

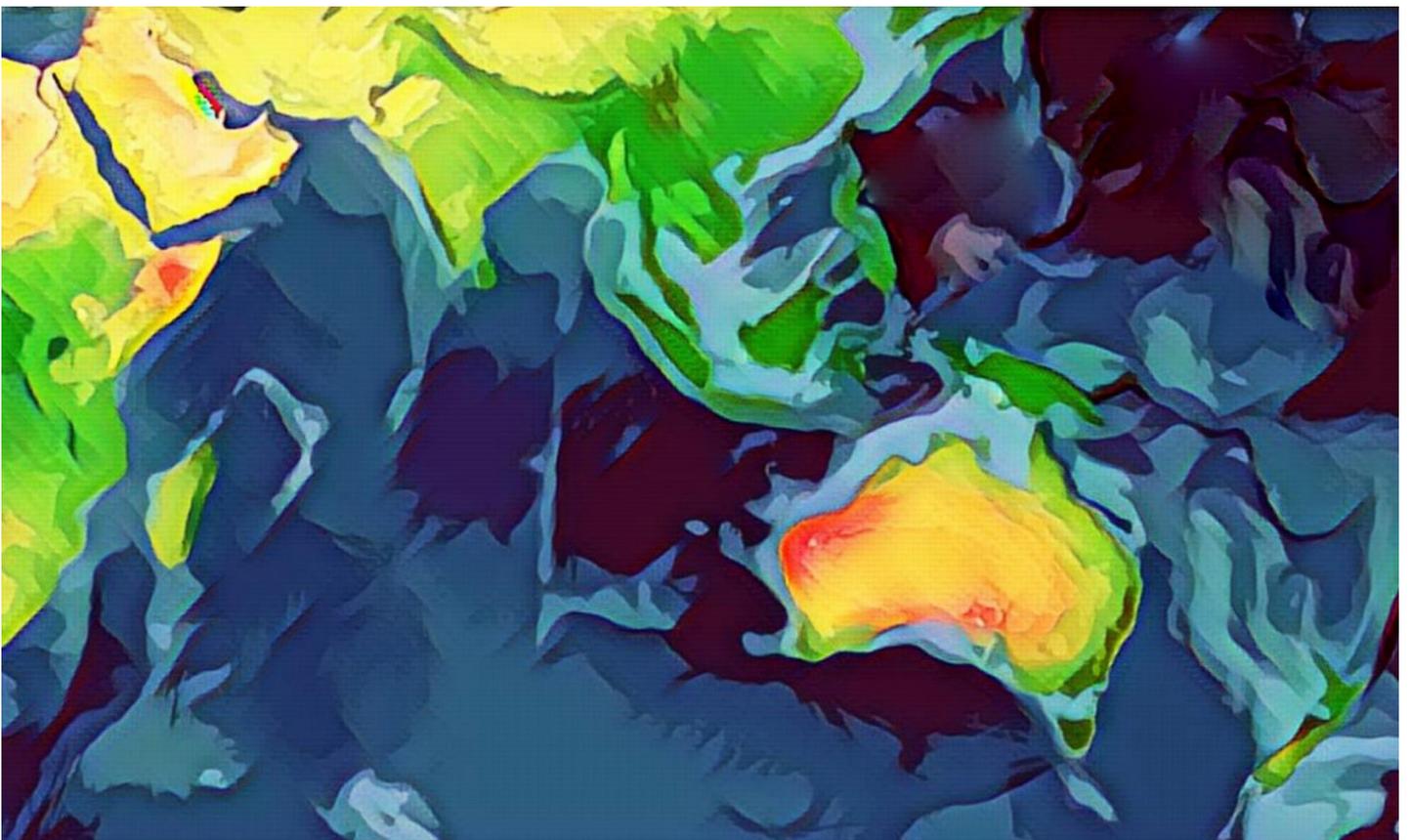


Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic's Strategy For Cooperation With The Indo-Pacific

Closer Than We Think

October 2022



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Why is the Indo-Pacific important for the Czech Republic?

- The Indo-Pacific has the **strategic, economic, demographic, political and security importance** to directly influence developments in Europe. It spans across four continents and two oceans.
- The Indo-Pacific is a **strategically located** region with vital trading, transport and shipping routes. It is a **world trade hub**.
- The Indo-Pacific is a large market of **4.24 billion people** (almost 60 per cent of total world population). It is home to **five out of the world's fifteen biggest economies** (in terms of GDP)¹.
- The Indo-Pacific produces **42 per cent of world's GDP** (compared to just one third in 2000). Its share in world economy is projected to exceed 50 per cent by 2050.
- The Indo-Pacific is **exceptional due to its economic growth and dynamism**. It has a young population, low-cost labour force, and an average GDP growth of 5.7 per cent. Its living standards are improving and its middle class is on the rise. Its increasingly strong purchasing power generates **unsatisfied demand**.
- The Indo-Pacific is among the prime movers of global **technological and social growth**. It is a crucial region in terms of **energy security and production of raw materials**.
- This creates **opportunities for greater activity for Czech companies** and mutual trade and investment. Our trade with the Indo-Pacific has yet to exploit the full **potential** of this rapidly growing region.
- The Indo-Pacific has a number of **regional economic and security target-oriented groupings** (CPTPP, IPEF, RCEP, AUKUS, Quad). They evolve dynamically and they have implications beyond their region. Indo-Pacific arrangements play a role in transatlantic relations as well as in the EU external relations. Many Indo-Pacific countries may be considered as **like-minded partners**. For example, the Czech Republic and its NATO allies share a partnership with four Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (AP4).

¹World Bank data on GDP, 2021

1 | INTRODUCTION

Cooperating with the Indo-Pacific: The Czech Republic's Strategy ("the Strategy") **explores the possibilities of our engagement in the region.** The Indo-Pacific is a region of sharply growing economic, political and security weight. It is a hub of global geopolitical and economic development, and the **fastest growing part of the world.** It is a region of opportunities, risks and threats, conflicts and potential partnerships, and a region where the Czech Republic has solutions to offer.

Politics and security

The region's internal dynamics and **intense geopolitical strife** are directly relevant to the interests of the Czech Republic and the entire EU. They will determine our future role in the region. A number of Indo-Pacific countries may be considered our **like-minded partners** sharing our values and principles. Our relations with the others are pragmatic and based on particular shared interests. The Czech Republic has several **strategic partners** primarily in the Asian region of the Indo-Pacific. Negotiations concerning **additional special partnerships** are under way. The Czech Republic and its NATO allies share a partnership with four Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (AP4).

The Indo-Pacific faces a number of economic, infrastructural and social challenges, which increase its **security risks.** Hybrid threats such as cyber-attacks are on the rise; there are diverse forms of radicalism and terrorism; and problems related to migration, development and environmental protection. The COVID-19 pandemic has added strength to some of the region's positive as well as negative trends.

Geopolitical competition and, at times, open disputes among some of the regional actors have the potential to spill over and create **zones of instability.** China's growing ambitions and assertive (if not confrontational) approach have given rise to tense political, economic and security relationships with countries within the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Beside China's quest for influence across the region, due account must be taken of the strategic and security interests of Russia and the Middle East countries. The Czech Republic's **natural partner and close ally** with important interests in the region is the **United States.**

In agreement with the EU, the Czech Republic sees China simultaneously as a partner, as an economic adversary, and as a systemic rival. Accordingly, the Strategy anticipates possible cooperation with China in areas where our interests overlap, and acknowledges that we remain divided on many issues such as human rights.

Threat to the rules-based order

Some of the region's countries violate **international and human rights law, including political and civil rights.** They call into question universal democratic principles and they undermine the UN's third pillar (Development). They attempt to redefine human rights and they commit human rights violations. Human rights protection is a sensitive topic in a number of Indo-Pacific countries. Protection, promotion and perception of human rights differ enormously from country to country. Lately, we have seen the human rights situation get worse in many countries across the region – and not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A good example of the way the rules-based international order can come under strain are the developments related to the freedom of navigation, including namely the breaches of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Economic hub

The Indo-Pacific is a region of worldwide **significance in terms of economic growth and opportunities**. It is a region of prominent non-European trade partners and **investors in modern technologies, innovations and connectivity**.

The Indo-Pacific is also a region where **strategic projections of the world's greatest political and economic powers intersect** – creating synergies as well as conflicts. This has direct implications for the functioning of multilateral trade and global supply chains, energy and raw materials security, and for creating innovations in sustainable development.

The impacts of climate change and water scarcity are the obvious challenges to sustainable development. The **security implications of investments** (especially in critical infrastructure and key sectors) are another increasingly pressing issue. Our export promotion policies must strike a balance between, on the one hand, security, human rights, and restrictive international arms control regimes and, on the other hand, the legitimate security needs of Indo-Pacific countries.

2 | POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Definition of the Indo-Pacific region

The Indo-Pacific region is not delineated in exact geographic or political terms. Different actors define it in different ways. For the purposes of the Czech Republic's Strategy, the "Indo-Pacific region" means the **territory bounded by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific**.

The Indo-Pacific has **40 countries and territories** (not counting Central Asian countries). **Eastern Asia** includes the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Mongolia, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Southern Asia includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. **Southeast Asia** includes Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and East Timor. **Oceania and Pacific states** include Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The **Strategy does not specifically address Central Asia**. However, this region is closely interlinked with the Indo-Pacific, and that is why the Strategy will also serve as a source of guidance for policies towards Central Asia, albeit in looser terms and focusing on security aspects and connectivity.

Basic documents

The main point of reference for the Czech Republic's relationship to the region is the **EU Strategy for Cooperation with the Indo-Pacific** (April 2021). This comprehensive policy document covers the wide spectrum of the EU's relationship to Indo-Pacific partners, including the commitment of the EU and its Member States to fostering the region's stability, prosperity and sustainable development.

Other EU policy documents relevant to the process of shaping and implementing the Strategy's goals are the **EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy** (2018) and the more recent Global Gateway (2021). The EU, NATO and OSCE have intense debates on the Indo-Pacific, its security challenges and threats, and on questions of cooperation with Asian partners. In addition, the Strategy is based on the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, EU Strategic Compass, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

National policy documents reflected in the Strategy include, above all, Conceptual Basis of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic (2015) and Security Strategy (2015) and, just as importantly, the Human Rights and Transition Cooperation Concept (2015), Development Cooperation Strategy 2018-2030, National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference (2021), and the Czech Government's Policy Statement (January 2022). Another relevant resource is the Czech Solutions for the Developing World, a policy document of the Economic Diplomacy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Any revisions of the above policy documents will be reflected in the Strategy.

3 | VISION

The Czech Republic will cooperate with Indo-Pacific countries to promote global security and prosperity, as well as respect for human rights and dignity.

To turn this vision into action, the Strategy identifies **four core priorities** in the Indo-Pacific: **partnership, security, prosperity, and sustainability**.

The Czech Republic will build on its long history of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the general awareness of our country, the good reputation of our products, and on the pillars of Czech foreign policy.

Our value framework is based on anchoring of the Czech Republic in the EU and NATO, our longstanding support of the present international rules-based order, our commitments arising from WTO membership, and our engagement in the areas of development, transition and human rights.

The Czech Republic will be **more visible** in the Indo-Pacific – not only in the context of our Presidency of the Council of the EU (second half of 2022) but also in the coming years. It will be active and will continue enhancing its presence. This will make the Czech Republic even more credible and attractive to its partners.

The Czech Republic will seek **innovative approaches** to its promotion, project implementation and to the building of partnerships across the government, non-governmental and business spheres. The methods of promotion and communication will be innovative as well.

In accordance with the long-term priorities of Czech foreign policy, we will continue to follow the human rights situation in the region and actively promote and support universal human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Strict **adherence to the fundamental principles** of our foreign policy is important for our overall credibility in the Indo-Pacific.

We will work as **efficiently** as possible towards our aims in the foreign policy, security and economic areas – both in asserting our core priorities and goals, and in using our cooperation with partners to create relevant synergies.

4 | MAIN GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

The strategic interest of the Czech Republic is complementary to the long-term interests of the EU, NATO and the main actors in the Indo-Pacific, e.g. the United States: the **Indo-Pacific must remain free, open and rules-based**. The dynamics of relationships within the region, and of relationships between the region and global actors, has direct implications for Europe.

To turn this interest into reality, the Strategy sets out four core priorities and seventeen goals for implementation.

4.1 | Priorities of the Czech Republic's cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Partnership

To keep the Strategy open-ended, we consider it useful to include all our Indo-Pacific partners, albeit to different degrees and in different ways. When developing our existing relations or establishing new ones, our crucial concern will be to have **rules-based partnerships** and to promote the **UN value framework**.

Security

Security cooperation is a crucial element of the Strategy. Our **response to security challenges** and our coordination with **allies, like-minded partners and multilateral mechanisms** will help reduce the potential for destabilization across the region and its parts.

Prosperity

As an open and export-oriented country, we need to have **good and transparent economic relations** with the Indo-Pacific in order to succeed in other areas. The Strategy will encourage diversification of trade and supply chains. It will use trade and investment opportunities to promote the **good name of the Czech Republic** in the region.

Sustainability

In line with **Agenda 2030** global commitments, the Czech Republic will work for steady development, less income inequality and more resilience across the region. We will focus on **innovation** and new technologies, including **digital partnerships**. Sustainability is the key cross-cutting topic to be mainstreamed into the processes of building viable economic relations, developing connectivity, and promoting the principles of fair competition and reciprocity. This will involve the pursuit of active raw materials diplomacy and transfers of know-how on sustainable use of mineral resources.

4.2 | Core goals

Partnership

1. Development of the Czech Republic's partnerships with individual countries in the region
2. Cooperation with Asian regional structures
3. Promotion of good governance and human rights
4. Promotion of the rules, international law and free trade

Beside continuous strengthening of our relations with **existing partners**, our cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries will focus on building new bilateral strategic partnerships (e.g. with India and Australia), **promoting the transatlantic link**, and cooperating with the United States in the region both on a **bilateral basis** and within those **multilateral formats** that have implications for the EU's and NATO's policies and relationships (e.g. Quad, AUKUS).

In addition, it is in the Czech Republic's interest to strengthen **relations with Taiwan and other regional partners in accordance with the Policy Statement of the Czech government (January 2022)** which undertook to “*deepen cooperation with democratic partners in the Indo-Pacific region (such as India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and others)*”.

The Czech Republic does not set out to gather as many partnerships as possible. We will regularly review each partnership and reconsider its format (or its existence) in the light of our security interests.

To strengthen its partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries, the Czech Republic wants to develop **deeper cooperation with regional formats**, especially with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Czech Republic is interested in broadening its cooperation with ASEAN institutions – both bilaterally and by getting involved in the relevant activities of the EU. The Czech Republic will support a move towards even closer EU-ASEAN relations heading towards a strategic partnership and greater economic and security cooperation between the two organizations. The Czech Republic wants to enhance its cooperation with other regional institutions such as ASEM or BIMSTEC.

One of the possible tools for building partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries is the **Visegrad Group's** cooperation format V4+. The V4 have regular dialogues with Japan and South Korea, and there is interest in similar cooperation with India. The V4+ format has some potential to help us develop our relations with the countries concerned; however, it is not in the Czech Republic's interest to let it outweigh our bilateral cooperation.

In accordance with the priorities of its human rights policy, the Czech Republic will support **good governance and improvement of the human rights situation** across the Indo-Pacific. This will involve promoting international human rights standards and open dialogues with national governments. This dialogue will take place bilaterally as well as on the EU level and in multilateral formats such as the UN Human Rights Council. Special attention will be paid to political and civil rights, including the freedom of speech (online as well as offline), freedom of association and assembly, and freedom of the media. Respect for the **principles of the rule of law** and fundamental **human rights** is an essential precondition for sustainable long-term cooperation on the bilateral as well as multilateral basis.

An open global economy based on market principles with efficient regulation and strong global institutions is the prerequisite for **sustainable globalization and prosperity**. In this spirit, the Czech Republic is committed to actively promoting the principles of the UN Charter, international law and a free rules-based international trade.

The Czech Republic will **work for effective multilateralism**, especially within the UN General Assembly and UN committees. We will coordinate the relevant steps with selected UN agencies and programmes.

Asian countries are strongly represented in **international organizations**. However, the Czech Republic has yet to exploit the potential of these cooperation fora. **Deeper cooperation with Asian countries** (e.g. **mutual support of candidatures**) can increase our weight in the relevant international organizations.

Security

5. Cooperation in the area of cyber security and in combating cyber-crime, building resilience, counteracting hybrid threats, and preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism
6. Security dialogue
7. Assistance with disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction (including humanitarian disasters), and strengthening the resilience
8. Support for the activities of security organizations and conflict prevention mechanisms

Taking into account its national capacities, the Czech Republic prefers to pursue its security interests **through international organizations** (EU, UN, NATO). The strength of our voice in each organization's policy-making process depends not only on our active engagement but also on the importance attached to the Indo-Pacific and its trends by our key allies.

It is in our interest to develop bilateral security cooperation with the region's countries. The cooperation must be **structured to reflect the Czech Republic's national and security interests**. Due to the diversity of the Indo-Pacific, cooperation will be considered on a country-by-country basis **and dependent on the types of challenges and threats**.

The Czech Republic prefers to develop cooperation (namely by sharing information and experience) in **cyber security, resilience building, counteracting cyber threats**, non-proliferation and arms control regimes, and in combating **cyber-crime** and protecting vital infrastructures. Other possible areas for cooperation include climate security, energy security, supply chain reliability and stability, promotion of international standards and the rule of law, and preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism.

Security dialogue with allies and like-minded partners is essential for deeper understanding and coordination in the region. It will be complemented by cooperation between **Defence Ministries, mainly in areas such as the defence industry and security structures**.

The Czech Republic's approach will not leave aside the problems of health protection and health risks, including epidemics. It will address **disaster risk prevention and reduction (including humanitarian disasters) and resilience building**.

Our **support for the activities of security organizations and conflict prevention mechanisms** will involve, most importantly, supporting the EU's more visible role and EU activities within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as the visibility of its role in regional organizations such as ASEAN. The Czech Republic will work together with other EU Member States, and with international security organizations and platforms active in the region (NATO, AUKUS, Quad) to assist, within its capacities, in the building of a **stable regional security architecture and conflict prevention mechanism**.

Prosperity

9. Increasing the visibility of the Czech Republic
10. Increasing the presence of the Czech Republic and Czech companies in the region
11. Academic, scientific and technical cooperation, people-to-people cooperation
12. Diversification of and better integration in trade and supply chains

Taking into account Indo-Pacific's profound economic potential, the Czech Republic has a crucial interest in the region's markets, with emphasis on promotion of our export and foreign direct investment to the region as well as to the Czech Republic. Investment promotion and protection must go hand in hand with **investment security screening** (especially in critical infrastructure and key sectors). The Czech Republic will actively develop bilateral cooperation in investment screening to harmonize our threat perception maps as far as possible.

To increase our economic relations with the Indo-Pacific successfully, we will need to bring into play **all available economic cooperation tools**. We need to select and fund appropriate projects, and create and support business centres and service hubs. At the same time, we must lose sight of security risks including interference and undue influence, economic dependence and leverage. **Our economic diplomacy projects**, our presence at relevant regional events, export incubators and other export promotion tools may help us as we move along this path.

The Czech Republic will **step up its cooperation in science, research and innovation**. Inter-university cooperation will be especially important as it typically prepares the ground for economic cooperation, foreign investment, and general people-to-people contacts. Our ambition and aim should be to create the best possible conditions for our entities (with an emphasis on reciprocity) while remaining **alert to security risks** including the risk of misuse of academic cooperation by foreign powers.

In the EU trade policy, the key precondition for the development of economic cooperation and diversification of value/supply chains is a **fully functioning multilateral trade system** represented by the WTO, and **broadening of the network of bilateral trade and investment agreements** to include additional Indo-Pacific partners (support of free trade agreements). The Czech Republic will actively support EU activities promoting open, sustainable and rules-based international trade. We need to incorporate in trade agreements ambitious and modern rules for digital trade in order to foster the atmosphere of trust necessary for technological development.

Many Indo-Pacific countries have **protectionist policies and both tariff and non-tariff barriers** that impeding economic cooperation. The Czech Republic will work through the EU and in coordination with like-minded partners both in the EU and in the Indo-Pacific to encourage implementation and enforcement of the **rules and standards of international trade, to help reduce unilateral strategic dependencies and diversify suppliers**, and to make the supply chains more reliable. This will involve, for example, supporting the negotiation of EU trade agreements.

Sustainability

13. Sustainable agriculture, circular and green economy, workforce mobility
14. Climate protection, support of sustainable development projects including biodiversity protection, energy and carbon sustainability projects
15. Active raw materials diplomacy
16. Support of regional cooperation, active role in the implementation of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy
17. Building of healthcare capacities

The Czech Republic's cooperation for sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific (including **biodiversity protection** projects, and **energy and carbon sustainability** projects) should be consistent with **sustainable trade** policies to safeguard environmentally friendly and socially compatible growth across the region.

In the light of Agenda 2030 and the results of the COP26 Glasgow climate conference (November 2021), the Indo-Pacific is clearly the natural choice for **more intensive cooperation on climate and environmental sustainability**. The cooperation should not be limited to environmental concerns. More than ever before, the success of sustainable agriculture, green economy and sustainability in workforce mobility depends on interconnection of regions and markets, and on the spread of crucial technologies.

Global development has forced EU countries including the Czech Republic to revise their energy and raw materials policies and diversify suppliers with the aim to strengthen their security. This opens up prospects for stronger cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners. Many Indo-Pacific countries have a relatively great potential for mineral and raw materials exploration. The good reputation of our geologists in the region is a good starting point. Czech companies can offer their Indo-Pacific partners complete value chains covering the whole raw materials cycle.

Connectivity is another horizontal topic in which long-term sustainability is a vital issue².

The Czech Republic believes that in order to promote sustainability and resilience, it is vital to engage EU partners and like-minded Indo-Pacific countries in debates on **ways to reduce unilateral economic dependence and improve the resilience of value chains**. The emphasis should be on **critical technologies and raw materials**. The Czech Republic supports the incorporation of trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters in trade agreements; however, TSD concerns should not play a dominant role in this respect.

To make the Czech Republic more competitive, we need to broaden our **digital partnerships**. We will actively engage in the implementation of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy (Connecting Europe and Asia: Building Blocks for an EU Strategy). However, when cooperating on connectivity issues in the region, we must not lose sight of the technical, political, security and social risks. Our cooperation must be consistent with the principles of fair competition and reciprocity, transparency and the rule of law. The focus must be on human rights.

Deeper connectivity and cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries, a region with prime global growth potential, will be an important factor for **sustainable economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic**. The Czech Republic will take part in projects **building healthcare capacities** in the Indo-Pacific as part of comprehensive post-Covid-19 recovery and renewal.

²Connectivity in terms of the document Connecting Europe and Asia: Building Blocks for an EU Strategy (2018) and the Council conclusions on connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU strategy, and the EU Global Gateway (December 2021).

4.3 | Principles for achieving the goals

Pragmatism

- a) Shared responsibility and cooperation with partners
- b) Reciprocity, transparency, level playing field
- c) Greater cooperation with regional organizations and institutions
- d) Support for the strategies and activities of the EU, NATO, UN and like-minded Indo-Pacific partners, including through the Czech Republic's activities in the UN

For the purposes of this document, pragmatism as a principle for achieving our goals consists in a **balanced approach to individual countries and the whole region in the process of promoting an international rules-based order** supported by **effective multilateralism and functioning international institutions**. Our pragmatic approach will be rooted in our **values**.

The dynamics of geopolitical relations requires us to **regularly review our partnerships as well as our policy towards the region**, including strategic partnerships, bilateral relations and engagement in regional formats. We should also look at the Indo-Pacific in the light of the roles played by its countries in multilateral formats.

To keep the relations coordinated and balanced, we need to have **closer inter-ministerial coordination** and the process must be **coordinated from the highest political level**.

The Czech Republic and the entire EU is a long-standing supporter of strengthening integration with the Indo-Pacific. We are interested to develop active cooperation with regional multilateral structures such as ASEAN. In doing so, we will keep promoting reciprocity, transparency and level playing field. We will continue to place emphasis on shared **responsibility and on interest in cooperation on the part of each partner country**.

Today, **multilateral formats and agreements** are one of our most effective ways to coordinate and make a difference in areas requiring comprehensive action, such as sustainable development, climate protection, trade relations, human rights, or in counteracting various types of security threats. In the longer run, we will consider broadening our cooperation with regional organizations and institutions (or moving it to a different format if needed). The cooperation will be complementary to the policies and activities of the EU, NATO and our other partners.

The Czech Republic is also ready to promote respect for the applicable rules and standards of the international regulatory framework across the Indo-Pacific in coordination with partners.

Synergies

- e) Synergy between the national strategy and the EU strategy for the Indo-Pacific
- f) Participation in projects of the EU and like-minded partners, including projects of the UN, OECD, regional banks and other partners
- g) More efficient use of all EU relevant instruments related to the region, including the NDICI - Global Europe

The Czech Republic's national activities should be closely linked, above all, with our activities and commitments stemming from EU and NATO membership. Our search for synergies will be guided by the idea of complementary and **practical cooperation within existing initiatives and programmes** of the EU, UN, NATO and other international entities, allies and partners such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the G7.

The Czech Republic will make efficient use of relevant EU financial instruments, including the **NDICI-Global Europe**. Implementation of the EU Global Gateway using the Team Europe approach and initiatives will also contribute to synergies within the EU.

Moreover, our national strategy is set to have a synergic effect of its own: a medium-sized, medium-weight country, with no direct geographic ties to the Indo-Pacific, may bring its own know-how into the overall cooperation process and its existing good bilateral relations in the region, to **enrich and inspire the EU approach**. This effect is not limited to our EU Presidency term. Our sound multi-layered relationships with the Indo-Pacific may help strengthen Europe's open strategic autonomy and shape its future policies in the region.

Each of our priorities and activities in the region will go through an inter-ministerial **consultation process** to ensure openness and transparency and avoid duplicities. We will also engage different levels of the public and private sectors, security structures, research and academic institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations.

Summary

The Indo-Pacific and its countries have changed profoundly in recent years. Their position and weight on the global political, security and economic scene is now completely different. On this basis, the Czech Republic has revised its position towards the region to reflect this change against the background of the evolving international environment. The aim is to take an active approach targeted on specific opportunities for cooperation.

The Czech Republic's strategy defines the Indo-Pacific loosely as a region formed by countries and territories between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Increasingly interlinked with our part of the world, home to dynamic economies, a source of risks – the seemingly distant Indo-Pacific is **closer than we think to the Czech Republic** and the EU. What is happening in the Indo-Pacific will have a decisive influence on the dynamism of the 21st century world.

The keyword of our strategy is **cooperation**. The Czech Republic wants to develop its relationships with Indo-Pacific countries as **equal partners** with an emphasis on mutual respect, consensus building and support of **mutually advantageous cooperation**, subject to respect for binding international rules and standards.

The Indo-Pacific is not only a **world trade hub** on the crossroads of major shipping routes. It is also a crucial region in terms of energy security. Its countries are prime movers of global technological and social growth. Its numerous innovative economies create new technologies and trends, albeit with a differing degree of emphasis on sustainable development. To reap the benefits of their growth they enter into regional free trade and digital trade agreements with global implications.

At the same time, the region has **many challenges**: the internal political dynamics of individual countries and in some cases also their relations both within the region and beyond. Existing multilateral order is being called into question. International law and human rights are not respected. The Czech Republic's (and EU's) cooperation with the region will have to take into account the risks presented by rival governance models, as well as the need to protect our shared values.

The dominant topic is our response to **China's growing geopolitical and economic influence and its global ambitions**. The Czech Republic's engagement will be guided by the positive vision of a peaceful, prosperous and increasingly interconnected region with a rules-based security architecture. We will continue to work with the EU and other allies to encourage China's involvement in the building of a peaceful, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific. The EU-China relationship has its own challenges to work out, but nevertheless it has an enduring strategic importance.

The **region's risk factors** include the existence of many internal conflicts (for example, in Afghanistan or Myanmar). Continuous tensions resulting from the lack of stability in the Taiwan Strait and the situation in the South China Sea and East China Sea may spill over regional boundaries to escalate into global conflicts.

The war in Ukraine has confronted the Indo-Pacific with an entirely new situation. The distinct and diverse responses from the region's countries show that Euro-Atlantic security is inseparable from the Indo-Pacific one.

To be present in the Indo-Pacific, **Czech Republic and the whole international community** will have to face up to the region's main challenges: to adapt to **new security risks** and to counter **hybrid threats** while keeping the **multilateral cooperation effective**. For the coming decades, the Czech Republic's priorities in the region include, but are not limited to, supply chain security and diversification, cyber security and hybrid threats, new technologies, standardization, arms control regimes, science and research, connectivity including digital connectivity, space technologies, climate change and the environment, and smart economy. Additional priorities in the area of trade are bilateral and regional free trade agreements and digital trade.

The Czech Republic and the EU work with Indo-Pacific partners is based on **shared values** and **interests**. Cooperation with allies and **like-minded partners** develops within the framework of bilateral ties and, more importantly, within the **framework of the EU and the transatlantic link**. The Czech Republic is open to cooperation with all countries of the region on the basis of the three UN pillars, subject to respect for the international rules-based system.

To achieve the **greatest possible synergy between our interests and priorities in the Indo-Pacific** and the framework of EU, UN and NATO relationships and policies, it will be important to use our existing strategic partnerships with the region's countries, to establish new partnerships, and to enter into free trade agreements. Existing EU-ASEAN institutional relations have paved the way for further development of cooperation. Closer cooperation with other regional organizations and arrangements should be regularly reviewed in the light of our national and security interests.

The Czech Republic's priority is to **offer specific project-based cooperation and long-term cooperation in selected areas**. The aim is to increase the presence and visibility of the Czech Republic and the EU in the Indo-Pacific. The Czech Republic will be a partner who fulfils expectations and honours its commitments. This strategic and project-based engagement will enable us to offer our Indo-Pacific partners a viable and realistic way to work together. It will increase our chances to influence the geopolitical development in the region.

Implementation of the Strategy will be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.