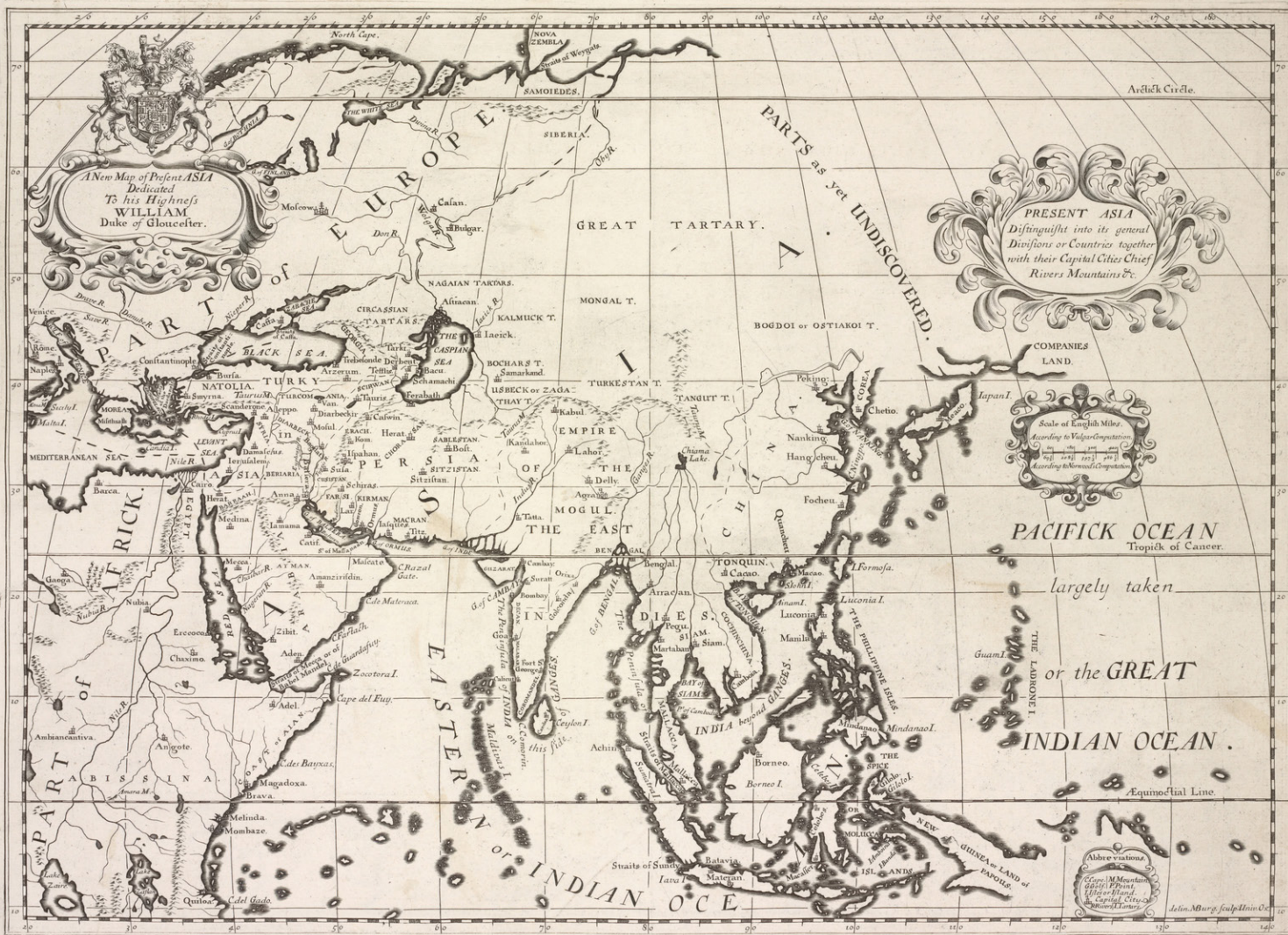


SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS



EUROPE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: MOVING FROM PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE?



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The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) is dedicated to research on contemporary South Asia.

It was established in July 2004 as an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The establishment of ISAS reflects the increasing economic and political importance of South Asia, and the strong historical links between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The Institute seeks to promote understanding of this vital region of the world, and to communicate knowledge and insights about it to policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society, in Singapore and beyond.

Joint symposium by the Institute of South Asian Studies; the European Union Centre in Singapore; the Swedish Institute of International Affairs; Swedish South Asian Studies Network, Lund University; Embassy of Sweden, Singapore; and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Singapore.

Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Moving from the Periphery to the Centre?

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INTRODUCTION

C. Raja Mohan

&

John J. Vater

The rise of China and the economic ascent of Asia, more generally, are redrawing the world's geopolitical map. The emerging rivalry between China and the United States (US) has begun to transform the Indo-Pacific into a major site of strategic contestation. Despite wide disagreement on the nature, scope and motivations behind the promotion of the Indo-Pacific, the new geographic construct is beginning to gain traction. The Indo-Pacific may or may not substitute the earlier inventions like the Asia-Pacific, but it will capture some key elements of the changing regional geography and shape the regional discourse. The nature of the political, economic and security architecture for the region will continue to animate the US, China, Japan, India and other regional actors. Europe, it has been widely assumed, will have no interest in the Indo-Pacific. That presumption is rooted in two important trends. In post-colonial Asia, there was inevitable diminution of Europe's historic political weight in the region as the US took up the burden of securing the region. Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has been preoccupied with the reshaping of its own structures of integration and had little time for Asian geopolitics.

The uncertain trajectory of US foreign policy in recent years as well as the rapid rise of China and its expansive Belt and Road Initiative are nudging Europe to pay greater attention. After all, Europe has huge stakes in the economic stability of Asia as well as the sea lines of communication connecting Europe and Asia through the Indo-Pacific. Europe, which had played a decisive role in the construction of trans-regional infrastructure in an earlier era of globalisation, can contribute to the new debates on regional connectivity. And as the integration between Europe and Asia accelerates and the threat of US retrenchment from Eurasia looms, Europe will also have to ponder over its security role in the east especially amidst the new Cold War in the region.

To discuss Europe's potential role in the emerging turbulence of the Indo-Pacific, the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore organised a symposium on 3 June 2019 in Singapore. Our partners in this enterprise were the European Union (EU) Centre in Singapore; the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI), Stockholm; Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET), Lund University,

Lund; Embassy of Sweden, Singapore; and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Singapore.

Symposium participants included scholars from SASNET; UI; the European Union External Action Service, Brussels; the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw; Brookings-India and Carnegie-India, New Delhi; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC; the Perth US-Asia Centre, University of Western Australia, Crawley; the Centre for International Exchange, National Defence Academy of Japan, Yokosuka; the Institute for Strategic and International Studies, London; ISAS; the EU Centre in Singapore; the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University; and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

The symposium addressed the prospect for a renewed European role in Asia and aimed at generating an Asian appreciation of the possibilities and limitations of the European role on connectivity and security in the Indo-Pacific. The panellists examined emerging European perspectives on the Indo-Pacific, Europe and Indo-Pacific connectivity, the interdependent needs of

Europe and the Asian Middle Powers and aligning the EU with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) security forums. The following is the collection of papers presented at the symposium. This introduction is a brief reflection on the issues debated there.

The first paper in the collection reaffirms the vital political, economic and strategic interests the EU has in the Indo-Pacific and explains why the EU has failed to formulate an Indo-Pacific strategy thus far. Patryk Kugiel outlines why the Indo-Pacific has played a marginal role in discussions of EU foreign policy despite the rise of Asia. Among the reasons cited by him are the EU's limited maritime presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the continuing lack of conceptual clarity around this regional concept and fears of alienating China through perceptions of containment. Nevertheless, Kugiel emphasises the EU's clear need to formulate a firm response to this geopolitical situation, especially given the EU's preference for a multipolar, multilateral world order, and the obvious connections between European prosperity and Asian security.

One observation that emerged from the discussion following the first session was how the EU's foreign policy can sometimes appear opaque to outside actors unfamiliar with the EU's internal workings. This produces uncertainties about whether the EU is actually 'one player' or 'multiple agendas'. Many agreed that the EU's principles of international law, open markets and partnerships across and between regions, however, have much in common with the framework and values envisioned for the Indo-Pacific, and thus provide an avenue for the EU to assist in developing the region's new security architecture.

The EU realises that hard security is perhaps not its best added value; but other aspects of security and non-traditional security (such as cyber security and migration) as well as connectivity (which may reflect geostrategic as well as sociological and maritime dimensions) are becoming increasingly important. The relationship between geostrategy and connectivity is the issue explored in the next two papers. Jivanta Schottli writes on the EU's emerging realpolitik vision of connectivity and Dhruva Jaishankar elaborates on how connectivity is

fast becoming a primary site of geopolitical struggle.

Both papers highlight how the EU's foreign policy is taking a more pragmatic turn in its recognition that the EU must combine economic objectives with political goals, and leverage its multilateral financial instruments, standards and knowledge to make a place for itself and its businesses on the world stage. Articulating a global connectivity strategy is a tightrope the EU must walk between the US and China, the latter of which exists pervasively for the EU as partner, competitor and provider. The need for the EU to communicate and develop a consensus about what its vision of connectivity intends for the international order is pivotal, because the EU will be competing with China and Russia as a primary connectivity provider and influencer of global norms.

The Indo-Pacific countries are like the EU in that they prefer a multipolar world in which they do not have to pick sides. The next set of papers identifies the shared interests of the middle powers. Shutaro Sano examines how Japan is deepening and strengthening connectivity with regional and external partners. India, for its part, is eager to

escape its confining neighbourhood and a defunct South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and seeks new friendships elsewhere. Within this context, Darshana M. Baruah draws attention to the wide scope for collaboration for countries in building a security architecture in the Indo-Pacific at bilateral, trilateral and multilateral levels. She argues that burden sharing is a must, especially when considering the capacity constraints of India, Japan, Australia and France that limit activity to their respective oceanic sub regions.

Gordon Flake, the moderator of the session and Chief Executive Officer of the Perth US-Asia Centre, endorsed the Indo-Pacific as a geographical descriptor for policy making, as it captures the rise of India, Indonesia, Vietnam and ASEAN, and resonates with Australia's outlook as a two-ocean nation. He offered his vision of the Indo-Pacific as a 'wide open field', whereby expanding the region to outside partners might dilute the relative concentration of Chinese influence, and he welcomed the roles of the United Kingdom and France as Indo-Pacific powers.

The final set of papers examines opportunities for EU collaboration through

multilateral forums. They argue that instead of pursuing membership with ASEAN-led regional security forums or attempting to fulfill asymmetrical security guarantees, the EU can enlarge the scope of EU-ASEAN cooperation by focusing on easy-to-achieve reforms and maximising complimentary capabilities – such as by cooperating around specific security and non-traditional security issues that could transform the region’s strategic dynamic. Malcom Cook warns of ‘high hanging fruits’, such as seeking a seat at the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), owing to the perceived effect of large memberships on progress and the increased subjection of these regional forums to the China-US strategic rivalry. But he gestures to how Australia has advanced with ASEAN bilaterally, suggesting a path EU member states might also take. Frederic Grare, by comparison, argues that the EU can approach issues like resource appropriation and environmental maritime security as viable paradigms to redefine civil-military relations, and create suitable partnerships emphasising the linkage between politico-strategic considerations and economic activities. Importantly, he flagged the EU’s need to change the perceptions of other countries

towards itself as a ‘peripheral’ player by seizing control of its own security narrative.

The future is always built off the past; one realisation amongst the discussants was of the EU’s need to better publicise the range of its accomplishments in Asia, such as in the amount of its foreign investments it has given or the amount it has spent on counterterrorism and combatting violent extremism externally. The perspective of Ambassador David Daly, Head of the Southeast Asia Division of the European External Action Service, at the start of the symposium was illuminating in this respect. He stated that the EU’s policy towards the Asia-Pacific region was based on the principles of openness, partnership, and international rules and standards. These principles are also reflected in the Indo-Pacific approaches of others. He also outlined three main agendas where the EU is actively involved or where negotiations are underway, from which further proactive collaborations might be built.

In security, this includes:

- Developing tailor-made bilateral security partnerships with India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Vietnam;

- Negotiating bilateral framework partnership agreements to facilitate the participation of partner countries in EU security and defense operations (such as those in place with Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Japan); and
- Multilaterally, co-chairing Inter-Sessional Meetings on maritime security with Vietnam and Australia in the ASEAN Regional Forum and by organising and co-chairing workshops and seminars on other nontraditional security issues such as preventative diplomacy, counter-terrorism, violent extremism and cyber security.

In trade and connectivity, this encompasses:

- Free trade agreements (FTA) with Singapore and Vietnam, and on-going negotiations with Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, albeit at various speeds, which are important in strengthening the trade relationship with the Southeast Asia region. Indeed, they represent building blocks towards a EU-ASEAN FTA in the future; and

- Aiming to create transport links, energy and digital networks, more people-to-people connections, and connectivity partnerships with individual Asian countries and organisations through the new EU strategy of ‘Connecting Europe and Asia’.

In the concluding session, ‘The Way Forward’, Rani D. Mullen, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS, argued that the region’s recent historical experience has been that prosperity has come from integration and greater connectivity – this is also the EU story. In a global environment of US and China disrupting the old order, the EU has a positive role to play. Asia and Europe have a common interest in mitigating the risks of a new Cold War and should move away from the binary of a ‘with us or against us’ narrative. Antoine Levesques, Research Fellow at the South Asia Institute for Strategic and International Studies, London, summarised policy proposals discussed, such as the need for the EU to research and understand the facts to develop its own impactful strategic counter-narrative and to focus more on the Indian Ocean as a space for preventative and experimental policymaking. Europe can and should undertake new partnerships (as a

union, in clusters of states, or bilaterally), and unveil a more ambitious European vision of connectivity that acknowledges the desire of Asian middle powers to shape the rules of the game.

In terms of deepening trade and security, the shared principles of the EU, ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific form a solid bedrock. For this reason, it is possible to start acting on issue-bound collaborations, which Baruah suggests, do not have to wait for narratives on the Indo-Pacific to align. Choices of which projects to engage in will require an assessment of best instruments and added values, including what EU member states can contribute, inevitably reflecting their capabilities and geopolitical positioning.

We still exist in a world of multilateral institutions, but this does not mean engagement requires formal participation or structural alignment. There are practical paths for progress. For instance, the EU should avoid dynamics that constrain how policy members think. The EU can operationalise the sectors it cares most about and move away from large, institutionalised forums to looser, legally non-binding groupings. Opportunities for cooperation

with one another are vast, for example in space and regional navigation systems, blue economy, cyber terrorism and unregulated fishing. What is needed first and foremost is action, and more forward thinking around ideas like those heard at the symposium.

Europe will indeed be compelled to debate its options in an increasingly turbulent and uncertain world. The weakening of US alliance commitments and Washington's insistence on 'burden sharing' certainly generate a sense of existential crises among the European states that had failed to invest in sufficient defence capabilities. But a US retrenchment also means the EU will be able to exercise greater independence in the future. It is not a foregone conclusion that Europe will always side with the US on all regional issues in Asia, including those involving China. Asia needs a robust European role to contribute to connectivity and security in the Indo-Pacific. Asia should also value the special virtues that Europe brings to the table – democratic values, norm-development and the capacity to temper nationalism with multilateralism.

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S STRATEGIC VIEW TOWARD THE INDO-PACIFIC

Patryk Kugiel

The concept of the Indo-Pacific has played a marginal role in discussions on the European Union's (EU) foreign policy among European politicians, policy analysts and academicians alike. This has not changed much even after the main EU partners – the United States (US), Japan, Australia and India – had prioritised the Indo-Pacific in their international strategies over the last few years. Yet, the EU's vital interests in the region and high stakes in the rules-based international order in times of global shifts call for a more clear-cut position from the European Union. Can the EU be an influential actor in this geopolitical arena? What interests and concerns will drive European approaches to the region? This paper reviews the EU's regional approach – including limitations and opportunities – and suggests the role that the EU can play in the Indo-Pacific.

Indo-Pacific in EU Strategy

The EU has no official strategy towards the Indo-Pacific. The term is absent in recent policy documents, official statements, bilateral agreements and speeches of EU representatives. One of the rare exemptions was a keynote address by

Federica Mogherini, Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, at the second EU-Australia Leadership forum in Brussels on 21 November 2018, when she said that “security in the Indo-Pacific region is today also crucial to our own European security”, and that we “want that regional relations in the Indo-Pacific are based on cooperation and mutual respect.” The concept was not used, however, in two legally binding strategic agreements the EU signed with Australia in 2017 and with Japan in 2018, nor in the Chair statement from the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Brussels in October 2018 or many summits the EU held with Asian partners. Terminologically, the EU is still attached to the notion of the Asia-Pacific and one can claim that its Indo-Pacific policy is just equal to its Asia-Pacific approach.

The EU’s policy towards Asia is driven by strategic documents at the continental level, specific strategies for sub-regions and bilateral arrangements with selected countries. At the macro level, the EU strategy to Asia was laid down in 1994 and current activities are still formally guided by the policy document from 2001. This is supplemented by more up-to-date sub-

regional strategies towards specific regions (ASEAN – 2017-2022, Central Asia – May 2019) or countries (including the first-ever strategy towards India accepted in December 2018). At the national level, four out of 10 EU strategic partners are from Asia (China, Japan, South Korea and India) and the EU has specific arrangements for cooperation with selected partners (that is, a Framework Agreement with Australia and a Security Dialogue with Pakistan).

The importance of Asia for Europe was highlighted in the EU Global Strategy of 2016, which recognised “a direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security” and where the EU vowed to “deepen economic diplomacy and scale up our security role in Asia.” In line with this strategy the EU endorsed two important documents on Asia in 2018: “The Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia” and “Council Conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia”, which identified several key areas for deeper engagement: “maritime security, cyber security, counter terrorism, hybrid threats, conflict prevention, the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons and the development of regional

cooperative orders.” Taken together, these documents show stronger focus on Asia in EU foreign policy. Yet, it does not recognise the Indo-Pacific as something new that would require a different approach.

Interestingly, relations with Pacific countries are seen separately and discussed within a different framework – the group of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. A legally binding agreement (the Cotonou Partnership) that sets the ground for the EU’s political, economic and development cooperation with ACP was signed in 2000 and a new deal post-2020 is under negotiation. This means that the tendency to treat the Pacific in disunion with Asia or the Indian Ocean may pose a structural challenge to the development of a coherent approach to the Indo-Pacific as seen as one geostrategic area.

On a practical level, the EU maintains several channels of communication with Asian and Pacific partners. At the intercontinental level, the EU and its member states are a part of the ASEM platform. The EU has also separate dialogues with ASEAN, is a participant to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and has tried – unsuccessfully – to join the East Asia Summit (EAS) [though it was invited to the

EAS in 2017 in Manila]. It is also an observer to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and cooperates with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) among other regional initiatives. In addition, the EU holds summits with major Asian partners and has regular contacts with most countries in the region. This plurality of platforms already makes the EU an actor in the Asia-Pacific but may discourage it from engaging in new initiatives.

Limitations and Opportunities of EU Engagements

Why has the EU not yet embraced the Indo-Pacific concept and come out with its own firm response to this new geopolitical situation? One can point at several main reasons.

First, the EU has limited presence in the Indo-Pacific, if understood as a mostly maritime area. Only two out of its 28 member states – France and the United Kingdom – possess some territories and permanent military presence in the Indian or Pacific Oceans. With a forthcoming Brexit, the EU’s visibility and capabilities in the region will be further diminished. This is also why many local partners do not see the EU as an Asian

stakeholder and are reluctant to invite it to regional platforms like the EAS.

The second is geography. Physical distance explains why the EU has also paid less attention to the region in the past. As is evident in the EU Global Strategy, the EU prioritises engagements in its close neighbourhood (both eastern and southern), from where most crucial threats and challenges emerge. Geography constrains the EU's role in the Indo-Pacific even further. As one European External Action Service official said at the seminar on EU-India relations in Brussels in April 2019, the EU has a greater role in the Indian Ocean than in the more distant Pacific, thus the "promotion of the larger concept of the Indo-Pacific is not in the European interest."

Thirdly, the EU is not a security or defense actor, especially in Asia. If the Indo-Pacific is about a defense alliance, then the EU does not have much to offer and should not be particularly interested in engaging in this initiative. Even if the EU collectively has the second largest defense budget in the world and is showing more interest in developing its own military capabilities and promoting itself as a security actor, its role will not exceed

far beyond a symbolic one in Asia for the foreseeable future.

The fourth problem is that the concept of the Indo-Pacific itself is not clearly defined by its proponents. The EU is waiting to see how it will evolve and what shape it will eventually take. Though the EU shares criticism of some of China's policies in the region (on the South China Sea or the Belt and Road Initiative) it does not want to be seen as aligning with the US against China and does not want the latter to be excluded from the area. Taking into account that the Indo-Pacific is seen in Beijing as an anti-China US proposal to contain its rise, European support for the initiative could also negatively impact EU-China relations.

Finally, the last limitation is not specific or exclusive to the Indo-Pacific – this is the question of coherence and the level of ambition in EU foreign and security policy. The differing national interests of EU member states and influence of external partners – be it the US, China or Russia – may stop the whole Union from taking a hard common position on delicate issues. Yet, with a clear commitment to "strategic autonomy" and the idea of majority voting on foreign affairs issues under discussion in the EU, this

impediment may play a less important role in the future.

EU Interests and Capabilities in the Indo-Pacific

Having said this, it does not imply that the EU shall not be interested in the Indo-Pacific. On the contrary, though geographically distant, the EU has vital economic, political and strategic interests in this region. First, as an economic powerhouse and major trading block linked to global value chains, it has obvious stakes in the safety of the sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation. In addition, as one-third of the EU's energy resources come from the Middle East through the seas, stability in the Indian Ocean is also crucial for its energy security. Second, the EU has political interests in stability and cooperation with regional partners as many of the global challenges it faces – from climate change to terrorism to migration – are shared concerns for Indo-Pacific nations.

Third, in strategic terms, the EU supports a multilateral and rules-based global order and promotes a cooperative approach to global challenges. Taking sides in an evolving “Cold War” between the US and China would be a worst-case scenario for Europe

as it has robust economic ties with both adversaries. A free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive and based on international law, is in the strategic interest of the EU. Moreover, it seems the EU shares this goal with many countries in the region. As said by Federica Mogherini during her interactions with ASEAN partners in Brussels in January 2019, “We both believe in rules-based multilateralism, in regional cooperation, in a cooperative approach to international issues, and not in geopolitical spheres of influence.”

The Union has a number of tools and resources to play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific. Most importantly, it has a number of economic instruments. It is still the largest trading partner, top source of foreign investments and largest provider of official development assistance for most countries in this region. Trade preferences, aid flows, European technologies and know-how would be crucial for harnessing the blue economy, improving multidimensional connectivity based on best international standards and fighting poverty and climate change in the region.

Secondly, the EU has many assets to influence the security situation, though not always in

a traditional military sense. Yet, three out of 17 current military and civilian missions are in the Indo-Pacific. The European Union Naval Force Operation Atalanta on the Indian Ocean is ongoing since 2008 and played an important role in fighting piracy off the shores of Somalia. The EU is stepping up joint exercises, training and capacity building programmes with Asian countries (for instance, the joint escort with India of the World Food Programme transport to Yemen in December 2018). Being a main source of military equipment, the EU has instruments (arms sales or arms embargo) to play an indirect role in regional defense capacities. Though it is not a hard power it is still an important force in addressing non-traditional security threats, humanitarian interventions and crisis resilience and response.

Finally, the EU as a regulatory power and successful regional organisation can positively contribute to regional peace and cooperation. The EU has played a vital role in negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015. It has supported security sector reform in Afghanistan and sponsored peace talks with ethnic groups in Myanmar. In addition, EU member states engage in diplomatic activities to put an end to wars in Asia (like Sweden's

role in the Yemen conflict). With its wide diplomatic presence and financial resources the EU can play a role in mitigating conflicts and tensions. More importantly, with its own experience as a regional organisation the Union can be instrumental in fostering confidence building measures and developing a new security architecture in the Indo-Pacific. The EU can cooperate with other existing regional platforms – like the ARF, the EAS and the IORA – or promote a new forum designed along the lines of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which proved helpful in facilitating dialogue among adversaries in the heights of the Cold War.

Conclusion: The EU as a Civilian Power in an Inclusive Indo-Pacific

In this time of global power shifts, the EU may find it easy to neglect the divisive and blurred concept of the Indo-Pacific in its external relations. It is also likely that the EU would continue its separate policies towards the Asia-Pacific and ACP countries and engage in ASEM as the most useful platform for practical cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners. It will strive to join the EAS and promote its role as an emerging security

actor and will try to contribute to evolving discussions.

Yet, it seems that the concept of the Indo-Pacific is here to stay and may soon redesign the regional balance of power in this crucial part of the world. As an area of growing US-China rivalry it is just too important to be ignored by the EU. The Union has its own direct economic and political interests in peace and stability in this region as well as in a stable, rules-based multipolar world order. Moreover, many smaller countries and middle powers need a capable outside player that can promote a cooperative regional order and contribute to regional stability and prosperity. The European Union, which seems to be leaving its past crises behind, shows both capacity and a will to play such an active role. Hence, designing a clear vision or response towards the Indo-Pacific can be an important task for upcoming European leadership, who will take power by the end of 2019. This would also require an honest dialogue with the US and China as well as other stakeholders.

Though the EU is developing its own defense capabilities and wants to be seen increasingly as a security actor, the most it has to offer

in the Indo-Pacific is in the civilian domain – through its diplomatic skills, economic and development tools and regulatory influence. To become an actor, it could prepare an offer that focuses on regional cooperation and on meeting the aspirations and needs of the people: improving infrastructure, developing maritime connectivity and blue economy, attaining sustainable development goals and mitigating effects of climate change. Joint collaboration between India and Japan on the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor may serve as one example of how the EU can also think about its role.

More importantly, however, it could play a stabilising role by mitigating tensions between major powers. The EU already shares with many stakeholders an interest in avoiding major US-China confrontation and would prefer to see an Indo-Pacific that is not only “free and open” but also “inclusive and cooperative.” It is not in the EU’s interest to contain or exclude China from the region, but rather, to make it play by its rules and laws. Along with its Global Strategy, the EU would like to see a “cooperative regional order” emerge in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, it can support existing frameworks or help in creating a new one. The Indo-Pacific may

serve as a major test for the EU to play a global role – regarding whether it can shape developments in distant regions or only adjust to scenarios written by others.

CONNECTING ASIA AND EUROPE – THE EUROPEAN UNION’S VISION AND STRATEGY

Jivanta Schottli

On 15 October 2018, the European Council adopted conclusions on “Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU strategy”, following the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of 19 September 2018. This is the third document outlining the European Union’s (EU) strategy towards Asia – the first was issued in 1994 and the second in 2001.¹ Over the past 25 years, both the EU and Asia have been transformed by regional and global developments. When the communication was announced, and the paper released, critics argued that the document offered far too little and came far too late as a strategy on connectivity. Proponents, on the other hand, hailed it as connectivity, done the right way!

The paper makes three broad points. Firstly, it proposes this is a strategy that seeks to combine economic objectives with political goals. The EU’s foreign policy has always had a strong normative agenda and this strategy carries the distinctive trademark of promoting European values. However, rather than being purely didactic, there is a pragmatic and realist approach that

¹ All documents can be accessed via the website of the EU External Action Service: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en. Last accessed on 25 July 2019.

recognises Europe really needs to improve its game. This combination can be read as part of an overall geopolitical effort to make the EU more *weltpolitikfähig*, as stated by the European Commission's President, Jean-Claude Juncker, or in other words to make the EU more of an effective global actor. Finally, what are the prospects for Europe's efforts? As an actor, the EU, by nature of its structures and processes, moves slowly. It is however likely that regardless of who takes up the leadership positions for the next five years, the momentum has been set to reinforce the EU's global strategy.

In 2018, the strategy document was launched by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini – a position which did not exist in 1994 and 2001. The evolving documents must therefore also be seen in terms of the changing structures and strategic outlook of the EU, as encapsulated in the 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. As part of this global strategy, the EU carried out a mapping exercise of Euro-Asian connectivity that led to the joint communication of 19 September 2018.

In terms of the way the EU 'views' Asia, the 2018 resolute focus on fostering "efficient and sustainable connectivity" is remarkable, given that in the past, Asia-Europe relations were framed primarily in terms of the need to foster regional security, human rights and the requisite declarations about drawing Asian countries into "a partnership of equals."² Instead, in 2018, there is an acknowledgement of the significant investment gap that exists in connectivity and the fact that this is an opportunity for the EU to deliver mutually beneficial assistance. A significant momentum has built up internally within the EU to reform its own internal financial architecture for development finance, adding both a constraint and a boost to the EU's efforts to re-energise its foreign policy.

The strategy was announced in September 2018 in time to feed into the EU's contribution to the 12th Asian-European Meeting (ASEM) Summit, which took place in Brussels on 18 and 19 October 2018.

Connectivity, the European Way

The definition of connectivity that the EU has adopted encompasses hard and soft aspects

2 See the 2001 document, "Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership", p. 2.

of physical and institutional linkages.³ There is a strong emphasis on upholding market principles and agreed international rules, norms and standards that are in keeping with the EU's normative approach to foreign policy. In fact, this has been packaged as connectivity done "the European way". Three features are given prominence in the 2018 strategy document as constituting a European approach: (1) an emphasis placed on the economic, fiscal, environmental and social sustainability of projects; (2) a comprehensive view of connectivity including transport links, digital networks, energy flows as well as a crucial human dimension; and (3) the adherence to and promotion of international rules and regulations to create a level playing field.

In other words, the European experience of internal market integration, the free flow of people, goods, services and capital; and the creation of EU-wide rules, provides the basis for a sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based approach to connectivity. This translates into what could be depicted as a three-pronged strategy of drawing on the EU's regulatory expertise, cross-border connectivity initiatives and its

interest in strengthening partnerships with third countries, regions and international organisations.

However, there is also a *realpolitik* at work, which lurks beneath the surface and occasionally emerges. For instance, the document urges the EU to "use all levers and tools in its financial network to mobilise public and private investment in sustainable connectivity", implying that a pragmatic rather than a didactic approach is to be applied. This needs to be seen in conjunction with ongoing efforts to modernise, consolidate and energise the EU's external investment architecture. Having focused for many years on revitalising the domestic economies of the EU following the debt crisis of 2009, there has been a gradual recognition of the need to focus on external instruments and their impact. In June 2018, the European Commission announced its intention to increase the external action budget (one of the seven main spending categories in the budget) to S\$190 billion for the period 2021-2027, marking an increase of 30 per cent, as calculated in current prices. A radical change that has been promised is a reduction in the number of financial and development aid

³ Reference is made to a definition agreed upon at the 13th Asia–Europe Meeting of Foreign Ministers in November 2017. Last accessed on 25 July 2019, "ASEM Connectivity", https://cdn.aseminfoboard.org/documents/Annex_1.pdf

instruments in order to support a clearer focus on political objectives and engagements with partners. This includes S\$136.11 billion for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, which will comprise new geographic programmes such as ‘Asia and the Pacific’. Furthermore, in preparatory documentation, a specific mention has been made of the need to direct European investment to regions with critical infrastructure and connectivity needs.⁴

Security does not feature very strongly in the 2018 communication, but it is embedded within the document. Three text boxes are indicative of priorities that look set to prevail. These are cyber security, the issues surrounding migration and the need to strengthen EU borders, along with efforts to promote ocean governance. The challenge of finding a balance between facilitating flows through connectivity and ensuring their safety is acknowledged but not given much consideration in this document.

Too Little, Too Late?

As soon as it was launched, the 2018 document was critiqued and analysed for

being the EU’s response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It was seen by some as an overdue, but welcome, show of strength and resolve and dismissed by many as offering too little in terms of a strategy and too late. When presenting the joint communication, Federica Mogherini clarified that this was “not a reaction...to another initiative... There is no link with the calendar nor with the timeline of others.”⁵

The timing of the new Asia strategy was also criticised for coming at the end of the current Commission’s term. However, it can also be read as the culmination of a slow and lengthy process that characterises much of the way in which the EU functions, given its internal decision-making process, especially on foreign policy. There have been efforts to streamline and strengthen the EU’s conduct of economic diplomacy aimed at promoting and supporting European investments and boosting the presence of European economic players in other parts of the world. Connectivity is in fact a focus that also emerges out of the EU’s stated interest in extending its successful Trans-European Transport Networks, to facilitate trade,

⁴ The documentation can be accessed via the European Commission’s website: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en

⁵ European Union External Action Service, “Remarks by HR/VP Mogherini at the press conference on the Joint Communication: Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU Strategy”, Press Release, last accessed 25 July 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/50736/remarks-hrvp-mogherini-pressconference-joint-communication-connecting-europe-and-asia-%E2%80%93_fr

investment and mobility also well beyond the EU.⁶

While connectivity may be “in the very DNA of the EU, as a political project based on market integration”, (as expressed by the High Representative in an op-ed published in *The Jakarta Post* in October 2018) there is also an explicit strategic agenda. This is in fact explicitly articulated in the now publicly available internal Joint Staff Working Document that was produced as part of the Euro-Asia Connectivity Mapping Exercise. A clear argument is made about connectivity being key to ensure that European companies can compete fairly in emerging markets. A whole section on the ‘Connectivity Policies of the EU’s Main Partners’ covers what others are doing, the needs for infrastructure and the potential for collaboration and overlapping interests. Beginning with the BRI, “the Chinese approach” is described as aiming “to support a global supply chain scheme, absorb China’s (over)capacity and use its capital abroad.” Although not labelled rivals, there is a clear identification in the mapping exercise of China and Russia

competing as connectivity-providers, especially within the region of Central Asia, the heartland of Eurasian connectivity.

In March 2019, just a month ahead of the annual EU-China summit, a Joint Communication titled ‘EU-China, a Strategic Outlook’ was published by the European Commission and the External Action Service. In it, China was referred to as a “systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance.”⁷ This surprised many, but it must be noted that the term “rival” appears only once in the 17-page document. Instead, the challenge of managing and protecting competition as well as enhancing competitiveness vis-à-vis China is the key concern and focus. As a result, expectations for cooperation and synergies remain high on both sides and featured strongly in the summit’s Joint Declaration.

China is also seen as a potential partner in the EU’s strategy on connecting Europe and Asia, which referred to the need for “a clear framework for confident engagement with our partners, enabling the Union to

6 See the website of the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA) which manages these projects: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en>. Last accessed on 25 July 2019.

7 European Commission, “European Commission and HR/VP contribution to the European Council: EU-China—A strategic outlook”, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The European Council, and the Council, 12 March 2019. Last accessed 25 June 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>

seek synergies between the EU and third countries, including China, in transport, energy and digital connectivity, on the basis of international norms and standards.” In this regard, the EU-China connectivity platform has been praised as an effective mechanism contributing to friendly exchange and cooperation on specific projects.

Aside from this, the various levels of ASEAN and the EU-Association of Southeast Asia Nations frameworks have traditionally been the focus of EU-Asia engagement. In both cases, connectivity, and the more recent buzzword of ‘sustainable connectivity’, looks set to remain high on the respective agendas.

The EU and Asia – Looking to the Future

Connectivity has always been at the heart of European-Asian interactions and exchanges. Ancient land and sea routes for trade enabled the flow of ideas and individuals creating entangled histories, interdependencies and grand infrastructure projects, some with less benign outcomes than others. The past will continue to rankle, and will no doubt be an issue for actors in Asia who, for example, perceive unfair advantages embedded in institutions, and to European actors who seek

to stoke feelings of fear and anxiety about the vulnerability of Europe or the over-bearing structures of the EU. Reconciling national politics with international compulsions is therefore going to be the biggest challenge on both sides of the relationship between European and Asian partners and competitors.

The growing involvement of Chinese companies and Chinese-state directed investments in Europe certainly represents a strategic dilemma but is also a challenge to Europe’s past understandings of Asia, which was variously portrayed as mysterious, despotic, rich beyond imagination, decadent and, in more modern times, as poor and illiberal. The reality of a globalised world punctures, yet also serves to perpetuate, some of these associations. In many ways therefore, the EU’s 2018 strategy for Asia is to be welcomed for its pragmatic and practical approach, one that recognises the exigencies of a more complex, more multilateral and multipolar world.

In terms of partners, the EU has a number in Asia and with whom important steps have been taken in recent times, cementing the growing importance that Asia has been

accorded within the EU. The EU and Japan's Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force on 1 February 2019; a landmark free trade agreement with Singapore has been ratified by the European parliament earlier this year; and a new strategy for India was released in November 2018. Each of these countries will likely play a crucial role as the EU looks to implement and carry forth the idea of a European way, distinct, competitive yet also compatible with other global connectivity initiatives, including the BRI and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategies of Japan and the United States.

EUROPE AND INDO-PACIFIC CONNECTIVITY

Dhruva Jaishankar

When political leaders, security officials and economic policymakers look at maps today, their eyes are as likely to look beyond boundaries to new kinds of lines being drawn: maritime trading routes, railway lines, transcontinental highways pipelines and energy transmission networks. Connectivity is becoming one of the primary arenas of geopolitical competition in the early 21st century. Nowhere is this more important than in the Indo-Pacific – a vast region extending from East Africa to the west coast of the Americas – a region that is experiencing both dynamic economic growth and intensifying security competition.

While in a narrow sense not ‘of the region’, Europe will be tremendously affected by these developments in the Indo-Pacific and will have a decisive role to play in shaping the emerging connectivity picture. As a collective entity, Europe remains – along with the United States (US) and China – one of the major poles of the global economy. It boasts considerable financial resources, high-quality governance standards and technical and technological expertise. However, the ability to harness these capabilities for geopolitical ends will require greater conceptual clarity on the part of European leaders about regional

dynamics, better coordination within, and targeted interventions to shape outcomes in Europe's favour. This would allow Europe to use its comparative advantages – money, norms and knowledge – most effectively.

Connectivity as Competition

Connectivity describes the hard and soft infrastructure required to facilitate the exchange of goods, capital, people, energy and information. The necessary ingredients for connectivity are: (i) 'hard' or physical infrastructure that includes roads, railways, ports, airports, power plants and electricity grids; (ii) 'soft infrastructure' including appropriate regulation, policy environments, laws, and standards; and (iii) necessary capital in the form of investment, loans, aid and other financial instruments. An era of geopolitical competition in a globalised world has meant that the ownership and management of connectivity infrastructure and the determination of connectivity standards have assumed a strategic character, creating new forms of dependency and leverage. Connectivity can, therefore, become a political tool, but only if a government or governing body plays an active role in directing, regulating or facilitating it.

However, assessments of connectivity often suffer from some major deficiencies. First, an excessive focus is often placed on certain elements – such as goods trade or tourist traffic – that are easier to measure or serve the interests of certain parties. By contrast, the openness of borders, financial flows, energy exchanges and data connectivity are often less discernible and are given insufficient importance. Second, the appreciation of connectivity as a strategic factor is poor, particularly among elements of the private sector. What dependencies are created, and how that might affect a state's national security, are poorly understood, with public debate oscillating between complacency and alarmism. Third, there is often a discrepancy between actual connectivity and a state's willingness and ability to translate that into strategic gains. Consider that the stock of Japanese overseas financial assistance is higher than China's (although China has narrowed the gap tremendously), or that the overall investment exposure of the US, Europe or (until recently) even Canada is higher than that of China.¹ Finally, an excessive emphasis on hard connectivity risks overlooking soft connectivity, which is equally necessary.

1 Mike Bird, "Japan's Silent Belt and Road is Beating China's", *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 April 2019; also see "Stock of Direct Foreign Investment – Abroad", *World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency, 2017.

In contrast to costly, and sometimes redundant, hard infrastructure projects, soft infrastructure remains an area where open societies and market economies such as Europe, India, Japan or the US have certain inherent advantages.

Why the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific concept has arisen as a consequence of two major developments. One is the inadequacies of existing regional institutions. A regional political architecture based around the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) arose during a period of withdrawn great powers, dating roughly between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s – the US after the Vietnam War; China after Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms; Japan before remilitarisation; Russia following the Soviet Union’s collapse; and India before economic liberalisation. ASEAN’s centrality to the regional institutional architecture, while useful, is increasingly under strain as the major powers become more active. Furthermore, a narrow definition of the Asia-Pacific earlier informed regional integration, with an emphasis on Northeast Asia and parts of Southeast Asia, often at the expense of the US, India, Australia or New Zealand,

or indeed other parts of Asia (Bangladesh, Mongolia) and the Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste), let alone Europe. The notion of ‘Asian values’ – in vogue before the 1997 Asian financial crisis – contributed to this narrower conception of the region. It is not just ASEAN, but also the US hub-and-spoke alliance system, and existing financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, that are revealing themselves to be vestiges of an earlier era and therefore inadequate for dealing with today’s challenges and opportunities. The Indo-Pacific has consequently arisen as a useful construct to reflect the regional dynamics underway in a broader region.

The second – and more pressing – driver of the Indo-Pacific strategic concept has been China’s ‘going out’ strategy, which has been in evidence since the early 2000s and particularly after 2008. Since 2013, this has explicitly taken the form of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) [previously known as One Belt, One Road]. The BRI represents a wide array of overseas investment and infrastructure projects from Africa and Europe to South and East Asia and serves multiple functions: exporting Chinese surplus industrial capacity and debt, consolidating the political position

of China's Communist Party leadership, stabilising China's restive western provinces and challenging US global leadership. It has been accompanied by China's growing security profile in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The fact that civilian infrastructure projects could be used for military purposes (dual use), or for political leverage, means that for China connectivity in the Indo-Pacific has now assumed a strategic purpose.

The concerns about China's external policies – often now in the guise of the BRI – are essentially four-fold. First, the lack of transparency of government decision-making adds to concerns. Second, non-market economic principles defining China's external engagement has led to non-reciprocity, uneven playing fields, and market distortions. Many countries now fear the consequences of BRI's unsustainable debt, opaque contracting, environmental degradation, social disruption, and undermining of sovereignty. China has accompanied its economic engagement with territorial revisionism, whether in the East China Sea with Japan and South Korea, in the South China Sea with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei or in the Himalayas with India and Bhutan. And there are growing

concerns at China's selective application of accepted global norms, whether freedom of navigation and overflight, Internet governance or non-proliferation.

For these two reasons – the inadequacies of the existing regional architecture and the nature of China's behaviour – the various notions of a free and open Indo-Pacific have begun to be articulated. Japan and Australia took a leadership role in this respect, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe articulating his approach in 2007 and its normative character in 2016. Australia's defence and foreign policy white papers between 2013 and 2017 expressed similar sentiments. India followed, with official articulations between 2013 and 2018, and the US embraced the terminology under Donald Trump's administration in 2017. More recently, countries like Indonesia and France have adopted the framework for their own regional policies. While significant differences exist, including on geographical emphases, the common threads are four-fold: (i) the Indian and Pacific Oceans constitute a single strategic space; (ii) the maritime sphere is of particular importance; (iii) the Indian Ocean and India are of elevated importance; and (iv) the security order and norms defining the region must be

enforced, and, hence, the region should be free, open and inclusive.

Europe's Role in the Indo-Pacific Community

Amid this backdrop, what role should Europe play? While it is understandable that Europe's security preoccupations may be elsewhere (the Mediterranean, North Atlantic, Arctic and in Eastern Europe and Eurasia), the economic importance of the Indo-Pacific is immense. Roughly 35 per cent of the European Union's (EU) exports (€618 billion [S\$954 billion]) and 45 per cent of its imports (€774 billion [S\$1.2 trillion]) are with Asia. Secondly, Asia, as a whole, faces immense infrastructure shortfalls, given current rates of growth. By one measure, it will require investments of US\$648 billion (S\$898 billion) in road infrastructure, US\$294 billion (S\$408 billion) in railways, US\$72 billion (S\$100 billion) in ports and airports, US\$619 billion (S\$858 billion) in energy infrastructure, US\$141 billion (S\$195 billion) in telecommunications and US\$109 billion (S\$151 billion) in water over the next decade.² It is also in Europe's interest that these developments meet high

quality standards, including environmental standards. EU official documents express a desire to diversify relations beyond economic issues to include political, civil society and security cooperation.

Europe – both individual countries and collective institutions – brings three main strengths to the table: money, norms and knowledge. Europe has a number of financing mechanisms at its disposal. To give but one example, the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world is Norwegian. EU funds are already being utilised for infrastructure projects in Central Asia, and the European Structural and Investment Funds, the European Fund for Strategic Investment and the European Fund for Sustainable Development are other mechanisms for financing connectivity initiatives both within and outside the EU.³ Working with private sector companies, as some European governments already do quite effectively, opens many other possibilities. Secondly, Europe is a global leader on standards, whether for issues like data protection, environmental standards, government transparency or safety. A good example of this involves negotiations towards

² "Global Infrastructure Outlook", Global Infrastructure Hub, 2017, <https://outlook.gihub.org>

³ "Connecting Europe & Asia: The EU Strategy", European Union External Action Service, 19 September 2018.

EU-Japan standards for safe data transfers, which offer a high degree of personal data protection. Finally, Europe remains a knowledge leader, whether in developing a better understanding of connectivity and its implications, leading new technologies (such as 5G networks or sensitive dual-use technologies) or improving people-to-people connectivity through educational exchanges and scholarships.

However, to harness these tools usefully, Europe will still have to take a number of important steps. The most important is conceptual: European leaders should understand the geopolitical and normative underpinnings of the Indo-Pacific strategic concept, if for no other reason than because they align with Europe's own interests. In practical terms, this will require consolidating state and multilateral financing instruments. The alternative would be a disaggregated approach, in which Europe will punch below its weight. Second, governments will have to work to sensitise and coordinate their private sectors to address the political and security implications of their actions. To a certain degree, this is already underway, with some loss of enthusiasm among major European

firms about the Belt and Road Initiative's procurement practices and the lack of transparency.⁴ Finally, Europe still suffers from a lack of exposure and knowledge. Think tanks and universities can play a critical role, but there is still a paucity of resources dedicated to contemporary Asia in Europe.

Should a more coordinated, integrated and well-informed approach to the Indo-Pacific be adopted widely in European capitals, there is no reason why Europe cannot play a significant role in shaping connectivity in the broader region by deploying its substantial financial, regulatory and intellectual heft. The extension of the BRI and the creation of a '16+1' format for Chinese engagement with certain central and eastern European states already indicate the degree to which regional developments in the Indo-Pacific are having direct implications for Europe. Without a concerted approach to connectivity in the region, the implications will be more widely and deeply felt in the coming years.

4 Tania Ghossein, Bernard Hoekman, and Anirudh Shingal, "Public Procurement in the Belt and Road Initiative", Discussion Paper No. 10, MTI Global Practice, World Bank, December 2018.

JAPAN'S INCLUSIVE INDO-PACIFIC VISION – SEEKING MULTI-LAYERED SECURITY COOPERATION

Shutaro Sano

Introduction

In the midst of a growing strategic competition between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region, Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision aims to (1) promote fundamental principles such as rule of law, freedom of navigation, openness and free trade; (2) strengthen regional connectivity via quality infrastructure, people-to-people exchanges and institutional harmonisation; and (3) ensure peace and stability by focusing its efforts on capacity building assistance as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. While there are certainly both cooperative and competitive elements in Japan's FOIP vision, it is not expected to become an exclusive nor a security-oriented initiative that would target or contain a specific country. Tokyo's primary objective is to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region by strengthening connectivity between Asia and Africa through a broader and deeper cooperation with both regional and external partners so that the region as a whole can serve the international public good.

Making Greater Efforts in the Security Field

While Japan's FOIP vision is a development-driven initiative, Tokyo has deepened its security efforts and strengthened the linkage between security and development, which has gained increasing importance from the cross-border infrastructure developments in the Indo-Pacific. In the security realm, Tokyo has, first of all, solidified its ties through various regional institutions and multilateral security cooperation with the Indo-Pacific states, in particular the United States (US), Australia, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. In pursuing a broader and deeper multi-layered security cooperation network, Japan has, most importantly, reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN and incorporated the principle of ASEAN centrality and unity into Tokyo's FOIP in 2018, recognising the importance of ASEAN's development in political, economic, social and cultural fields as a whole. Earlier in 2016, Japan strengthened its defence ties with the

ASEAN countries with the introduction of the Vientiane Vision, which not only sets the framework for stronger cooperation with the individual ASEAN member states but also seeks to develop an ASEAN-wide cooperation that would promote practical cooperation by effectively combining diverse measures.¹ Tokyo's emphasis on ASEAN's centrality and unity is also expected to provide countries with more strategic space to manage their relations with major powers.

In addition, Tokyo has recently strengthened cooperation in maritime security with its regional partners.² These efforts are aimed at promoting a secure international maritime domain including transportation routes and maritime natural resources, which has become critical to the future development of all countries in the region.

Second, Japan has intentionally avoided taking actions that would be perceived by China as containment, despite its growing concerns over Beijing's continuous assertiveness in the East and South China

1 These measures include (1) the promotion of international law, especially in maritime security; (2) capacity building cooperation in HA/DR, PKO, landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance, cybersecurity, defense buildup planning (sharing know-how); (3) defense equipment and technology cooperation; (4) continued participation in multilateral joint training and exercises; and (5) strengthening of human resource development and academic exchange.

2 In May 2019, Japan joined with the other 17 ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) grouping to participate in the fourth multilateral maritime security field exercise in Singapore. Also in May, Japan conducted two new quadrilateral naval exercises in less than two weeks: first, the Japan-US-India-Philippines exercise in the South China Sea; and second, an exercise with the US and Australia along with France off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.

Seas as well as in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.³ There are also apprehensions over China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which necessitate countries, including Japan, to ensure that the BRI becomes a more accommodating initiative for all based on international standards and rules. Despite these worries, Tokyo decided in June 2017 to cooperate with the BRI under certain conditions,⁴ renamed the FOIP from a "strategy" to a "vision" and resumed summit meetings to show its resolve to establish a warmer political relationship with Beijing, given the two countries' high level of economic interdependence as well as the potential of the BRI becoming a prominent driver in the establishment of a new global economic centre of gravity in the Indo-Pacific region. Meanwhile, the improvement in Japan-China relations has alleviated concerns, at least in the short-run, among the Indo-Pacific states, which have feared being forced to take sides with either of the regional major powers, namely, the US and China.

Third, Tokyo has intensified its relationship with non-regional powers such as the

European Union (EU) in the pursuit of its FOIP vision by establishing the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), along with the Economic Partnership Agreement. The SPA illustrates a strong joint commitment to defend key principles and values that form the basis of the existing international order. During the first SPA Joint Committee in March 2019, the two sides exchanged views on the initial priorities for cooperation in sustainable connectivity, quality infrastructure and global issues as well as on the importance of strengthening security cooperation. Meanwhile, Japan has been keen on enhancing Europe's presence in the Indo-Pacific by strengthening bilateral security cooperation with individual EU countries such as France and the United Kingdom through 2 plus 2 foreign and defence ministerial dialogues, the signing of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement as well as the various defence exchanges/exercises. Japan has also strengthened security ties with other EU countries such as Finland by signing the memorandum on defence cooperation and exchanges in February 2019.

3 Recently, China has strengthened its maritime research activities off the coast of Indonesia to seek an alternative route in avoiding the Malacca Strait, which is under the US surveillance.

4 Prime Minister Abe clarified four conditions during the Upper House Budget Committee in March, 2019. These conditions include: (1) healthy finances of the recipient countries (projects would not harm the finances of the recipient countries); (2) openness of the projects; (3) transparency of the projects (including non-military use); and (4) economic efficiency of the projects to the recipient countries.

Confronting the Potential Risks

While Japan has been able to receive gradual support for its FOIP vision, challenges exist. First and foremost, there are multiple views on the FOIP and they differ in content as well as in the initiative's geographic scope. Specifically, the US' version of the FOIP has a much stronger competitive element than the other versions of the FOIP, including Japan's. In early June 2019, the US Department of Defense released an exclusive security-oriented Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, which specifically targeted China, Russia and North Korea. The report recognises the linkages between economics, governance and security, but it is basically an extension of the US National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy issued earlier by the Trump administration. While it is imperative that the US maintain its geopolitical presence in the Indo-Pacific region and that Japan continues to strengthen its alliance with the US, Tokyo would need to ensure that its FOIP would not be forced to transform into an initiative similar to Washington's latest security-oriented FOIP strategy. What Tokyo needs to do is to cooperate with the US in security issues, while maintaining its inclusive non-

security-oriented FOIP. This will be a big challenge for Tokyo as it will most likely be pressured to align with Washington. One way for Tokyo to overcome this challenge may be to seek and strengthen a development-oriented cooperation with Australia, India and the ASEAN member states within the framework of its FOIP vision.

Furthermore, there is an utmost need for Japan to find a common ground with the US in implementing its FOIP vision. Both Japan and the US agree highly on the importance of maintaining fundamental principles such as the rule of law, but Tokyo has taken a softer approach than Washington towards issues regarding illegitimate election processes and individual human rights violations in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia and Myanmar. The divergence between Tokyo and Washington over these issues could negatively affect the level of support towards Japan's FOIP vision as a whole, and, as a result, could further complicate Southeast Asian states' relations with Japan, the US and China.⁵

Meanwhile, multilateral frameworks such as the Japan-US-Australia-India quadrilateral dialogue would need to develop, if

5 Kei Koga, "The Emerging Indo-Pacific Era", Japan-Southeast Asia Relations, Pacific Forum (May 2019), pp.128-129.

deemed necessary, but in a way so that the initiatives would not be perceived by Beijing as containment. Therefore, it will be more important for Japan to continue strengthening its current bilateral and trilateral strategic partnership with the US, Australia and India than overly focusing on developing the Quad into a security-oriented mechanism.

Second, Tokyo needs to seek broader and deeper cooperation with external powers such as the EU to enhance its FOIP vision. Cooperation, especially in the security field, can be challenging due to different policy priorities based on the distinct geographical location and geopolitical position of each country. While the primary geographic focus of Tokyo's FOIP vision is the Indo-Pacific region, security cooperation should not be limited to bilateral or regional issues, but be broader in scope and focus also on cross-regional as well as global issues such as of the prevention of the spread of international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, as well as maritime security and the use of new domains (for example, outer-space, etc.). This is because bilateral and regional issues have become more directly related to cross-

regional and global issues in recent years.

With regards to maritime security, Japan has strengthened its efforts and conducted multiple naval exercises with EU countries, in particular France and the UK.⁶ While the frequency of the exercises has increased over the years, these efforts need to become more institutionalised. Furthermore, there is a growing need for countries to cooperate in outer-space due to its close link with maritime security. Both navigation systems (Japan's regional-focused Quasi-Zenith Satellite System and the EU's global-coverage Galileo) are designed for commercial use, but they need to be compatible in order to improve information-gathering, communication and maritime situational awareness. Moreover, deeper cooperation in outer-space is essential as developments in navigation control and anti-satellite systems have direct security implications for the international community as a whole. As stipulated in its latest 2018 National Defense Program Guidelines, the use of new domains – outer-space, cyber and electromagnetic spectrum – in defence has become the top priority for Tokyo.

6 These include a naval exercise near the Pacific islands of Guam and Tinian with the US, France and UK in May 2017. More recently in December 2018, Japan joined with the US and UK to conduct a submarine-hunting exercise for the first time off the coast of the Philippines.

Issues closely related to climate change are also areas in which Japan and external partners can deepen cooperation.

Development in the Arctic has become an important issue not only for the Arctic States but also for the Indo-Pacific countries and non-regional countries, as melting ice in the region has affected the natural environment in the Arctic both positively and negatively as well as in other parts of the world, including the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, Russia has begun to intensify its military capabilities for securing its interests in the Arctic.⁷ China has also started to get more involved in the Arctic region with the expansion of its geostrategic BRI. These events create room for greater cooperation in pursuing effective and peaceful governance in the Arctic. Today, the Indo-Pacific countries, including Japan, India and China, along with seven EU countries and Switzerland, are among the 13 observers in the Arctic Council. These countries need to cooperate with the Arctic States in governing the area. Meanwhile, water security in the Indo-Pacific such as the Mekong Basin, the Himalayas and the Indian subcontinent will also be an issue for future collaboration. Countries including Japan and the EU need to ensure that water is a means for cooperation

and will not become the cause of the next war.

Yet, the different geopolitical positions of each country over critical issues may affect the level of cooperation with Japan. With regard to China's BRI, some European countries, such as France, the UK and Germany, have become more sceptical in recent years, while others like Greece and Italy maintain a more positive outlook. This divide may negatively affect the extent and scope to which Japan and the EU could cooperate via the SPA. In light of these differences, it would, therefore, be more realistic for Japan to take a two-track approach by continuously deepening its bilateral cooperation with individual EU countries while gradually seeking a stronger relationship with the EU as a whole. Brexit could also affect the level of cooperation. Furthermore, different approaches to Russia could be a concern for Tokyo in seeking cooperation with Europe. When Russia invaded Crimea, Japan took a softer approach to Russia than the EU due to its desire to reach a post-war settlement with Moscow over the contested Northern Territories. It would, therefore, be important that Tokyo

7 The US has recently released a report on the Arctic stressing the danger posed by Russia and China in the region.

and Brussels agree on the policy priorities over issues related to Russia.

While Japan and the EU seek greater cooperation over these various issues, it will be equally important to deepen their respective relations with Australia, India and the ASEAN countries, as these countries also need to play a substantial role in maintaining the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. In this respect, it is encouraging that both Japan and the EU have been respectively deepening their relations with these countries in recent years. Notably, the agreement between ASEAN and the EU to upgrade their relationship to a Strategic Partnership in January 2019 is expected to play a significant role in promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Last but not least, Japan needs to acknowledge its limited defence capabilities in enhancing its security ties within the region. Today, Japan has endeavoured to strengthen the linkage between security and development in its pursuit of the FOIP vision, and deepened its strategic ties with both regional and external countries by sharing common interests in bilateral, regional and global issues. However, there is a significant

gap between Tokyo's FOIP vision and its defence capabilities. Tokyo's FOIP vision covers the two continents – Asia and Africa – and the two oceans – the Indian and the Pacific Oceans – but the Japan Self Defense Forces, for example, do not have sufficient power projection capabilities to engage in maritime security in the Indian Ocean. Their maritime power projection capabilities in the Pacific are also limited. Furthermore, the use of new domains in defence and outer-space, in particular, is still in its early stages. Overvaluing the extent and scope of cooperation with other countries, therefore, should be avoided.

Going Forward – Pursuing a Substantive Vision

In 2006, Japan introduced an initiative similar to the present FOIP vision, called the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” concept. The foundation of this initiative rested on a value-oriented diplomacy that placed high importance on universal principles and values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law and the market economy. Today, Japan has excluded the value-related elements like democracy from the FOIP vision, and emphasised the importance of

maintaining the fundamental principles such as rule of law, freedom of navigation and open free trade via declarations and statements. But there is still much to be done. Tokyo needs to pursue a broader and deeper multi-layered security cooperation with both regional and external partners in strengthening the linkage between security and development as well as clarify the specific areas in which it should and could cooperate with other cross-border infrastructure projects, including China's BRI. Moreover, Japan needs to seek, together with its partners, a free and open environment that would provide the Indo-Pacific states with more strategic space to manage their relations with the major powers, the US and China in particular, rather than leave these countries with no other option but to take sides. As such, the FOIP vision needs to develop into a more substantive initiative than the one proposed back in the mid-2000s, but remain as an inclusive and non-security-oriented framework so that it would be well-received by the international community in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

INDIA AND EUROPE: MIDDLE POWER COLLABORATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Darshana M. Baruah

The Indo-Pacific has rapidly moved from a conversational point to an active theatre for engagements and collaborations. Today, most navies refer to the region as their area of operation and interest, widening the scope and horizon of maritime interactions across the globe. As more nations begin to adopt this theatre as an operational area, there is a need to identify and implement practical collaborations to materialise the idea of an Indo-Pacific. As countries continue to define and outline their Indo-Pacific engagements and priorities, the case for middle power collaborations emerge as one of the strongest pillars of the Indo-Pacific.

While the developments of the Indo-Pacific are usually attributed to the rise of China and its interactions with the United States (US), middle powers will emerge as critical players in shaping a new security architecture. The Indo-Pacific as a theatre, to a great extent, will be shaped by and through engagements between middle powers. It is the alternative to a bipolar or a unipolar world and a theatre that, perhaps for the first time, places a considerable amount of responsibilities in the hands of middle powers – many of which were at the periphery post-World War II. While the European powers played a critical

role through the Cold War, their global military footprint reduced significantly post the Cold War era. As great power politics return to the centre, accentuated by a rising China's interactions with big and small players and Washington's call to the region to take on more responsibility, there appears to be a natural coalition between middle powers with an interest in shaping a new emerging security architecture. These middle powers want to voice their concerns and become pillars of a new security architecture. While middle powers like India, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and Australia are becoming key actors of a new Asian order, coalitions between Europe and Asian middle powers also offer a scope for practical collaborations in maintaining a stable Indo-Pacific.

Role of the Middle Powers

At the core of India's Indo-Pacific vision are its partnerships. It is a theatre of opportunities built on Delhi's increasing and deepening maritime engagements. Since 2015, Delhi has increasingly used the Indo-Pacific as the area of interest with its strategic partners beginning with Japan. It then began using the term with its Southeast Asian partners, Australia and the US. While

Delhi's Indo-Pacific engagements with its European partners are rather recent, it is quickly emerging to be the new scope for collaboration in the Indo-Pacific.

As India began to embrace the Indo-Pacific concept, it quickly realised the potential and benefit in a wide network of partnerships. This network of partnerships not only highlighted the advantages of collaboration across the Indo-Pacific, it also allowed the middle powers to address a common challenge – that of capacity. Middle powers like India, Australia, France and Japan carry significant strategic weight in shaping a new security architecture. However, there are serious capacity constraints in these middle powers' ability to operate and secure the Indo-Pacific on its own. If India's advantage lies in the Indian Ocean region, Japan plays a greater role in the western Pacific, Australia in the southwest Indian Ocean and France in the western Indian Ocean. Australia, Japan and France are also the leading players in the South Pacific. While none of these countries might have the capacity, capital or the resources to play a dominant role across each of the sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific, together, and through a model of burden sharing, middle powers have the capacity and

capability in responding to challenges and shaping the Indo-Pacific narrative.

As Delhi began to expand its maritime partnerships and embrace the strategic concept of the Indo-Pacific, Tokyo emerged as a natural key partner. Under Modi's first term as Prime Minister between 2014 and 2019, leaders in both Delhi and Tokyo underlined an unprecedented strategic intent in the bilateral relationship. This created the environment and political will for new and strategic initiatives from connectivity, space and cyber to maritime and robotics. Over a period of five years, Delhi and Tokyo set the stage for middle power collaborations on issues of strategic, geopolitical and economic significance. The collaboration went beyond the bilateral relationship, exploring projects in third countries and outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. Similarly, India renewed its interests with Australia and both countries invested considerably in strengthening the bilateral relationship, especially in the maritime domain. Incidentally, Australia and Japan were also among the first countries to articulate an Indo-Pacific vision and pursue it in its foreign policy engagements. Gradually, Delhi deepened its collaborations and

renewed engagements with a host of other middle power countries such as Indonesia and Singapore. A recent addition to India's strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific has been an increasing interest with Europe.

A convergence of interests in India and Europe's vision for the region – a rules-based order, upholding established norms and standards – provided the broader umbrella for more substantial engagements. A recent development in middle power collaborations has been the rise of the India-France strategic partnership. While Delhi and Brussels continue to explore and identify areas of interest for joint collaborations, France stands out as India's closest strategic European partner in the Indo-Pacific. While London too has expressed keen interest, the pace of development in the Delhi-Paris relationship remains unparalleled. Delhi and Paris have of course long enjoyed a strategic partnership but there was a limited regional focus in the bilateral relationship. While traditionally the two countries have had limited interactions at sea, strategic trust between the two nations remains unparalleled with regard to India's relationship with western powers. A convergence in maritime initiatives and vision facilitates this collaboration in the

Indo-Pacific. Both India and France have capacity constraints but have excellent geographical advantages in the region. While India is considered a dominant power across the Indian Ocean, its blind spot lies in the western Indian Ocean – where France plays a leading role. On the other hand, if France lacks a visible presence in the eastern Indian Ocean and along the straits of Malacca, Delhi takes the lead as a security provider along the straits. France also has a considerable presence in the South Pacific, an area India is looking to increase its engagement. Together, through a concept of burden-sharing, India and France as middle powers can not only address common challenges but also be authoritative voices in shaping the Indo-Pacific.

As India continues to deepen its partnerships across the Indo-Pacific, there is a wider scope for collaboration at bilateral, trilateral and multilateral levels. However, practical collaboration will be defined by specific converging interests rather than an overarching Indo-Pacific intent. The 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue¹ highlighted the presence of multiple versions of the Indo-Pacific as put forward by countries big and small. This

is likely to continue and is the reality on the ground. Given the geographic scope of the theatre, each country's primary area of operation in the Indo-Pacific will differ based on its strategic interest and capabilities. Instead of focusing on aligning every Indo-Pacific vision, there is greater benefit in an issues-based approach for middle power collaborations.

Issues-based Approach

While middle powers might have capacity constraints in operating at the same scale across the wider Indo-Pacific, the challenges and concerns across the region appear to be the same. Middle powers are keen to protect a rules based order, promote a multipolar architecture and lend a significant voice in shaping new norms and rules, if any. The sense of uncertainty emerging from an assertive China and a hesitant US underlines the common interests among the middle powers – that the middle powers can no longer wait along the sidelines for the big powers to decide and mould the new security architecture. There is an acute realisation that middle powers will have to play a considerable role in protecting their

1 See speeches, interactions and analysis from the Shangri-La Dialogue, May 31 - June 02, 2019 at Singapore: www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2019

own interests and balancing great power politics. If capacity is a constraint, it can be overcome through partnerships. One of the common interests across the middle powers is the ability to monitor developments in the maritime region which would allow each country to better prepare to defend rules and norms as well as protect its own strategic interests. As a result, maritime domain awareness (MDA) – for both traditional and non-traditional security threats – has come to be one of the key issues in most countries' Indo-Pacific strategy. Maritime domain awareness is the ability to monitor all movements, on, under or above the maritime domain.² By definition, an effective MDA can be achieved only through partnerships given the challenges in developing the MDA by one country across the Indo-Pacific. If the MDA is a key area in Indo-Pacific collaborations, then information sharing is at the heart of MDA. As the Indian Navy placed MDA as its priority in a changing maritime environment in the Indian Ocean region, Delhi realised the potential of maritime partnerships and in information sharing. However, for a country with a history of

operating primarily alone, the task of creating a robust information sharing mechanism was not easy. To test logistical concerns and build trust among partners, Delhi began by signing white shipping agreements with its key partners. Taking the next step, India in 2017 announced its intent in hosting a regional information fusion centre. India inaugurated the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in December 2018.³ The IFC-IOR aims to build “a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region.”⁴ A fusion centre provides the platform to merge inputs from all sources in creating one picture on all movements at sea. This helps detect and address all issues related to maritime safety and security at sea by sharing information with participating countries through liaison officers and other communications. As a regional hub, the IFC-IOR led by India addresses a critical challenge in the region. MDA and fusion centres have come to be a great example of middle powers taking initiatives in providing common goods and addressing common threats and challenges. If India set up the

2 See “Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy”, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, October 2015, www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

3 Press Information Bureau, “Raksha Mantri Inaugurates Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)”, 22 December 2018, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=186757>

4 “Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region”, official website, www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/about-us.html

IFC-IOR, the EU, led by France, established the IFC in Madagascar⁵ to address threats in the western Indian Ocean region. While Singapore was the first regional information centre, Australia is now leading efforts to build a South Pacific fusion centre.⁶ Together, these fusion centres led by middle powers will allow for countries to address security threats and maintain peace and order in the maritime domain. Collaborations between middle powers in the region even at the bilateral level will feed into MDA efforts in the region. One such collaboration could be the use of strategic islands across the Indo-Pacific, which provide middle powers and their partners access to key points and lines of communication allowing them to be present and operate in areas far away from shores. For example, the islands of Okinawa (Japan), Cocos Keeling (Australia), Andaman and Nicobar (India) and La Reunion (France), are strategically located close to key chokepoints and with easy access to potential hotspots in the region. Access to each other's facilities through exercises and mutual logistics facilities agreements would allow middle powers to pool resources and respond to any threats arising around these

key lines of communication, keeping them open, free and secure.

MDA is only one such example. Similarly, middle powers through their collective resources can address challenges in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, coordinate capacity building efforts, offer substantial infrastructure and connectivity projects, explore and develop blue economy initiatives and work toward the sustainable development of islands addressing climate change and socio-economic challenges. If realised, middle powers together have the resources, capacity and capability to ensure a stable and secure Indo-Pacific. While most countries have adopted the Indo-Pacific as a theatre, middle powers now must lead the way in implementing its intent in creating a new security architecture.

5 See Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre, Madagascar, <http://crfimmadagascar.org/en/historique/>

6 Australian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia to support new Pacific Fusion Centre", 5 September 2018, <https://dfat.gov.au/news/news/Pages/australia-to-support-new-pacific-fusion-centre.aspx>

HIGH HANGING AND BITTER: ALIGNING THE EU WITH ASEAN-LED SECURITY FORUMS

Malcolm Cook

Fruit trees are a common policy reform analogy. We are told that reform processes work best if reformers pick some low-hanging fruit (easy to achieve reforms) that are sweet (show good, quick results) first. This will then allow them to climb the tree, if they choose, for the higher hanging fruit (the more important but difficult reforms). It seems to me that aligning the European Union (EU) with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-led regional security forums in general, and seeking an EU seat at the table of the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) process and the Extended ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) in particular, are certainly high-hanging fruits on a tree that is hard to climb. Moreover, with the broadening United States (US)-China strategic rivalry, EU alignment with these ASEAN-led regional security forums, if achieved, may make this more bitter than sweet for the EU and its member states.

High Hanging

ASEAN, by not inviting the EU to join the EAS, has already made this tree a tall one from which to pick fruit, whatever its flavour or smell. As the EAS is into its 14th year and has

already had one round of dialogue partner additions, its roots are deep. The ADMM+ process and EAMF, due to their same membership, later creation and lower-level representation, are best seen as branches of the EAS tree. Discussions over the last decade with ASEAN watchers, diplomats from ASEAN member-states and former members of the ASEAN Secretariat suggest three reinforcing reasons for ASEAN's exclusion of the EU from the EAS, ADMM+ process and EAMF, none of which are easily mutable or likely to change.

First is the negative reaction to the breadth of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) membership which includes the EU and the association made between the large and diverse membership of the ARF and its lack of dynamism and progress.¹ The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process confronts a similar causal narrative between a large and diverse membership and lack of dynamism and progress, as does the Asia-Europe Meeting. Both the ARF and the APEC (as India knows) have long-standing de facto membership moratoriums in place in reaction to this problem.

The smaller, less diverse membership of the EAS – and by extension the ADMM+ process and EAMF – is an effort to preclude the reoccurrence of this problem of numbers. It seems to be a widely held view among ASEAN member states, strongly championed by some including Singapore, that the current membership of 18, including the eight dialogue partners, are both the right number and the right members. Including the EU would significantly expand the geographic scope of the ASEAN-led regional security forums beyond the Asia-Pacific region and the broader Indo-Pacific region turning them into inter-regional, not intra-regional, security forums.

Even if this fear of expansion could be overcome, the EU (or Canada) would then face the problem of pairing. The expansion of the EAS to include the US and Russia was easy to justify on the importance side. Many Southeast Asian countries and dialogue partners organise their grand strategy and defence policies around the US forward defence in Asia. An ASEAN-led regional security or strategic forum without the US is much less relevant than one with the US.

1 Ralf Emmers and See Seng Tan, "The ASEAN Regional Forum and Preventive Diplomacy: A Failure in Practice", RSIS Working Papers, www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/rsis-pubs/WP189.pdf

Russia is an important security partner for Vietnam and Laos in particular as well.

ASEAN internal deliberations and ASEAN consultations with existing EAS dialogue partners about inviting the US to join were facilitated by the pairing of US and Russian membership as, on many key issues for some ASEAN member-states and China, Russia is correctly seen as a counterbalance to the US. Russian and American differences in the UN Security Council and more recently on the South China Sea disputes between China and five ASEAN member-states are clear evidence of one balancing off the other. There is no clear balancer to the EU among potential future EAS members. As US-China rivalry intensifies, this lack of possible balance against EU (or Canadian) membership will become a more difficult problem.

The third problem is specific to the EU-ASEAN relationship and has been an issue that complicated earlier enhancements of the EU-ASEAN dialogue partner relationship. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation had to be amended to allow the EU to accede to it.² The EU is not a state. It is the only ASEAN dialogue partner that is not a sovereign state,

and the President of the EU Commission is not a head of state. For the ADMM+ process, this difference between the EU and other dialogue partners is a major issue as there is no EU defence minister to come to the ADMM+ process to join the other defence ministers or EU naval capabilities to contribute to ADMM+ exercises. The fact that the United Kingdom (UK) has identified the ADMM+ process as a possible lower-hanging fruit in its own efforts to enhance UK alignment with ASEAN, reinforces this EU problem as does France's promotion of its greater naval activity in the South China Sea as part of its greater engagement with the region. For the EAMF, this is less of a problem as this is not a ministerial-level forum and it appears to be one largely populated by foreign affairs officials where the EU External Action Service could represent the EU. However, membership in the EAMF, without corresponding membership in the EAS or ADMM+ process, would weaken the linkages between these three ASEAN-led regional security forums.

2 European Commission, "The EU accedes to Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia", Press Release, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-781_en.htm

Bitter

ASEAN-led regional security forums have already become, despite the wishes of ASEAN member states, an arena for the US-China strategic rivalry. In 2015, well before Donald Trump became US President, the Malaysian chair's hope that the ADMM+ ministerial meeting would produce a joint statement was dashed by the US insistence that the South China Sea disputes be mentioned in any such statement and China's refusal to countenance this.³ In 2012, disagreements among ASEAN member-states over the South China Sea disputes precluded a joint statement. In 2015, disagreements among dialogue partners included in the ADMM+ process achieved the same undesired outcome.

Since 2015, the US-China rivalry has intensified, broadened and been elevated to a much higher level. It is very likely that ASEAN-led regional security forums that include the US and China will be beset by more and more heated US-China disagreements. Moreover, the US and China will likely be very interested in how other members of these forums align themselves

in relation to these disagreements. The US-China strategic rivalry has and will likely further undercut cooperation and progress in ASEAN-led regional security forums. At the same time these forums have become signalling devices for both the US and China about other members' alignment choices. For states and regional groupings that do not want to have to choose or be seen as choosing between the US and China, membership and participation in ASEAN-led regional security forums may become less palatable, more bitter and less sweet. The fact that ASEAN member-states current and likely future alignments between the US and China are far from uniform simply adds to this problem.

Lower, Sweeter

Closer EU alignment with ASEAN outside the ASEAN-led regional security forums may offer lower hanging and sweeter fruit to pick. The EU is one of only four dialogue partners not to have a free trade agreement (FTA) with the ASEAN, with negotiations paused since 2009. Russia, the US and Canada are the other three though, in 2016, ASEAN and Canada agreed to a joint feasibility study

³ For more details, see "CO15257 | The 3rd ADMM-Plus: Did the Media Get it Right?", RSIS Commentary, 26 November 2015, www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co15257-the-3rd-admm-plus-did-the-media-get-it-right/#.XOeSD48RWUk

on an ASEAN-Canada FTA. The EU is one of three dialogue partners not to have hosted a summit with ASEAN leaders and not to have regular summits with ASEAN. New Zealand and Canada are the other two. As Australia's dialogue partner relationship with ASEAN shows, these ASEAN-Australia summits and Australia's bilateral engagement with ASEAN outside of the ASEAN-led regional security forums provide a wealth of opportunities (a bounty of fruit) for closer Australian alignment with ASEAN in ways that are both directly influenced by either the US or China.⁴ This closer Australian alignment with ASEAN outside of the ASEAN-led regional security forums includes greater Australian-ASEAN cooperation on non-traditional security issues ranging from counter-terrorism to people smuggling to consular affairs. Lower hanging fruit are easier to pick and often are sweeter and riper too.

4 Malcolm Cook, "ASEAN-Australia Relations: The Suitable Status Quo", Lowy Institute, 6 August 2018, www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/asean-australia-relations-suitable-status-quo

DEFINING NEW GROUNDS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND ASEAN

Frederic Grare

Security interactions between the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) have grown substantially since the turn of the century. The EU was first involved in Aceh, supported the peace processes in Mindanao and Myanmar, and is currently working with ASEAN member states on a number of security issues, including cyber-security, counter-terrorism and non-proliferation. The two entities have regular high level maritime security dialogues and the EU is a participant of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), where it co-chairs, with Vietnam and Australia, the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security. It should soon become an observer of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts Working Group activities. Despite this evolution, the EU is still perceived as unable to answer Southeast Asia's strategic challenges and therefore is not seen as a strategic actor, despite its real and growing convergence of interests and objectives with ASEAN. The question today is therefore no longer that of an alignment of the EU with ASEAN security forums but rather how to change the perception of the EU by ASEAN member states. This will be possible only if the EU

can effectively contribute to solving or at least mitigating the strategic issue ASEAN is confronted with. The debate ASEAN has, so far, mostly focused on the freedom of navigation and overflight, for which the EU has little to offer in terms of military capabilities. But the ongoing evolution of a strategic landscape, characterised more by resources appropriation than military rivalry, could open new grounds for EU-ASEAN security cooperation in a manner consistent with EU characteristics. In this perspective, environmental protection is a field worth exploring, in particular in the maritime domain, as it would open up promising avenues for cooperation, both politically acceptable and strategically significant.

For a long time, the possibility of security cooperation between the EU and ASEAN was seen with skepticism by the latter. For most of Southeast Asia, the EU was only a distant power and insignificant as a security actor. Even the 2005 Aceh Monitoring Mission in Indonesia, the first European Security and Defense Policy mission in Asia, which was presented as a success for the EU, as evidence of its role as a security actor, did not register very strongly in many of the Southeast Asian countries. It was not

even clear for many observers if the EU would be up to the challenge of devising a comprehensive strategy of engaging Southeast Asia on security issues.

The perception of a benevolent China, the preeminence of the US and a general shift towards the Pacific contributed, for a long time, to lessen Southeast Asian interest in the EU. This perception is gradually changing as China is increasingly seen as a threat (even though it is rarely openly admitted) and uncertainties about US commitment to Asia's security keep growing in the region. In this changing strategic context ASEAN's perception of the EU is evolving. The security relationship grows closer after each EU-ASEAN summit. In May 2018, Federica Mogherini could announce that "joint work on security has been the biggest area of growth in terms of [the EU] expanding cooperation with Asia" in general and ASEAN in particular. But despite growing recognition of their respective importance for each other, this perception of the EU as a weak security actor is still the dominant one.

On the ASEAN side, the question is whether the EU is willing and capable of undertaking joint strategic action in Southeast Asia in the

foreseeable future. Unless it does so, the EU will still be seen as a “peripheral player” in the region. An examination of the content of the EU actual cooperation shows a focus on human security, when the nature of the concerns, as expressed by both the EU and ASEAN, is of a strategic nature. The ASEAN-EU working plan of Action 2018-2022 lists a number of very concrete cooperation efforts, from migration and border management issues to counter-terrorism, many of which are currently being implemented. If these issues are indeed important for both entities they remain at a sub-strategic level. Many are moreover addressed through dialogues. In effect, the EU still seems content to leave most of the hard strategy and security contribution to the United States.

Some EU member states – France, the United Kingdom – have elevated their security cooperation in Southeast Asia to a level of strategic significance. France in particular has, since 2012, engaged in a systematic effort to mobilise its EU partners in joint action in the South China Sea, welcoming observers, as well as military assets, from EU member states onboard its navy ship navigating contested areas. However, it would be delusional to expect rapid changes

in the near future. As indicated earlier, limited capabilities, and a willingness to benefit from China’s economic dynamism, limit the appetite to confront China. Moreover, different strategic cultures and contrasted visions of the world and self-perception of each actor’s role in it will allow only for a slow evolution.

It seems, therefore, desirable to enlarge the scope of security interaction between EU and ASEAN and place it in a different perspective. Despite the militarisation of the South China Sea islets, the problem posed by China to the EU and ASEAN cannot be reduced to its military dimension, nor can it be limited to Southeast Asia alone. The strategic problem generated by China’s rise and behaviour is a combination of military issues – the willingness to impose strategic constraints to China’s rivals and enlarge China’s own margins for manoeuvre – and resource appropriation.

Geographically, this combination is manifest everywhere, from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, including the South China Sea. It also raises problems of a different nature. The use of fishermen as militia, with hundreds of fishing boats at times asserting China’s

claims by sheer number, without resorting directly to armed violence, is a specific example of the strategy followed by China, for which other countries are ill equipped to answer. This kind of method, moreover, causes problems far beyond its initial point of application. Vietnamese fishermen caught fishing illegally in areas going from Indonesia to French Polynesian waters, because they were pushed out of their own exclusive economic zone, is only one example of such occurrences. Chinese objectives do not consist in territorial claims, but the linkage between politico-strategic considerations and economic activities is a constant.

However, if China's strategy complicates the management of all disputes where China is a protagonist, it does also open new grounds for cooperation between the EU and ASEAN. It seems, therefore, necessary to enlarge the scope of EU-ASEAN cooperation, both thematically and geographically, in order to make it strategically relevant.

Environmental maritime security (including the protection of protected wild species; water supply; response to marine pollution; waste management; and illegal, unregulated and unreported [IUU] fishing, etc.) is one

such domain which could open the way to concrete cooperation, including the diplomatic one, as the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) on biodiversity is currently being negotiated and should take into account some of these concerns.

Illicit, unregulated and unreported fishing is one such issue. The activities of Chinese fishermen did not only impact the Vietnamese Exclusive Economic Zone, as already mentioned. It also marked the beginning of tensions across the entire South China Sea. A similar phenomenon can be observed today in the Indian Ocean. China is not the only country involved in IUU fishing, but it is the only one which has turned it into an instrument of political penetration, while the potential reaction of victim countries are making the practice of IUU fishing a potential source of conflict.

This would, in turn, open the way for a series of operational cooperations. The creation of marine protected areas as part of the answer to manage and protect the stocks of fish would require a parallel effort in capacity building and sometimes a redefinition of civil-military relations, all topics well in the

range of EU capacities and likely to have a real strategic impact. This would moreover require new developments in the field of maritime domain awareness, complementing the activities of the Singapore Information Fusion Center by those of the EU Critical Maritime Route Wider Indian Ocean programme, covering the southwest of the Indian Ocean but a replica of which is also being discussed for its northeast area, strengthening moreover other fields of cooperation between the EU and ASEAN.

One may argue that such themes are already being discussed and developed between ASEAN and other interlocutors. The Pacific Environmental Security Forum (PESF), for example, is the US-Indo-Pacific Command's programme to explore solution to environmental security issues throughout the Indo-Pacific region. It is a platform for dialogue between the civilians and the military around environmental security issues in order to promote civil-military cooperation, contribute to capacity building in partner countries, increase surveillance and security of the maritime domain, improve multilateral regional cooperation and strengthen relations between US military and the armed forces of the partner countries. However, the PESF

covers the space defined by the US concept of Indo-Pacific (from the western shores of the Americas to India) leaving aside areas which do not belong to ASEAN or the EU, such as Africa and parts of the Gulf, but are of vital interest for both entities.

Making environmental security part of the security dialogue between the EU and ASEAN and defining a joint, concrete project could create some real complementarity, reinforce existing institutions such as Indian Ocean Rim Association, and create the basis for an increased cooperation between the EU and ASEAN on the one side and the US on the other. It would, moreover, diminish the military aspect of the dispute – even if it does not totally eliminate it – and introduce new dimensions for which EU and ASEAN are perhaps better equipped.

The evolution of the EU-ASEAN security relationship, although real, has been so far much slower than those of the strategic environment they are supposed to address, generating frustrations on both sides. Asymmetrical expectations have been part of the problem as ASEAN seemed to expect from the EU security guarantees that the latter was not able to provide. Ultimately,

the security relationship has so far almost amounted to a classical problem of coalition building: convergence of interests is central but coalitions do materialise if and only if the expected benefits exceed the costs (including security costs) generated by their creation.

The issue of alignment between EU and ASEAN forums is, therefore, no longer only a matter of similar concerns. It is also an issue of capabilities and strategy. The nature of the strategic problem posed by China as well as the Indo-Pacific framework should permit both sides to escape this dilemma by bringing into the picture a series of global issues calling for local action. Environmental security is one of them. It is not totally absent from EU-ASEAN dialogues – combatting IUU fishing is part of the EU-ASEAN plan of action and is part of the recently released ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook – but has not figured so far very prominently among their concrete projects. It is only one example of what could be done jointly, but would have the advantage of shifting the interaction between the two entities towards policies within the actual range of capabilities of ASEAN and the EU and would include a normative dimension, which has always been part of the DNA of the latter. Its global character would

moreover change the nature of the challenge as the objective would ultimately be to define the terms of a new engagement with Beijing, potentially beneficial to China over the long term. Such an approach would, therefore, be conducive for EU-ASEAN security relations because it would be politically acceptable while strategically meaningful.

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Grare has written extensively on security issues in Asia, in particular South Asia. His most recent book, *India Turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, has been published in 2017 by Hurst Publishers.

About the Partner Organisations

The European Union Centre in Singapore

The European Union Centre (EU Centre) was set up in 2008 by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) with generous co-funding from the European Union (EU). The first grant from the EU was for the period from mid-2008 to December 2012. Supported by contributions from the two host universities, NUS and NTU, the EU Centre was able to carry out an impressive range of outreach activities to promote better understanding of the EU and its policies, and, more importantly, to build up knowledge about the EU through dialogue, research and publications on policies and on EU relations with Singapore and Southeast Asia.

The Swedish Institute of International Affairs

The Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) should be an indispensable source for those who seek to deepen their knowledge about international relations, foreign affairs and the world. Furthermore, UI wants to create an open conversation about international relations, a conversation founded in research and analysis.

The Institute's mission is to inform and enrich the public debate by promoting interest in and knowledge of international relations and foreign policy. This mission is pursued through our research, seminars and by presence in the media.

Swedish South Asian Studies Network, Lund University

The Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET) is an interdisciplinary network for the promotion of research, education and information about South Asia (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives). SASNET's activities take place at Lund University, where it encourages a South Asian perspective in teaching and research through lectures, workshops and conferences in cooperation with various departments and centers at the University. SASNET's mandate is also national and aims at promoting collaboration between Swedish as well as Nordic universities. It primarily does so through networking activities and the online circulation of a monthly newsletter that publicises research on South Asia in the Nordic countries. SASNET supports the South Asian Student Association (SASA), which is a platform for education and cultural exchange between students at Lund University.

The Embassy of Sweden, Singapore

The main task of the Embassy of Sweden in Singapore is to promote and strengthen the relations between Sweden and Singapore.

The Embassy's activities are focused on trade promotion, but we do also contribute to further cooperation in other areas such as culture, education and defense. Furthermore, we provide consular services to Swedish citizens living in or visiting Singapore as well as immigration related services.

The Embassy is also accredited to Brunei Darussalam and has a similar task to strengthen the relations between Sweden and Brunei.

Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Singapore

The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Singapore has been established in 2004 and, since the beginning, was located as Wisma Atria Office Tower.

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