

full article

The EU and European Countries' Indo-Pacific Strategies: Security and Nuclear Factor

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Abstract: The Indo-Pacific region concept, having a significant place in the U.S. as well as their Asia-Pacific allies' official discourse in the latest decades, is also penetrating the diplomatic terminology of both the EU and separate European nations. This paper features a review of how the Indo-Pacific strategies are designed as exemplified by the corresponding documents adopted by the said international organisation and some of its member states (including the former ones, such as the UK), particularly in the security realm and nuclear non-proliferation, given the importance of these factors for strategic stability in the global and regional dimensions. In terms of methodology, the article employs some elements of discourse analysis, content analysis, comparative political studies, and prognostic methods; the sources are represented by the EU and European countries' official documents, as well as speeches made by politicians. Thanks to analysing the states' strategies, main trends, which are also reflected in the common EU strategy, are singled out. The author draws a conclusion that the deterioration of the Ukrainian crisis will limit the opportunities for further development of the interregional ties between Europe and Asia.

Keywords: European Union, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Indo-Pacific strategies, interregional ties

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оригинальная статья

Индо-Тихоокеанские стратегии ЕС и европейских стран: безопасность и ядерный фактор

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Аннотация: Концепция Индо-Тихоокеанского региона, занимающая в последние десятилетия важное место в официальном дискурсе США и их союзников в АТР, проникает и в дипломатическую терминологию как ЕС, так и отдельных европейских стран. Секьюритизация общественно-политического дискурса в Европе в 2022 г. требует более пристального внимания к динамике отношения ЕС и ведущих европейских игроков к безопасности в ключевых регионах мира, включая Азиатско-Тихоокеанский. В статье рассмотрены особенности формулирования Индо-Тихоокеанских стратегий ЕС и некоторых ее членов (включая бывшие – на примере Великобритании), в частности в сфере безопасности и ядерного нераспространения, с учетом важности данных факторов для стратегической стабильности в глобальном и региональном измерениях. Используются отдельные элементы дискурса-анализа, контент-анализа, политической компаративистики и прогностические методы; источниковая база представлена официальными документами ЕС и европейских стран, а также заявлениями отдельных политиков. Благодаря рассмотрению страновых стратегий выявляются основные тенденции, отражающиеся и в общей стратегии ЕС в отношении ИТР. С точки зрения ядерного фактора в Индо-Тихоокеанских стратегиях и документах более низкого порядка (в случае ФРГ и Нидерландов – «основополагающих принципах») общим местом является обеспокоенность североазиатской ядерной проблематикой и в меньшей степени модернизацией стратегических ядерных сил КНР. Также автор приходит к выводу, что обострение ситуации вокруг Украины сократит возможности дальнейшего налаживания европейско-азиатских межрегиональных связей. Приводятся и перспективные направления дальнейших исследований в изучаемой области.

Ключевые слова: ЕС, Европа, Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион, Индо-Тихоокеанские стратегии, межрегиональные связи

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Introduction

The European countries (in particular, EU member states) have long been striving to institutionalise their relations with the Asia-Pacific region. This is especially important in light of the impressive economic growth displayed by key Asian players even in the COVID-19 pandemic¹. However, it is no wonder that the fundamental security challenges in the region are reflected in the respective strategies adopted by the EU countries. Indeed, such developments are quite abundant, including but not limited to border conflicts on the disputed territories (e.g. between China and India), grievances concerning island chains claimed by several nations in the East China Sea and South China Sea, 2021 power shift in Myanmar (often labelled in the Western media as a coup d'état), DPRK nuclear and missile tests etc. Thus, U.S. and their Asia-Pacific allies (predominantly Japan and Australia) responded to these happenings by popularising the Indo-Pacific concept in their doctrines following its mainstreamification in the scholarly discourse. Several years later, EU also followed their suit, producing a unified EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific² in September 2021. A number of European countries had also come up with similar documents on a national level, and this piece represents an attempt to trace the role of the security component in such strategies, specifically comparing the influence of the nuclear factor in the European outlook on the Indo-Pacific macroregion as stipulated in these papers.

Manifold dimensions of security as an umbrella term range from so-called classical security (defence in the first place) to human security. Even if the given work focuses on the former, it is crucial to understand the complex nature of the security as a notion established in the European mindset. Still, the goal of this article is to find out what role hard security (namely, nuclear factor) plays in the European states' Indo-Pacific strategies as well as outline a probable future scenario in the short-term perspective.

Methodology

It would be pointless to deny the conceptual significance of the problem under consideration from the IR theories standpoint. As such, frameworks as interregionalism or transregionalism explaining the cooperation between different parts of the world could be enriched by means of an in-depth study of the relations between Europe and Asia-Pacific. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that theoretical subtleties rather remain on the periphery of the presented paper.

Inasmuch as the methodology per se is concerned, conventional logical and intuitive methods are at the core of the research conducted. Country-based approach turned out to be of assistance in terms of delineating the tendencies related to the dynamics of interregional relations as shown in the documents discussed. The work also involves some elements of other methods that include: discourse analysis (unveiling the ideological foundations of the Indo-Pacific strategies), qualitative content analysis (e.g. defining intertextual topical links), comparative studies (which helped the author mark out similarities and differences in the countries' postures), prognostic methods (represented by a simplified version of scenario analysis, where only the baseline scenario is laid out briefly, due to the format constraints).

Literature review

From a historiographical standpoint, the sources analysing EU's Indo-Pacific stance are in essence of quite recent origin, which is understandable since this concept appeared in the contemporary political science less than two decades ago. All the more, European countries arguably acted more slowly (see below) in embracing the term under consideration from a scholastic point of view, as well as officially.

It is worth noting that the adoption of "Indo-Pacific" thinking in Europe began not on the EU level; on the contrary, separate European nations, such as France, set this trend. As mentioned by K. He and H. Feng, conceptual institutionalisation of the Indo-Pacific largely depends on creating far-reaching multilateral establishments (described by the word combination "deep institutionalisation"), and the example of the EU can play an existential role in this regard, in terms of identity in the first place [1]. Australian thinker R. Medcalf draws a historical parallel, noting that on European colonial maps, Asia encompassed what is now understood as "Indo-Pacific" [2], which, in turn, explains European comprehension of this part of the globe. F. Heiduk and G. Wacker take notice of major differences pertaining to the content of the term in various nations and even situations, and specifically acknowledge the politicised nature of this concept [3]. At the time their paper was published (i.e. mid-2020), as claimed by these authors, the EU interests in the region – including in the security realm – were still to be defined.

One of the most prominent European scholars involved in the studies of the Indo-Pacific phenomenon, E. Pejsova [4],

¹ Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement December 2021. URL: <https://www.adb.org/outlook> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

² Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Brussels, 16 Sep 2021/ JOIN(2021) 24 final. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_indo_pacific_en.pdf (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

argues that the impact of geopolitics has eventuated in the EU embracing the Indo-Pacific as a concept, as the security implications of the U.S.-China rivalry will have a spillover effect not only regionally, but also globally.

M. Li, in turn, connects the security aspect of the European Indo-Pacific strategic thinking with the Belt and Road Initiative [5], based on a link between geoeconomics and geopolitics. According to the scholar, China's trade and infrastructure activities arguably securitise the environment in the region, thus leading to a more active stance from the external actors, such as the EU and certain European states. Other papers also single out PRC as one of the reasons for an increasingly active positioning of the EU in the Asia-Pacific [6]. The context of intensifying competition between Washington and Beijing [7] comprises the backbone of the regional setting, forcing EU and European actors to adjust their policies accordingly.

Talking about an Indian perspective, B. Krishnamurthy assesses commonalities between India's and European players' vision of the region where multilateralism and adherence to "rules-based order" are of the utmost importance [8].

On a normative level, some policy briefs [9] underline the necessity of coordination and engagement between the EU and minilateral regional formats. In the first place it is associated with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and its member countries. Theoretically, interregionalism has been employed as an explanatory framework interpreting the EU's involvement in the Indo-Pacific [10], and the UK and France are seen as key nodes outside the region for building partnerships with the U.S. and its Quad allies. G. S. Khurana, oftentimes cited as the one who coined the term "Indo-Pacific" in its modern understanding, argues that the EU sees Quad as a "quasi-military alliance" [11], highlighting its divisive impact for the region. However, the Indian pundit also admits – and rightly so – that large European powers such as France and the UK are more amicable towards the notion *per se*. Still, one has to take into account an extensive use of quotation marks to emphasise the term "Indo-Pacific" by manifold commentators, not excluding G. S. Khurana himself.

Therefore, it is no wonder that most of the papers on the given topic concentrate more on the national dimension of Indo-Pacific strategies. Symptomatically, J. Rogers in his visionary article scrutinises French and British Indo-Pacific geostrategies even before the second iteration of Quad, namely, in 2013, specially concentrating on the naval component of their respective stances [12], a landmark trend in the present-day situation. E.g. D. Scott [13] treats France's Indo-Pacific strategy as a fashion of projecting the power by means of cooperating with the regional "like-minded partners" (meaning Japan and Australia). Another layout would be a trilateral dialogue with the participation of France,

India and Australia [14]. N. Regaud proceeds from a convergence of French and EU interests in the region, calling crisis prevention the most promising sphere for interregional collaboration [15], also centring in the possible adoption of European mechanisms and structures by the Asian players. Another French researcher, C. Penot [16], claims that the *Élysée* should pursue its own goals in the region independently, renouncing the approach proffered by the AUKUS. As such, authors from France mostly focus on Paris's strategy in the Indo-Pacific, rather than zeroing in on the EU. A. Y. Chikhachev [17] takes note of the institutional formats (e.g. FRANZ grouping) that can help France maintain its security dialogue in the region, although after AUKUS was announced, the future of such an alignment is questionable. In general, the establishment of the trilateral "Anglo-Saxon" pact in the region has led to pessimistic predictions regarding the future of Europe in general [18].

As is clear from this section, it is only lately that the Indo-Pacific strategising has come to the fore in the European scholarly literature, especially comparing the interest to this phenomenon on the part of U.S. and Asia-Pacific authors. Out of the country-based studies, France appears to be the most popular related case, having the longest established history of involvement in the Indo-Pacific from a legal perspective, the UK firmly occupying the second place in this improvised ranking. On a side note, no papers – to the best of the author's knowledge – have been devoted to the nuclear side of the issue, leaving a gap to be filled.

Results

Compared to the U.S. or its Asia-Pacific partners, European states adopted their Indo-Pacific strategies with a certain time lag for obvious reasons. The related timeline is displayed on Fig. 1.

Structure-wise, it would be rational to preface the analysis of the EU strategy with a short overview of the topical documents on a national scale first.

French Republic. France has been a pioneer in developing its own Indo-Pacific strategy [19], which was declared in 2018. It should be emphasised that France is anchored to the region relying on its overseas possessions (French Polynesia and other insular territories) with a total population of 1.6 million citizens and military personnel. It stands to reason that Paris's concerns originally had to do primarily with security. It is all the more peculiar that the nuclear factor was not underscored distinctly in the paper – even in its most recent edition³. In the chapter dedicated to strategic partnership with India, peaceful use of atomic energy is referred to as an "axis" of the collaboration⁴. It should also be noted that France is desperately trying to recover its status in the region after the painful AUKUS blow that resulted in a diplomatic tiff with Australia and the U.S. France has also been planning to deploy its nuclear attack submarine

³ France's Indo-Pacific Strategy. France Diplomatie – Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. 74 p. URL: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en_dcp_a4_indopacifique_022022_v1-4_web_cle878143.pdf (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

⁴ La stratégie de la France dans l'Indopacifique. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. P. 39. URL: <https://www.elysee.fr/admin/upload/default/0001/10/c3852600cbeccbc2fa05ecf147fa307a79ac17.pdf> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

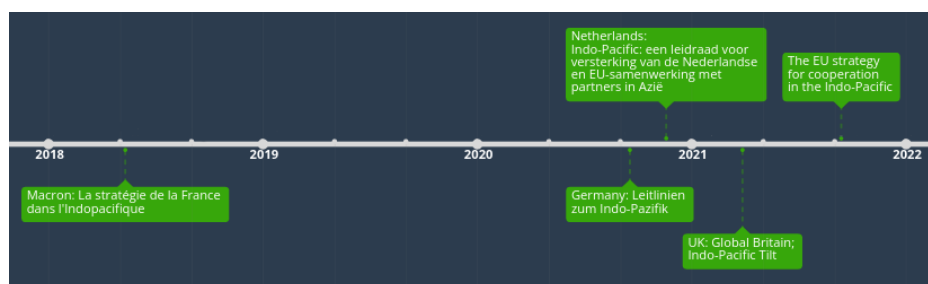


Fig. 1. The timeline of EU and European countries' Indo-Pacific strategies adoption
Рис. 1. Хронология принятия Индо-Тихоокеанских стратегий ЕС и европейскими странами

in the region (the “Marianne” mission)⁵. Apart from that, North Korea with its nuclear ambitions was another item mentioned in the nonproliferation context.

Federal Republic of Germany. Germany is doubtlessly one of the pivot states for the EU, but unlike most major nations, so far it has not ended up going further than adopting its guidelines⁶ – Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik – in September 2020. Whereas Indo-Pacific security in Berlin's vision only goes after trade and even climate policies⁷, the wording in the paper itself is comparatively restrained, but the references to the nuclear aspects are tangible⁸. Three Indo-Pacific nuclear powers are highlighted: China, India, and Pakistan (Netherlands, for one, attributes this regional presence to seven nuclear-weapon-states); North Korea is also mentioned, like China's growing nuclear arsenal. In the meantime, it does not prevent Berlin from collaborating with Beijing in strategic domains [20].

Kingdom of the Netherlands. Amsterdam, enjoying the “nuclear sharing” privilege within NATO, made its Indo-Pacific guidelines available in November 2020. Netherlands, a seemingly insignificant participant of the EU, is in fact, an influential partner for the Asia-Pacific thanks to its shipbuilding, supply chains, fintech and other fields. It is quite symptomatic that not only DPRK's nuclear programme is taken heed of, but also China's expansion of its nuclear arsenal⁹. Thus, the Netherlands, together with Germany, constitutes one of the few exceptions in this regard (see below).

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Even after Brexit, UK, having concentrated on its “Global Britain” stance, still remains too important to be omitted from this context. London's position towards

the region was crystalised in its most recent 2021 Integrated Review entitled “Global Britain in a Competitive Age”¹⁰, where security and defence issues received much attention. The word “nuclear” is used by an order (literally!) more frequently than in the other documents investigated in this article, which can be explained by a more comprehensive nature of the Review. The part devoted to the Indo-Pacific is filled with the references to security, rooted in both “laws” and “rules”. “Nuclear proliferation and miscalculation” is regarded as one of the flashpoints in this area, and this type of WMD is also alluded to as one of the CBRN constituents, albeit the country's nuclear deterrent is most actively mentioned in the document in conjunction with NATO, i.e. in the Transatlantic environment. Concerning the practicalities, the AUKUS pact, formed by Australia, UK and US in September 2021, can be interpreted as an attempt to vocally express London's take on the regional affairs, not excluding the nuclear component (when it comes to the nuclear propulsion deal). Besides, creating military bases in the region is one of the major directions in Great Britain's “tilt” towards the Indo-Pacific [21].

European Union. Only after the leading states within the Union expressed their interest in the Indo-Pacific through their documents, the EU embarked on forging its own strategic paper. Initial discussions on a joint approach within the EU date back to late 2020 – early 2021¹¹. As to the premises behind this endeavour, one should keep in mind individual nations' policy features connected with the historical background: rich colonial past, control of overseas territories, as well as macroeconomic reasons expressing itself, among other things, in engagement in trade routes and supply chains. Pertaining to the chosen

⁵ Ibid. P. 56.

⁶ For the sake of simplicity and consistency, Germany's and the Netherlands' Indo-Pacific guidelines are hereinafter referred to as “strategies” in this article.

⁷ Indo-Pazifik. *Auswärtiges Amt*. 28 Oct 2021. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/regionaleschwerpunkte/asien/indo-pazifik/2492704> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

⁸ Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific. Germany – Europe – Asia. Shaping the 21st century together. Druck- und Verlagshaus Zarbock GmbH & Co. KG, Frankfurt a. M. 68 p. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380514/f9784f7e3b3fa1bd7c5446d274a4169e/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien-1-data.pdf> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

⁹ Indo-Pacific: Guidelines for strengthening Dutch and EU cooperation with partners in Asia. *Government of the Netherlands*, 13 Nov 2020. URL: <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documenten/publications/2020/11/13/indo-pacific-guidelines/Indo-Pacific+Guidelines+EN.pdf> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

¹⁰ Global Britain in a competitive age. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. HM Government, Crown copyright, 2021. 112 p. URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

¹¹ Cunningham G. The EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. 14 Jan 2022. URL: <https://spfusa.org/research/the-eus-strategy-for-cooperation-in-the-indo-pacific/> (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

subject, one should remember the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests conducted in the region by UK and France during the Cold War. All of this adds to the picture, revealing the EU motivation to become more involved in the intricate Asia-Pacific regional affairs in a more pronounced manner.

The European understanding of the region under scrutiny is predetermined by its declared broad geographical scope (including i.a. East Africa). The ideological component is explicitly reflected in the “rules-based international order” formula. Conspicuously, the strategy simultaneously embraces the (in) famous “rule of law” concept, but the “free and open Indo-Pacific” word combination (native for U.S. Asian allies’ papers) is remarkably missing.

The quantitative content analysis conducted shows that German vision of the region relies on security more than in any other country (Fig. 2). The number of mentions of the term “security” in the EU strategy is ostensibly close to a mean value of a similar indicator in the countries’ documents. In case of UK, such an outlier can be explained by a relatively smaller amount of text dedicated to the Indo-Pacific itself.

Delving further into the specificity of the topic, one can see that the “nuclear” component is mentioned more in the strategies of so-called “nuclear sharing” countries of the EU, i.e. states with the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on their territories: Germany and the Netherlands (Fig. 3). Nuclear possessors (in accordance with the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) such as France or United Kingdom seemingly deemphasise their nuclear armaments. Again, it is remarkable how the EU paper contains an average – approximately – of all the countries’ indicators.

Given the urgency of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes as a problem of a global significance, it is also demonstrative how different the stances of the nations might seem (Fig. 4). The subject has been ignored in the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, but “Global Britain in a Competitive Age” is a leader in this regard.

Wrapping up the discussion of content analysis results, it is necessary to make an allowance for unequal sizes of the documents: those were guidelines in cases of Berlin and Amsterdam, whereas France and the EU provided full-fledged strategies. For UK, it was about positioning the nation’s foreign policy not only in the region (only several pages being dedicated to the Indo-Pacific), but – as follows from the title of the document – globally.

All in all, security and defence is one of the seven key priority areas designated in the EU Strategy. The actual realisation presupposes naval activities (such as joint drills with two or more participants). For instance, exercises of this kind could be held on a multilateral basis in the Indian and/or Pacific oceans, but the details of such sensitive undertakings would remain under question. The underlying causes are securing the vital sea trade routes and sharing expertise in dealing with piracy (relevant for navigation in the Strait of Malacca). Other spheres of cooperation cover counterterrorism as well as novel dimensions, e.g.

cybersecurity. Another window for practical implementation is a chance for European defence industries to sign exports contracts with the regional powers. Such deals, though, are mostly sealed on a bilateral basis, like France’s Dassault Rafale supplies to Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the prior proactiveness of the leading EU states predicates that the Strategy was mostly formed by them, and disagreements in the course of drawing up the document were inevitable. Same applies to different hues of attitudes to China: Italy or some Eastern European states are traditionally

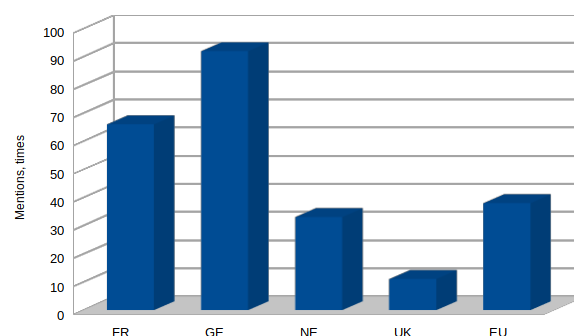


Fig. 2. The term “security” as mentioned in the corresponding strategies

Рис. 2. Упоминания термина безопасность в соответствующих стратегиях

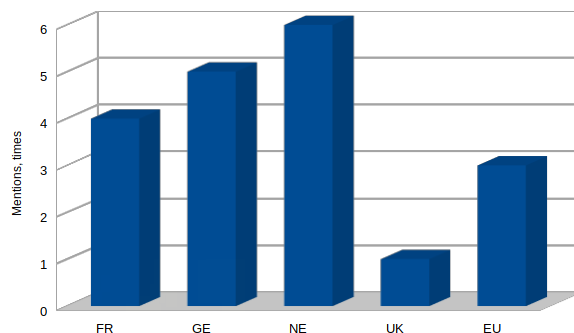


Fig. 3. The term “nuclear” as mentioned in the corresponding strategies

Рис. 3. Упоминания термина ядерный в соответствующих стратегиях

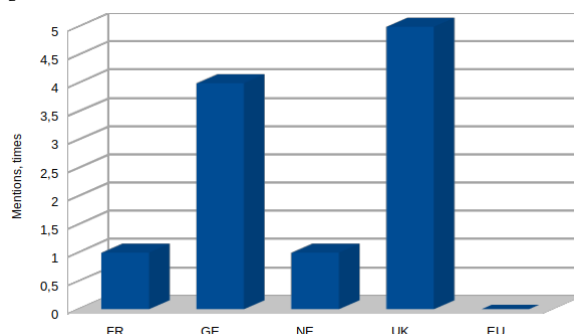


Fig. 4. North Korean nuclear programme as mentioned in the corresponding strategies

Рис. 4. Упоминания северокорейской ядерной программы в соответствующих стратегиях

perceived as considerably more lenient towards Beijing with its military modernisation programme, whereas Western European countries have a more “hawkish” position (relatively speaking, naturally). Zhongnanhai, in its turn, does not welcome the Indo-Pacific pivot as much as it applies to regional powers. On the one hand, the Strategy offers a holistic, macroregional approach; on the other hand, regardless of the inclusiveness, one cannot help noticing the subtle nod to China. The value-based approach described above could indeed be seen as an obstacle to cloudless collaboration with Beijing under certain circumstances.

Taking into account the nuclear factor, it is only brought up in the scope of joint efforts aimed at ensuring nuclear safety and security¹². On a more substantive note, inter-institutional cooperation with ASEAN on CBRN is rated high, and it is encouraged to continue this cohesion.

Curiously enough, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell did not invoke nuclear matters – let alone AUKUS – in his remarks at the press-conference on September 16, 2021¹³. The agenda of the official visits also carries some symbolism: e.g. in his speech in Jakarta, Borrell also talked about security engagement in general terms, skipping the nuclear factor¹⁴.

Conclusion

Summing it up, the accentuation of the security dimension in the strategic documents is strongly dependent upon the European countries’ understanding of their interests in the Asia-Pacific. At the same time, European thinking on Asia is on the whole less subject to ideologisation than the U.S. vision of the region, and can arguably be called more pragmatic.

Some attention is, as a matter of fact, paid to the nuclear proliferation as an issue in the documents under review. Speaking of common points in the national strategies, nuclear dangers and threats are in most cases illustrated by balanced – and sometimes vague – expressions such as regretting or condemning North Korea’s activities. With a few exceptions, EU states avoid any direct allusion connected with China’s strategic forces buildup. It is noteworthy that Europe is not inclined to join the containment strategy directed at Beijing, trying to avoid the zero-sum mentality and securitisation of the relations with China.

That said, in spite of a more or less unified position voiced in the EU strategy, there is a notable degree of compartmentalisation on security issues. One should also consider a certain asymmetry within the EU: countries such as France are incomparably more interested in incorporating themselves into the Indo-Pacific. Unsurprisingly, certain discrepancies between the 27 member

states will arise, and overcoming these difficulties might not be a simple task, allowing for consensus-based decision making. Despite the fact that Europe as a whole is perceived as an outsider in the region to an even bigger extent than the U.S., external players will be definitely welcomed in the Asia-Pacific if they are to play a stabilising role. In the years to come, observers will presumably witness this whimsical co-existence of the EU and the European nations as separate external actors in the macroregion.

From a constructive point of view, EU might have some common ground with ASEAN, not necessarily fully embracing the ideologems nurtured by the U.S. On that occasion, ASEAN could benefit from EU sharing its relevant experience of building a state-of-the-art international organisation, while acknowledging that it would be next to impossible to succeed through blindly copying and pasting this pattern in the South-East Asia. ASEAN is likely to refrain from creating redundant political bodies to avoid bureaucracy the EU is notorious for. This, however, should not be an impediment to the intergovernmental interplay between the two organisations. Furthermore, the idea of ASEAN centrality is a rare point of convergence with the Russian official stance. By contrast, these benevolent intentions can be rendered null in the face of the tendency to search for the lowest common denominator (as is demonstrated by the content analysis results pertaining to the EU’s search for consensus). Distance remains another challenge here, preventing seamless integration, much like growing self-sufficiency of some Asian players. Moreover, the situation with the interregional cooperation will evidently deteriorate as Russia used to provide connectivity between the parts of the globe (from supply chains and logistics to its role as a cultural bridge). Even though the article is not intended to be a prescriptive one, it would be advisable to foster Track 1, 1.5, and 2 dialogues (bilateral summits and expert groups) between European and Asian structures, featuring Russia as well – to the extent feasible.

Mindful of the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Eastern Europe, European actors – together with the U.S. under the auspices of NATO – have their eyes set more on the intraregional contingencies. Given the repercussions of the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, it is reasonable to stick to the prediction that the European countries will likely concentrate on building their own capacity, focusing on the military projects within both EU and NATO.

Accommodating the limitations of this study, further research will require closer theoretical deliberations and a deeper investigation into ASEAN states’ attitude towards the EU presence in the region. A wider database is also needed to get a bigger picture (politicians’ statements, public opinion polls etc.), as well as more varied analysis tools.

¹² Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific ...

¹³ Indo-Pacific: Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President at the press conference on the Joint Communication. Brussels, 16 Sep 2021. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/indo-pacific-remarks-high-representativevice-president-press-conference-joint-communication_en (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

¹⁴ The EU approach to the Indo-Pacific: Speech by High Representative / Vice-President Josep Borrell at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Jakarta, 3 Jun 2021. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-approach-indo-pacific-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-centre_en (accessed 31 Mar 2022).

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