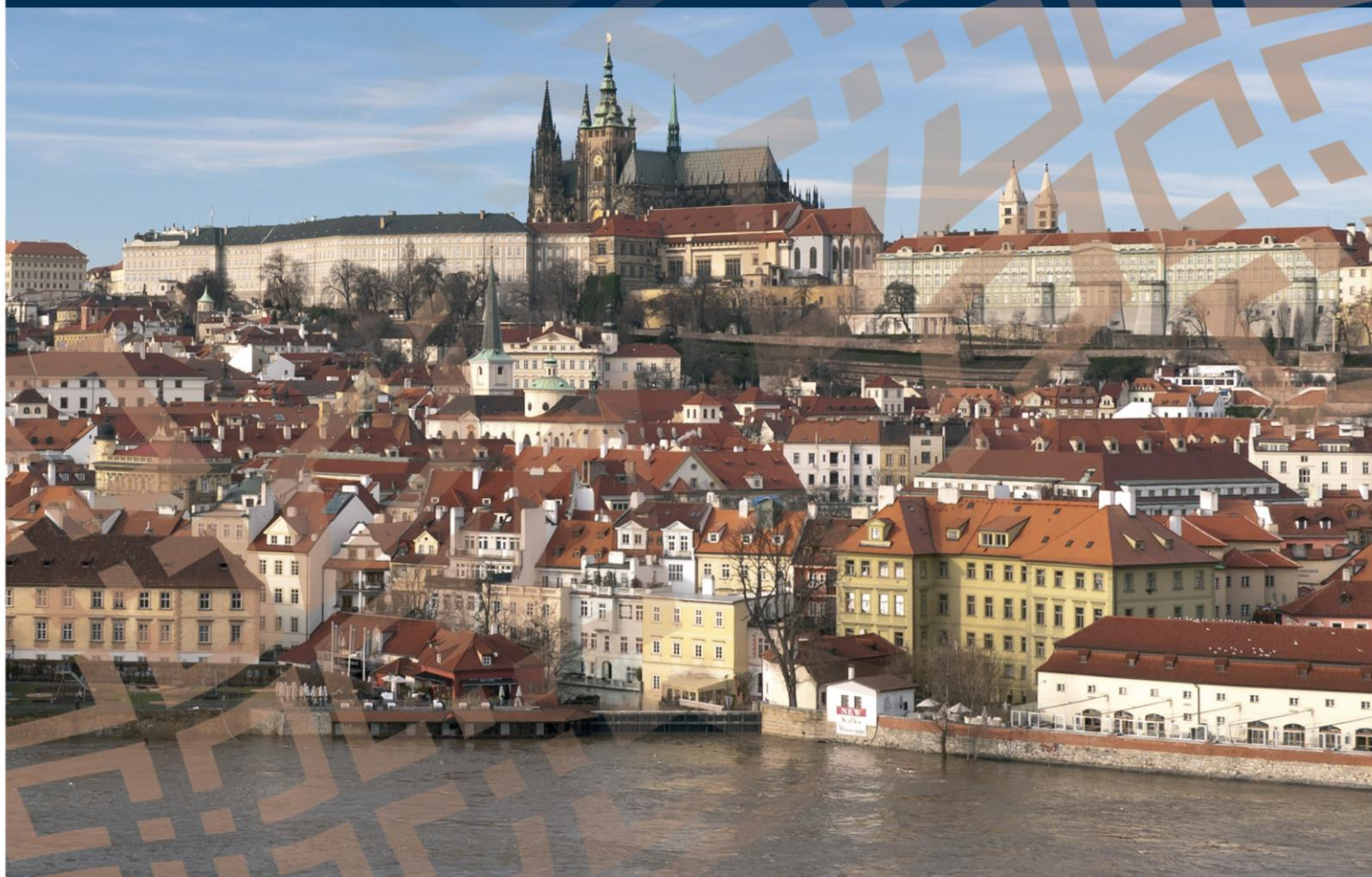




CENTRUM TRANSATLANTICKÝCH VZTAHŮ
Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations

PCTR Newsletter

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Message from the Director

Dear readers,

the Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations finished the year 2014 with Dore Gold 's lecture about Radical Islam, the West and the Future of the Holy City, which was attended by more than 160 persons. In addition, for the first time you have an opportunity to find a video record from a PCTR event on our [YouTube channel](#).

We have already been preparing outcomes of our projects for you, which are supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Representation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic and Korea Foundation. In the New Year, you can look forward to very interesting academic texts, on which we are going to inform you.

As always, we are offering a report about the events we have organized, followed by a brief review of the most important news in the field of Euro-Atlantic relations.

*Alexandr Vondra
Director*

PCTR Bulletin

The PCTR, Embassy of the State Israel in the Czech Republic and Garamond Publisher organized a public lecture with the title: **Radical Islam, the West and the Future of the Holy City**. The event took place on 8th December at the CEVRO Institute. **The lecture was given by the former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dore Gold.**

The lecture was held on the occasion of publishing the Czech version of Mr. Gold's book "The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City". **Tomas Pojar, the former Czech Ambassador to the State of Israel and the vice-president of the CEVRO Institute, opened and hosted the event.**



Dore Gold, who is currently the president of the think tank "Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs", spoke about the history of Jerusalem and focused also on uncovering the roots of the ongoing tensions between the Jews and the Arabs. Mr. Gold then answered many questions from the audience.



The attendants of the lecture had a unique chance to buy the book "The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City" for a discounted price and get the autograph of the distinguished author.

Our thanks belong to our media partners reviewed journal Defense and Strategy, ertz.cz, and the Czech - Israeli Chamber of Commerce.

A photo gallery from the lecture is available [here](#) and a video record [here](#).

Events in Euro-Atlantic relations (December 2014)

The South Stream project has been cancelled due to the uncooperative approach of the EU and Bulgaria. The chief executive of Gazprom Alexei Miller announced it on 1st December, during his visit to Turkey. Instead, Russian representatives were considering construction of an undersea pipeline to Turkey, with an annual capacity of 63 billion cubic meters.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/01/us-russia-gas-gazprom-pipeline-idUSKCN0JF30A20141201>

A Polish tank battalion will be a part of the temporary NATO Very High Readiness Joint Forces. The Polish minister of foreign affairs Grzegorz Schetyna announced it on 3rd December. The NATO foreign affairs ministers decided on forming temporary quick response force during their meeting on 2nd December. This temporary „spearhead” should reach its combat readiness as soon as at the beginning of 2015 in order to provide a possibility to react to potential threats. It would be replaced with a newly formed combat-ready unit at the beginning of 2016. Apart from Polish tanks, the force is to consist of German, Dutch and Norwegian Army.

http://www.defence24.com/news_polish-tanks-core-of-the-nato-spearhead-force,
http://www.natoaktual.cz/polsko-poskytne-tanky-pro-nove-sily-velmi-rychle-reakce-nato-ptm-na_media.aspx?c=A141205_151546_na_media_m02

Five Czech JAS-39 Griffin fighter aircrafts left airbase on Iceland on 4th December. Czech pilots have been guarding Iceland's air space, as this NATO member does not have its own air-force. They have spent nine weeks there and moved back to the tactical air-force base in Caslav.

<http://www.mise.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/gripeny-naposledy-vzletly-z-islandskeho-letiste-keflavik-105292/>

The Czech Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec and his Austrian counterpart Johanna Mikl-Leitner signed a new agreement on cross-border police cooperation between the two countries on 5th December in Brussels. It replaced the previous agreement signed in 2006 that was not suitable for current circumstances. The new agreement sets conditions for common police actions under the leadership of one country. It also gives policemen permission to act along both sides of the border in case health or security of citizens is threatened.

<http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ministri-vnitra-ceska-a-rakouska-podepsali-smlouvu-o-policejni-spolupraci.aspx>

Russian army conducted 'battle readiness' drills in the Kalinigrad region between 5th and 10th December. General Andrey Kartapolov said the main objective had to repel the attack from Europe. Some 9000 soldiers, 642 army vehicles including 250 tanks and transporters, 100 artillery units, 55 warships and Iskander rocket system were deployed during the maneuvers. Russian ministry of Defense later announced that all units proved "genuine qualities, great capacities and high combat readiness". The drills were ordered by the Russian president Vladimir Putin.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/putin-naridil-vojske-cviceni-na-hranici-s-nato-fuf-na_media.aspx?c=A141217_165655_na_media_m02

U.S. defense budget has been increased to 585 billion dollars. The new budget was approved by The Congress on 13th December and is ready to be signed by the President Barack Obama. A bigger part of the money, some 521 billion dollars, would be used for basic financing of the army. Some 63, 7 billion dollars could be spent on operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Around 5 billion dollars could be used to support military operations against the Islamic State. The budget also includes spending on construction of new ships, aircrafts, and weapons and money to increase salary of soldiers by 1 %.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/senat-schvalil-rozpocet-usa-na-obranu-d8u-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A141213_071131_zahranicni_cen

On 16th December 141 people, 132 of them children were massacred in Pakistan army-run school in Peshawar in a raid by Taliban terrorists. Gunmen had no demands and started shooting right after they had entered the school building. All seven terrorists were killed in a skirmish with Pakistani soldiers.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/taliban-utok-na-skolu-pakistan-pesavar-dy3-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A141216_095722_zahranicni_voz

Russian economy sinks into financial crisis. Reaching a 16-year low, the ruble fell to 80 against the USD on 16th December, compared to 40 against USD in October. Rubble is dropping partly due to the economic sanctions against Russia. However, the main cause of the problems of Russian economy seems to be low oil prices as the income from oil and gas exports make 50 % of Russian state budget.

<http://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/7550355/rubel-pocitil-pad-na-dno-rusko-je-vo-financnej-krize.html>

The U.S. president Barack Obama signed into law the Ukraine Freedom Support Act on 18th December. It allows U.S. to provide lethal and nonlethal military assistance to Ukraine. The act also enables U.S. to support Ukraine's energetics, defense sector, civil society and programs to tackle Russian propaganda. The law also allows expansion of sanction on Russian energy sector and defense industry.

<http://www.praguepost.com/world-news/43382-obama-signs-ukraine-freedom-support-act>

On 18th December Russian marines left French port of Saint-Nazaire, where they were trained as the crew for the new Mistral class amphibious assault ship. First of the warships named Vladivostok should have been handed over to the Russians by October 2014, but France has postponed the fulfillment of the contract indefinitely due to the Ukrainian crisis.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/rusko-poslalo-vojaky-z-francie-domu-dbn-/na_zpravy.aspx?c=A141230_080407_na_zpravy_m00

USA has asked China for cooperation in investigation of the hackers attack on the Sony Pictures company. Media revealed the information on 21st December citing anonymous sources from the U.S. government. USA and China, which is considered as one of the North Korean biggest allies, allegedly share information on the issue. It is said that Beijing agreed with Washington's statement that hacker attacks represent serious breach of the cyber security standards. Meanwhile, Korea has repeatedly refused the accusations.

<http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-63286370-ameriane-kvuli-kybernetickemu-utoku-na-sony-pozadali-o-pomoc-cinu>

Finnish citizens would decide about joining the NATO in referendum. The leader of governing social democrats Antti Rinne announced the information on 25th December. By doing so, Rinne denied previous statements by other Finnish politicians who had claimed the referendum would not be necessary.

<http://echo24.cz/a/wB2jp/finove-o-moznem-vstupu-do-nato-pry-rozhodnou-v-referendu>

Russian president Vladimir Putin signed new Russian military doctrine on 26th December. According to the document NATO was the most serious external threat due to ongoing expansion of its influence and increasing of its military capacities. Moscow has also claimed its right to preemptive nuclear strike. Activities aiming at destabilization of the country and terrorism were identified as the most dangerous inner threats.

<http://echo24.cz/a/wSfJL/putin-schvalil-novou-doktrinu-nato-je-pro-rusko-hlavni-nebezpeci>

The Islamic State has killed over one hundred of its affiliates during last three months of 2014. Between 120 and 200 people have lost their lives due to violation of Islam. Some of them came from Europe and were killed when tried to go back home. The media informed about the issue on 29th December.

<http://echo24.cz/a/wjaEB/islamsky-stat-zavrazdil-az-200-vlastnich-stoupencu>

Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko signed a law cancelling the neutrality of Ukraine on 29th December. Poroshenko also promised to introduce reforms aiming to meet standards required to become a NATO candidate country. Consequently, the referendum about Ukraine joining the Alliance would be organized. However, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that Ukraine needed to fulfill plenty of requirements before the real beginning of the joining process, solving its territorial disputes being one of them.

<http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/267889/porosenko-podpisal-zakon-o-zruseni-neutrality-ukrajiny/>

UN Security Council rejected the Arab - Palestinian draft of the Middle East Peace Resolution on 30th December. The draft presented by Jordan needed one more vote to pass. The proposal suggested signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Palestine within one year. The Israelis would have to leave the occupied areas in Gaza Strip, West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem by the end of 2017. USA and Australia voted against the draft. Five countries abstained from voting and eight supported the proposal. Even if there were more votes in favor, the resolution would not pass as the USA said in advance they were ready to use its veto.

http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/svet/severni_amerika/zpravy/rb-osn-odmitla-palestinsky-navrh-rezolute-o-okupovanych-uzemich/1163728

The new NATO mission in Afghanistan entitled Resolute Support has started. The new operation replaced the previous ISAF mission that came to its end on 31st December, after thirteen years. ISAF had been providing assistance to the Afghani government and international community in their common goal to keep the region in peace.

<http://www.mise.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/spojenecka-mise-isaf-v-afghanistanu-po-vice-nez-trinacti-letech-konci-105944/>