



Fourth edition of the Asia & Europe Initiative

Stability and Security in the Indo-Pacific: The US, Japan, the EU and the Elephant in the Room

7 and 8 March 2022

Concept

Has the centre of the geopolitical world moved to the Indo-Pacific? EU member states' interest in the region began emerging in 2018 when France adopted its Indo-Pacific strategy. Next were Germany and the Netherlands, which published their Indo-Pacific strategies in 2020. Finally, in 2021 the EU published its Indo-Pacific policy guidelines in April and a Joint Communication in September. However, the Joint Communication came at a fraught time, since a few hours earlier the US, the UK and Australia announced the birth of a new alliance named AUKUS.

AUKUS demonstrates that the US focus has definitely shifted from the Atlantic towards the Pacific, as was anticipated by 2011's *Pivot to Asia*. However, this brand-new alliance – sealed with the cancellation of a France-Australia defence contract in favour of US technology – also shows that the Americans are ready to pay the bill in terms of their relationship with the European Allies for the sake of a more stable security infrastructure in the region. Since the power centralisation process that began in China in 2017, geopolitical competition and rivalry between China and the US intensified, making the Indo-Pacific Region the main concern for both the Trump and Biden administrations. The arena for confrontation, however, extends beyond the strategic realm to encompass economic competition and cooperation, since the regional actors promoted several trade agreements such as TPP, CPTPP and RCEP. In the Quad framework as well, securing supply chains for critical and emerging technologies such as 5G, semiconductors and biotechnology has become a central point.

The economic dimension as a pillar of EU engagement in the Indo-Pacific is evident from the *EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, which reflects a desire to create “a strong basis for a mutually beneficial relationship”. This starts with building more resilient value chains and completing trade agreements with several regional partners, and includes security-related issues such as “exploring ways to ensure enhanced naval deployments in the Indo-Pacific”. In addition, all the actors involved – namely the EU, Europe, Japan, India and the US among others – are busy conceiving new frameworks to figure out their own role in the region and to structure both individual relationships and the ones between great and middle powers. Common policies and a stable diplomatic environment are the issues at stake, with the aim of countering China's rise in the region. How will the European Union frame its involvement in the region? What will the new supply chains and trade routes in the Indo-Pacific look like? Is it possible to develop a common security agenda in the region?

7 MARCH Roundtable Open to the Public

12h00-13h15
CET

Setting Sail for the Indo-Pacific: the Search for an EU Pivot to Asia

War has come back to Europe just as the world's centre of gravity was shifting from Europe to Asia. If today's focus is on supporting Ukraine's fight to resist the Russian invasion, long-term concerns for European security remain centred in Asia. It is past time for Europe to discuss whether to step up its economic and strategic presence in Asia, especially the Indo-Pacific region; the urgent challenge is to figure out how such a game will be played. The activism of AUKUS and QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) members has forced the EU to quickly develop a complete strategy towards the region encompassing its relationship with emerging countries in ASEAN, the US, China and Japan. Is the Joint Communication enough or are more steps needed? How can European national and communitarian interests be made to coexist? And what can Russia's invasion of Ukraine teach us about the new order in the making in the Indo-Pacific region?

Moderator: **Filippo FASULO**, Co-Head, Centre on Geoeconomics, ISPI, Italy

Speakers:

Mathieu DUCHÂTEL, Director of the Asia Program, Institut Montaigne, France

Michito TSURUOKA, Associate Professor, Keio University, Japan

Gudrun WACKER, Senior Fellow Asia Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Germany

YU Jie, Senior Research Fellow on China, Asia-Pacific Programme, Chatham House, UK

8 MARCH Closed-Door Workshops

9h30-11h00
CET

Security in the Indo-Pacific: A Common Agenda or Every Country for Itself?

During the Trump administration, the Indo-Pacific concept gained a new boost after its promotion in 2007 by the Japan Government as "the confluence of the Two Seas". Since then, the regional security framework has been updated, and the existing, but at the time on hold, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) has been strengthened. More recently, a trilateral security pact between the US, the UK and Australia, named AUKUS, has been announced. European countries started patrolling the South China Sea in order to help protect the sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation in the region. However, AUKUS sparked a heated debate about the role of Europe and its relationship with traditional allies in building a renewed security framework. What is the role of Quad and AUKUS with respect to already existing military alliances? Will the EU find its place among regional powers in the Indo-Pacific or will have to remain limited to the economic realm?

Moderator: **Axel BERKOFISKY**, Co-Head, Asia Center, ISPI and Professor, University of Pavia, Italy

Speakers:

Shada ISLAM, Senior Advisor, European Policy Centre (EPC), Belgium

Rory MEDCALF, Head, National Security College, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University (ANU), Australia

Ryo SAHASHI, Associate Professor, International Relations Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo, Japan

YANG Yue, Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Institute of Asian Studies, China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU), China

8 MARCH

14h00-15h30

CET

Securing the Supply-Chain Along the Indo-Pacific

“Decoupling”, “Competitive interdependence” and “Strategic autonomy” are some of the concepts shaping the industrial dimension of the renewed competition between China and Western and Indo-Pacific powers. Industrial policies and initiatives to bolster supply chain security are being promoted across the globe: examples include the “Dual circulation strategy” in China; the “Strategy for semiconductors and the digital industry” in Japan; the “The Supply Chain Resilience Initiative” by India, Japan and Australia; the “New Industrial Strategy” and its update in the EU; and Biden’s “Executive Order on America’s Supply Chains”.

This session will seek to examine and compare national and international initiatives to secure supply chains among Indo-Pacific countries in order to minimise dependencies in critical sectors, and to assess how the EU might improve cooperation with regional actors.

Moderator: **Alessia AMIGHINI**, Co-Head, Asia Center, ISPI and Professor, University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy

Speakers:

Kristi GOVELLA, Deputy Director, Asia Program German Marshall Fund of the United States, US

Françoise NICOLAS, Senior Research Fellow and Director of Center for Asian Studies, IFRI, France

Jagannath PANDA, Incoming Head of South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs at ISDP, Sweden; and Research Director, Europe-Asia at the YCAPS

Shino WATANABE, Professor, Faculty of Global Studies, Sophia University, Japan