



EU IN THE INDO-PACIFIC JEAN MONNET NETWORK

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 8

PROJECT UPDATE

IN THIS ISSUE

- Internship report
- EUIP priority:
Security &
defence
- Focal location
spotlight:
Thailand
- Recent outputs &
future events

We are nearing the end of year 2 of the EUIP Network. Things have been progressing well and we are in the process of collating and interpreting the raw data collected in our nine focal locations.

The unveiling of our preliminary interpretations and recommendations based on the collected data will occur at the Sandpit Workshop events to be held in December and January. These are day-long workshops hosted in each of the nine focal locations. They encompass a synthesis of academics and EU officials. This will be a way of facilitating direct dialogue with the EU but also an opportunity to hone our policy relevant feedback by talking with officials.

Lastly, although we sadly had big farewell to Rowan Dennett, at the end of November the EUIP project welcomes Anna Doak for a 3 month internship funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development.

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Nāku noa, nā

Nicholas Ross Smith



ROWAN DENNETT: EUROCENTRISM AS POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

After spending a month working as an intern on the EUIP project as part of the Crankstart Scholarship programme at the University of Oxford, Rowan was asked to share his thoughts on the EU in the Indo-Pacific. Here is his essay.

Eurocentrism is broadly categorised and defined, with classifications ranging from an ontology to an epistemology and a social construct to a conceptual tool, but it is the lattermost which is of interest here. For eurocentrism as a conceptual tool acts as a route to utilising and exploiting perceptions of eurocentrism politically. As a Brit, I am more than familiar with this type of political discourse; that which exploits perceptions of EU eurocentrism which has been rife throughout UK politics since the very beginning of the Brexit campaign. But as is the nature of eurocentrism, this, and my own personal understanding of the political usage of eurocentrism comes from a distinctly European perspective, with understandings of it limited to its use in domestic European circles. It is with this in mind that I welcomed the exposure to alternative uses of eurocentrism in international political discourse in the Indo-Pacific in my time interning at the NCRE.

Broadly speaking, the perceptions of EU eurocentrism used in political dialogue can be categorised, firstly into 'Europe as Insular', and secondly as 'European Priorities First'. The first of these categories is quickly dismissed from any critical or observational perspective, and yet remains in political discourse. While the EU undeniably has insular, protectionist characteristics and a complex, federalised structure with member states largely conducting their own foreign policy, it is by no means insular. Not in its policies, strategies nor situation in the world, never mind its Indo-Pacific Strategy we are all more than familiar with and the blockbuster Global Gateway Initiative. Whether arising out of purposeful ignorance or basic misunderstanding, the Eurocentric perceptions of the EU as insular are not uncommon.

In my work so far at the NCRE I have been working on data from the New Zealand Delphi and seen multiple instances where the framing of the EU as wholly or partly insular has been politically exploited and reproduced. The most notable instance has been by Prime Minister Luxon, who at the July NATO summit undermined the importance of the EU to New Zealand by excluding the EU as a single market in his statistics of New Zealand's biggest trading partners, exaggerating the importance of the US in what was likely a bid to promote the US-New Zealand relationship and AUKUS' second pillar. This reproduction of the perception of the EU as at least somewhat insular was a recurring theme in New Zealand interviews, with foreign policy officials and influencers repeatedly buying into the perception of the EU as an insignificant player in the Indo-Pacific. The motivations behind this usage are not always clear, with such perceptions being constantly (re)produced in the everyday intent is not always clear-cut, but the flirtation with AUKUS Pillar 2 represents a clear motivation for some politicians in New Zealand to exploit these largely inaccurate perceptions.

The second categorisation of perceived EU eurocentrism stands on much firmer and legitimate ground. 'European Priorities First' is not unexpected, or indeed problematic, after all the EU primarily serves its own constituents first. This, however, is quickly problematised when it acts in conjunction with the international behaviours of the EU that disprove the 'Europe as Insular' perception, such as the Indo-Pacific Strategy. In this instance, it is rather the EU itself which exploits perceived eurocentrism as a political tool.

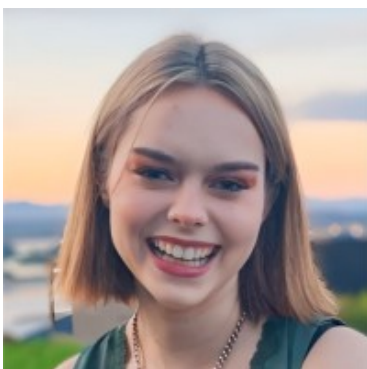
The EU frames the Indo-Pacific Strategy as working towards communal goals of shared interest in the Indo-Pacific, putting the value and importance of European and Indo-Pacific priorities on a level pedestal. This framing exaggerates the importance of Indo-Pacific Nations' priorities to the EU by equating their importance to the extremely high perceived importance of European priorities to the EU. What this framing misses however, is firstly the injustice that European priorities are labelled 'equal' in the Indo-Pacific to Indo-Pacific Nations' priorities are in their own backyard, and secondly, the imposition of the same hoop-jumping prerequisites on Pacific Island states for EU cooperation as are placed on larger, wealthier countries. These two contradictions outline the neo-colonial undercurrents underlying the political dialogue and framing of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the extent to which the EU itself utilises Eurocentric perceptions of itself for its own gain, actively reproducing those very Eurocentric perceptions.

On this international stage and from a non-European perspective, the continued strength and power eurocentrism holds as a political tool becomes clear. Despite typically, and not unjustly, being associated with exploitation and (neo)colonialism, perceptions of EU eurocentrism are so strong even the EU reproduces them in their political dialogue and framing of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. This usage on the international stage acts in conjunction with its usage in domestic politics, often in a bid to underplay and undermine the EU, not least in the UK during Brexit but now in New Zealand to popularise the possibility of joining AUKUS Pillar 2.

In studying these two categorisations of eurocentrism as a political tool, it is critical not to consider them as distinct, with the usage of 'European Priorities First' reinforcing the strength and validity of 'Europe as Insular' and vice versa. It is for this reason that it is in the shared interest of the Indo-Pacific to move past these Eurocentric discourses rather than reproducing them. In doing so, not only will the EU be on a better footing for long term collaborative success by eradicating neo-colonial undertones to its Indo-Pacific Strategy, but it will also be opening EU collaboration up to more Indo-Pacific states, all while undermining the validity of the 'Europe as Insular' perceptions that are so commonly used to dismiss them.

The first step on this long path to a post-Eurocentric world is for the EU to look beyond the short term in their political discourse, and to begin discussing the Indo-Pacific and other regions of the world with less patronisation and greater equity. It's easier said than done given the strength and potential of eurocentrist perceptions in political discourse highlighted here, but it is in the EU's interest as much as anyone's to do so.

NEXT INTERN: ANNA DOAK



Anna has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Sociology and a Graduate Diploma in Political Science and International Relations, both from the University of Canterbury. In 2025, she will begin a Master of European Studies at the University of Canterbury's National Centre for Research on Europe.

EUIP PRIORITY: SECURITY & DEFENCE

In the context of the EU's overall ambition of a free, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific, Security and Defence is an essential priority. The EU itself prescribes the goal for this priority is "to promote an open and rules-based regional security architecture" to support and secure the future of the Indo-Pacific.

In order to realise this, the EU set out specific areas of focus. Central to this is regional co-ordination, co-operation and capacity-building through intensifying communication and dialogue while increasing EU naval presence in the Indo-Pacific. Through these actions the EU aims to support Indo-Pacific partners in counterterrorism, counter-piracy and freedom of navigation operations along with cybersecurity.

Despite these strong actions and ambitions, hesitancy remains in the Indo-Pacific over the credibility of the EU as a Security and Defence partner. One New Zealand MFAT official labelled the EU's presence as "odd" while others suggested they did not have the "tools" or "mandate" to operate militarily in the Indo-Pacific. This is representative of the wider challenge the EU faces in Indo-Pacific Security and Defence: overcoming the presence of the US, China and increasingly, AUKUS.

Security and Defence

to promote an open and rules-based regional security architecture

- Joint naval exercises conducted by EUNAVFOR ATALANTA with partners, such as Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Oman, and the United States;
- EU and Japanese Leaders agreed at the 2023 Summit, to develop their security partnership by increasing cooperation in areas including maritime security, cybersecurity, hybrid threats, counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation;
- At the EU-ROK Summit in 2023, Leaders agreed to establish a security partnership and a Strategic Dialogue at Foreign Ministerial level to enhance cooperation on global peace and security;
- New EU Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM-Moz);
- Coordinated Maritime Presence in the North-West Indian Ocean;
- EU participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum;
- EU-funded thematic projects with a regional outreach:
 - ▶ CRIMARIO - capacity building and maritime information sharing solutions;
 - ▶ ESIWA - practical cooperation on counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, maritime security and crisis management;
 - ▶ Global Action on Cyber Crime Programme.



SECURITY & DEFENCE IN PRACTICE: INDIAN OCEAN COORDINATED MARITIME PRESENCE (CMP)

On 21st February 2022, the EU launched a Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) in the North-West Indian Ocean in collaboration with their global security programme, Strategic Compass. The CMP programme ensures an EU Naval Presence in the Indo-Pacific in order to secure the passage of the 80% of world trade that sails through the Indian Ocean while building maritime relationships and partnerships in the region.

This maritime presence of the EU in the Indo-Pacific supports and actively engages with identified threats in the region such as piracy, supporting and working towards the development of an “open and rules-based regional security architecture”. Additionally, this CMP in the North-West Indian Ocean supports other priorities of the IPS, including Connectivity and Sustainable and Inclusive Prosperity by securing maritime trade and communication routes and working against organised crime which acts to the detriment of fair and equal economic prosperity.



FOCAL LOCATION SPOTLIGHT: THAILAND

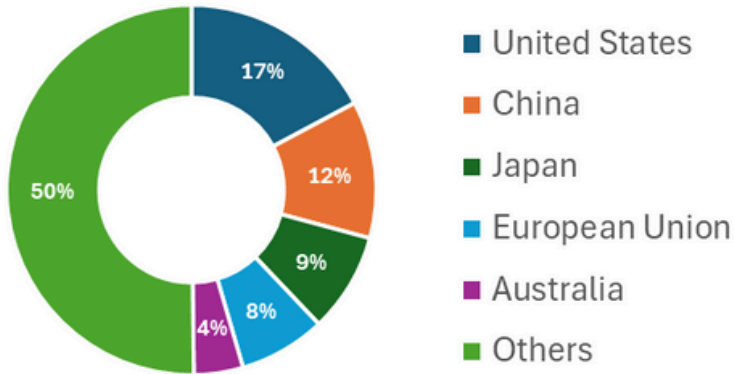


Official Thai-European Union relations date back to 1962. Later in 1979, the office of the Delegation of the European Commission in Bangkok was set up. However, it was under the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra that the bilateral relationship was upgraded considerably. The negotiation of Thailand-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was launched in 2005. However, norm contestations between two sides briefly suspended the negotiations in 2006 and progress overall was slow. In 2013 under the premiership of Yingluck Shinawatra, the PCA negotiation was resumed together with the start of the Thai-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. Negotiations for both agreements were disrupted again, this time by the 2014 coup led by General Prayut Chan-ocha.

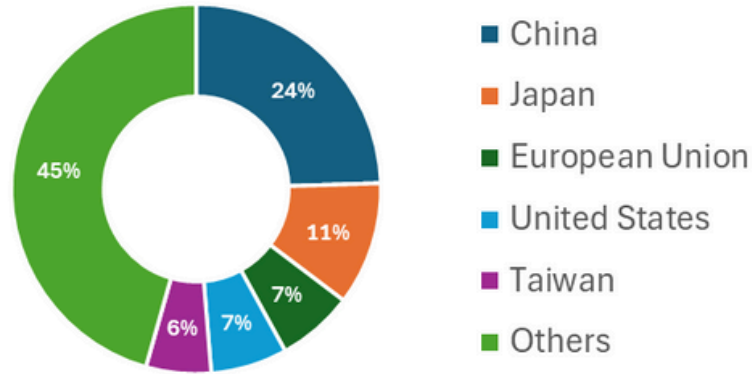
The EU pressured the Thai junta to restore the democratic process as quickly as possible and imposed the ban on high-level visits from both sides. The Thai-EU relations were normalized again when the European Council issued the resolution in 2019 to restore the exchanges of high-level official visits after the junta arranges the referendum to approve the draft constitution showing signs of democratic progress. Then, after the Thai general election in 2019, the PCA negotiation process was restarted and eventually signed in December 2022, successfully passed the Thai parliament in August 2024. Currently, the FTA negotiations are entering the 4th round, scheduled to take place in November 2024. The Thai government is also prioritizing negotiations for visa-free access to the Schengen Area.

THAILAND'S TWO WAY TRADE

Exports



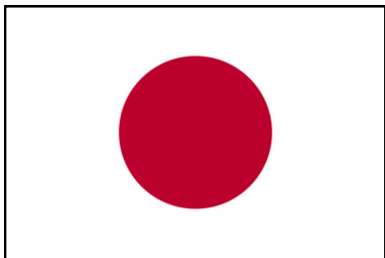
Imports



**18.3% OF TOTAL TRADE
97 BILLION EUROS**



**11.9% OF TOTAL TRADE
63 BILLION EUROS**



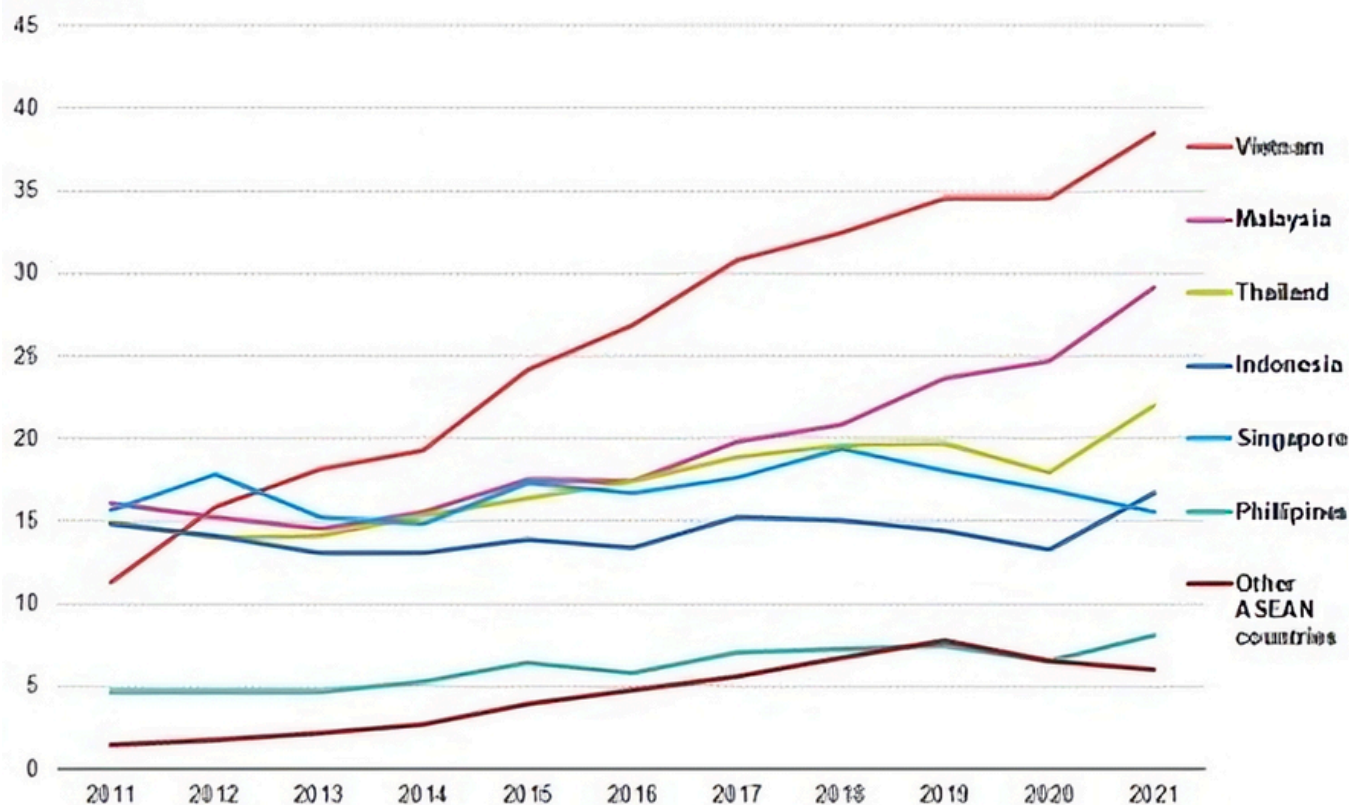
**9.7% OF TOTAL TRADE
51 BILLION EUROS**



**7.1% OF TOTAL TRADE
38 BILLION EUROS**

EU imports of goods from ASEAN countries, 2011 - 2021

€ billion



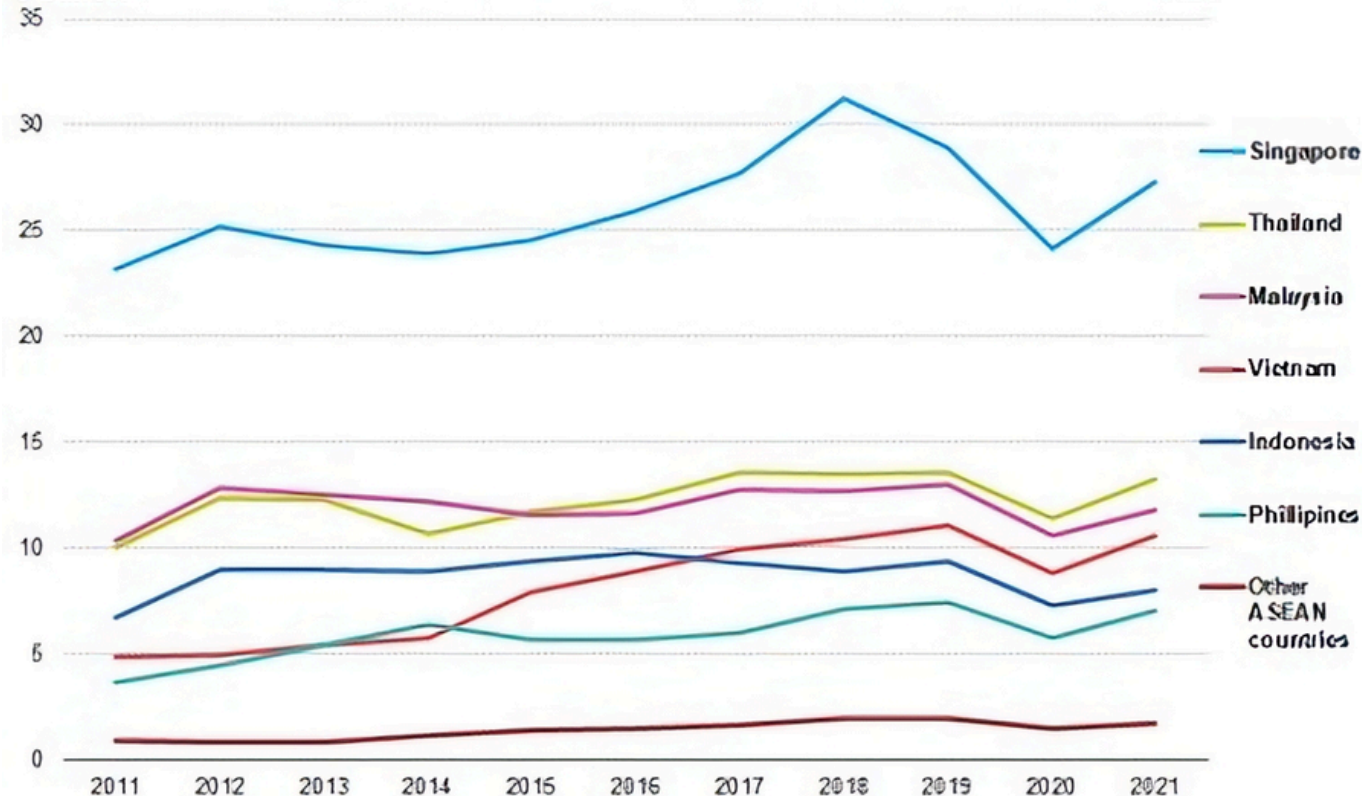
Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-016995)

* Other ASEAN countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar

eurostat

EU exports of goods to ASEAN countries, 2011 - 2021

€ billion



Source: Eurostat (online data code: Comext data code : DS-016995)

* Other ASEAN countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar

eurostat

THE EU-THAILAND PCA & FTA

The EU-Thailand PCA consists of 64 articles under 8 titles. Some of the key areas of the agreement are:

- **Trade and Investment Cooperation:** Details cooperation in trade and investment matters such as trade facilitation, investment promotion, food security, competition policy, technical barriers to trade, and intellectual property rights.
- **Cooperation on Freedom, Security, and Justice:** Addresses issues related to rule of law, gender equality, human rights, anti-money laundering, fight against organised crimes and human trafficking, migration, security, and justice.
- **Multisector cooperation:** Covers a wide range of cooperation areas such as climate change, energy, health, transport, science and technology, tourism, agriculture, culture and education, innovation, fiscal policies, and ocean governance.

Under the EU-Thailand PCA, both parties will establish a Joint Committee and specialised working groups in various areas such as Political cooperation, Trade and Investment, Sustainable Development and Green Transition. The Joint Committee should meet no less than every two years, rotating between Bangkok and Brussels.

After the PCA was signed by both parties, the FTA negotiations have been restored by both sides without delay in March 2023. The first round of negotiation started in September 2023. Under the premiership of Settha Thaveesin, Thai-Schengen free visas agenda was included in the FTA and will continue the discussion under Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra aiming to complete in 2025. The negotiation process will reach its fourth round in November 2024 in Thailand.

The objectives that the Thai government aims to achieve in the negotiations and the expected benefits for Thailand from this free trade agreement as follows:

- The export tariffs on Thai goods to the 27 EU countries will eventually be reduced to zero. This applies to products such as automobiles and components, various electronic equipment, textiles and garments, food, rubber, chemicals, and plastics.
- The service sector will receive preferential rights such as wholesale and retail trade, food production, and tourism.
- Import tariffs on raw materials will also be reduced to zero. This will lower production costs for our manufacturing sector, particularly for the import of machinery, equipment, and chemicals.
- The free trade agreement with the European Union will play a crucial role in attracting investors from around the world to Thailand, increasing investment numbers and boosting the country's GDP.

OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION

Apart from the PCA and ongoing FTA negotiations, Thailand and the EU have also cooperated in various fields, aligning with the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy (EUIP).

For example, the 'Strengthening SDG Localization in Thailand' project is partly funded by the EU. This initiative, launched in 2023 in collaboration with the Thailand's Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims to improve the quality of life of people in local communities by enhancing cooperation between state and non-state actors and developing partnerships with various sectors to accelerate Thailand's commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

This project aligns with the MOI "76 provinces, 76 promises for development for equality for sustainability; this world is for us" policy. The project initially focuses on 15 selected provinces across Thailand, namely Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Tak, Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima, Bangkok, Phetchaburi, Surat Thani, Phuket, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, with plans to expand to other regions.

Additionally, under the NDICI-Global Europe (Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument), the EU Cooperation Facility has committed €20 million to its partnership with Thailand for 2021-2027. This collaboration focuses on key areas such as trade, sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and environmental protection. It also extends to education, research, and innovation, driving growth and progress in both regions.

Interestingly, Thailand has also joined the Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia (ESIWA) in 2023. ESIWA is to enhance the EU's security and defence cooperation with the Indo-Pacific in four areas namely; counterterrorism and preventing violent extremism, crisis management, cyber security, and maritime security. Additionally, it has three main objectives as follows:

- Strengthen security negotiations and promote increased operations between the European Union and partner countries within the region.
- Enhance operational cooperation and capacity building, which will help align policies and practices between the European Union and partner countries within the region in terms of security.
- Increase international awareness and recognition of the European Union's role as a security guarantor.

THE THAILAND RESEARCH TEAM



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RECENT OUTPUTS FROM PROJECT MEMBERS

Journal articles

Doidge, Mathew and Serena Kelly. 2024. "Between tides: examining China discourses in Pacific Island news media." *The Pacific Review*.

Maurer, Heidrun, Raube, Kolja and Richard Whitman. 2024. "Zeitenwende" as coming of age? EU foreign & security policy through war & peace*. *European Security*, 33(3), 345–363.

Steffi Weil, Jörn-Carsten Gottwald, and Markus Taube. 2024. The European Union, Taiwan, and the Silicon Shield argument: a conceptual assessment thorough the lens of grand theories, *European Politics and Society*.

Kissack, Robert, Eva Michaels, and Óscar Fernández. "Parliamentary acceptability of EU military deployments in member states: beyond rubber-stamping?." *Journal of European integration* (2024): 1-28.

Book chapters

McNeill, Henrietta and Nicholas Ross Smith. 2024. "European statecraft in the Pacific Islands," in J. Wallis, H. McNeill, M. Rose, A. Tidwell (eds), *Power and Influence in the Pacific Islands* (London: Routledge).


Others

Smith, Nicholas Ross and Paul Bacon. 2024. "China is not going to cause World War III". *The Conversation*.

Reiterer, Michael et al. 2024. "Navigating the Indo-Pacific: Strategic Priorities for the New EU Leadership", *CSDS POLICY BRIEF*.

Karolin Hofmann, Jörn-Carsten Gottwald, Markus Taube, and Anja Hofmann. 2024. "China's Innovation Drive. A Review of Systems of Innovation Literature", *Alliance for Research on East Asia Ruhr Working Paper No. 1*.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

 **Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha**

10ª Edición Seminario
#CiberseguridadUCLM2024

España y la UE en el Indo-Pacífico: percepciones, oportunidades y retos

Toledo, 21 de noviembre
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales
Aula Magna Madre de Dios

Cuenca, 25 de noviembre
Facultad de Comunicación, Aula 2.18

 **UCD School of Politics and International Relations**
Scoil na Polaitíochta agus Gnóthaí Idirnáisiúnta UCD


Centre for Sustainable Development
Lárionad um Fhorbairt Inbhuanaithe


India - Ireland Relations

November 14, 2024
11:00AM

A talk by
H.E. Mr. Akhilesh Mishra

Ambassador of India to Ireland



 F301, UCD School of Politics & International Relations (SPIRe)
Third Floor, Newman Building, Belfield, Dublin 4.

NZPSA

New Zealand Political Studies Association
Te Kāhui Tātai Tōrangapū o Aotearoa

50TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

On Thursday November 28th NZPSA | TKTOA will hold a 50th Anniversary Symposium to mark the founding of the Association. The Symposium will be held in the Great Hall at the Christchurch Arts Centre between 9am and 6pm.

 **AACaPS**
Australasian Association for Communist and Post-Communist Studies

 **ANZSA**
Australia and New Zealand Soviet Studies Association

 **NCRE**
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON EUROPE

 **UC**
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

for the 17th Biennial AACaPS and ANZSA Conference:

'Changing Divisions in Europe and the Asia-Pacific: A New Cold War?'

hosted by the National Centre for Research on Europe, Faculty of Arts at the University of Canterbury's Ilam campus, Christchurch, New Zealand

30 - 31 January 2025



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