



Strategies and approaches of EU countries to the Indo-Pacific region:

Implications for Slovakia

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The authors thank Elma Aliaj, Joe Boentges, and Michael McKinley for their assistance with data collection for this publication.



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Executive summary

- 1** The **Indo-Pacific is economically the most dynamic region** in the world. Although it offers important economic opportunities, many **security risks** undermine regional peace and stability and **impact Europe**.
- 2** **Japan, Australia, and the United States** were the first countries to publish strategies for the Indo-Pacific region. They have a common interest in a **free and open Indo-Pacific**, in maintaining a **rules-based regional order**, including **freedom of trade and navigation**, and in seeking cooperation with **like-minded regional partners**.
- 3** **France** (2019), **the Netherlands** (2020), and **Germany** (2021) were the **first EU members** to release a **separate Indo-Pacific strategy**, followed by the **EU** (2021). While mostly in line with the strategies of Japan, Australia, and the US, European strategies are **very vague** regarding the implementation of the aims and interests.
- 4** As **Slovakia has no country-specific strategies** for any Indo-Pacific nation, including China, a cohesive, comprehensive Indo-Pacific strategy would **increase the efficiency** of its policies and diplomacy towards individual countries in the Indo-Pacific and the region as a whole. A **whole-of-government approach** will also provide essential guidelines for private Slovak companies with business interests in the region.
- 5** In developing its strategy for the Indo-Pacific region, Slovakia should take a **comprehensive view** that includes **economic, security, societal, and environmental aspects**. To further deepen the relations with the region, it is crucial to **strengthen the knowledge base** on the Indo-Pacific in Slovakia.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to provide the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic with a **systematic overview of the Indo-Pacific strategies of big and small European countries**. The findings of this study will subsequently enable decision-makers to learn from best practices but also identify niches in other strategies that Slovakia can exploit.

The study starts with a brief analysis of why and how the new **concept of 'Indo-Pacific'** was coined in the early 2000s. It then outlines the **geostrategic** and **geo-economic reasons** why many Western and Indo-Pacific nations have issued specific Indo-Pacific strategies in the last decade. European countries and the European Union (EU) are latecomers in this process.

Our experts applied a content analysis on the European strategies. In addition to identifying key terms such as 'rules-based order,' 'like-minded partners' or 'maritime security,' the study also evaluates whether the strategies contain specific means of implementation.

The study provides a **brief summary of the strategies of the EU and key countries** and a **table enabling a direct comparison** of the strategies. Based on our analysis of the different strategies, we propose **recommendations** for key elements that an Indo-Pacific strategy of Slovakia (or other small states) should take into account.

The rationale for Indo-Pacific strategies in the world

From a geostrategic and geo-economic point of view, the **dynamic but also volatile Indo-Pacific region** is one of the most important regions in the world. The region offers many **economic opportunities**. China and Japan are the second and third largest economies in the world, while India as well as middle powers such as Indonesia and Vietnam are growing fast. European countries are not only dependent on these markets, with more than **four billion consumers**, and their attractive investment and **production locations**, but Europe also relies on **resources and high-tech products** from the transnational production and supply chains in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the Indo-Pacific is also rich in **traditional and non-traditional threats**. Be it the unresolved **territorial disputes** in the South and East China Sea, **the Cross-Strait tensions, North Korea's nuclear ambitions** or **climate change, illegal migration, poverty** or **drug and people trafficking** - these threats cause not only insecurity in the Indo-Pacific but also **impact Europe**.

Therefore, European governments, but also beyond, **need a cohesive Indo-Pacific strategy** to deal with the vast economic opportunities offered by this region and to cope with the potential risks. Consequently, **since 2019 several European governments** and the European Union (EU) have **published their own Indo-Pacific strategies**. Previously, Japan, Australia, and the United States defined in their Indo-Pacific strategies their strategic, security, and economic interests as well as their aims and means of implementation. These helped European governments identify **overlaps and differences** with other strategies.

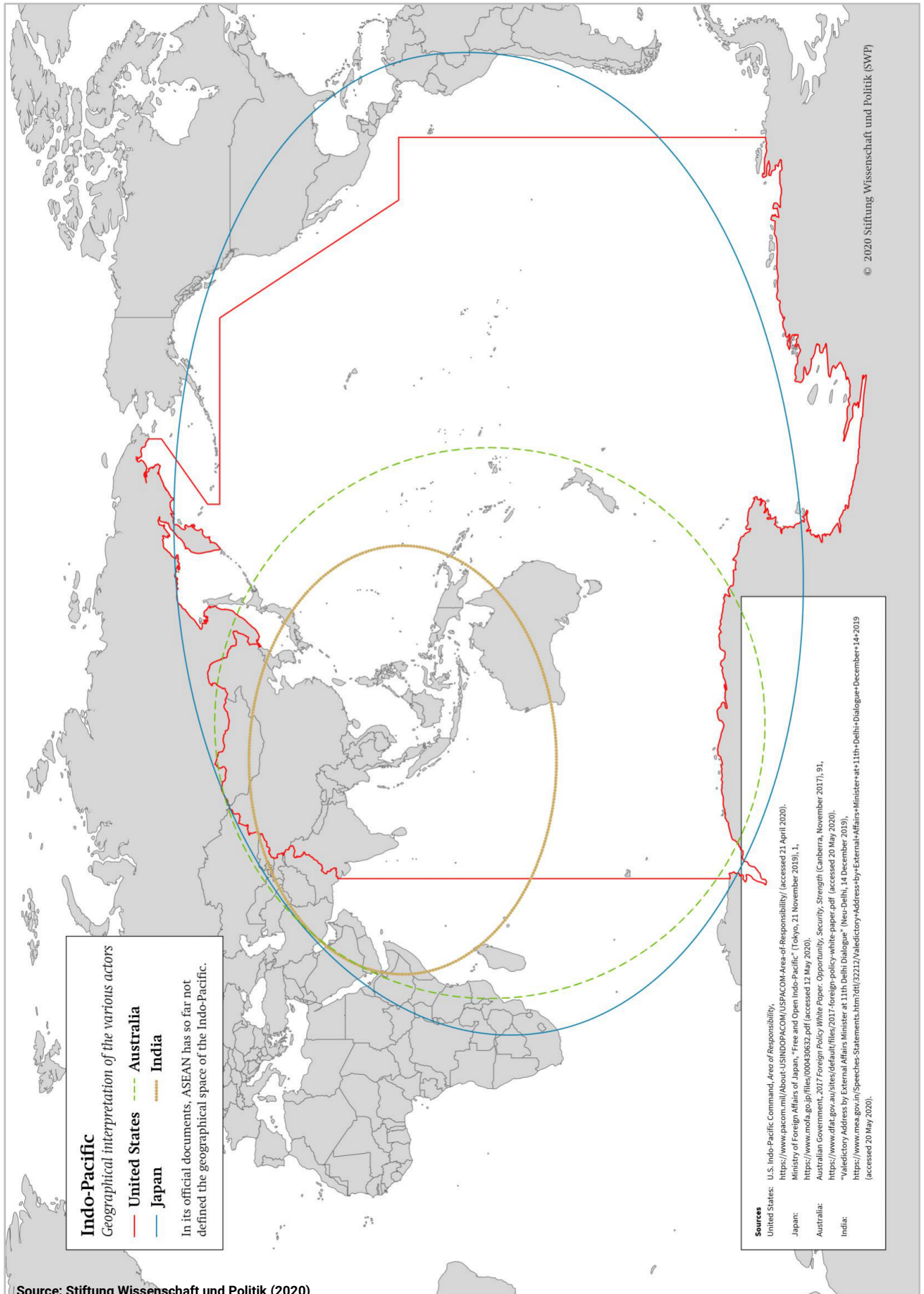
Defining the Indo-Pacific

In the last decade, the **geopolitical term 'Indo-Pacific'** has been increasingly used over the longstanding 'Asia-Pacific'. At their core, both concepts refer to the same region, situated between the Pacific and Indian oceans. However, the Indo-Pacific concept usually also include parts of the Middle East and the east coast of Africa. Moreover, definitions of the Indo-Pacific highlight the Indian and Oceanian connections with various other players, emphasizing the region's maritime character. **'Asia-Pacific' has been used**

since the 1960s, while the term 'Indo-Pacific' is relatively new, coined by Japan's late prime minister Shinzo Abe in his speech to the Indian parliament in 2007. Australia and India were early adopters of this concept. It was later adopted by the US, boosted by former president Donald Trump in 2017 by enshrining it in diplomatic language.¹ The 'pivot to Asia' or rebalancing strategy of his predecessor, Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, had narrower geographic focus. Notably, the Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, which was then adopted and adapted by the Joe Biden administration, illustrates that the **Indo-Pacific strategies are a response to China's rising influence in the region, exemplified by its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. The aim is to offer other Indo-Pacific nations various means of cooperation and alternative means of funding to prevent them from becoming economically and subsequently politically dependent on China.² Beijing does not use the term 'Indo-Pacific', rather it refers to the 'Asia-Pacific', as it believes the main aim of the Indo-Pacific concept is to check or even contain China's economic and military rise and secure the American hegemony in the region.³

There are **competing geographic definitions** of the Indo-Pacific (see Figure 1). Japan and the EU draw the geographic boundaries most widely. For the EU, the Indo-Pacific is "a vast region spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific Island States".⁴ Japan even includes the west coast of the Americas in its definition. The US has not officially defined the region. The definition provided by its Indo-Pacific command is based on purely military logic and thus very narrow but also geopolitically misleading. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was in the beginning very reluctant to use the term as it did not want to be seen by Beijing as supporting a China-critical concept. Eventually, ASEAN accepted the term in its *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* in order to safeguard its strategic role and its own regional centrality, while focusing on cooperation and dialogue rather than rivalry.⁵ ASEAN is also flexible in regard to the geographic definition of the Indo-Pacific. However, common to all these definitions is that they **include China and Russia**, since they either share common borders or economic and political interests with them. Moreover, many Asian nations support a multipolar regional order to preserve stability and gain benefits, especially economic ones, from cooperation with great powers.⁶

Figure 1⁷

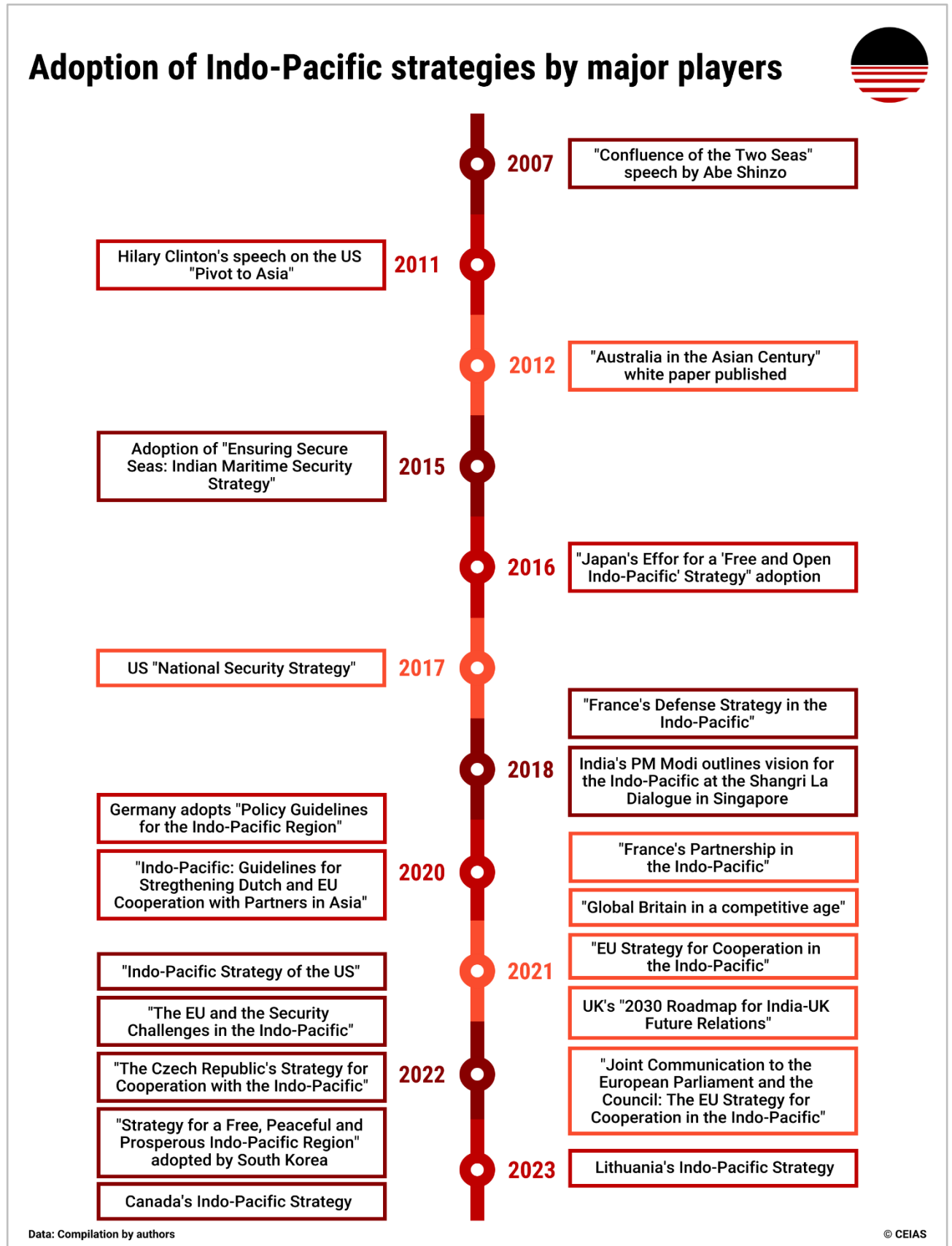


Indo-Pacific strategies of Western states also emphasize the **need for cooperation to resolve common problems**, in particular climate change, and the mutual benefit of increased economic and security relations. Despite a focus on **cooperation with like-minded partners**, collaboration is also offered to China. This **China-inclusive approach** sets the EU apart from the US. While both perceive China as a strategic challenge, the EU refuses to decouple from China. Rather, it follows a **de-risking** approach. Introduced by the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her speech on EU–China relations in March 2023, this strategy seeks to reduce risks stemming from the EU’s economic dependencies on the PRC and to strengthen the EU’s resilience.⁸ China dominates the Indo-Pacific region along with India, and remains the EU’s number one trading partner, with a share of more than 22% of its foreign trade. By comparison, India is the 10th largest partner of the EU, with a 2.2% share of its foreign trade.⁹ The importance of Southeast Asia, in particular Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore, grew recently as well. Southeast Asia is the EU’s third largest non-European trading partner, and the EU is the second largest investor and main provider of Official Development Assistance in the region. In recent years, many European, but also Asian companies, relocated from China to Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries.

Timeline of adopting Indo-Pacific strategies

The following timeline (Figure 2) demonstrates that **Europe is a latecomer** in developing a dedicated strategy on the Indo-Pacific, despite its enormous economic interests in the region.

Figure 2



Why is it important for Europe and Slovakia?

The Indo-Pacific is the economically most dynamic region: it is home to **60% of the world population and it produces about two thirds of the global GDP**. Four of the EU's top ten trade partners are located there, and one third of the EU's overall trade passes through the South China Sea, a globally important sealine of communication. Young and dynamic societies are developing fast and technologically are highly innovative. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed Europe's high level of economic dependence on supplies (medical devices, medicines, and semiconductors) from Indo-Pacific countries and the dangers of what happens when these supply chains are affected, for example, by the repeated disruptions of the Slovak automobile industry (representing 13% of GDP and 47% of exports). Moreover, a hypothetical cross-Strait or South China Sea conflict, which would disrupt the busiest trade route in the world, would also impact Slovakia, as 6% of its foreign trade passes through the South China Sea.¹⁰

The work on a specific Slovak Indo-Pacific strategy is crucial to **identify the country's key strategic and economic interests**; which specific solutions it can offer to challenges in the region; with which like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific and abroad it should cooperate most closely; and the most appropriate means of implementation of the strategy. During this process, **existing weaknesses** (e.g., limited diplomatic resources or lack of knowledge on specific sub-regions and countries) need to be highlighted in order to overcome them. Only on the basis of a **self-critical assessment** of one's own interests, strengths, and weaknesses can the full potential of the relations with the Indo-Pacific be exploited.

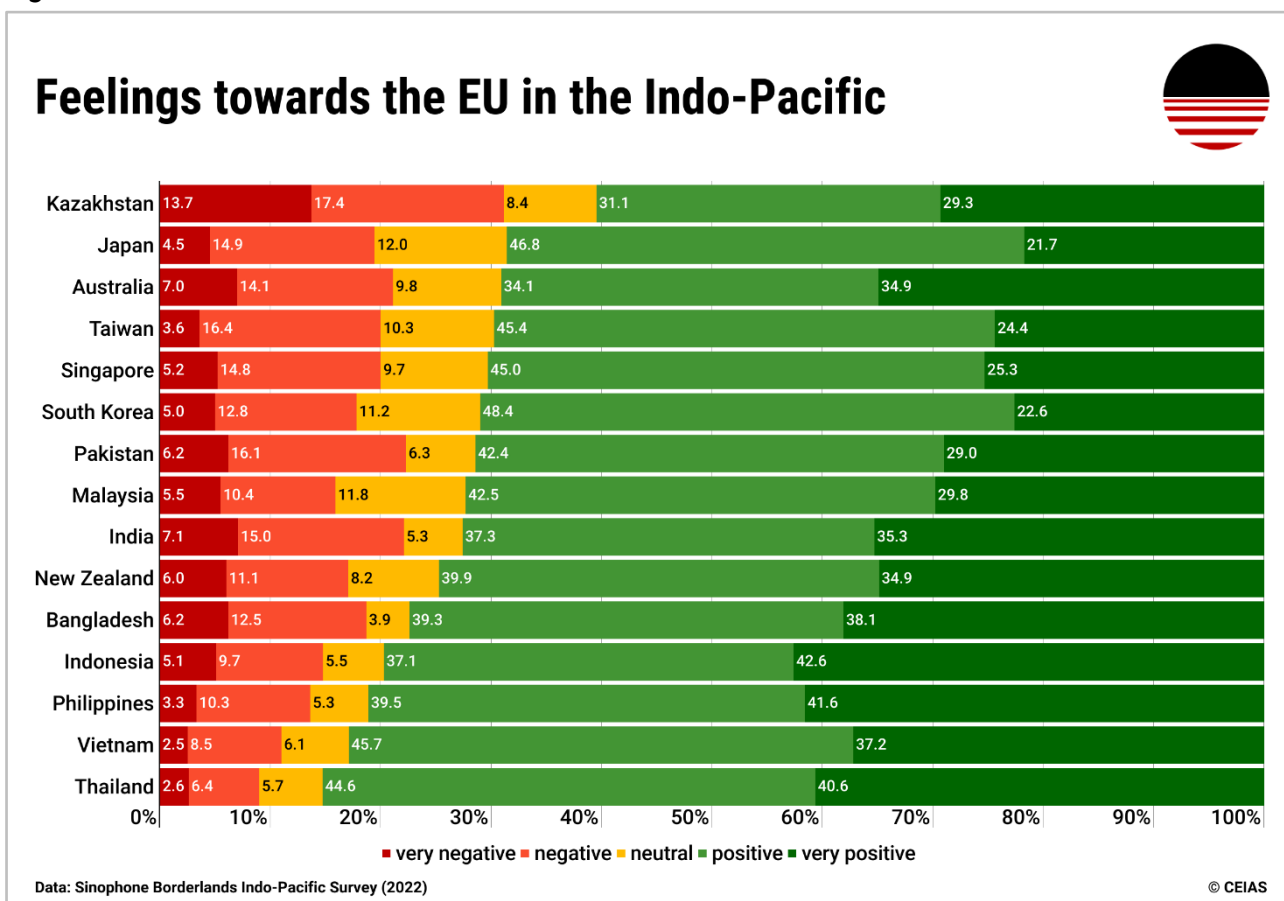
An Indo-Pacific strategy is also **necessary to coordinate the national decision-making processes** on all Indo-Pacific-related topics in a more efficient manner, with all ministries becoming familiar with the national priorities and aims and following the guidelines of the strategy. This ensures a necessary **whole-of-government approach**.

A strategy on the vast Indo-Pacific region will also **bundle existing strategies on individual countries in the region**, making the specific strategies **more efficient**. Such a strategy is especially **important for smaller countries**, like Slovakia, with limited financial and diplomatic resources, as it **helps them to identify opportunities and niches** which can be clearly targeted by the government. Finally, a Slovak strategy is essential to communicate the national interests and policies to the governments in the Indo-Pacific and the EU institutions where partners can be found to advance the Slovak interests.

While pursuing national interests directly in bilateral relations with Indo-Pacific countries will remain absolutely crucial, **many aims can only be achieved via the EU**, such as the conclusion of free trade agreements (FTAs). Another example is the EU's ambitious **Global Gateway Initiative (GGI)** which finances high-quality projects in the realm of infrastructure, health, sustainability, and education. The implementation of the **GGI in the Indo-Pacific offers Slovak companies interesting economic opportunities** in new markets. More generally, EU members benefit from the very **positive image of the EU** in the Indo-Pacific region (see Figure 3).

In Central Europe, the Indo-Pacific is perceived primarily in economic terms, as a prospective region for trade and investment cooperation and diversification of supply chains. In this regard, **security issues connected to stable sea trade routes and production networks are important**. To fulfil these countries' goals, including economic ones, it is important to **enhance their presence in the region** through diplomatic missions and business offices, such as by increasing their number, financing and personnel in existing representations. It is also important to use tools at the EU level, such as FTAs, EU delegations, and support of chambers of commerce networks, on a wider scale.

Figure 3



Comparison of existing Indo-Pacific strategies in Europe

Major and middle powers but also smaller countries have released their own Indo-Pacific strategies, guidelines, or position papers, which have ultimately created a new sphere for study, yet also added another layer of complexity to the evolving strategic environment. Some have done so in addition to having a **separate China strategy**.¹¹ The **EU has both** an Indo-Pacific strategy (2021) and a China strategy (2019) (see Figure 4).

In the European Union, France, the only EU member with territories in the Indo-Pacific, has been the trailblazer in adopting strategies for both the Indo-Pacific as well as China on a national level. The Netherlands, Germany, Czechia, and Lithuania quickly followed suit. Ireland also has a strategy, although under the name of Asia-Pacific, not Indo-Pacific. Also, the United Kingdom adopted an ambitious foreign policy strategy with a strong focus on the Indo-Pacific region, and while no longer part of the EU, it deserves attention.

All strategies demonstrate their **anchorage in the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy**, and those published before the EU strategy clearly emphasize the need for a common EU strategy. Nevertheless, the respective roles, interests, and capabilities of the various countries are reflected in their national Indo-Pacific strategies.

What all strategies have in common is that they contain a very well-founded assessment of the risks and opportunities for the Indo-Pacific region and their impact on Europe. Common themes include a clear commitment to the **multilateral rules-based international order** – reflected in the strategic aim of a **free and open Indo-Pacific** – support of **ASEAN's centrality**, and a multi-layered approach vis-à-vis **China** acknowledging its role as a **partner, economic competitor, and systemic rival**. However, the respective approaches differ especially in regards to their thematic focus, concrete ambition, and proactivity.

The first **notable difference** is in these countries' **definitions** of the Indo-Pacific. For Germany, it is "the entire region characterized by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific"; for the Netherlands "countries around the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including the South China and East China Seas – the region

extends from Pakistan to the islands of the Pacific"; for Czechia "the territory bounded by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific" (40 countries and territories in total); and for France "from the eastern shores of Africa to the Pacific". The UK, which has notably the longest document dedicated to the Indo-Pacific strategy (with about 40,000 words compared to 21,000 in Germany, 17,000 in France, 8,500 in Ireland, 8,000 in the EU, and about 6,000 in both Czechia and the Netherlands) provides no clear definition, though Pakistan and Afghanistan are included, and China and India are even given their own short sections. For Ireland, while the strategy refers to the Asia-Pacific instead of the Indo-Pacific, the region is defined as "stretching from the Himalayas to the Straits of Malacca to the furthest reaches of the Pacific Ocean, Asia and the Pacific". Lithuania's geographic definition is similar to Czechia and Ireland (41 countries and territories in total).

Figure 4

Indo-Pacific and China strategies in Europe



	Indo-Pacific Strategy	China Strategy
Czechia	Yes (2022)	No
European Union	Yes (2021)	Yes (2019)
France	Yes (2019, updated in 2022)	No
Germany	Yes (2021)	Yes (2023)
Ireland	Yes (2020, updated in 2023)	No
Lithuania	Yes (2023)	No
Netherlands	Yes (2020)	Yes (2019, updated in 2023)
United Kingdom	Yes (2021, updated 2023)	No

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All of these countries use the term **like-minded partners** – sharing the **same values and principles**. These countries are the preferred partners. Czechia and Lithuania explicitly adds Taiwan to the list of the usually mentioned countries: Australia, Japan, South Korea, India, and Indonesia. However, **the strategies do not address**, at least not in detail, **the fact that the majority of the countries in the region are non-democratic** (for instance Vietnam) and how cooperation should proceed with them. All of the strategies include **China** but the country is only one Indo-Pacific actor among many. Only the UK deals with the strategic challenges posed by China in detail. France considers China a predatory actor or disruptor, never as a potential partner. Czechia, fully in line with the EU's perception, "sees China simultaneously as a partner, as an economic adversary, and as a systemic rival". Germany and the Netherlands are overall critical but inclusive of China. In the UK strategy, China is specifically defined as a systemic competitor but is also considered an important cooperation partner in certain areas, notably climate change and global health. The importance of a **closer partnership with ASEAN** is in all cases highlighted: in the French strategy it is even dubbed a priority. On the other hand, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a diplomatic and security network between Australia, India, Japan and the United States, is only mentioned in the Czech and French strategies.

As for the **implementation**, the Czech strategy does not lay out concrete plans, merely a few principles such as pragmatism, deepening partnerships with key partners, and working together with the EU, NATO, and the Visegrad Four. Similarly, the Netherlands and Ireland mostly refer to the EU policy framework and mention only certain forms of cooperation and treaties. In the German strategy, implementation is mentioned but rarely elaborated on. The French strategy lists some tangible initiatives, but most examples provided are broad and undefined. France also attempts to demonstrate how it sets up its actions "from the bases of its overseas departments and communities", but said departments and communities are still not fully integrated in their regional environment. The British strategy is partly very concrete about implementation, with very specific steps for the Indo-Pacific tilt described (for example, to become an ASEAN dialogue partner), while other sections are very vague. Less specific regarding the implementation is the Lithuanian Indo-Pacific strategy, though the government promised to issue a specific action plan.

There are many **similarities and overlaps** between the Indo-Pacific strategy of the EU and the strategies of the EU countries. Overall, however, the EU strategy is less coherent and stringent than the strategies of France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Also, in light of the recent developments in

the region, the EU Indo-Pacific strategy needs to be further developed. Notably the plans for implementing the aims and policies are only vaguely addressed, though they have been supplemented in the months since, with the **Global Gateway Initiative**, launched in December 2021, representing a key instrument.¹² This ambitious infrastructure initiative has indeed been viewed positively as it can provide governments in the Global South, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa, with alternative funding options to China's Belt and Road Initiative in the area of high-quality infrastructure in the transport, climate and energy, digital, health, and education and research sector.¹³

It will also be crucial for the EU, as a global economic power, to define its role in the geopolitical competition between the US and China. French President Emmanuel Macron launched a debate about the **EU's strategic autonomy**, but his concept is vague and contested. Much more specific is the new, above discussed **de-risking approach towards China**.¹⁴

Figure 5 | see Annex for full list of indicators

Key aspects of European Indo-Pacific strategies (I)		
	Key interests & aims	Key partners
Czechia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ peace ▪ prosperity ▪ economic interest in the region as the quickest growing region ▪ political participation of the EU and cooperation with ASEAN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ India ▪ Japan ▪ New Zealand ▪ South Korea ▪ Taiwan ▪ United States
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ stronger EU engagement ▪ maintaining the rules-based order ▪ promotion of human rights and democracy ▪ deepening of economic relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ India ▪ Japan ▪ New Zealand ▪ South Korea ▪ United Kingdom ▪ United States
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensuring the sovereignty of its territories and citizens in the region (overarching priority) ▪ freedom, rule of law and multilateralism ▪ stability of the global economy ▪ climate change and sustainable development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ India ▪ Indonesia ▪ Japan ▪ Malaysia ▪ New Zealand ▪ Singapore ▪ South Korea ▪ United States ▪ Vietnam
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ peace and stability ▪ avoiding unilateral dependencies ▪ free trade and economic prosperity ▪ digital transformation and connectivity ▪ climate change ▪ countering misinformation and the rise of authoritarianism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ G20 ▪ Japan ▪ New Zealand ▪ Pacific Islands Forum ▪ South Korea

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Figure 6 | see Annex for full list of indicators

Key aspects of European Indo-Pacific strategies (II)		
	Key interests & aims	Key partners
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ building strategic relationships ▪ economic partnership ▪ diaspora communities ▪ increase Ireland's visibility in the region ▪ 'Team Ireland' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ Cambodia ▪ India ▪ Japan ▪ Laos ▪ New Zealand ▪ Pakistan ▪ South Korea ▪ Vietnam
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ peace and security ▪ rule of law, democracy, human rights ▪ international and effective multilateral cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ India ▪ Indonesia ▪ Japan ▪ Malaysia ▪ NATO ▪ New Zealand ▪ South Korea ▪ Singapore ▪ Taiwan ▪ United States ▪ Vietnam
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ peace and security ▪ international legal order and human rights ▪ sustainability and climate change ▪ economic and digital development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ China ▪ India ▪ Japan ▪ NATO ▪ New Zealand ▪ SIDS ▪ South Korea
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ shared prosperity ▪ regional stability ▪ being European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ASEAN ▪ Australia ▪ Canada ▪ France ▪ Germany ▪ India ▪ Indonesia ▪ Japan ▪ Malaysia ▪ New Zealand ▪ Pakistan ▪ Singapore ▪ South Korea ▪ United States ▪ Vietnam

Data: Compilation by authors

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European Union's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** September 2021

Regarding itself as a stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific and a natural economic partner, the EU highlights the geostrategic and geo-economic importance of the region for Europe. While the assessments of the opportunities and risks and the strong economic influence of Europe in the Indo-Pacific are sound, all in all the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy lacks ambition and fails to define clear means of implementation of its aims and interests. The strategy usually refers to existing EU initiatives and bilateral and multilateral projects. Though, this lack of ambition and clarity is also evidence for the **limited strategic and security influence of the EU** in the Indo-Pacific.

As the title of the strategy, "The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific", reveals, the EU emphasizes the importance of various forms of collaboration as well as of a multilateral, inclusive, rules-based order. Cooperation is offered to all nations, including China, but in particular to like-minded partners. In this context, Brussels stresses the need to **promote democracy, human rights, and rule of law** in the region. The key partner to strengthen the rules-based regional order is ASEAN. Regularly mentioned are also Japan and India.

The EU defines **seven priority areas** in its approach towards the region, namely sustainable and inclusive prosperity; green transition; ocean governance; digital governance and partnerships; connectivity; security and defense; and human security.¹⁵

Economic and trade interests figure prominently in the EU strategy. Accordingly, it attaches great importance to **strengthening and diversifying existing value chains**, which became all the more urgent after the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the disruption of many supply chains. Reflecting its self-conception as a **global normative power**, the EU aims to set in cooperation with regional partners new norms and standards in the economic and digital sector. Trade agreements are sought with individual governments, namely Australia, Indonesia, and New Zealand. On a regional level, an Economic Partnership Agreement is sought with the East Africa Community, but not with ASEAN.¹⁶

About one third of European trade passes through the South China Sea, so securing **freedom of navigation** is both an economic and strategic aim. In order to uphold maritime security and guarantee freedom of navigation, Brussels aims to support existing regional maritime initiatives and

contribute to capacity-building of regional actors. Moreover, the EU will also “seek to conduct more joint exercises and port calls with Indo-Pacific partners, including multilateral exercises, to fight piracy and protect freedom of navigation while reinforcing EU naval diplomacy in the region”.¹⁷ However, the EU lacks military and, in particular, naval power projection capabilities. Thus, making significant contributions to maritime security, including freedom of navigation, is an ambitious long-term objective.

Czechia’s Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** September 2022

In September 2022, “The Czech Republic's Strategy for Cooperation with the Indo-Pacific - Closer Than We Think”¹⁸ was adopted by the Czech government. The strategy defines the Indo-Pacific in a geographically narrower manner than the EU, thereby explicitly stating that “Eastern Asia includes the People’s Republic of **China, (and) Taiwan** [...]”.¹⁹ Acknowledging “China simultaneously as a partner, economic adversary, and systemic rival”²⁰ **aligns with the EU's view.**

In line with Prague’s traditional values-based foreign policy, the strategy emphasizes **multilateralism, human rights, international law, and potential UNCLOS violations by China.** In addition to strategic and security interests, the strategy puts a strong focus on **economic interests.** Czechia’s economic engagement focuses on stability amid the region's dynamism. Cooperation with key allies - the US, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea - is regarded as crucial for maintaining the **rules-based order.**²¹ The strategy champions an open global market, recognizing threats like cyber-attacks, radicalism, terrorism, migration, and environmental issues.²² Aligned with Agenda 2030, sustainability goals involve innovation, digital partnerships, and reduced inequality as well as connectivity.²³

To promote the strategic as well as security and defense interests of Czechia and the EU, the strategy aims to strengthen the respective cooperation with **regional allies and like-minded nations.** The Czechia emphasizes **supporting the EU-ASEAN relations,** reflecting a commitment to the broader European agenda.

The strategy acknowledges the limited resources of the Czechia. A key aim is to increase the **visibility of Czechia and Czech companies** in the Indo-Pacific. For this, the strategy recommends exploiting the **niches** where Czechia and Czech companies have advantages and focus on specific and

selected cooperation.²⁴ However, the strategy lacks specific plans, aligning with the EU's framework and seeking niches to promote Czech strategic, security, and economic interests.

France's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** May 2019
- **Updated:** July 2021 / February 2022

France is a “fully-fledged Indo-Pacific country,”²⁵ with 1.6 million of French citizens living in the country's overseas territories, and 75% of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the world's second-largest, being in the region. Paris defines the Indo-Pacific as a space “extending from the eastern shores of Africa to the Pacific.”²⁶ **China** is mentioned from the get-go: its “power is increasing” and its “territorial claims are expressed with greater and greater strength”.²⁷ Its competition with the US, but also with India and its predation over Taiwan, are destabilizing elements which are “changing regional balances of power, and making strategic calculations more complex”.²⁸

The Indo-Pacific should remain “a space that is open and inclusive, free of all forms of coercion and governed in accordance with international law and multilateralism”.²⁹ To this effect, France aims to be a “stabilizing force, promoting the values of freedom and rule of law”.³⁰ It is important to remain, along with the European Union, “stakeholders in a region where their interests are significant and the risk of destabilization is growing.”³¹ Paris also acknowledges the Indo-Pacific as a “structural element of the global economy,”³² representing 18% of France's imports and 14% of its exports. It hence pushes for “significant investments”³³ in **infrastructure** to safeguard its stability, which could also benefit French companies.

Japan and India are the two main French allies in the region, with cooperation in several domains. France also works with the U., Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and New Zealand, at different levels. **ASEAN** is described as “central to building a multipolar Asia,”³⁴ and, considering its “essential role in the Indo-Pacific”, closer relations with it and its members is dubbed “a priority of the French strategy.”³⁵

France does mention the necessity of “promoting a rules-based international order”, though this pledge is best understood through another quote: “France is opposed to any attempted *fait accompli*, unilateral change in existing systems, or challenge to international law through the use of

force.”³⁶ Pushing for a “regional maritime security architecture,”³⁷ it ensures regional stability and the sovereignty of its territories through three permanent military bases in La Réunion, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia, totaling about 7,000 troops. These forces also serve as the basis for projections, “with a regional scope beyond French sovereign territory,”³⁸ also allowing the conduct of “high-level interactions in all fields”³⁹ with allies. Humanitarian assistance and securing common maritime areas are also part of their missions.

Despite a clear realist approach, France assesses the Indo-Pacific as a region “where there is a proven need to clearly support the values of freedom and defending human rights,”⁴⁰ **values** that France “supports protecting [...], particularly under its commitment to the rule of law.”⁴¹ This commitment is ensured by regional dialogue, and close attention paid to the destination of funds originating from the French Agency for Development (AFD). At the forefront of investments regarding “sustainable infrastructure,”⁴² but also blue economy and governance, the AFD led 170 projects in the region between 2015 and 2020, for a total of €3.7 billion.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, **health** has been a priority in France's engagement in Southeast Asia, where it has actively supplied vaccines and set up a solidarity fund. Emphasizing research and cooperation, Paris can rely on an extensive **scientific network** in the Indo-Pacific, such as the CNRS, Pasteur Institute, and INSERM, which have all “recognized expertise in key areas” and “established solid partnerships”⁴³ in the region, despite the need to “increase the[ir] visibility.”⁴⁴

France claims that its strategy is implemented through “actions that are concrete and diverse in nature,”⁴⁵ and some tangible initiatives are indeed listed, such as the continuation of programs aimed at climate change resilience.⁴⁶ However, most examples provided are rather **imprecise and need to be specified**, at the risk of being non-applicable.

Germany's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** September 2021

Germany explains the need for a strategy with “a great interest in participating in Asia's growth dynamics and in being involved in shaping the Indo-Pacific region, as well as in upholding global norms [...]”⁴⁷ and clearly lays out its **core interests** in the region, such as “peace and security”, “open markets and free trade” and environmental protection.⁴⁸ Berlin “considers

the Indo-Pacific to be the entire region characterized by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific".⁴⁹

China's role as a major player in the Indo-Pacific is addressed; Germany explicitly "supports the EU in its strategic approach vis-à-vis China,"⁵⁰ engaging China as a **partner, competitor, and systemic rival**. This approach is reflected in the content of the document. The security aspect remains an integral part of Berlin's engagement with Beijing. On the one hand, China is considered an important dialogue partner in the context of the "**ASEAN-centric security architecture**". On the other hand, Berlin calls on Beijing to "live up to its responsibility as a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty".⁵¹ Overall though, the strategy is arguably rather **inclusive vis-à-vis Beijing** as Berlin recognizes that China "is extremely important. Nearly 50 percent of German foreign trade in the Indo-Pacific region is with China."⁵² Consequently, the strategy substantially includes China as a key partner for cooperation across virtually all domains, such as security,⁵³ environmental protection and climate change,⁵⁴ education,⁵⁵ and business and trade.⁵⁶

ASEAN, not only due to its security relevance, is a key partner for Berlin in the region. Hence, the document promotes close cooperation with ASEAN and its member states across the board and strongly supports the principle of **ASEAN centrality**.⁵⁷ Subsequently, Germany is seeking observer status in the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) and is working towards upgrading relations with ASEAN to a dialogue partnership on a national and a strategic partnership on an EU level. Other highly relevant partners include but are not limited to Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India.

Germany highlights the importance of the **rules-based order**, particularly in the context of multilateralism and security. It commits to promoting this order through regional and international frameworks and structures, underscoring its anchoring in human rights. A functioning rules-based order is considered vital for both Germany and the region's **economic prosperity** and Berlin aims to **diversify economic relations**. It supports trade agreements and initiatives like the "Partnership for Sustainable Textiles" and the "Green Button" to promote environmentally and socially responsible economic practices.⁵⁸ Germany, furthermore, plans to provide **development assistance**, focusing on renewable energy, infrastructure improvement, vocational training, and environmental issues. Germany is looking to "expand security and defense cooperation in the region together with its partners", for example through joint exercises and notably "various forms of maritime presence,"⁵⁹ implicitly underscoring Germany's stake in the **South China Sea**.

Simultaneously, Berlin pursues a values-based approach, emphasizing the defense of **human and civil rights** as well as **democracy**. Other important themes include enhancing digital connectivity, infrastructure, and boosting a green transition.

Ireland's Asia-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** January 2020
- **Updated:** October 2023

Ireland applies the same geographic definitions as Czechia and Lithuania, but instead of using the term “Indo-Pacific” it refers to the “Asia-Pacific”. Ireland wants to pursue mutually beneficial political and economic relationships in this region, promote Ireland’s values, and work with partners on global challenges.

The renewed document from 2023⁶⁰ refers to the EU Indo-Pacific strategy as a framework for Ireland’s contribution to the EU’s role in the region. It emphasizes Ireland’s membership in the EU, the EU Single Market, and the Eurozone in relation to what such a small country can offer in the Asia-Pacific region. Repeatedly, the document emphasizes Ireland’s collective work with other EU member states and EU institutions, both on the ground and in key fora to deepen political relations with like-minded partners.

The document acknowledges that not all partners in the region align fully with Ireland’s views and values, but Ireland is committed to finding common ground, especially when working on global solutions to shared global challenges. **China is seen rather as a partner** despite its growing global influence and as a **key player on global issues**, particularly climate change, global trade, and investment, and the multilateral system.⁶¹ **India is a key aspect of the renewed Asia-Pacific strategy**, which calls for a deepening of the strategic relationship across all strands of cooperation, including strengthened political contacts and a deeper trade and investment relationship.⁶² On the other hand, the Irish government is committed to opening an embassy in Pakistan by 2025 in order to deepen bilateral relations and reinforce the understanding of regional dynamics.

There is a strong focus on the economic aspect of the relationship with the region: inclusive economic growth, free and fair trade, and the strengthening of Ireland’s position in global value and supply chains. Ireland's Asia Pacific Strategy had a **target of €100 billion in trade with the region by 2025**.

Ireland's 2022 – 2026 Trade and Investment Strategy, *Value for Ireland, Values for the World*⁶³ articulates how global trade is essential to Ireland's economic wellbeing and a key pillar also to the promotion of Ireland's values and standards abroad.⁶⁴ EU free trade agreements, through the EU, have been concluded with South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and New Zealand and are currently being negotiated with Australia, Indonesia and Thailand.

The strategy also focuses on the **Irish diaspora in the region**, with plans to develop deeper links with them, share the Irish culture and increase the country's visibility in Asia-Pacific.⁶⁵ At home, it envisions enhancing the understanding of the Asia-Pacific region.

To achieve the above-stated objectives, Ireland wants to reinforce the collaborative **Team Ireland** approach throughout the region – priorities interdepartmental and interagency collaboration, both in Ireland and overseas, and also cooperate with civil society, academia, and the private sector.⁶⁶

Lithuania's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** July 2023

The aim of its Indo-Pacific strategy for secure, resilient, and prosperous future is to complement the EU strategy as well as the efforts of the EU, NATO, and various partner countries "to keep the Indo-Pacific free, open, and within the framework of international rules. Our core interest lies in fostering peace and security based on the rule of law and democracy, protection of human rights, the primacy of international law and effective multilateral cooperation".⁶⁷

Vilnius identifies 41 "countries and economies" in the region; Lithuania's geographic definition of the Indo-Pacific thus overlaps with Czechia's. The strategy defines **niches** which Lithuania can exploit to promote its strategic and economic interests. It follows a **cooperative and inclusive approach** but is **highly critical of China**. China and Russia are regarded as examples that "security challenges posed by anti-systemic and revisionist states in both the Indo-Pacific and the transatlantic space are interconnected".⁶⁸ Conversely, and fully in line with its values-based foreign policy, the strategy emphasizes that "The development of economic relations with Taiwan is one of Lithuania's strategic priorities and a part of its economic diversification policy."⁶⁹

The key interest is to strengthen the rules-based order. To achieve this objective, Lithuania's Indo-Pacific strategy rests on three pillars, namely security, economics, and **soft power**. Soft power includes the following: "establishing networks through people-to-people contacts; exchanges in the areas of science, culture, education as well as women and youth empowerment; promoting tourism, and showcasing Lithuania in the Indo-Pacific as a democratic and progressive country and attracting experts to Lithuania. This also encompasses promotion of democratic values and principles, protection of human rights, dignity and freedoms, sustainable development for the improvement of social, environmental, and other standards."⁷⁰

A major aim is to raise Lithuania's **visibility** in the Indo-Pacific, not least to attract foreign direct investment and promote tourism. Another objective is to **increase knowledge about the region** in Lithuania. To this end, the strategy advocates the "strategic development of studies of the Indo-Pacific" in Lithuania, so "graduates equipped with specialised knowledge could engage in research, business, tourism, cultural exchange, and other spheres".⁷¹

The Netherlands' Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** August 2020

The Netherlands' Indo-Pacific strategy⁷² covers in its policy review the entirety of the area around the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including the South and East China Seas, which more concisely means countries from Pakistan to the islands of the Pacific. In this region, the Netherlands is set to create or strengthen existing relations with **like-minded countries**, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. In addition to these partners, there is a strong emphasis placed on increased cooperation with the EU, ASEAN countries, NATO, and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Central to the strategy is the commitment to preserving peace and security in the area, since "Most of the countries in the region seek to prevent the Indo-Pacific region from becoming a pawn of one of the great powers or spoils in the conflict between them."⁷³ By supporting the Non-Proliferation Treaty, UNCLOS, and being more actively vocal on breaches of international maritime law, the Netherlands hopes to promote **effective multilateralism** and "democracy, the rule of law, human rights, freedom, free trade"⁷⁴ in the region. This also reflects the **cautious approach of the Netherlands towards**

China's geopolitical pursuits. However, it acknowledges the economic significance of China, a recognition that remains crucial for the trade-oriented Netherlands.

Considering how “The COVID-19 crisis has given a strong impetus to the discussion of strategic dependencies and the reliability of value chains,”⁷⁵ the strategy additionally underscores the urgency of **diversifying supply and value chains** sustainably and innovatively. Technological innovation is also integral to the strategy, extending its reach to cyber security which is why the Netherlands aims to enhance its digital capacity in collaboration with ASEAN countries.

While the strategy outlines specific policies and treaties, such as focusing on the EU's Connectivity Strategy and acceding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, much of the content is broad, mainly offering suggestions for the EU's Indo-Pacific policy. The Netherlands appears aligned with overarching EU objectives, contributing to a collective effort in shaping the Indo-Pacific landscape.

The UK's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Adopted:** March 2021
- **Updated:** March 2023

The United Kingdom's Indo-Pacific strategy is broadly laid out in her encompassing external policy document in which the Indo-Pacific is mentioned repeatedly, and a chapter is attributed to this vast region, which does show the importance it holds for the UK. The UK states that it seeks to “be the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific”.⁷⁶ This is to be achieved through an “**Indo-Pacific tilt**”⁷⁷ in her foreign policy. The UK seeks to pursue a “deeper engagement in the region in support of her goals of shared prosperity and regional stability”.⁷⁸

China is seen both as a “systemic competitor”⁷⁹ and an “important partner”⁸⁰ in the region. **China's** growing power is named as “by far the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today”.⁸¹ The UK sees China as pursuing an assertive foreign policy against which the UK must defend itself. China is referred to as the “**biggest state-based threat to the UK's economic security**”.⁸² China, though, is also specifically named as an important economic partner with whom the UK needs to engage and with whom the UK seeks to pursue a “positive economic relationship”.⁸³ China is also regarded as a partner in transnational challenges, such as climate

change. Regarding other regional actors, the UK names India and Japan specifically as important players in the region, though further regional powers are also considered relevant actors.

Japan is considered the closest strategic partner. The UK specifically seeks to become a “ASEAN dialogue partner”⁸⁴ and to “support **ASEAN’s central role** in regional stability and prosperity”.⁸⁵ The UK also attributes notable importance to India as an actor and partner in the Indo-Pacific. The UK does state that its goals in the Indo-Pacific are to be pursued with “**like-minded partners**”, though no countries are specifically mentioned in this context.

The UK commits to upholding “the international rules and norms that underpin free trade, security and stability”⁸⁶ for which the Indo-Pacific is considered especially relevant, as it is described as relevant to “many of the most pressing global challenges, such as **maritime security and competition linked to law, rules and norms**”.⁸⁷ The Indo-Pacific is considered the center of the intensifying geopolitical competition and a region which contains multiple potential flashpoints. This includes the issue of freedom of navigation, which is essential to the UK’s national interest. The UK states that she needs to engage more deeply in the Indo-Pacific for her own security. Regarding security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific the UK articulates that she is already working closely with “regional partners and will do more through persistent engagement by our armed forces and our wider security capacity-building”.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the UK seeks to build on its existing military bases and to **deepen defense and security cooperation** with its partners, including deeper engagement with India, and regional security groupings. Economically the UK seeks to deepen its engagement in the Indo-Pacific as “[f]or economic opportunities - the Indo-Pacific is the world’s growth engine”.⁸⁹ The UK seeks to be an open and liberal trade partner and aims at concluding a free trade agreement with India and becoming a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (which it did in 2023).

What should the strategy of a small country like Slovakia look like?

Unlike some other smaller EU countries (the Netherlands or Czechia) Slovakia does not yet have an official Indo-Pacific strategy or any guidelines for conducting relations with this region, although the Indo-Pacific is of growing economic importance to the country and Slovakia's key partners in the world. While there is no specific definition of the Indo-Pacific region, the key countries of interest for Slovakia in this region can easily be identified. They are the biggest investors and the most important trade partners: South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia

Among **Slovakia's interests** in this region are:

- the preservation, strengthening, and expansion of economic ties;
- the diversification of supply chains for the Slovak industry and the stabilization of existing transport routes;
- the strengthening of cooperation in the areas of innovation and sustainable development;
- the promotion of cultural and academic exchange;
- and working together with like-minded partners to maintain peace, stability, and the rules-based order in the region.

Therefore, Slovakia should adopt **a whole-of-government approach and therefore a comprehensive view**, integrating economic, security, societal, and environmental aspects, and aim to achieve its aims in close cooperation with the EU and its members as well as like-minded partners from the **Indo-Pacific and beyond**, both on governmental and civil society levels. For such an ambitious approach, it is necessary to strengthen the **knowledge base** on the Indo-Pacific region in Slovakia, ranging from expertise on languages, cultures, religions, politics, international relations to economics.

Regarding the promotion of a **rules-based regional order**, including freedom of trade and navigation, Slovakia should cooperate more closely with **ASEAN**, both in its capacity as an EU member and bilaterally. ASEAN,

however, is also an example that not all Southeast Asian and Indo-Pacific nations are democracies. An Indo-Pacific strategy, therefore, also needs to define in a pragmatic manner the principles which should guide the relations with **non-democratic** and even authoritarian governments.

As Slovakia does not have a separate **China strategy**, a crucial element of the Indo-Pacific strategy is to define therein the national interests and red lines in the relations with Beijing. Viewing China in the broader context of the geopolitical and geo-economic developments of the Indo-Pacific and in the light of other European nations' strategies towards China will be extremely helpful for this endeavor.

In comparison with other EU members, Slovakia has only a few embassies in the Indo-Pacific. The strategy should define key partners in the region where embassies should either be maintained or new embassies be opened in the next five to seven years. Also, ideas for **sub-regional diplomatic and trade centers or closer cooperation with other EU members** should be developed to use the financial and diplomatic resources most efficiently. Finally, **synergies with EU policies and initiatives** such as the Global Gateway Initiatives, which builds on a Team Europe approach, should be sought and better exploited. Such an approach will help to further increase Slovakia's visibility in the Indo-Pacific region. This is a crucial strategic aim, as other European countries compete with Slovakia for investments, trade opportunities, and tourists.

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Annex: Key aspects of European Indo-Pacific strategies

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
CZECHIA	Peace Prosperity Economic interest in the region as the quickest growing region Political participation of the EU and cooperation with ASEAN	ASEAN Japan New Zealand South Korea Taiwan India Australia United States	Diversification of trade and supply chains necessary. Hints at the necessity for "more intensive cooperation on climate and environmental sustainability" which is not limited to environmental concern but also "the success of sustainable agriculture, green economy, and sustainability".	Not mentioned.	Connectivity mentioned in the context of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy and Global Gateway Initiative and critical infrastructure merely mentioned as a sidenote.	Stressing the importance of cooperation with natural allies and like-minded partners with whom NATO shares partnerships and the necessity of building resilience against new hybrid threats.	Cooperation with NATO, AUKUS, and Quad. Hybrid threats: no concrete plans or partners mentioned.	Contain the tensions in the Taiwan Strait and in the South China Sea. Support for UNCLOS.	Not a specific focus, only disaster relief and health protection briefly mentioned.	Digital partnership mentioned as part of the EU-Asia connectivity strategy with due consideration to "technical, political, security and social risks.

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
EUROPEAN UNION	<p>Stronger EU engagement in IP</p> <p>Maintaining the rules-based order</p> <p>Promotion of human rights and democracy</p> <p>Deepening of economic relations</p>	<p>Cooperation as key approach, extremely inclusive.</p> <p>Mainly:</p> <p>ASEAN</p> <p>Japan</p> <p>India</p> <p>Australia</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>United Kingdom</p> <p>United States</p> <p>All like-minded countries.</p>	<p>Reinforcing existing value chains, diversification, level playing field, trade agreements, setting standards, transition to green economy.</p>	<p>Not detailed.</p> <p>Support for UN SDGs, climate change, socio-economic development, education.</p>	<p>Comprehensive approach towards connectivity, including digitalization of transport.</p> <p>To be implemented with regional partners, notably ASEAN, Japan, India.</p>	<p>Traditional and non-traditional security risks directly impact on Europe.</p> <p>Maritime and cyber security highlighted.</p> <p>Support for ASEAN initiatives, cooperation with Quad in non-traditional security.</p>	<p>Participation in existing multilateral initiatives, strengthening dialogue with key partners.</p>	<p>Strong focus on maritime security, aim of promoting ocean governance and strengthening naval presence.</p> <p>Upholding UNCLOS, promoting standards for sustainable management of marine resources.</p>	<p>Directly addressed, with emphasis on health (COVID-19 focus) and disaster risk reduction</p>	<p>Strong focus on digitalization, comprehensively addressed, e.g., digital governance, digital transition, digital transport. Digital partnerships with regional partners to be deepened</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
FRANCE	<p>Ensuring the sovereignty of its territories and citizens in the region (overarching priority)</p> <p>Freedom, rule of law and multilateralism</p> <p>Stability of the global economy</p> <p>Climate change and sustainable development</p>	<p>India</p> <p>Japan</p> <p>Indonesia</p> <p>Singapore</p> <p>Vietnam</p> <p>Malaysia</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>Australia</p> <p>United States</p>	<p>Push for "significant investment" in infrastructure, notably "transportation, energy, and telecommunications".</p>	<p>The French Agency for Development: active in 24 Indo-Pacific countries.</p> <p>Total investment stock in the region in 2020 was more than €9 billion (China 13% of it), led 170 projects between 2015 and 2020.</p>	<p>French Agency for Development at the forefront of investment for "sustainable infrastructure". France joined an Indian-launched Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in 2020. Also mentions the need for more connectivity and "expand the network of digital partnerships with the Indo-Pacific" but doesn't specify how to make it happen.</p>	<p>Focus on "sovereignty forces" (La Réunion, New Caledonia and French Polynesia), "presence forces" in the UAE and Djibouti.</p> <p>Total of 7000 pre-positioned troops in the region.</p>	<p>French pre-positioned troops to engage in "high-level interactions in all fields" with allies, and notably the US, Australia, and New Zealand.</p>	<p>French troops take part in securing maritime zones through patrols.</p> <p>Favoring the "development of a regional maritime security architecture" that would widen the scope of information-sharing.</p> <p>Producing fisheries' guidelines and fighting against illegal fishing.</p>	<p>Health is described as a "priority" (infectious diseases and ageing societies notably mentioned).</p> <p>Also, "strengthening of [France's] scientific cooperation efforts" with regional partners: health is a component in the roadmap with Japan and Australia, and is collaborated on with India, Indonesia, and Singapore.</p> <p>There is also an extensive French scientific and research network in the Indo-Pacific.</p>	<p>The Indo-Pacific is seen as a huge player in the digital domain, with regional governments "actively support[ing] research and development of new cutting-edge technologies, as well as the digital transformation of their institutions".</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
GERMANY	<p>Peace and stability</p> <p>Avoiding unilateral dependencies</p> <p>Free trade and economic prosperity</p> <p>Digital transformation and connectivity</p> <p>Climate change</p> <p>Countering misinformation and the rise of authoritarianism</p>	<p>ASEAN</p> <p>Australia</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>Japan</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>Pacific Islands Forum</p> <p>G20</p>	<p>Diversify economic relations and support the conclusion of new EU free trade and investment agreements.</p> <p>Engagement with China, while addressing contentious issues such as IP, tech transfers and "level playing field".</p>	<p>ODA through KfW and KfW Development Bank, primarily in energy, infrastructure, transport, water supply, digitalization, and education (vocational training).</p>	<p>Instruments and institutions include NDICI and KfW.</p> <p>Main partners: Japan and ASEAN, but also China.</p>	<p>Training and regional marine exercises, strategic dialogues, defense contacts with Indo-Pacific partners, support of multilateral formats, support for rules-based order, UNCLOS, support of ASEAN centrality.</p>	<p>Plans for "strategic dialogues" and "bilateral visits and an expansion of defense contacts in the region [...] as well as other forms of maritime presence".</p>	<p>Focus on marine exercises, piracy, fishing practices, and ocean pollution - to be addressed through multilateral dialogue as well as "bilateral and regional projects in the region, including in India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and at regional level in cooperation with ASEAN".</p>	<p>Focus on terrorism, piracy, climate change, freedom of and access to information, and pandemics - through regional or international regulatory frameworks and structures. Acknowledgement of religious freedom, peace and understanding as important factors.</p>	<p>Needed partly in response to BRI.</p> <p>Cooperation envisioned with Japan, ASEAN, and China.</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
IRELAND	<p>Building strategic relationships</p> <p>Economic partnership</p> <p>Diaspora communities</p> <p>Increase Ireland's visibility in the region</p> <p>Team Ireland approach</p>	<p>Japan</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>Australia</p> <p>India</p> <p>Pakistan</p> <p>Vietnam</p> <p>Cambodia</p> <p>Laos</p>	<p>Support to Irish export and FDI to Asia-Pacific, tourism, research and education</p>	<p>Not detailed.</p>	<p>Increase air and maritime connectivity with Asia Pacific.</p>	<p>Cooperation on cyberattacks, hybrid threats, and artificial intelligence</p>	<p>Disarmament and non-proliferation</p> <p>Peacekeeping operations</p> <p>Sharing of experience on conflict resolution.</p>	<p>Work with Pacific Island countries to develop ocean partnerships through Ireland's Our Shared Ocean program</p> <p>Facilitating research partnerships, capacity building and knowledge exchange on inclusive and sustainable blue economy, marine policy, and ocean governance.</p>	<p>High food safety, resilience to climate change and natural disasters</p>	<p>Support the development and roll out of the EU's digital partnerships with Singapore, Japan, and Korea.</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
LITHUANIA	<p>Peace and security</p> <p>Rule of law, democracy, human rights</p> <p>International and effective multilateral cooperation</p>	<p>US</p> <p>NATO</p> <p>ASEAN</p> <p>Japan</p> <p>Australia</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>Singapore</p> <p>India</p> <p>Taiwan</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>Malaysia</p> <p>Indonesia</p> <p>Vietnam</p>	<p>Deepening bilateral trade relationships.</p> <p>Focus on new production processes, health, technology and biotechnology, information, and connectivity technology.</p> <p>Investments sought in advanced technology, life sciences, semiconductors, FinTech, electronics, and vehicle-component production.</p>	<p>Aims to contribute bilaterally and as EU member with knowhow to green transition, digitalization, democratic reforms, thereby also involving civil society.</p>	<p>Lithuania will contribute to existing initiatives, but no major focus of the strategy.</p>	<p>The strategy is highly critical of China and other "anti-systemic and revisionist states".</p> <p>China's "aggressive foreign policy" causes instability, notably in regard to Taiwan and the South and East China Seas.</p> <p>Primacy of international law and cooperation.</p>	<p>Cooperative efforts required to strengthen the capacities of like-minded countries to counter various traditional and non-traditional threats, including cybersecurity.</p> <p>NATO as partner highlighted.</p>	<p>Maritime security is regarded as crucial.</p> <p>Lithuania promises to share its knowhow in maritime logistics and port operations.</p>	<p>Focus on human rights, women and youth empowerment.</p> <p>Support for UN Sustainable Development Goals</p>	<p>Supporting digitalization is a main aim, but not described in detail</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
NETHERLANDS	<p>Peace and security</p> <p>International legal order and human rights</p> <p>Sustainability and climate change</p> <p>Economic and digital development</p>	<p>Australia</p> <p>Japan</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <p>South Korea</p> <p>ASEAN countries</p> <p>China (important economically)</p> <p>India</p> <p>NATO</p> <p>SIDS</p>	<p>Continuing negotiations on FTAs with the countries in the region.</p> <p>"Making value chains more reliable by exploring the scope for diversifying suppliers from the Indo-Pacific region."</p>	<p>Not mentioned.</p>	<p>Part of the EU Connecting Europe and Asia strategy: main focus on sustainable diversification of supply and value chains and improving digital strategy (innovation, AI, e-commerce).</p>	<p>Focus on non-proliferation, maritime and digital security, cooperation with like-minded countries and NATO.</p>	<p>Focus on non-proliferation and disarmament, organizing seminars and dialogues on strengthening capacity building in the area of international law, and offering courses on building cyber capacity in ASEAN countries.</p>	<p>Promoting safe passage and maritime security in cooperation with the EU through compliance with UNCLOS and participation in ReCAAP.</p>	<p>Not a specific focus, only mentions of how cooperation helps in defeating viruses (like COVID) and mitigating crises.</p>	<p>Focus on digital strategy as part of the EU Connectivity Strategy and increasing cyber capacity in ASEAN countries.</p> <p>Commitment to an open, free, and secure internet.</p>

	Key interests and aims	Key partners	Economy	ODA	Infrastructure and connectivity	Security	Defense	Maritime security and ocean governance	Human security	Digital governance and partnership
UNITED KINGDOM	<p>Shared prosperity</p> <p>Regional stability</p> <p>Being European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific</p>	<p>Japan (closest partner)</p> <p>Indonesia</p> <p>Vietnam</p> <p>Malaysia</p> <p>Singapore</p> <p>ASEAN</p> <p>France</p> <p>Germany</p> <p>India</p> <p>Pakistan</p>	<p>Very concrete: new bilateral trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand</p> <p>agreeing to an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India</p> <p>acceding to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership</p> <p>becoming ASEAN Dialogue partner.</p>	<p>Aims to use ODA more strategically:</p> <p>Support countries in combating extreme poverty.</p> <p>When countries can finance development move gradually from providing grants to providing expertise and returnable capital.</p>	<p>Support of high-quality infrastructure through ODA.</p> <p>Connectivity not mentioned.</p>	<p>The Indo-Pacific is considered vital in the security realm.</p> <p>Also focus on new security challenges (incl. cyberspace), freedom of navigation, and the need to engage for UK's own security.</p>	<p>Continued engagement with regional partners; strengthening defense and security cooperation, building on overseas military bases, enhancing engagement with FPDA partners and with regional security groupings.</p>	<p>Preserving freedom of navigation (essential to the UK's national interests as shipping depends on chokepoints).</p> <p>Strengthen security cooperation in maritime security.</p> <p>Fishing and pollution not mentioned.</p>	<p>Focus on climate change.</p>	<p>Deepen "partnerships in science, technology and data" in the Indo-Pacific;</p> <p>Strengthen tech partnership with India and Singapore.</p>

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Strategies and approaches of EU countries to the Indo-Pacific region: Implications for Slovakia

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Design: Matej Šimalčík

Editing: David Hutt

Cite as: K. Kironska et al. *Strategies and approaches of EU countries to the Indo-Pacific region: Implications for Slovakia*. Bratislava: CEIAS, 2023.

Published by:

Central European Institute of Asian Studies
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Implemented with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic within the grant program *International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic (MVZP/2023)*.



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SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe coordination and support action 101079069 – EUVIP – HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03.



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