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New Impulses for Czech Strategy in Africa

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Preface

Dear Readers,

as a representative of the Hanns Seidel Foundation and its head for the Czech Republic, I am very pleased to see the Czech NGO Association for International Affairs (Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky – AMO) publish this volume on Africa and European-African relations. Transregional research, within the European Union and beyond, is important for our political foundation.

Hanns Seidel Foundation is working in Africa with partners in 17 countries. Our activities there include promoting democracy and the rule of law, providing administrative support, management training and vocational and socio-political education, implementing environmental and climate projects as well as strengthening civil society and transregional cooperation.

The former German Federal President Horst Köhler recently said: “The corona pandemic is currently making it brutally clear just how interconnected the human existence on our planet is.” He is of course absolutely right. Let us not resort to the old clichés about our neighbouring continent, with which we have been closely connected for thousands of years. Köhler is right when he calls on us to “awaken curiosity about Africa!”. The role for which transregional research seems to me to be predestined is to take other world views seriously in the context of their own rationality.

Africa should no longer be overlooked by us Europeans, a point German Chancellor Angela Merkel made very clearly when outlining her government's agenda for the EU Council Presidency, which Germany takes over for the second half of 2020. Chancellor Merkel announced that Africa will be a political priority of this German EU Presidency – not least as it has been hit particularly hard by the corona pandemic and its economic consequences. On the other hand, some African countries also have special experience in fighting epidemics (such as Ebola), which means that we Europeans can learn a lot from our African neighbours. This is why it is of great importance for the European Union to build a partnership with the African continent, as Angela Merkel said in her speech before the Bundestag.

But in order to build a relationship on an equal footing, it is crucial to get to know and understand the partner better. The EU and the African Union (AU), and the individual countries and regions within them, also need to work out common goals. That is why I am happy to have our partner AMO addressing this topic, immensely important for the future, with us in this publication and with our Prague conference. My hope is that this publication and the conference spark more interest in relations between Africa and Europe as neighbours.

Martin Kastler

Former MEP, representative and regional head of the Hanns Seidel Foundation for the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary



The work of the HSS in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa are the two focus regions in the international work of the HSS.

We work in 17 African countries and have offices in 14 of them. This means that almost half of our total work abroad is done in these countries.

The main issues of the work are the strengthening of civil societies, the support of decentralised structures, citizen friendly policing, security policy, gender issues, environmental issues, the fight against corruption, development of rural areas, and the strengthening of economic power.

Since the commencement of the 'Marshall plan for Africa' of Minister Müller, the strengthening of economic actors and cooperation with the German economy have increased in importance in recent years.

In the project countries in the Sahel, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and their southern neighbours Togo, Benin and Ghana the work of the HSS focuses on „Citizen friendly policing“ in order to strengthen the dialogue between police and civil society (SDG 16). The EU supports this work with a significant financial contribution. CEN-SAD, the community of the Sahel-Saharan States is also an important partner for this region.

In Ethiopia, the HSS works together with its partners in the fields of economic growth and federalism.

In Egypt, the HSS works in the fields of administrative reforms, environmental issues and the inclusion of women, youth and the disabled in the economy.

Finally, in the DRC, the HSS has its largest projects worldwide. With funding from the EU in excess of 25 million euros, agroforestry projects have been successfully developed and implemented. Stable rural communities with a firm political structure that arose during the implementation of these projects ensure their sustainability. On the Plateau Bateke, 150 km east of Kinshasa, approx. 250.000 people benefit from these projects.

The projects in the DRC focus on the SDGs 6, 8 and 16, but - according to the policy of the HSS for Africa- on the grassroots level.

Klaus Liepert

Head of Sub-Saharan Africa Division, Hanns Seidel Foundation



Summary

→ Africa has only been a marginal topic for Czech foreign policy since the split of Czechoslovakia. This trend reached its nadir in 2011 with the adoption of the new foreign policy strategy. However, the situation has started to change in the last decade. Czech foreign policy has gradually adopted sub-Saharan Africa as its new vector and stabilization of the Sahel region has become one of its strategic priorities.

→ This new priority was confirmed by the adoption of the “Strategy of the Czech Republic to support the stabilization and development of the Sahel countries in the period 2018-2021” in April 2018 and of the „Program of activities to support source and transit migration countries in Africa for the period 2020-2022” in March 2020.

→ The Czech approach seems to be very ambitious and to set a complex agenda consisting of military, political, economic and social goals. Doubts remain whether this approach is realistic and achievable taking into account the highly limited financial and personnel capacities of Czech foreign policy in relation to African countries. A strategic approach toward Africa ought to be built on limited, clearly defined and attainable goals with (possibly) one, clearly defined key overall priority expressed in terms of SDGs.

→ Unfortunately, a debate about why and how the Czech Republic should be engaged on the African continent/in the Sahel region is largely missing. Such a debate, if open and inclusive, would better enable the defining of Czech interests and priorities on the continent, partial goals derived from these interests/priorities and suitable tools to achieve them.



Recommendations

- Czech diplomacy should follow the established trend of perceiving Africa as a strategic region.
- Beside standard bilateral relations particularly with countries with resident embassies, Czech diplomacy should continue and even strengthen its strategic focus as expressed by the “Sahel strategy” and the “Africa program”.
- To increase the effectiveness of the program, strategic activities in Africa should have a clearly defined and rather limited geographical focus, not going beyond the Sahel region (if Sahel is defined as a strategic region for Czech interests).
- The role of the embassy in Bamako should be strengthened in the upcoming years to serve all the G5 Sahel countries.
- Strategic activities in Africa should be framed within the narrative of sustainable development or local capacity building as a tool to tackle forced migration within the continent instead of the Euro-African migratory narrative.
- Strategic activities in Africa should lie within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and should prioritize one or a few SDGs to increase the impact on the host countries.



Introduction

Despite a long history of relations dating back to the first months of Czechoslovak independence, Africa has been only a marginal topic for Czech foreign policy. In line with EU priorities, Czech foreign policy has gradually adopted sub-Saharan Africa as its new vector¹ and stabilization of the Sahel region has become one of its strategic priorities. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently working on a new mid-term territorial strategy towards Africa, this policy paper should serve as a trigger for the much-needed debate about the Czech Republic's role on the continent.

The following text aims to highlight the key questions that stakeholders and the public should ask. Does the Czech Republic have strategic interests in sub-Saharan Africa? What are these interests? How should we define our overall priorities and short-term goals? What are the most suitable tools to achieve these goals? What resources must be devoted in order to make the Czech presence on the continent effective? The focus of the text is primarily on bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and African countries, particularly the five countries of the G5 Sahel Group (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger). However, this paper, as an initial input, remains on the general level of Czech bilateral relations toward countries of the continent. Thus, it does not discuss the particularities of relations between the Czech Republic and any concrete African country, but rather the strategic involvement of Czech foreign policy in general. Similarly, it does not focus specifically on relations within the framework of development policy, humanitarian assistance and transformation cooperation.

This paper tries to analyse the current strategic approach of Czech foreign policy toward Africa and to identify potential strengths and shortcomings. One side of this is that there is an attempt to define a priority region in Africa and target the activities of the Czech Republic toward the region. On the other side, a lack of long-term perspectives, an inability to define clear and achievable goals, absence of previous ties with the selected region of the Sahel and limited resources and capacities are key barriers to effective strategic involvement. Moreover, the public debate about this strategic involvement on the continent, as a whole, is missing and participation of civil society, including diaspora, academia or media, is limited. And it is precisely this strategic involvement, which has the potential to be of crucial added value for Czech foreign policy toward Africa.

This policy paper proceeds as follows: The first part presents a brief overview of Czechoslovak and Czech foreign policy toward Africa and current changes related to the prioritisation of the Sahel. The second part looks abroad for inspiration, with Germany, Sweden and selected CEE countries' policies and approaches being presented for comparison. The third part sets out a few discussion points on how to make Czech engagement on the continent more effective both for the host countries and for the Czech Republic.

¹ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR: Nástupní projev ministra zahraničních věcí Tomáše Petříčka z 18. října 2018 [Introductory speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Petříček, October 18, 2018], 4. https://www.mzv.cz/file/3049953/Nastupni_projev_ministra_zahranicnich_veci_Tomase_Petricka.pdf.



Part one: Africa in Czech foreign policy and the Sahel as a new strategic priority

When focusing on Africa, Czech foreign policy can build on a hundred year long tradition of diplomatic and economic relations. After its independence in October 1918, Czechoslovakia sought to establish relations with countries in Africa. A consulate in Egypt was established in 1919,² soon followed by several consulates in sub-Saharan Africa.³

After World War II, Czechoslovakia initially tried to build upon existing interwar contacts. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, it followed the Soviet activist politics in the Third World in order to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with revolutionary regimes. When these promises failed, Czechoslovakia shifted to economic pragmatism.⁴ Its semi-independent African policy focused on economic benefits, particularly through arms exports, and reflected the priorities of the Soviet Union. It also sought to gain prestige and respect among developing countries and to show moral solidarity with the oppressed Africans.⁵

In the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovakia had to acquiesce to the Soviet superpower strategy and lost its own initiative on the continent. Its role was to supply arms to vanguard Marxist pro-Soviet regimes such as Angola.⁶

In the early post-Cold War era, the main strategic goal of the Czech Republic was to reorient its foreign policy towards the West. In the first foreign policy strategy (1993), the conservative government focused on joining the European Union, cementing the trans-Atlantic security ties and fostering economic relations with neighbouring countries. Neglecting Africa was in line with the prevailing Western narrative focusing predominantly on (in)security,⁷ which resulted in the depiction of the continent as “hopeless Africa” by the end of the decade.⁸

The subsequent social-democratic government criticized its predecessor for neglecting relations with developing countries.⁹ A new foreign policy strategy (1998) put more attention on peace, security, co-operation, democracy and prosperity – both at a global level and in Africa. Again, this was in line with a new Western narrative, which started to emphasize the need for collective action to kick start the development of Africa as an indispensable part of global well-being.

A second social-democratic government shifted the overall emphasis of its foreign policy strategy (2003) towards securing national interests and economic

² Tomáš Klusoň, “Československo-arabské vztahy v meziválečném období: Politické a hospodářské vztahy meziválečného Československa k arabským zemím Blízkého východu [Czechoslovak-Arab relations between the two wars. Political and economic relations of the interwar Czechoslovakia to Arab countries in the Near East]” (Rigorous thesis, FF UK, 2010), 32-34. <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/103536/>.

³ For details see Jaroslav Olša jr., “Českoslovenští diplomaté v černé Africe, 1918–1955 [Czechoslovak Diplomats in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1918-1955],” *Mezinárodní vztahy* 40, no. 2 (2005).

⁴ Petr Zídek, Karel Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika v letech 1948-1989* [Czechoslovakia and Sub-Saharan Africa in the years 1948-1989] (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007), 17-18.

⁵ Philip Muehlenbeck, *Czechoslovakia in Africa, 1945-1968* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2-4.

⁶ For an analysis of the Soviet policy towards Africa in the 1970s and 1980s see, for example, George W. Breslauer, *Soviet policy in Africa: From the old to the new thinking* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992).

⁷ For detailed analysis of the changes in European and French narratives towards Africa see Bach, Daniel C., “Africa in international relations: The frontier as concept and metaphor,” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 20, no. 1(2013).

⁸ *The Economist*, May 13, 2000 (title page).

⁹ Zpráva vlády o stavu české společnosti (Usnesení Vlády České republiky č. 106/1999 ze dne 1. února 1999) [State of the Czech society Government Report, Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 106/1999 from February 1, 1999], iHNed, March 5, 1999, <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-825360-zprava-vlady-o-stavu-ceske-spolecnosti>.



diplomacy. Czech foreign policy towards Africa remained “unjustifiably passive”¹⁰ because it lacked a vision of what to achieve in Africa and how to achieve it.¹¹

During the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2009, Czech foreign policy sought to match bilateral Czech-African relations with the European and multilateral agenda. Mitigation of security threats was introduced as a new priority in Africa.¹² Unfortunately, the impetus provided by the Presidency was only short-lived. The enhanced focus on Africa did not reflect a genuine interest of the Czech government and did not help with the activation of Czech-African policy.¹³ Despite the relatively high intensity of bilateral contacts, a conceptual framework for mutual relations was missing.¹⁴ Moreover, the global financial crisis caused budget cuts and the closing of half the embassies in sub-Saharan Africa, without any debate about Czech-African relations, Czech interests on the continent or suitable tools.¹⁵ African policy reached its low-point in 2011, when it was listed as the last regional priority in the new foreign policy strategy.

Neglect of Africa started to slightly change in 2012 with the new export strategy, which identified an insufficient presence in Africa as a barrier to exploiting economic opportunities on the continent. Again, this was in line with the changed Western narrative depicting Africa now as a new (economic) frontier of global powers.

The current foreign policy strategy was adopted in 2015. It focuses on Africa more than its predecessor and in a more concrete way. The Czech approach toward Africa is still characterized by a double focus on export and investment opportunities and on security concerns, with the Sahel being defined as a priority region.

Since 1993, Africa has represented a rather marginal issue in Czech foreign policy. However, this has started to change in the last few years and the importance of Africa is rising. The key feature of this change has been delineating security in the Sahel as a new priority of Czech foreign policy in Africa.

Until recently, the primary focus in bilateral relations was put on expanding an economic presence on the continent. In relation to the economic agenda, Czech policy was and still is proactive and uses different tools of economic diplomacy.¹⁶ In absolute terms, the volume of bilateral trade between the Czech Republic and Africa is rising. Indeed, Czech-African trade shows an even higher growth rate than the overall Czech foreign trade. However, this reflects the fact that it is rising from very low levels. Currently, Africa’s role in Czech foreign trade is still negligible and only

¹⁰ Vladimír Handl, Otto Pick. *Česká zahraniční politika 1993–2005. Od „návratu do Evropy“ k evropeizaci* [Czech Foreign Policy 1993–2005. From „Back to Europe“ to Europeanization]. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2005, 2. <https://www.dokumenty-iir.cz/PolicyPapers/HandlPickPolicyPaper.pdf>.

¹¹ Ondřej Horký, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice [Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007: analýza ÚMV* [Czech foreign policy in 2007: Analysis of the IIR], ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2008), 306.

¹² Ondřej Horký, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice: Nová koncepce, obnovení odboru a výzvy předsednictví EU [Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy: New Concept, Restoration of the Department and EU Presidency Challenges],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2008: analýza ÚMV* [Czech foreign policy in 2008: Analysis of the IIR], ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2009), 284.

¹³ Ondřej Horký, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice v roce 2009: Z evropského výsluní zpět na okraj domácího zájmu [Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy: From the European limelight back to the margins of domestic interest],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2009: analýza ÚMV* [Czech foreign policy in 2009: Analysis of the IIR], ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2010), 264.

¹⁴ Ondřej Horký-Hluchán, Kateřina Rudincová, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice [Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2013: analýza ÚMV* [Czech foreign policy in 2013: Analysis of the IIR], ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2014), 250.

¹⁵ Ondřej Horký, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice [Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2010: analýza ÚMV* [Czech foreign policy in 2010: Analysis of the IIR], ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2011), 280.

¹⁶ Kateřina Ženková Rudincová, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice [Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2016 [Czech foreign policy in 2016]*, ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2017), 278.



just exceeds 1 % (see Table 1 below). Moreover, trade with Africa is highly concentrated in just a few countries. Africa's receipt of foreign direct investments from Czech companies is similarly limited. Czech Republic also shows a proactive approach in development policy. Although based on multilateral commitments, it is also viewed as an opportunity for Czech enterprises to participate in development projects. However, this proactive approach resulted from the personal engagement of top Czech officials (mainly on the level of deputy ministers) rather than from an elaborated strategy towards Africa.¹⁷

Table 1

Key trade partners of the Czech Republic in Africa in 2019¹⁸

Total trade volume with Africa (exports + imports):	89 billion CZK (1.02 % of total trade)
North Africa 44 %	Morocco 16,5 % Egypt 13 % Tunisia 10 % Algeria 3,5 %
Sub-Saharan Africa 56 %	South Africa 38,5 % Nigeria 5,5 % Côte d'Ivoire 2, 5%

Source: Český statistický úřad, databáze Pohyb zboží přes hranice [Czech Statistical Office, database Cross-border movement of goods], data for 2019, <https://apl.czso.cz/pll/stazo/STAZO.STAZO>.

In relation to security interests, Czech policy was initially reactive and simply following European initiatives¹⁹ without its own strategic and recognizable added value. However, although the specific focus on the Sahel stems primarily from the EU level, it seems that it has been internalized also as a Czech strategic priority and political representatives and army officials started to show a much more proactive approach. With respect to the current Czech involvement in training missions and the planned involvement in a military mission in Mali, this country was depicted as a potential “fortress of terrorists on our doorstep” (Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Petříček)²⁰ or even as a “time bomb” (Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces Aleš Opatá).²¹ Recently, the jihadist attacks have spread from Mali to other countries of the Sahel region. Thus, stabilization of the region is seen as being of vital importance to Czech interests. This proactive approach should be highly valued because it opens space for a more visible Czech presence.

Prioritization of security in the Sahel was first delineated in the foreign policy strategy that was adopted in 2015. It was further elaborated on in two complementary documents, which were adopted by the Czech government.

¹⁷ Kateřina Ženková Rudincová, “Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech foreign policy. Approaching Africa as a partner,” in *Czech foreign policy in 2017: Analysis*, ed. Alica Kizeková (Praha: ÚMV, 2018), 213.

¹⁸ Český statistický úřad, databáze Pohyb zboží přes hranice [Czech Statistical Office, database Cross-border movement of goods], data for 2019, <https://apl.czso.cz/pll/stazo/STAZO.STAZO>.

¹⁹ Kateřina Ženková Rudincová, “Subsaharská Afrika v české zahraniční politice [Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy],” in *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2016 [Czech foreign policy in 2016]*, ed. Michal Kořan (Praha: ÚMV, 2017), 278.

²⁰ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí ČR. Česko otevřelo velvyslanectví v Mali. Prioritou bude posilování bezpečnosti (tisková zpráva). <https://www.businessinfo.cz/clanky/cesko-otevrela-velvyslanectvi-v-mali-prioritou-bude-posilovani-bezpecnosti/>.

²¹ Oldřich Danda, „Metnara tepali i vlastní poslanci,“ *Novinky*, February 6, 2020, <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/metnara-tepali-i-vlastni-poslanci-40312472>.



“Strategy of the Czech Republic to support the stabilization and development of the Sahel countries in the period 2018-2021” was adopted in April 2018. In this strategy, stability in the Sahel is recognized as one of the key factors for security in Europe. The Czech Republic proclaims a readiness and interest to foster its activities in the region. In the security domain, it will support the G5 Sahel Joint Force (financial support, training), it will increase its participation in international missions in the region and it will initiate bilateral and trilateral security cooperation with the Sahel countries (meant primarily as commercial cooperation between Czech enterprises active in the defence industry and local security forces). In the socio-economic domain, Czech Republic intends to actively contribute to the improvement of local socio-economic conditions, particularly with regard to food self-sufficiency and adaptation to climate change. Finally, in the economic domain, the Czech government will seek to introduce new mechanisms to support Czech private investments in the region and it will also try to increase levels of participation of the Czech private sector in the projects of multilateral development banks. Czech enterprises are seen to have profound know-how and relevant expertise particularly in the sectors of agriculture and the agro-processing industry, water management, solar energy and geology.

„Program of activities to support source and transit migration countries in Africa for the period 2020-2022” was adopted in March 2020. This program envisages active bilateral and multilateral EU interventions in security, economic and social domains. The focus of this program is not geographic, but thematic with respect to migration flows from Africa to Europe. In geographic terms, it thus focuses not only on the Sahel, but also on other regions in Africa, which are sources of migration (West Africa, the Horn of Africa) or which serve as transit routes for migrants (North Africa). Morocco, Mali and Ethiopia were chosen as priority countries. The program is divided into three pillars. The first pillar tackles the issues of peace, security and stability (control of borders; programs for migrants, internally displaced and repatriated people; enhancement of capacities of local security forces). The second pillar deals with the economic development of the respective regions (infrastructure building, support of entrepreneurship, creating new jobs, education, environmental protection), while the third pillar focuses on good governance and social development (enhancement of the capacities of the public sector, societal inclusion and participation, support of civil society, protection of cultural heritage).

While the “Sahel strategy” intended to set up strategic priorities of Czech foreign policy in the region, the “Africa program” is the first ever program with earmarked resources from the state budget to support partner countries in Africa outside of the framework of development cooperation. The budget of this program is 300 million CZK (app. 11.5 million EUR) for the next three years, allocated evenly one third each year.



Part Two: Experience from Europe

This section provides a brief look at other European countries and analyses similarities and differences in their Africa policies. Germany was chosen as an example of a country with a complex agenda in Africa, which reflects its position as both the economically strongest EU member state and one of its key engines. Sweden was chosen as an example of a middle-sized country without a colonial past and with a high level of global responsibility. Finally, three post-communist countries with a similar tradition to that of the Czech Republic were chosen, namely Slovakia, Poland and Slovenia.

Germany

The current German strategy towards Africa, which was introduced on 27 March 2019, is complex and ambitious. The declared principal aim of the strategy is to bridge the gap in development and prosperity between the two neighbouring continents. The strategy is values-based, seeks to empower partners, but meanwhile sensitive to the local contexts and expecting a high level of involvement from NGOs, academia and the diaspora.²²

The German strategy has five thematic sections. The first chapter stresses the principles and values of good governance, democracy, protection of human rights and the promotion of gender equality.²³ Political rights for the youth and women are seen as a prerequisite to overcoming ongoing and preventing future political tensions. The promotion of the democratic process and the empowerment of institutions (including regional) is a crucial part of ensuring peace and stability. Germany also highlights a restrictive arms export policy and strengthening the mechanisms of the international humanitarian system.²⁴

The second part focuses on economic development through improved infrastructure and strengthened rule of law, good governance, and anti-corruption measures. For Germany, crucial areas for economic cooperation are foreign trade and investments, energy partnership and climate dialog, and prevention of tax evasion and tax avoidance. Cooperation in the field of science, research, innovation and technology is another crucial aspect of the partnership, where the digital agenda plays a significant role. In socioeconomic issues, there are priorities toward sustainable agriculture, the healthcare system and issues connected with demographic development.²⁵

The third part focuses on the question of migration. The aim of the German strategy is to tackle the causes of displacement and irregular migration where they arise and to create obstacles for human trafficking.²⁶ This should be done in close cooperation with the diaspora, the civil society sector as well as with international organisations.²⁷

The fourth part is about strengthening the rules-based global order together with Africa. African countries are viewed as important partners in ensuring a multilateral international environment, including reform of the UN Security Council, global free and fair trade (WTO reform), climate change mitigation and various other measures such as a successor treaty to the Cotonou agreement after 2020.

²² Federal Foreign Office. An enhanced partnership with Africa. Continuation and further development of the Federal Government's Africa Policy Guidelines (2019), 2-3.

²³ Ibid, 7.

²⁴ Ibid, 7-9.

²⁵ Ibid, 11-17.

²⁶ Ibid, 20.

²⁷ Ibid, 22-24.



The focus of the fifth part is on deepening contacts, not only on an intergovernmental basis but also between civil societies as well as between civil society and states (education and training for the youth, scholarship programs, alumni networks, promotion of African studies in Germany). Free media are a crucial prerequisite for this pillar.

Sweden

The foreign policy of Sweden towards Africa for the years 2016 - 2021 is focused on strengthening institutional capacity, including that of regional organizations, to tackle transnational and transregional threats. Despite the variety of different environments and conditions, Swedish strategy sees crucial challenges as being similar all over the continent: demographic challenges, environmental degradation, and the question of gender imbalances in the formal and informal sector. The expected added value of Swedish cooperation with Africa is a long-standing collaboration at the regional level as well as a broad presence in the region.

To achieve this principal aim, priorities are divided into four categories in order to reach concrete results: a better environment (sustainable use of natural resources, climate change and natural disasters); strengthened democracy, the rule of law, respect for gender equality and human rights and a free media; improvement of the living conditions of poor and vulnerable people and delivering basic services; human security and freedom from violence.²⁸

Similarly to Germany, Sweden also sees a critical role in the question of gender. However, the gender in this context is not just about two dichotomous categories of men and women, but gender is more focused on four categories of men, women, boys, and girls. The focus of the strategy is on the different impacts of conflicts on all four categories and the structural lack of their engagement in peace talks, which is highly required to solve ongoing conflicts.

When analysing the most suitable tools, a crucial component of all activities shall be respect for individual and group rights as well as promoting perspectives. According to the strategy, human rights and democracy are regarded as fundamental to development.²⁹ Emphasis should be placed differently on different gender groups (men, women, and children). When promoting economic opportunities particularly on the regional and transborder level, empowering of women and girls must be taken into account as a core activity of Swedish foreign policy.

However, the crucial activity of the strategy is the promotion of regional cooperation to tackle the challenges of societies – not only on an inter-state level (regional organizations), but also on the transnational level (African Development Bank, AfDB) or sub-state level (cultural sector, universities and research centres, private sector). The aim of all activities should be to build strong, long-term and self-sustainable ties.³⁰

CEE Countries

Finally, let's take a brief look at the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, who had to redefine their approach toward Africa in the 1990s similarly to the Czech Republic. As there are no separate strategic documents related to Africa available, the analysis is based on general foreign policy strategic documents and delimitation of Africa's role within this overall context.

²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden. Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa 2016–2021 (2015), 3-4.

²⁹ Ibid, 9.

³⁰ Ibid, 9-11.



In the case of Slovakia,³¹ there is a stark contrast between the two geographic and political-cultural parts of the continent. While North Africa together with the Middle East are strategic regions and stability in both regions is defined as one of the key goals of Slovak foreign policy, sub-Saharan Africa is seen as a region of export opportunities and as a target region of Slovak development policy. Local economic development is supposed to prevent migration and refugee flows.

The foreign policy strategy of Poland,³² similarly to its Slovak counterpart, identifies terrorism, political and economic destabilisation and uncontrolled migration flows from the Middle East and North Africa as a genuine challenge to transatlantic security. In relation to sub-Saharan Africa, the strategy stresses that Poland should strengthen its economic bonds with countries in more distant regions and should increase its development assistance to the least developed world regions.

Slovenia,³³ in its foreign policy strategy, depicts sub-Saharan Africa as a continent of poverty, political instability, growing terrorist threats and a source of migration to Europe.

Slovenia wishes to build solid partnerships with global players and leading regional powers to create an international environment conducive to security, universal sustainable growth, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The main task for Slovenian diplomacy in Africa is to find new markets and to intensify development cooperation. In multilateral forums with regard to Africa, Slovenia also seeks the active promotion of issues such as human security, children's and women's rights, water supply, and demining.

Key takeaways for the Czech Republic

A brief analysis shows the different approaches of different types of EU member states. Germany is one of the leading countries of the European foreign policy towards Africa, with vast capacities. While the Czech Republic has eight/nine³⁴ embassies in sub-Saharan Africa and four embassies in North Africa (see Table 1 below), Germany has embassies in the same four North African countries complemented by thirty-eight embassies in sub-Saharan Africa (plus two more consulates-general in South Africa and Nigeria). The level of involvement of the two countries in Africa is hardly comparable. This allows Germany to have an elaborate and complex Africa strategy. The German case clearly shows that there is (or at least there should be) a direct proportionality between the complexity of the country's engagement in Africa and the resources devoted to it. It is necessary to find the right balance between goals and resources to foster the effectiveness of a country's Africa policy.

³¹ Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR: Hodnotenie priorit zahraničnej a európskej politiky Slovenskej republiky v roku 2019 a ich zameranie na rok 2020 (február 2020). <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/2686701/2020+Hodnotenie+prior%C3%ADt+zahrani%C4%8Dnej+a+eur%C3%B3pskej+politiky+Slovenskej+republiky+v+roku+2019+a+ich+zameranie+na+rok+2020>.

³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland: Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021. <http://www.gov.pl/attachment/869184co-bd6f-4a20-b8af-a5c8190350a1>.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia: Slovenia: Safe, Successful, Globally respected. The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia. https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenty/strateski-in-programski-dokumenty/strategija_ZP_ang.pdf.

³⁴ The Embassy in Kinshasa was closed in 2011 and re-opened in October 2019. Based on the Government Resolution, the re-opening of this Embassy is only temporary for 18 months in order to ensure ownership rights for the plot and the building.



Table 2

List of Czech embassies in Africa
(as of September 2020)

Algeria (Algiers)

DR Congo (Kinshasa)

Egypt (Cairo)

Ethiopia (Addis Ababa)

Ghana (Accra)

Kenya (Nairobi)

Mali (Bamako)

Morocco (Rabat)

Nigeria (Abuja)

Senegal (Dakar)

South Africa (Pretoria)

Tunisia (Tunis)

Zambia (Lusaka)

Source: authors.

Sweden is a middle-sized country with a high level of international commitments. Its Africa strategy is also highly elaborated, but much more limited in its scope. Sweden is well aware that it must strike a balance between an ambitious agenda and limited and attainable goals. By defining one key goal, Sweden could better reach crucial priorities. The Swedish case clearly shows that if the available resources are limited, the country must thoroughly define how it can best contribute to Africa's development and what can be achieved on the ground. In other words, the country must be able to define its key priorities, partial goals and suitable tools. Sweden decided to focus on the complex task of strengthening local institutions, which is rightly seen as a prerequisite for development. Other states may opt for less complex thematic approaches, such as Finland with its focus on education.

CEE countries, in their turn, acknowledge their global commitments (development cooperation) and EU commitments (support for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law), but do not pretend to have any strategic bilateral interests in Africa beyond export opportunities. They acknowledge that illegal migration is a threat to EU countries and see economic and development cooperation as the most suitable instruments with which to slow down illegal migration flows.

The Czech approach is more ambitious as it defines two priorities in Africa: economic opportunities on one hand, stabilization of the Sahel on the other. As mentioned earlier, stabilization of the Sahel has been increasingly seen as being of vital importance to Czech interests. Consequently, the spectrum of suggested activities is broader than in the case of other CEE countries. Unfortunately, the Czech approach does not seem to follow the Swedish path of an ambitious, but limited agenda with clearly defined added value, but rather to follow the German path of a complex agenda. Moreover, the public debate about our involvement in the Sahel is largely missing.



Part Three: how to make the Czech engagement in Africa more effective?

Focusing on the Sahel region as a key priority makes sense from a security perspective. The security situation is continuously worsening due to the activity of different Islamic jihadist groups across the region. From the European perspective, the Sahel is one of a number of important world regions with respect to migration flows, both in terms of source of migration and transit routes. The question of security in the Sahel region is thus essential for the EU and, at least indirectly, also for the Czech Republic. Concerning security, the Czech Republic has broad experience from different missions, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo. In Mali, the Czech Republic has been active in training missions since 2013. Focusing on the Sahel also makes sense from a political perspective. State authorities in the region are weak, which negatively affects both their ability to control the territory, particularly in remote rural areas, and to deliver basic services to citizens. From an economic perspective too, a focus on the Sahel makes sense. Czech companies have been active in the region for decades (albeit to a limited degree), but destabilization of the region will affect business opportunities, both existing and potential. The Sahel is a geographically proximate region, which decreases logistical costs for active involvement of Czech enterprises.

In this part of the policy paper, a few discussion points will be raised in order to answer the basic question: how to make Czech engagement in Africa more effective?

First, let's start with the definition of the Sahel region. The Czech "Sahel strategy" defines the region in broad geographical terms stretching from Senegal to Ethiopia, contrary to the narrow political delineation of the region as preferred by the EU, which focuses primarily on the G5 Sahel countries. The latter was promoted by France and it is by no means accidental that the G5 Sahel group consists of five Francophone countries with strong ties to the former colonial power. The discrepancy between the two definitions does not necessarily pose a problem if the Czech Republic is able to justify the geographical delimitation of the strategic region. Defining of terms is even more important taking into account that the geographical focus of the "Sahel strategy" and the "Africa program" are different. While the former focuses on the Sahel region in its wider definition, the latter widens its scope beyond the Sahel region to include also North Africa, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. Three countries are selected as priority countries: one in the G5 Sahel region (Mali), one in the wider Sahel region (Ethiopia) and one out of the Sahel region (Morocco). This means that the "Africa program" covers half of the continent, which necessarily compromises any attempts to use limited Czech capacities in a more targeted way. Moreover, as a response to the coronavirus crisis, the Czech government decided to further widen the scope of the program in its first year of implementation to cover the whole of Africa. Although an attempt to help Africa tackle the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is understandable, this is a step back. Similarly an attempt to help as many African countries as possible to tackle the causes of the migration crisis is understandable, but this is also a step back. Taking into account that the budget for Czech strategic activities in Africa is in the low tens of millions of euros, the "Africa program" would be more effective if it had a limited geographical focus not going beyond the Sahel region, regardless of whether in its political or geographical definition. As Ethiopia has been a priority country for Czech development cooperation for years, and both Addis Ababa and Dakar are locations of resident embassies, using the wider geographic definition of the Sahel region is justifiable. This does not mean that the Czech Republic should resign on any activities outside the Sahel region. Bilateral as well as multilateral relations will still cover the whole



continent with a specific focus on countries with resident embassies. Development cooperation will still cover the whole continent with a specific focus on two priority countries, Ethiopia and Zambia. The government can still approve a specific humanitarian program to tackle a sudden crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic, which will cover the whole continent. However, if the Sahel is identified as a strategic priority for Czech foreign policy in Africa, any government-approved long-term program on the continent should reflect this priority and should focus only on the strategic region.

A second discussion point is the institutional framework within which Czech diplomacy approaches the strategic region. One of the key elements of the “Sahel strategy” was the establishment of a new Czech embassy in Mali as a central point for engagement in the region. The embassy opened in October 2019, which has fostered the diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, this embassy is currently led by the head of the mission (charge d’affaires), not by the plenipotentiary ambassador. Moreover, G5 Sahel countries are currently served by different embassies: Mauritania from Rabat; Mali from Bamako (except for the visas, which are still issued from Algiers); Burkina Faso from Accra; Niger with Chad from Abuja. If five Sahel countries fall under four different embassies, coordination of activities in the region is complicated. The situation is even more complicated by the fact that Czech diplomacy uses the geographical definition of the Sahel, which also includes Senegal (served from Dakar), Sudan (served from Cairo) and Ethiopia (served from Addis Ababa). Such institutional multiplicity, which makes the effective implementation of the “Sahel strategy” extremely difficult, needs to be addressed in the coming years. Fortunately, Czech diplomacy is well aware of this situation. An evaluation of the functioning of the embassy in Bamako and the strengthening of its role in the region (promotion of the head of the mission, extended accreditation) are envisaged as key short-term priorities of Czech foreign policy in Africa.³⁵

A third discussion point is that the Czech approach is framed within the narrative of migration as a threat for European security. However, migration is rather an external outcome of different internal root causes, where economic imbalances are a fundamental driver of South-North labour migration.³⁶ Moreover, the Czech approach tackles the issue of migration in its entirety, including both source and transit regions of migration. However, this may prove to be counter-productive in terms of the efficiency of Czech interventions. Source countries and transit countries face different challenges and require different solutions. Analysing the three pillars of the “Africa program” in more detail, it can be concluded that the security pillar is more crucial for transit countries, while the economic and social pillars are more crucial for source countries. Although Sahel is definitely a transit route for migrants from West Africa, it has increasingly become also a source country due to growing insecurity. Therefore, the ‘Africa program’ with its three pillars extending beyond security concerns is highly to be welcomed as it enables existing security cooperation to be complemented by more civilian-oriented activities. This is extremely important as the contributing factors for the jihadist uprising in Mali are, inter alia, the economic and political neglect of central and Northern Mali, the low capacity of central institutions, unemployment, poverty, corruption, and access to land and water. A long-term solution to the current situation in the Sahel lies in stronger institutions able to cope with the everyday challenges citizens must face. Thus, strategic activities in Africa should be framed within the narrative of sustainable development or local capacity building rather than within the narrative of transcontinental migration.

Finally, although Czech foreign policy claims to be compatible with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), neither of the two strategic documents defines its goals in terms of concrete SDGs, only in terms of general

³⁵ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky: Priority MZV pro rok 2020 [Priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2020], 8. https://www.mzv.cz/file/3791506/MZV_Priority_2020.pdf.

³⁶ Jesper Bjarnesen, Shifting the narrative on African migration: The numbers, the root causes, the alternatives – get them right! (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2020).



reference to SDGs. More precisely, both strategic documents incorporate several SDGs. The question of SDGs is touched upon in more detail in the “Strategy of the Czech international development cooperation for the period 2018-2030”.³⁷ In this strategy, seven SDGs are pinpointed as a priority:

- zero hunger (development of agriculture and rural areas, SDG 2)
- clean water and sanitation (SDG 6)
- affordable and clean energy (SDG 7)
- decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
- climate action (SDG 13)
- life on land (SDG 15)
- peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Activities envisaged in the “Sahel strategy” and in the “Africa program” fall mostly under these SDGs. However, these strategies incorporate two more SDGs by emphasizing also education (SDG 4 – quality education) and infrastructure building (SDG 9 – industry, innovation, infrastructure). “Strategy for development cooperation” is a long-term strategy, which is complemented by adequate financial resources.³⁸ On the other hand, the “Africa program” is only a mid-term strategy with a much lower budget. Therefore, the list of priority SDGs should be reduced rather than expanded.

It is doubtful whether the Czech Republic has a sufficient capacity to deal with nine SDGs in partner countries simultaneously. If all stakeholders agree that the Czech strategic priority in Africa shall be the stabilisation of the Sahel region as part of the effort to tackle the causes of migration, there may be at least three different approaches in terms of SDGs:

- 1) local approach:** to be present widely across the Sahel region focusing on one concrete priority expressed by one SDG, which would create a hallmark of the Czech foreign policy and which could be easily transmittable from country to country;
- 2) thematic approach:** to focus on a wider thematic priority merging several closely related SDGs’ indicators to identify concrete projects whose implementation is most likely to help to reach the goals;
- 3) global approach:** to focus on capacity building of the Sahel countries in the long-term perspective.

Considering the previous lack of diplomatic cooperation between the Czech Republic and the Sahel countries, all three approaches would require substantial and systematic strengthening of capacities on the Czech side.³⁹

An example of an easily transmittable local and short-term target is clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), which can be a unique and easily evaluable target of the Czech presence in the region. The focus on water and sanitation makes sense from various perspectives. Czech experts have had long-term cooperation with developing countries on water and sanitation issues for decades. Water and sanitation is already

³⁷ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky: Strategie zahraniční rozvojové spolupráce České republiky 2018–2030. http://www.czechaid.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Strategie_ZRS_CR_2018-2030.pdf.

³⁸ The annual budget for bilateral international development cooperation, transformation cooperation and humanitarian assistance is more than 40 million EUR. See Government Resolution No. 618/2020 on bilateral international development cooperation in 2021, 8 June 2020.

³⁹ Czechoslovakia opened its embassy in Bamako as part of revolutionary relations with the continent in the early 1960s. After the pragmatic shift in Czechoslovak Africa policy, this embassy was closed in 1964 and finally cancelled in 1970. See Pavel Kopecký, „Československo a Mali do roku 1989“ [Czechoslovakia and Mali before 1989], *Mezinárodní politika*, March 31, 2014, <https://www.iir.cz/article/ceskoslovensko-a-mali-do-roku-1989>.



one of the priorities of the Czech development policy. In 2018, approximately 2.5 million EUR from the development policy budget was dedicated to projects focusing on water resources management and drought prevention.⁴⁰ Furthermore, taking into account the critical scarcity of water in the Sahel, water issues will form an important part of any stabilization efforts in the region. The Czech Republic may also play a diplomatic role as a potential mediator in water-related conflicts in international basins, although there is probably not much experience in this role up to now. For instance, Czech long-term relations with both Egypt and Ethiopia offer us various diplomatic tools to mitigate potential tensions between the two countries over the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Water insecurity and bad water governance, including a lack of transboundary water cooperation, can deepen humanitarian pressures and emergencies, potentially leading to forced rural-urban migration and increased security challenges.⁴¹ Such focus on water and sanitation issues (SDG 6) as a Czech priority in the region does not exclude the possibility of implementation of projects falling under other SDGs. However, with setting one clearly defined priority in terms of one SDG, the cooperation might be better focused, concentrated, evaluated and communicated to both external partners and the public.

The second approach is to focus on a wider thematic priority, which would merge several closely related SDGs with the aim of mitigating one of the defined potential threats arising in the region. For instance, if the priority for the Sahel region were to be the prevention of forced migration, more than one SDG, or more precisely, several concrete indicators within a number of SDGs, could be identified as essential. To tackle forced migration efficiently, it is essential to use a holistic agenda to mitigate climate change as a social threat. Climate change will affect the Sahel countries mainly in the domains of energy security, water and sanitation management and land/soil productivity. Thus, a clustered solution is required to improve the rural situation and to avoid the forced migration of rural populations to the cities. However, even if living conditions in rural areas substantially improve, some level of rural-urban migration can hardly be avoided, which will have a significant impact on urban infrastructure, which is generally insufficient in the region. Therefore, urban resilience (SDG 11) is also important when tackling the issue of migration. It is crucial to avoid the creation of slums and ghettos, which represent a significant threat to the long-term stability of urban societies (not only) in the Sahel. Czech Republic could decide to focus on the rural part of the problem, clustering climate change issues (SDG 13) with land degradation (SDG 15) and agricultural productivity (SDG 2). Alternatively, the emphasis might be on the urban part of the problem, thus clustering clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). However, it is not necessary to include all indicators of these SDGs in the strategic approach. For instance, in water management, only two out of six indicators focus on water availability for all and may serve to reach the goal of targeting forced migration. What is crucial is that such “clustered” SDGs, or their essential indicators, must be chosen after the initial identification of the overall goals of Czech foreign policy in the Sahel. Moreover, these priorities must take into account the limited current capacities. Chosen targets must be very limited and defined indicators regularly evaluated. For dealing with migration (as an example), there is a need for comprehensive and concrete responses throughout the migration cycle, including measures to prevent forced migration related to resource scarcity, facilitating planned, safe movement

⁴⁰ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí České republiky: Česká diplomacie 2018, 9. https://www.mzv.cz/file/3559577/ceska_diplomacie_2018.pdf.

⁴¹ Alexander Carius, Daria Ivleva, Benjamin Pohl, Lukas Rüttinger, Stella Schaller, Dennis Tänzler, Janani Vivekananda, A foreign policy perspective on SDGs (Adelphi, Berlin, 2018), 11. <https://www.adelphi.de/en/system/files/mediathek/bilder/A%20Foreign%20Policy%20Perspective%20On%20The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20-%20Brief%20%2B%20Annex%20-%20adelphi.pdf>.



away from degraded lands, and managing adaptation to allow people to stay, or return to, affected areas.⁴²

The third possibility is to focus on long-term capacity building of institutions in the region on a local, national and trans-national level (SDG 16). This approach would follow the premise that without strong institutions, there will only be limited stability. However, choosing this alternative requires a broad public debate and strong political will to ensure that this “new vector” of Czech foreign policy will survive more than one electoral period. It must be a long-term commitment based on a genuine will to take the Czech presence in the Sahel seriously. Consequently, this commitment must be complemented with enhanced and systematically built capacities both in the region and in the Czech Republic. Prioritising SDG 16 must go hand in hand with a detailed knowledge of the local political landscape with its formal and informal institutions, a long-term presence in the region and mutual respect from both sides involved. If we look at the Swedish strategy, the focus on SDG 16 depends on a very detailed knowledge of the environment in the countries of cooperation and on the active involvement of a wide spectrum of actors such as diaspora, academia and local NGOs on the ground. This approach requires a detailed stakeholder analysis and an action plan to be adopted and the concrete added value of Czech activities in the Sahel to be defined.

⁴² Ibid, 8.



Conclusion

In recent years, the Czech Government has tried to formulate partial priorities in Africa, to match them more closely with national interests and to increase the effectiveness of activities on the continent. This attempt to define strategic interests in Africa and to build a new approach toward the continent on the basis of these strategic interests is highly laudable. It confirms that Africa is a strategic continent with respect to both European and Czech security, political and economic interests. Africa is no longer a neglected region, on the contrary, it has become a “new vector of Czech foreign policy”. However, there are serious doubts whether this new approach – as defined by the “Sahel strategy” (2018) and the “Africa program” (2020) – is realistic and achievable taking into account the highly limited financial and personnel capacities of Czech foreign policy in relation to African countries. The new strategic framework covers half of the continent, it tries to cover both source and transit migration countries and it focuses on security, economic development, social issues and good governance issues at the same time. Taking into account that the budget for Czech strategic activities in Africa is slightly more than ten million euros annually, it is clear that the “Africa program” is very ambitious and the capacities of the Czech Republic far from sufficient to achieve all declared strategic goals. A strategic approach towards Africa must leave behind the idea of all-encompassing goals. Instead, it must be built on limited, clearly defined and attainable goals with (possibly) one, clearly defined key overall priority expressed in terms of SDGs.

Based on the overview of Czech foreign policy towards Africa since 1993, experience from other countries and the political economy of SDGs, three possible approaches for effective Czech engagement in Africa were identified:

global, where the Czech Republic may focus on complex tasks of institution building as a prerequisite for the development of the region;

thematic, where focus on several closely related “clustered” SDGs may help in solving concrete problems in the region (for example rural development in terms of climate change, land degradation and agricultural productivity, or urban resilience in terms of affordable and sustainable water, sanitation and energy management systems);

local, where Czech activities may focus on one clearly defined SDG across the region to create a hallmark of Czech foreign and development policy in Africa (for example water and sanitation).

Formulation of a more coherent and strategic approach toward Africa requires an inclusive and open debate, including making the mentioned sectoral strategic documents public. The question is: where the Czech Republic wants to be present, how it wants to be perceived on the continent and whether it is able to ensure a stable environment for cooperation from its side. The Sahel region certainly may be an important region for future world stability and Czech efforts to participate in the stabilization of this troubled region should be praised. However, a debate about why and how the Czech Republic should be engaged, is largely missing. Such a debate would better enable the defining of Czech interests and priorities on the continent, partial goals derived from these interests/priorities and suitable tools to achieve them. Without such a debate, Czech foreign policy will be unclear and uncertain not only toward partners in sub-Saharan Africa, but also toward the Czech public. At the same time, a systematic and strategic approach toward Africa may trigger greater involvement of civil society (academia, media, diaspora, NGOs, but also private sector etc.) with the continent. And only such an inclusive approach will ensure that the presence of the Czech Republic in Africa has the potential to make a difference. With clearly defined priorities, the Czech Republic will also be able to actively participate in articulating the European policy toward the priority region.



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