

Preface

In Europe, the Indo-Pacific region, in all its political and geographical definitions, has seen a palpable increase in attention over the past couple of years. While allies and friends such as Japan, the US, India or Australia have thought about this strategic space for a while, the newly found attention is undoubtedly a reflection of the region's staggering importance for Europeans and their own foreign policies, too. Population composition and growth, trade volume with Europe, share of global gross domestic product, and infrastructure development are only a few select measurements which make the region's significance unambiguously clear. Via France, the European Union (EU) also has territory in the Indo-Pacific. European engagement in the region is certainly bound to increase and by and large seen as an opportunity for mutual growth and cooperation.

To be sure, the region is also awash with challenges, ranging from security, to social, to environmental, and to economic and political matters of global consequences. Not least as the main theatre for great power rivalry today, many issues are amplified way beyond local contestations. As a consequence of both opportunities and challenges, the Indo-Pacific will be of utmost relevance to the future of the global order, but also to the EU itself. Brussels has acknowledged as much.

By the end of September 2021, three EU member states, France, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as the EU, had published their respective strategies or guidelines on the Indo-Pacific region. The national papers have clearly driven the eventual EU-wide approach, with France and Germany leading from the front and the most important tenets of the national papers reflected in the EU document.

This issue of *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs* reflects on these strategies, and crucially, their perception in the region. The issue begins by laying out the main commonalities of the European strategies and where they differ – mainly in nuance. The astute comparison in the first article portrays mostly a great consensus on central issues, around which the eventual EU strategy was formed as well. The issue continues by asking the difficult question of how China fits into the strategic approaches of Germany and the EU in particular. A third article then asks how likeminded partners for the EU can be identified amidst increasing bipolarity and great power tensions, and how the EU can be successful in its “quest for like-minded partnerships in the Indo-Pacific”, as described by the author. Before regional perspectives on the EU strategy in particular are discussed, namely from an Indian, Japanese and broader Southeast Asian perspective, the fourth article looks

at “what the EU [is] seeking to accomplish by joining the Indo-Pacific bandwagon, and if and how Brussels can make a difference.”

Panorama 1/2021 ends by elaborating on concrete areas of cooperation, with three regional experts taking a closer look at European maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, EU-Indian Partnership on Sustainable Development, as well as EU engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic in Southeast Asia and the potential for what is referred to as a “nexus approach” to managing pandemics and other non-traditional security threats.

I am very pleased to share this *Panorama* issue with you as it offers both analyses on larger strategic questions as well as concrete discussions on specific issues. Most importantly, it offers Asian and European insights, contributing to both the inter- and intra- regional discourse. This exchange continues KAS’ efforts to provide insights and platforms where European and Asian viewpoints meet, expectations are documented, and inter-regional exchange contributes to successful partnerships. I would like to thank the contributing experts for their timely work on this issue and wish all readers an informative and interesting read!



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