

## NEW CALEDONIA: A CRUCIAL MARITIME KEYSTONE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE -TOWARDS A CONCERTED EFFORT?

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<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJSSMR.2025.8212>

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the intricate interplay between France's New Caledonia issue and the EU's strategic recalibration in the Asian region, aiming to address the implications of these dynamics on regional stability and international relations. The document adopts a multifaceted approach, integrating in-depth analysis of geopolitical developments, policy frameworks, and historical contexts related to France's New Caledonia and the EU's evolving Asia strategy under the emerging multipolar global order. Methodologically, it draws on explorative case-study and AI analysis, which is a digital method retrieving information stored digitally towards knowledge maps on human prompts. It synthesises insights from scholarly works, official publications, and geopolitical analyses to understand the subject matter comprehensively. The analysis reveals the complex nexus between France's New Caledonia challenges and the EU's strategic realignment in Asia at the nexus of geoeconomics and geopolitics during a power transition. It underscores the need for nuanced diplomatic manoeuvres, sustainable development initiatives, and strategic partnerships to navigate the intricacies of these issues effectively. The overall conclusion is that adopting a cohesive and adaptive approach to address France's New Caledonia concerns within the broader context of the EU's Asia strategy is imperative. It emphasizes the significance of fostering regional stability, sustainable development, and collaborative engagement to address the multifaceted challenges at hand. This tunes in with the broader goals of international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

**Keywords:** New Caledonia Conflict-Solution, Indo-Pacific, Overseas Territories, Blue Ocean Continent Strategy, Global EU Pacific Islands Policy.

The village is the university where courses are offered in living.

- Melanesian proverb

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, where the waves of history, geopolitics, and economic interests converge, lies the archipelagic jewel of New Caledonia, part of Melanesia, second to none to Polynesia and Micronesia. As the sun sets over its pristine shores, the strategic significance of this French territory reverberates far beyond its idyllic landscapes. Meanwhile, across the globe, the European Union is embarking on a subtle yet profound reorientation in

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the Asian region, extending its gaze from the traditional power centers to the often overlooked margins - the Pacific Islands.

This shift signifies a pivotal moment in the geopolitical tapestry, where the periphery becomes the focal point. As we delve into the challenges faced by France in New Caledonia and the EU's strategic reorientation, we unravel a narrative that transcends borders, encapsulating historical legacies, geopolitical dynamics, and the economic imperatives that underpin the evolving Indo-Pacific strategy.

New Caledonia, an archipelago in the South Pacific, has been a French territory since 1853. The indigenous Kanak people have long sought independence, leading to significant unrest in the 1980s. This culminated in the 1998 Nouméa Accord, which granted greater autonomy and set the stage for a series of referendums on independence.

New Caledonia's strategic location in the Pacific makes it a key player in France's Indo-Pacific strategy. The region is rich in nickel resources, which are crucial for global industries. France's military presence in New Caledonia also underscores its strategic importance, serving as a counterbalance to growing Chinese influence in the Pacific.

France's policy towards New Caledonia has been marked by a delicate balance between granting autonomy and maintaining control. The French government has invested in economic development and infrastructure to integrate the territory more closely with mainland France. However, tensions remain high, with indigenous groups continuing to push for full independence.

The European Union has been increasingly focusing on the Indo-Pacific region, recognizing its economic and strategic significance. The EU's strategy, outlined in a 2021 joint communication, aims to strengthen partnerships, promote a rules-based international order, and address global challenges such as climate change and security. This reorientation is driven by the need to counterbalance China's growing influence and to ensure stable trade routes and economic ties.

Understanding the historical and geopolitical dynamics of New Caledonia provides insight into France's broader Indo-Pacific strategy. Simultaneously, the EU's strategic reorientation in Asia highlights the region's global importance. Together, these contexts underscore the interconnectedness of regional stability, economic interests, and international relations, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of current and future geopolitical trends.

The objectives of this piece can be outlined as follows:

1. **Analysis of France's New Caledonia Challenges:** The document aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by France in New Caledonia, particularly in the context of regional geopolitics and strategic interests.
2. **Evaluation of EU's Strategic Reorientation in Asia:** The document seeks to assess the European Union's strategic reorientation in the Asian region, with a focus on its evolving engagement with Pacific Island countries and its broader geopolitical implications.

3. **Identification of Key Geopolitical Dynamics:** The document aims to identify and analyze the key geopolitical dynamics at play in the Pacific region, including the influence of major powers, regional alliances, and the impact on regional stability.
4. **Assessment of Policy Implications:** The document will assess the policy implications of France's challenges in New Caledonia and the EU's strategic reorientation, particularly in the context of economic cooperation, security, and regional development.

Scope:

1. **Regional Focus:** The analysis will primarily focus on the geopolitical dynamics and strategic interests of France and the European Union in the Pacific region, with specific attention to New Caledonia and its significance in the broader regional context.
2. **Geopolitical and Economic Aspects:** The document will delve into the geopolitical and economic aspects of the challenges faced by France in New Caledonia, as well as the EU's evolving strategic approach in the Asian region.
3. **Policy Recommendations:** The analysis will culminate in providing policy recommendations for France and the EU, considering the implications of their engagement in the Pacific region and the strategic imperatives involved.

## Research Questions:

1. How does the EU and France intersect in the Oceania region of the “Indo-Pacific”?
2. How can we explain the dynamics of great power cooperation and conflict?
3. How do we figure out how to cooperate in Oceania amongst great powers and actors and explain why it is in everyone’s interest?

The significance of this study lies in the exploration of the EU's role in the emerging international system from the vantage point of Great Power cooperation from a position of relative weakness. The study is of interest of academics and policy-makers, and students of international affairs, who care about peace, love and friendship and the contribution an incomplete composite actor like the EU could bring to bear to maintain peace and security in the Pacific. Several historical, geopolitical, and economic factors contribute to the importance of this shift. It is our hope that the reflections on how an orderly multipolarisation could be unfolded contribute to keep the peace in this remote region.

We argue, New Caledonia's strategic location and its unique geopolitical status make it a critical player in the Indo-Pacific region, influencing both regional stability and international relations. New Caledonia, located in the South Pacific, serves as a vital maritime link between Australia, New Zealand, and the broader Asian continent. As a French territory, it holds a unique position that allows France to maintain a significant presence in the region, which is increasingly important as global power dynamics shift. The Indo-Pacific region is characterized by rising tensions among major powers particularly between the US and China. New Caledonia's location makes it a strategic asset for both military and economic interests, as it can serve as a base for operations and a point of influence in regional diplomacy. New Caledonia's economy is heavily reliant on France, receiving substantial financial support and investment. This dependency not only stabilizes its economy but also positions it as a key player in the EU's trade relations with Oceania. The territory's rich nickel resources are crucial for global supply

chains, particularly in the context of the green energy transition. New Caledonia faces several security challenges, including the potential for regional conflicts and the impacts of climate change, which threaten infrastructure and livelihoods. The territory's strategic importance means that its stability is essential for the security of the broader region, as instability could lead to increased tensions and conflict. New Caledonia's relationship with France provides it with a unique platform. France's influence in the EU and its military capabilities allow New Caledonia to engage with other regional powers effectively. Strengthening these diplomatic ties can lead to collaborative efforts in addressing shared challenges such as climate change and maritime security. Recent diplomatic initiatives such as signing the PIF agreements illustrate New Caledonia's role in fostering regional cooperation. These agreements focus on sustainable development, climate resilience, showcasing New Caledonia can lead in addressing pressing regional issues. According to recent trade statistics, New Caledonia's exports of nickel to Asia have increased by 30% over the five past years, highlighting its growing economic significance. Additionally, military presence in the region, including French naval exercises, underscores the strategic importance of New Caledonia in maintaining regional security.

Some may argue that New Caledonia's influence is limited compared to larger regional powers like Australia or China. Critics might suggest that its economic and military capabilities are insufficient to impact regional dynamics significantly. However, New Caledonia's unique position as a French territory provides it with advantages that larger powers may overlook. Its role as a bridge between Europe and the Asia-Pacific allows it to facilitate dialogue and cooperation making it an essential player in regional stability. Furthermore, its strategic resources and location can be leveraged to enhance its influence in negotiations and partnerships. In conclusion, New Caledonia's strategic location, economic dependencies, and diplomatic relationships position it as a crucial player in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape. Its stability is vital for regional stability and cooperation particularly in the face of rising tensions among major powers over the Oceania region, comprising twenty states and 10,000 islands.

The historical context of colonial legacies, including France's historical ties to New Caledonia and its role in the Pacific, shapes the geopolitical dynamics in the region. The EU's historical engagement in the Asia-Pacific and its evolving relationship with former colonies contribute to the evolving strategic imperatives.

1. **Geopolitical Dynamics** The geopolitical significance of the Pacific Islands as a strategic gateway to the broader Asian region cannot be understated. The region serves as a bridge between the Pacific and Asia, with implications for trade, security, and regional influence.
2. **Economic Considerations** The economic potential of the Pacific Islands, including natural resources, maritime trade routes, and emerging markets, has drawn the attention of global powers. The EU's reorientation reflects the recognition of economic opportunities and the need to diversify strategic engagement beyond traditional power centers.
3. **Strategic Imperatives** The subtle shift from Asia-Pacific to Asia signifies a broader and more inclusive approach that acknowledges the strategic importance of working from the margins, particularly the Pacific Islands, into the Asian heartland. This approach

recognizes the interconnectedness of regional dynamics and the need to engage with diverse stakeholders.

4. US-EU Relations The revision of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy also reflects evolving transatlantic relations and the EU's pursuit of a more independent and assertive role in shaping its engagement with Asia. This shift has implications for the broader transatlantic partnership and the EU's strategic autonomy.

## **Situating my approach in the literature**

Most of the volumes on the Pacific Islands are country-specific and not comparative in perspective. For obvious reasons, the outside powers and their varying strategies are in focus.

"China in Oceania: Reshaping the Pacific?" edited by Terence Wesley-Smith and Edgar A. Porter, provides a comprehensive analysis of China's expanding influence in the Pacific Islands.

## **Scholarly Approach:**

The volume adopts a multidisciplinary perspective, incorporating insights from political science, anthropology, and regional studies. It features contributions from scholars and diplomats across Oceania, China, Japan, and North America, offering diverse viewpoints on China's engagement in the region.

## **Analytical Points:**

1. China's Pacific Engagement: The book examines China's strategic, political, and economic interests in Oceania, situating them within Beijing's broader outreach to the developing world.
2. Diplomatic Competition: It explores the diplomatic rivalry between China and Taiwan in the Pacific, analyzing how this competition influences regional politics and development assistance.
3. Overseas Chinese Communities: The volume delves into the experiences of overseas Chinese in Pacific Island nations, assessing their roles in fostering bilateral relationships and economic ties.
4. Case Studies: Specific chapters focus on individual Pacific Island countries, such as Fiji's "Look North" strategy, Solomon Islands' engagement with China, and China's relations with Samoa and Tonga, providing detailed analyses of bilateral interactions.
5. Regional Responses: The book also considers Japan's response to China's growing presence in Oceania, offering insights into the broader geopolitical implications of China's activities.

## **Critique:**

The volume is praised for its inclusion of Pacific Islander perspectives, often overlooked in discussions about China's influence in the region. By presenting a range of viewpoints, it challenges monolithic narratives and highlights the complexities of China's engagement in Oceania.

Overall, "China in Oceania: Reshaping the Pacific?" serves as a valuable resource for understanding the multifaceted nature of China's interactions with Pacific Island nations and the broader implications for regional geopolitics.

Next comes Joan Wallis's work "Pacific Power? Australia's Strategy towards the Pacific":

## Scholarly Approach

### 1. Research Basis:

- Wallis uses a combination of policy analysis, historical context, and geopolitical frameworks to examine Australia's engagement with Pacific Island nations.
- Her work is grounded in a detailed understanding of Australia's foreign policy and its evolving role in the Pacific region.
- She draws on primary government documents, speeches, official white papers, and regional agreements while incorporating secondary sources like academic critiques and media reports.

### 2. Theoretical Framework:

- Wallis explores power dynamics through lenses like regionalism, soft power, and realist versus liberal perspectives in international relations.
- She contrasts Australia's strategic interests with the aspirations of Pacific Island nations, often critiquing the asymmetry in these relationships.

### 3. Critical Themes:

- Australia's security-first approach: The work critiques how Australia's priorities (e.g., defense and border security) influence its interactions in the region.
- The tension between Australia's aid-based engagement and Pacific Island nations' calls for genuine partnership and respect for sovereignty.
- The impact of China's increasing influence in the Pacific, shaping how Australia frames itself as the region's "preferred partner."

## Main Analytical Points

### 1. Historical Context of Australia-Pacific Relations:

- Wallis provides a historical overview of how Australia's Pacific policy evolved, from colonial influences to post-WWII regionalism, highlighting how legacy issues shape current strategies.

### 2. Australia's Aid and Development Strategy:

- Wallis critiques Australia's heavy reliance on aid diplomacy, questioning its effectiveness in fostering genuine partnerships.



- She notes that while aid is substantial, it often serves Australia's strategic goals (e.g., security and immigration control) rather than addressing Pacific priorities (e.g., climate change).

### **3. Security-Driven Diplomacy:**

- Australia frames its regional role through the lens of regional stability and countering external powers (e.g., China).
- Wallis argues this security-centric view often sidelines Pacific nations' primary concerns, such as climate action and economic resilience.

### **4. The China Factor:**

- Wallis highlights the growing influence of China in the Pacific through infrastructure investments, loans, and diplomacy.
- She critiques Australia's response as reactionary, suggesting it lacks long-term vision and underestimates Pacific Island nations' agency in engaging with external partners.

### **5. Australia's Climate Change Credibility:**

- Climate change is identified as an existential threat for Pacific Island nations, but Wallis critiques Australia's domestic policies (e.g., reliance on coal) as undermining its regional credibility.

### **6. Regionalism and Sovereignty:**

- Wallis discusses Australia's involvement in organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum and highlights tensions between Australia's leadership aspirations and Pacific nations' push for greater sovereignty and self-determination.

## **Critique of Wallis's Analysis**

### **1. Strengths:**

- **Comprehensive Analysis:** Wallis thoroughly explores key dimensions of Australia-Pacific relations, combining geopolitical, economic, and cultural perspectives.
- **Empowerment of Pacific Voices:** Her critique often aligns with the aspirations of Pacific nations, emphasizing their agency rather than portraying them as passive recipients of aid.
- **Engagement with Contemporary Issues:** The analysis is timely and relevant, particularly given China's growing influence and the urgency of climate change.

### **2. Potential Limitations:**

- **Overemphasis on China:** While the China factor is significant, some critics might argue Wallis risks framing Pacific agency as a response to external powers rather than its own intrinsic priorities.

- **Policy Solutions:** The critique is sharper than the solutions offered; Wallis identifies gaps in Australia's approach but offers fewer concrete recommendations for improving bilateral and multilateral relations.
- **Complexity of Climate Policy:** While Wallis rightly critiques Australia's climate record, she could further explore how domestic political constraints (e.g., mining sector influence) shape its international stance.

### 3. Broader Context Missing?

- Wallis could engage more deeply with how other regional players (e.g., New Zealand, the US, and France) also shape Pacific geopolitics, adding nuance to Australia's role.
- **Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities,** edited by Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon, offers a comprehensive analysis of the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Scholarly Approach:

The editors adopt a multidisciplinary perspective, incorporating insights from international relations, security studies, and regional studies. The volume features contributions from experts who examine both macro-level grand strategies and micro-level case studies, providing a holistic understanding of the region's dynamics.

### Analytical Points:

1. **Redefinition of Geopolitical Realities:** The book discusses how new rivalries, shifting alliances, and economic fluctuations are reshaping the Indo-Pacific, emphasizing the region's significance in 21st-century international politics
2. **National Strategies and Policies:** Chapters delve into the Indo-Pacific strategies of key nations, including
  - **India's Engagement with the Quad:** Analyzing India's approach to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and its implications for regional security.
  - **Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Concept:** Decoding Japan's vision and its strategic objectives.
  - **U.S. Strategic Re-positioning:** Examining the U.S.'s shift from the "Asia-Pacific" to the "Indo-Pacific" paradigm.
  - **Australia's Regional Role:** Exploring Australia's contributions to constructing the Indo-Pacific concept.
3. **Regional Interactions:** The volume provides case studies on interactions between regional actors, such as Japan's relations with Eastern African countries and the Philippines' policies, highlighting the complexities of regional cooperation and competition.



4. **Non-Traditional Security Issues:** The book addresses non-traditional security concerns, including maritime security and the geopolitical implications of economic developments, underscoring the multifaceted nature of security in the Indo-Pacific.

## **Critique:**

The volume is praised for its timely contribution to the expanding discourse on the Indo-Pacific, offering both breadth and depth in its analysis. However, some critiques suggest that while the book provides comprehensive coverage of major powers, it could further explore the perspectives of smaller regional actors to present a more nuanced understanding of the Indo-Pacific's geopolitical landscape.

Overall, "Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars, and students interested in the strategic complexities of this pivotal region.

Frederick Kliem's work, "Great Power Competition and Order Building in the Indo-Pacific: Towards a New Indo-Pacific Equilibrium," examines the escalating rivalry between the United States and China and its impact on the regional order.

## **Scholarly Approach:**

Kliem employs a multidisciplinary methodology, integrating perspectives from international relations theory, security studies, and regional analysis. He combines theoretical frameworks with empirical case studies to assess the dynamics of great power competition and the processes of order-building in the Indo-Pacific.

## **Analytical Points:**

1. **Impact of U.S.-China Rivalry:** Kliem argues that the intensifying competition between the U.S. and China is undermining the existing regional order, leading to instability and uncertainty.
2. **Proposed Regional Equilibrium:** To address this instability, Kliem proposes establishing a new Indo-Pacific equilibrium through two order-building projects
  - **Strategic U.S.-Led Constraint:** Aimed at countering Chinese assertiveness and preventing regional hegemony, this strategy focuses on strategic denial rather than comprehensive containment.
  - **Inclusive Multilateral Institutions:** Drawing from liberal institutional traditions, Kliem advocates for the development of inclusive multilateral frameworks to manage competition and foster cooperation among regional actors.
3. **Synthesis of Realist and Liberal Approaches:** Kliem's strategy combines realist principles of power balancing with liberal ideals of institutional cooperation, aiming to create a sustainable and peaceful regional order.

## Critique:

Kliem's proposal for a new Indo-Pacific equilibrium is both timely and relevant, offering a nuanced approach to managing great power competition. However, the feasibility of implementing such a strategy may be challenged by the complexities of regional politics and the divergent interests of involved nations. Additionally, the effectiveness of a U.S.-led constraint strategy depends on the willingness and capability of regional allies to support and sustain such efforts.

Overall, Kliem's work contributes significantly to the discourse on Indo-Pacific security, providing valuable insights into the challenges and potential pathways toward achieving regional stability amid great power rivalry.

"The Indo-Pacific Theatre: Strategic Visions and Frameworks," edited by Srabani Roy Choudhury, offers a comprehensive analysis of the strategic dynamics shaping the Indo-Pacific region.

## Scholarly Approach:

The volume adopts a multidisciplinary perspective, integrating insights from political science, international relations, and area studies. It examines the internal framework of the Indo-Pacific and the strategic issues faced by its constituent countries, focusing on the emerging strategies of key actors involved in regional competition.

## Analytical Points:

- 1. Great Power Competition:** The book discusses how intensified rivalries, particularly between the U.S. and China, are reshaping the Indo-Pacific, influencing regional stability and economic growth.
- 2. Strategic Initiatives:** It explores various strategic visions, including:
  - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** Analyzing its purpose and post-pandemic agenda.
  - **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP):** Examining its conceptualization amid Sino U.S. competition.
  - **ASEAN and South Korea's Strategies:** Assessing their roles and responses within the regional framework.
- 3 Economic Architecture:** The volume addresses economic aspects, such as supply chain disruptions and the region's role as a driver of global economic growth.
- 4 European Union's Geopolitical Strategy:** It examines the EU's approach to the Indo-Pacific, highlighting its geopolitical interests and strategic engagements.

## Critique:

The book is commended for its timely analysis and comprehensive coverage of strategic visions in the Indo-Pacific. However, some critiques suggest that while it provides in-depth insights into major powers' strategies, further exploration of the perspectives of smaller regional actors could offer a more nuanced understanding of the Indo-Pacific's strategic landscape. Overall, "The Indo-Pacific Theatre: Strategic Visions and Frameworks" serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars, and students interested in the evolving dynamics of this pivotal region.

Felix Heiduk's 2022 article, "Europe's Foray into the Indo-Pacific: Comparing France and Germany," published in the *European Review of International Studies*, examines the strategic approaches of France and Germany toward the Indo-Pacific region.

## Scholarly Approach:

Heiduk employs a comparative analysis to assess the Indo-Pacific strategies of France and Germany, focusing on their objectives, planned initiatives, and conceptualizations of regional order. The study evaluates strategic convergence and divergence between these two European powers to understand potential focus points for an emerging EU approach to the Indo-Pacific.

## Analytical Points:

- Strategic Convergence:** Despite different role conceptions, France and Germany exhibit convergence in their key objectives and planned initiatives in the Indo-Pacific. Both nations emphasize the importance of a rules-based international order, freedom of navigation, and strengthening partnerships with regional actors.
- General Declarations:** The strategies of both countries contain general declarations of interests and intent, often lacking concrete strategic choices. This generality suggests that any future EU approach to the Indo-Pacific may emerge around the least common denominator focus points, drawing on long-established EU approaches toward the Asia-Pacific.
- Policy Convergence and Cross-Loading:** Heiduk discusses the processes of policy convergence and cross-loading between France and Germany, indicating that their Indo-Pacific strategies influence each other and contribute to shaping a potential EU strategy in the region.

## Critique:

Heiduk's analysis provides valuable insights into the strategic considerations of France and Germany in the Indo-Pacific. However, the study highlights that the lack of concrete strategic choices and the reliance on general declarations may limit the effectiveness of a cohesive EU approach in the region. The article suggests that for the EU to play a more substantial role in the Indo-Pacific, member states need to move beyond declaratory policies and commit to concrete actions that reflect a unified strategic vision.

Overall, Heiduk's work underscores the complexities and challenges of formulating a coherent European strategy in the Indo-Pacific, emphasizing the need for deeper strategic alignment and commitment among EU member states.

## Summary:

Existing research highlights a variety of countries' approaches to the Indo-Pacific and the increased perceived power competition over the outer periphery of China. A Struggle over the definition over whose order is to prevail is underway, without much consideration given to the views of the Pacific Islanders. The EU's role in global politics, particularly its potential as a force d'équilibre in regions like the Indo-Pacific. The literature notes the EU's reliance on general declarations of interest (e.g., rules-based order, freedom of navigation), but critiques its limited specificity and lack of actionable strategies. Studies also emphasize the importance of policy convergence among key EU members like France and Germany, the EU's multilateralism, and its challenges in projecting power against major global actors like the U.S. and China. Regarding Pacific Island policies, the literature remains sparse, reflecting a nascent EU engagement in this region.

## Scholarly Contribution

In my comprehensive analysis of the Pacific Islands, I delve into the intricate geopolitical, economic, and environmental dynamics that shape this unique region. My research highlights the strategic importance of the Pacific Islands in global geopolitics, particularly in the context of rising powers and their influence on regional stability and development. By examining the interplay between traditional and non-traditional donors, I provide a nuanced understanding of how Pacific Island nations navigate complex international relationships to maximize their development outcomes, while exploring the intricate interplay at ordering the region from the European perspective. By that, we do not pretend to have found the definite formula for keeping the peace but provide clarity how the power transition could better be managed in the context of an orderly multipolarisation of the international system. This multilayered approach provides unique insights and constitute a major preliminary contribution to how actors navigate a complex and dynamic international system. We will also highlight our contributions to the unfolding of the EU-India Strategic Partnership to order-building in the Indian Ocean region in the context of the policy review of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy due in the fall of 2025.

This study is framed in European terms, meaning that it analyzes the dynamics of conflict and coop- eration during a power transition through the lens of European political, economic, and strategic thought. The focus is on understanding how power shifts—whether within the European Union, be- tween the EU and external actors, or within the broader international system—affect patterns of competition, negotiation, and institutional adaptation.

## Why Is This Important?

1. Historical and Institutional Context
  - Europe has undergone multiple power transitions, from the Treaty of Westphalia to the formation of the EU and its evolving role in global governance.

- The EU's institutional framework provides a unique case for examining how power transitions are managed through diplomacy, legal structures, and economic integration rather than through direct confrontation.
2. Conflict and Cooperation as Dual Forces
    - Power transitions historically lead to conflict when rising and declining powers fail to establish mutually acceptable rules of engagement (e.g., Thucydides' Trap).
    - In the European context, mechanisms of cooperation—such as the EU's regulatory power, economic interdependence, and multilateralism—are designed to mitigate conflict.
    - The study explores whether these mechanisms remain effective amid rising geopolitical tensions, including competition over resources, technological leadership, and military capabilities.
  3. The European Experience in Global Power Shifts
    - The EU itself is in transition, seeking greater strategic autonomy while navigating competition between the US and China, the war in Ukraine, and its evolving security role.
    - Europe's approach to power transitions relies on legal norms, economic incentives, and diplomatic engagement rather than hard power alone. Understanding this model provides insight into how the EU can maintain influence in a multipolar world.
  4. Lessons for Global Governance
    - The study examines whether the European model of balancing conflict and cooperation can be applied in other power transitions, such as the reconfiguration of the Indo-Pacific, the future of the transatlantic alliance, and regional integration efforts elsewhere.
    - It also assesses the limits of cooperation, particularly in cases where security dilemmas or economic pressures lead to competitive rather than integrative dynamics.

By framing this study in European terms, we gain a structured way to analyze power transitions through a mix of institutional stability, economic leverage, and multilateral cooperation, while also recognizing the challenges posed by external pressures and internal fragmentation. To coin Durkheim, the international society is more than the sum of individuals, the system by their association represents a specific reality. These social facts can be theorised and allows for arrangement in categories since social entities themselves may be classified in genera and species, so long as homo sapiens is the top predator among earthlings and organisations seek to control their environment. As a member of the wider policy-making community specializing in Eu Foreign Policy making a living from connecting virtual collaborative infrastructure with relational infrastructure, we believe it a rational pursuit to explore how to keep the peace deploying Ai assisted statistical methods on the basis of a theory about the dynamics of emergent polarity from the vantage point of Europe.

This piece contains the kernel of a theory of the dynamics of great power cooperation and conflict during a power transition at unit-level, a recurring phenomenon in international relations rarely studied let alone used a guide for understanding how to lead and relate to each other for the conduct of diplomatic change management.

The making of US hegemony, an empire by integration, was made in Asia and Europe. How the power transition is managed will not only highly impact the probability for peace and war in our epoch but also decide the quality of change management during the power transition to multipolarity. Thus, we are not concerned about tracing how power capabilities are used to influence mechanisms of multilateral frameworks and international organisation let alone in the mechanics of great power competition leading to an inexorable logic of insecurity spirals, misunderstanding and the recurrence of war nor do we give much attention to the clash of strategies the study of which forms the basis of much diplomatic interaction.

The focus is on the unit level in an elusive quest to understand and study change. This also applies to a hyperdigital age calling for stronger institutions and a firm hand on the tiller. In no way shall the achievements of this piece be construed as a pretext for complacency or technology be an excuse for not holding deep diplomatic conversations. The timing and focus of the study are consistent with power transition theory's emphasis on great peril when approaching parity, and on internal attributes and external capabilities and their impact on conflict and cooperation.

## Method of Working the Margins

A distinctive aspect of my methodology is the concept of "working the margins." This approach involves focusing on the often-overlooked peripheral areas and issues that are critical to understanding the broader regional dynamics<sup>2</sup>. By paying close attention to the margins, I uncover the subtle yet significant factors that influence the political and economic landscape of the Pacific Islands. This includes:

1. **Local Governance and Community Resilience:** Investigating how local governance structures and community resilience strategies contribute to regional stability and development.
2. **Climate Change Adaptation:** Analyzing the innovative approaches adopted by Pacific Island nations to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, which remains a paramount concern for the region.
3. **Cultural and Social Dimensions:** Exploring the cultural and social dimensions that underpin the interactions between Pacific Island nations and external actors, ensuring that local priorities and values are respected and integrated into development initiatives.

By working the margins, my research not only provides a comprehensive analysis of the central issues but also reveals the peripheral factors crucial for a holistic understanding of the Pacific Islands' global context.

Amidst the evolving geopolitical landscape, the strategic significance of France's New Caledonia and the European Union's reorientation in the Asian region has garnered increased

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<sup>2</sup> Keen (2024)



attention. This document aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by France in New Caledonia and the EU's strategic shift from the traditional Asia-Pacific focus to a more inclusive approach that encompasses the Pacific Islands and extends into the Asian heartland. By examining historical, geopolitical, and economic factors, this analysis seeks to elucidate the implications of this subtle shift and provide policy recommendations for France and the EU.

The central argument of this piece is to underscore the strategic importance of working from the margins - the Pacific Islands - and into the Asian heartland, as France navigates challenges in New Caledonia and the EU reorients its approach in the Asian region. By considering historical, geopolitical, and economic factors, this analysis aims to provide insights into the implications of this shift and offer policy recommendations to guide strategic engagement.

## Methodology

My research combines an explorative method with case-study an AI Analysis, crating a hybrid methodological approach that blends qualitative, evidence-based inquiry with digital, data-driven methods.

An explorative method is an open-ended, inductive method used to investigate underexplored or emerging phenomena. It does not start with rigid analysis hypotheses but instead seeks to identify 2 Keen (2024) patterns, relationships, and structures in complex environments. This approach is particularly useful when

- the subject is dynamic and lacks a well-establish theoretical framework.
- the study aims to generate new insights rather than confirm predefined assumptions.
- the research requires flexibility, adapting to new data and prespectives as they emerge.

In the context of studying the management of an emerging great power concert, the explorative method allows for a multi-layered examination of diplomatic, economic, security and environmental interactions -particularly in a region as strategically fluid as the Pacific.

A case-study is a context-specific, in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon, actor or (sub-)system. As a methodology, it

- deep contextual understanding of EU diplomatic engagement , focusing on detailed, empirical analysis rather than broad generalizations
- Examines interactions within and across different domains (diplomacy, trade and security)
- Uses multiple sources of evidence (documents, interviews, historical records ana data analysis) for comparative insights, examining the EU's role relative to other actors (such as the US, China, Australia and PIF).

The Pacific region, as a case study, provides an ideal testing ground for exploring how the Eu navigates great power competition while acting as a force d'équilibre in an emergent multipolar system. It allows for the identification of patters in regional stability management, economic interdependence, and geopolitical alignments.

AI analysis introduces a digital method that complements case study research by offering

- data processing at scale, handling vast amounts of diplomatic, trade, and geopolitical
- pattern recognition, identifying correlations and trends beyond human cognitive capacity
- non-linear insights. enabling unexpected connections across disparate data points
- Real-time adaptability, refining statistical correlations as new data is processed on human prompts

AI analysis is based on alloy theory combining various data sources, statistical method detecting trends and tracing probabilities in a non-sequential and non-linear process exploring dynamic interdependencies deployed for the understanding of complex and dynamic international system. This is important since examining evolving diplomatic strategies in far away places, where outcomes are path dependent and influenced by unpredictable shifts. AI-generated knowledge maps generate visualize connections between actors, policies, and geopolitical events. Its claim to scientific validity rests on combining large-scale data, statistical robustness, and transparent algorithmic methodologies.

The draw-back is language models differ from human language by following strict syntactic rules with no ambiguity, whereas human language notably in diplomacy is characterized by constructive ambiguity, context-dependent meaning and syntactic variation.

LLM's meaning is defined by logic and not shaped by culture, context and human cognition, requiring human inference as part of a social interaction. LLM's is designed and updated by humans and changes through structured updates, whereas human language evolves naturally over time through social interaction and cultural shifts. LLM's are limited to logical operations and predefined commands, whereas human language allows for metaphor, emotion, creativity, and open-ended communication. LLM must be explicitly programmed or trained on datasets. Human language is learned through immersion, socialization, and cognitive development.

## Summary

Case study provides depth, context and human-centered insights into EU diplomacy.

AI analysis introduces breadth, speed, and pattern detection, uncovering hidden dynamics and verifying empirical patterns.

Together they offer a more holistic understanding of the EU's diplomatic role in the Pacific by balancing qualitative case insights with AI-driven empirical validation.

This hybrid approach ensures that my study is both empirically grounded and methodologically innovative, anchored in geo-economics, and regional security in an evolving Indo-Pacific Order.

In the following sections, we sketch out a sort of analytical framework before addressing in depth the emerging polarity of the international system and its impact on this sub-region and the efforts to install great power cooperation. We will examine the strategic and policy context and the intricacies of the EU's evolving policies and strategies towards the Indo-Pacific from the vantage point of the Pacific Islands in general and, more specifically, New Caledonia, as though it was the axis mundi of both Melanesia and of the universe. We will discuss this

universe rather than expressing it emulating an alloy system by piecing together several elements combined in all possible proportions.

## 2.0 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In examining the evolving global order, the three works—Sven Biscop’s *This is Not a World Order*, Jochen Richter and Walther Horst’s *Europe and the Emerging World Order*, and Sami Puri’s *West- lessness*—offer complementary perspectives on the shifting dynamics of international relations. Together, they highlight the decline of a unipolar, Western-dominated world and point to the emergence of a more fragmented, multipolar order in which the EU, among other actors, must adapt to new global realities.

### **Sven Biscop’s *This is Not a World Order* (2020)**

Biscop offers a critical analysis of the current state of global politics, emphasizing that we no longer live in a coherent world order. He challenges the assumption that a stable, U.S.-led global system remains in place after the Cold War, arguing that the global order is increasingly characterized by instability and uncertainty. Biscop points out that the U.S.’s retreat from global leadership, the rise of China and other emerging powers, and Europe’s struggles to assert strategic autonomy in a fragmented world have left the international system without a clear, guiding structure.

Biscop’s key argument is that the absence of a central organizing principle—what he sees as the lack of “order”—means that the EU must rethink its role in global governance. The EU, according to Biscop, must recognize the limits of Western power, especially in light of challenges from the East, and work toward greater strategic autonomy. However, he also stresses that Europe cannot simply aim to recreate an idealized version of a past world order. Instead, it must engage with the world as it is: a more multipolar and fragmented landscape where cooperation, rather than dominance, will be key to navigating global challenges.

### **Jochen Richter and Walther Horst’s *Europe and the Emerging World Order* (2020)**

Richter and Horst focus on Europe’s evolving role in this changing global landscape. They argue that Europe must adapt to a world where it no longer enjoys the same hegemonic influence it once had. As the West’s internal divisions grow, and powers like China and Russia rise, Europe’s unity and ability to act collectively have become central issues. The authors stress that the EU must find ways to overcome its internal challenges—ranging from political fragmentation to economic disparities—and strengthen its position in a world that no longer revolves around Western interests.

Their analysis aligns with Biscop’s view of a fragmented global system, but Richter and Horst emphasize that Europe, despite its internal struggles, still holds significant power in areas such as trade, diplomacy, and soft power. In this context, Europe must carefully balance its relationships with the U.S., China, and Russia, seeking strategic alliances that allow it to retain influence in a multipolar world. They advocate for a European foreign policy that is more independent and proactive in shaping the emerging world order, one that does not rely solely on its traditional Western allies.

## Sami Puri's Westlessness (2020)

Puri's work takes a different, but complementary approach, focusing on the fractures within the West itself. He argues that the decline of Western unity—manifested in the growing rifts between the U.S. and Europe—creates an opportunity for external actors, particularly in Asia, to exploit these divisions. Puri's concept of Westlessness highlights the disintegration of the West's ability to act as a coherent bloc, due to shifting priorities, ideological divisions, and geopolitical tensions.

This, he suggests, opens the door for countries like China, Russia, and others to assert their own influence.

For Puri, the EU can strategically exploit these internal Western divisions, especially in its relations with Asia. As the U.S. becomes more unpredictable and inward-looking, Asia's rising powers are seeking alternatives to the binary choices between Washington and Beijing. The EU, with its emphasis on multilateralism, human rights, and soft power, can position itself as a neutral and reliable partner. In this way, the EU is uniquely positioned to engage with Asia in a way that is not bound by the shifting priorities of American foreign policy. Puri argues that Europe's ability to exploit the fractures within the West will allow it to carve out a more independent, influential role in the emerging world order.

## Summary: The EU's Role in a Fragmented World Order

Taken together, the three works provide a nuanced view of a global system in flux. Biscop's analysis of a world without order, Richter and Horst's focus on Europe's changing place in the emerging world order, and Puri's exploration of Westlessness all point to the need for the EU to redefine its role in a more fragmented and multipolar world. While the lack of a clear, unipolar world order may create instability, it also opens opportunities for the EU to assert its autonomy and shape global governance.

For Biscop, this means acknowledging the limits of European power and working toward greater strategic autonomy. Richter and Horst stress that Europe's collective action is vital, but it must overcome its internal divisions to be effective. Puri, meanwhile, highlights the EU's potential to exploit the fractures within the West, particularly in its approach to Asia, positioning itself as a balanced and reliable actor in a world where the U.S. and China are increasingly at odds.

Ultimately, these authors suggest that the EU's success in navigating this fragmented world will depend on its ability to adapt to the lack of a clear global order and to forge new relationships that enhance its influence without relying on the dominance of any single power.

In analytical terms, we frame this evolving role of the EU by studying the current dynamics of international relations and the EU's role therein should be by bringing together different strands of literatures (1) Foreign Policy theory (2) The Geoeconomics-Geopolitics nexus (3) Addressing the rules of the game during the power transition towards multipolarity.

## 2.1 The Case for Prioritizing Great Power Cooperation Over Competition in EU Foreign Policy

The EU's foreign policy has traditionally balanced cooperation and competition among great powers, but shifting global dynamics marked by increasing multipolarity, economic interdependence, and transnational threats necessitate a stronger emphasis on great power cooperation. While competition will inevitably shape international relations, the EU's strategic interests are better served by fostering collaborative mechanisms with other major actors such as the U.S., China, India, and regional powers.

### 1. The EU's Structural Position: A Systemic Facilitator of Cooperation

Unlike the U.S. or China, the EU is not a traditional hard power hegemon. Instead, it wields regulatory, economic, and normative power that positions it as a mediator and coalition-builder in global governance.

The EU's identity as a normative power aligned more naturally with diplomatic engagement than with geopolitical rivalry.

The EU's foreign policy operates through multilateral frameworks, making it an institutional bridge in disputes between great powers.

A cooperative approach enhances the EU's credibility and strategic autonomy, reducing its overreliance on the U.S. or NATO security structures.

#### EU's Comparative Advantages in a Cooperation-Centric Approach

**Economic Integration Power:** As the world's largest trading bloc, the EU can leverage economic diplomacy to incentivize cooperative behaviors.

**Regulatory and Standard-Setting Influence:** The EU's "Brussels effect" ensures that it plays a defining role in global digital governance, climate policy, and financial regulations.

**Diplomatic Architecture:** The EEAS (European External Action Service), EU-led peace initiatives, and partnerships with UN bodies and regional organizations enable it to function as a neutral convenor.

## 2. Addressing Global Challenges That Require Cooperation, Not Zero-Sum Competition

### a. Climate Change and Environmental Governance

- Climate change is an existential global issue that no great power can address alone.
- The EU is already a leader in climate diplomacy, pushing for carbon neutrality, sustainable energy transitions, and global emissions targets.
- Cooperation with China on renewables, joint climate financing with the U.S., and technology-sharing agreements with India are more impactful than isolating these actors through competitive stances.

## b. Economic Stability and Supply Chain Security

- The global economy is interdependent, making economic de-coupling or full-scale geoeconomic competition unsustainable.
- The EU benefits from stabilizing trade relations rather than fueling protectionist competition.
- Example: Rather than joining U.S.-China technological decoupling, the EU could mediate a rules-based digital economy agreement.
- In critical raw materials (e.g., rare earths), coordinated supply chain diversification through cooperative agreements is preferable to trade wars.

## c. Arms Control, Cybersecurity, and Global Security Regimes

- Nuclear proliferation, AI in warfare, and cyber threats necessitate collective action.
- The EU can act as an intermediary between China, the U.S., and Russia in arms control negotiations.
- The EU's experience in hybrid threats and counter-disinformation makes it well-positioned to lead cooperative cybersecurity frameworks.

### 3. The Pitfalls of a Competition-Centric Approach

If the EU focuses too heavily on great power competition, it risks:

Being drawn into U.S.-China or U.S.-Russia rivalry, undermining its strategic autonomy.

Losing credibility with the Global South, which prefers a multipolar, cooperative model over a return to Cold War-style power blocs.

Diverting resources from constructive engagement, such as Africa partnerships, technology diplomacy, and green transition leadership.

#### Case Study: The High Seas Treaty & Ocean Governance

Instead of reinforcing U.S.-China tensions over maritime zones, the EU has prioritized cooperation on marine biodiversity protection through the High Seas Treaty.

This demonstrates that even in contested geopolitical arenas, cooperation can yield tangible outcomes.

### 4. The Long-Term Payoff: A Global Order That Reflects European Interests

A world structured around great power competition is unstable, militarized, and less conducive to economic growth all of which harm EU interests.

By investing in multilateralism, economic integration, and joint governance mechanisms, the EU can help shape an order that prioritizes cooperation over coercion.

#### Policy Recommendations for the EU



## 1. Institutionalize Strategic Cooperation Mechanisms

Establish EU-led great power dialogues on AI governance, trade policy, and arms control. Expand EU-China and EU-U.S. green transition platforms.

## 2. Maintain an Independent Economic and Diplomatic Strategy

Engage in economic diplomacy with all major powers, resisting full alignment with U.S.-China de-coupling strategies.

## 3. Leverage EU's Strengths in Norm-Setting and Regulation

Use the Brussels effect to shape global standards in AI, digital trade, and carbon pricing through co-operative agreements.

## 4. Prevent the Militarization of Foreign Policy

While defense autonomy is necessary, the EU should avoid framing China-EU or EU-Russia relations in purely security-based competition..

## 5. Fong & Chong's Approach

In the Routledge Handbook of Great Power Competition, co-edited by Brian C.H. Fong and Ja Ian Chong, Fong advances a comprehensive analytical framework to understand contemporary great power competition. His approach can be summarized in four key points:

### 1. Conceptualization of Great Power Competition:

Fong emphasizes the re-emergence of great power competition in global politics, moving beyond the post-Cold War stability. He provides a nuanced definition that considers various dimensions of power and influence among major states.

### 2. Analytical Framework:

He proposes an integrative framework that identifies the key actors (state, quasi-state, and non-state), mechanisms (military, economic, and ideational influence), and domains (territorial and non-territorial) involved in great power dynamics. This framework serves as a tool for analyzing the complexities of contemporary international relations.

### 3. Interdisciplinary Approach:

Recognizing the multifaceted nature of great power competition, Fong incorporates insights from various disciplines to provide a holistic understanding of the subject. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how different factors interact in the realm of international politics.

## 4. Future Research Directions:

Fong concludes by highlighting the need for further research into the evolving patterns of great power competition, encouraging scholars to apply and refine his analytical framework to better understand and anticipate future geopolitical shifts.

This structured approach offers valuable insights into the mechanisms and implications of great power interactions in the contemporary world.

### **Summary: Cooperation is a Strategic Imperative for EU Foreign Policy**

The EU has more to gain from promoting great power cooperation than from reinforcing great power competition. Its institutional strengths, economic leverage, and normative influence make it an ideal facilitator of multilateral solutions. While competition will remain an element of international relations.

## **2.3 Oceania**

Oceania has become a key arena for geopolitical and geoeconomic competition, with great powers including the U.S., China, Australia, France, and regional actors like Japan and New Zealand seeking influence over the region. The stakes in Oceania span multiple domains, including military positioning, economic resources, maritime sovereignty, climate security, and diplomatic alliances.

### **1. Geopolitical Stakes: Great Power Rivalry & Military Strategy**

#### **A. U.S.-China Competition and the Indo-Pacific Strategy**

The U.S. views Oceania as a critical frontier in countering China's strategic expansion in the Indo-Pacific.

China's growing economic and diplomatic influence (via the Belt and Road Initiative, infrastructure projects, and security agreements) is seen as a direct challenge to U.S. allies like Australia and Japan.

Military positioning is crucial in Oceania as it provides bases, airstrips, and naval access for power projection.

The U.S. controls key military installations in Guam, the Marshall Islands (Kwajalein Atoll), and Hawaii, ensuring its dominance in the Pacific.

China's security pact with the Solomon Islands (2022) raised concerns that Beijing could eventually establish a military base in the region, challenging the U.S. and Australian security order.

#### **B. France's Indo-Pacific Presence and European Stakes**

France is a resident power in the Pacific, controlling New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna.

French territories serve as a strategic counterbalance to China's influence and provide the EU with a military, economic, and maritime foothold in the region.

Independence movements in New Caledonia could reduce French power and shift the regional balance.

**Figure – The Three Islands chain**



Source: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/china-pacific-conflict/>

## C. Australia and New Zealand as Regional Anchors

Australia sees Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu) as its direct sphere of influence and has invested heavily in countering China's presence.

New Zealand plays a diplomatic and aid-based role, particularly in Polynesia, emphasizing climate cooperation and indigenous Pacific interests.

## 2. Geoeconomic Stakes: Resources, Trade, and Infrastructure

### A. Natural Resources & Strategic Commodities

#### 1. Seabed Minerals & Deep-Sea Mining

The Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) in the Western Pacific holds some of the world's largest untapped deposits of cobalt, nickel, and rare earth minerals, critical for global supply chains (e.g., batteries, green tech, and semiconductors)<sup>3</sup>

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) regulates deep-sea mining, but China, the U.S., and EU-based firms are racing for access.

## 2. Energy Resources (Gas, Oil, and Renewables)

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has major LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) reserves, with ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies, and Chinese firms competing for contracts.

Australia and Japan are investing in renewable energy projects in the Pacific, particularly solar and wind infrastructure.

## 3. Fisheries and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)

Pacific nations control vast maritime zones that are key for tuna fishing, an industry worth billions of dollars.

Illegal fishing (especially by Chinese fleets) has sparked diplomatic tensions, with Australia and the

U.S. funding maritime patrols and monitoring systems.

## B. Infrastructure Diplomacy and Debt Dependence

China has financed airports, ports, and roads in the Pacific under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), increasing its economic leverage.

The U.S., Japan, and Australia have launched competing infrastructure initiatives to counterbalance Chinese influence, including the Blue Pacific Partnership (2022).

Many Pacific nations are highly indebted to China, which raises concerns over debt-trap diplomacy and potential strategic concessions.

## Environmental Stakes: Climate Change & Disaster Resilience

The Pacific Islands are among the most vulnerable to rising sea levels, extreme weather, and ocean acidification.

Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands face existential threats, with some preparing climate migration strategies as land disappears.

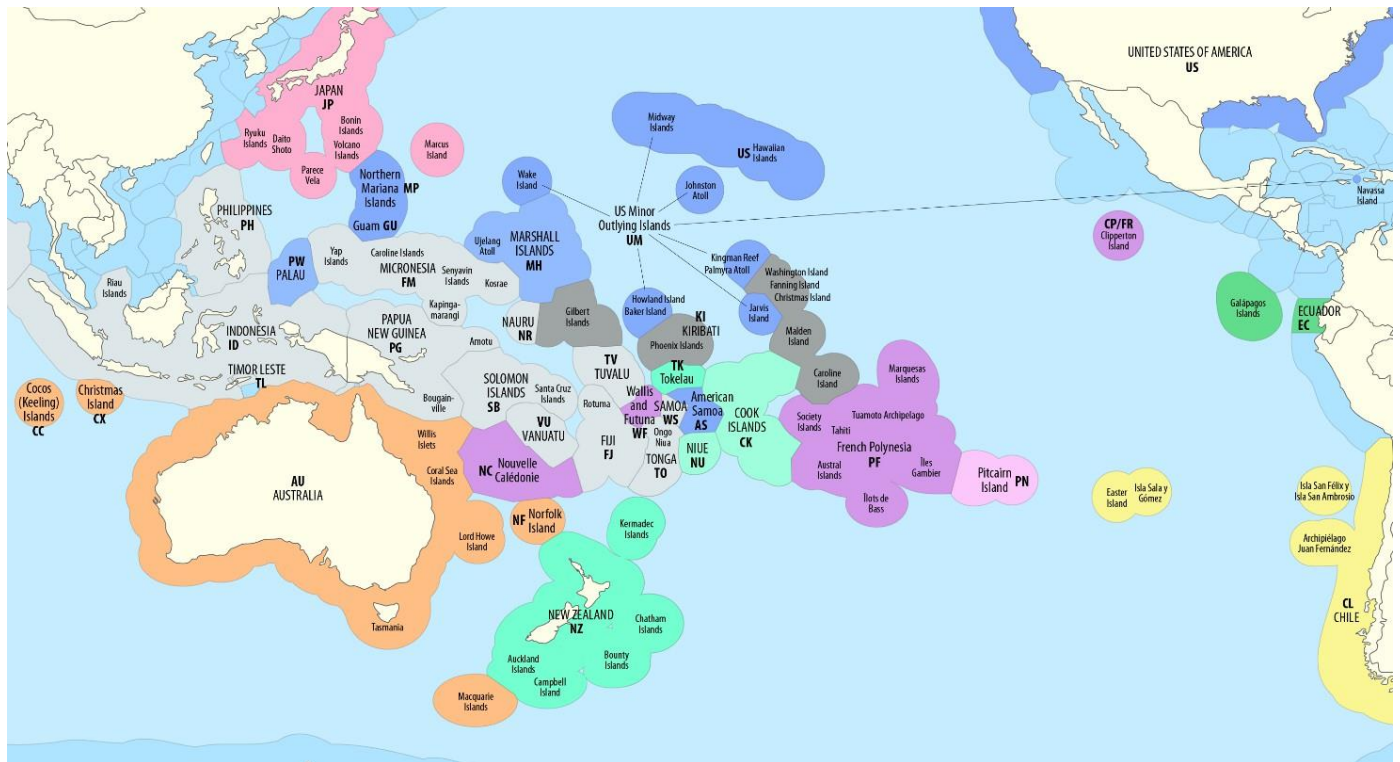
China and the U.S. both claim to be climate leaders in the region, offering funding for mitigation efforts.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irena.org/Digital-Report/Geopolitics-of-the-Energy-Transition-Critical-Materials>

France and the EU support the Pacific’s climate agenda, aligning with island nations’ priorities in UN climate negotiations (e.g., COP summits).

**Figure** – The EEZ in Oceania



**Source:** <https://cod.pressbooks.pub/westernworlddailyreadingsgeography/chapter/pacific-realm-economic-geography-i/>

## 4. Diplomatic & Institutional Stakes: Who Controls the Pacific Narrative?

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) as the Region’s Political Hub

The PIF unites Pacific nations in collective diplomacy, but there are internal divisions over China’s role.

The Solomon Islands and Kiribati have shifted diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, deepening regional fragmentation.

### B. U.S. & China’ Competition for Alliances

The U.S. is renewing Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreements with Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands to keep them in the American security orbit.

China is actively offering alternative aid and trade agreements, using economic carrots to sway governments away from U.S. Alignment.

## 5. Risks of Geopolitical Escalation & Future Scenarios

### A. Militarization & Security Tensions

If China establishes a military presence in the Solomon Islands or elsewhere, it could undermine

U.S. naval dominance in the Pacific.

Australia, Japan, and the U.S. are expanding military agreements, including the AUKUS alliance, which involves nuclear-powered submarine development.

### B. Regional Fragmentation & Strategic Dependencies

Pacific Island nations are leveraging great power competition to maximize aid and investment, but this risks deepening economic dependencies.

The EU and France want to be seen as neutral partners, offering development aid without the strategic strings of China or the U.S.

### C. Future of the Rules-Based Order in Oceania

The High Seas Treaty & deep-sea mining regulations will shape future resource access.

Pacific states are demanding greater say in global governance structures, particularly on climate finance, maritime sovereignty, and security issues.

## Summary: A Balancing Act in an Increasingly Contested Region

Oceania is no longer a peripheral region it has become a critical geopolitical and geoeconomic battleground in the Indo-Pacific competition between China, the U.S., and regional powers like Australia and France.

The stakes are military (strategic bases & security alliances), economic (resources & investment), and environmental (climate resilience & ocean governance).

Pacific nations are increasingly assertive, using their geostrategic position to extract concessions from competing great powers.

The risk of militarization, economic coercion, and climate-induced displacement will shape the future of regional governance, power alignments, and global Pacific diplomacy.

The coming years will test the region's ability to balance competing interests while maintaining its own agency in global affairs.

EU's foreign policy should prioritize engagement, diplomatic coalitions, and joint governance mechanisms to secure its long-term global standing.



Geoeconomic conflict refers to the strategic use of economic instruments to achieve geopolitical objectives. This involves leveraging trade policies, investment flows, and economic sanctions to influence other nations' behaviors and advance national interests.

The European Union (EU) wields significant commercial power, positioning it as a formidable geo-economic actor. Its vast single market and regulatory frameworks enable the EU to influence global industrial competition. By setting stringent standards and regulations, the EU can shape international trade practices and promote its economic and political values globally.

The nexus between geoeconomics and geopolitical conflict lies in the interplay between economic strategies and political power dynamics. Geoeconomic tools can serve as alternatives to military force, allowing nations to exert influence without direct confrontation. However, the deployment of such tools can escalate tensions, potentially leading to geopolitical conflicts if not managed carefully.

Effective governance structures and diplomacy are crucial in managing geoeconomic conflicts and preventing them from escalating into wars. International institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), provide frameworks for resolving economic disputes and promoting cooperation. Diplomatic engagements, bilateral agreements, and multilateral dialogues are essential in addressing the underlying causes of geoeconomic tensions and fostering collaboration among nations.

The intensity and nature of geoeconomic conflicts can vary significantly across different regions. Factors such as economic interdependence, regional alliances, and historical relationships influence how geoeconomic strategies are employed and perceived. For instance, in regions with high economic interdependence, such as the EU, geoeconomic conflicts may be less intense due to mutual dependencies. Conversely, in regions with less economic integration, geoeconomic tools might be used more aggressively, leading to heightened tensions.

To conceptualize these regional differences, one can analyze the degree of economic interdependence, the presence of regional governance structures, and the historical context of geopolitical relationships. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how geoeconomic strategies are formulated and their potential impacts on regional stability.

In summary, geoeconomic conflict involves the strategic use of economic means to achieve geopolitical ends. The EU's commercial power plays a pivotal role in global industrial competition, influencing international economic dynamics. Understanding the nexus between geoeconomics and geopolitical conflict is essential for developing governance structures and diplomatic strategies that promote cooperation and prevent escalation into warfare. Regional variations in the intensity of geoeconomic conflicts underscore the importance of context-specific analyses and approaches.

Prospects for great power cooperation in Oceania hinge on shared interests such as climate change mitigation, disaster response, and sustainable development. Multilateral forums like the Pacific Islands Forum provide platforms for dialogue and collaboration. However, differing strategic objectives and competition for influence can pose challenges to sustained cooperation. Exploring themes of international relations, conflict, and cooperation help us

understand the intricate interplay between economic interests and geopolitical strategies among major powers.

Applying these general principles to Oceania, the region is strategically significant due to its vast maritime zones, abundant natural resources, and pivotal location in the Indo-Pacific. Great powers, including the United States, China, and regional actors like Australia, have vested interests in Oceania. Geoeconomic conflicts may arise from competition over resources, influence over Pacific Island nations, and strategic military positioning.

Prospects for great power cooperation in Oceania hinge on shared interests such as climate change mitigation, disaster response, and sustainable development. Multilateral forums like the Pacific Islands Forum provide platforms for dialogue and collaboration. However, differing strategic objectives and competition for influence can pose challenges to sustained cooperation.

In practical terms, the management of great power conflict would often be divided into different dimensions, something we shall explore in a forthcoming study on the Arctic.

### 3.0 IS THE WORLD MULTIPOLAR?

Henry Kissinger once stated: “The balance of power inhibits the capacity to overthrow the international order, shared values inhibits the desire to overthrow the international order”. This reminds us that strategic stability provides stability whereas shared values provides an ethical framework. In today's context, this adage remains highly relevant. The balance of power prevents any single actor state or bloc from dominating the international order, maintaining a certain equilibrium. Meanwhile shared values, such as democracy, human rights and international law, help countries from pursuing aggressive actions that could destabilize the global system. As the world transitions into multipolarity and regional tensions, these principles offer critical insights into how nations manage conflicts, sustain cooperation, and strive for global stability in the face of new power dynamics.

As a rule of thumb defining an equilibrium in international relations, one must consider the evolving global landscape, marked by multipolarity, new economic realities, and shifting security threats. Equilibrium should be understood not just in terms of military and economic power but also in terms of diplomatic influence, technological advancements and environmental concerns. Key updates include the need for flexible frameworks that can adapt to sudden shifts in power and influence.

In Asia, the wish for clarity about the rules of the games is now acutely felt and originates in the region's desire to safeguard sovereignty and ensure stability. With rising powers like China and India, as well as ongoing regional security issues, clarity in international norms and practices helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. A clear set of rules ensures that all actors, big and small, are treated equitably, fostering a more predictable and secure environment for development and cooperation.

Let us examine then the notion of great powerhood and who the actors are, what could conceivable be meant by orderly multipolarisation, and what unites and divides from them

from one another in relation to values as interconnected to likewise concerns among the Pacific Islanders.

## 1. Great Power Isomorphism

Great powers tend to be isomorphic in that they share similar structural attributes and behavioral patterns, shaped by their ability to exert influence on a global scale. Despite variations in governance or ideology, they exhibit common characteristics: **Military Capabilities** Great powers maintain advanced military forces, including nuclear deterrents, blue-water navies, and strategic air and cyber capabilities.

1. **Economic Strength:** They control large, competitive economies that shape global trade, finance, and investment flows.
2. **Technological and Industrial Base** They lead in innovation, advanced manufacturing, AI, and space technology, reinforcing their economic and military edge.
3. **Diplomatic Reach and Alliance Networks** Great powers form extensive diplomatic relationships, alliances, and influence in international institutions.
4. **Soft Power and Cultural Influence** Through media, education, and cultural exports, they shape global norms, values, and ideologies.
5. **Control Over Natural Resources** Access to and control over critical resources (e.g., oil, gas, rare earth minerals, food supply chains) provide leverage in geopolitics and economic security.
6. **Management of Global Public Goods** : They influence global security, financial systems, and environmental governance through institutions and strategic initiatives.

## 2. Power Attributes of a Composite Actor like the EU

As a composite actor, the EU wields power differently from traditional great powers due to its supranational nature:

1. **Normative Power** The EU projects influence through laws, human rights advocacy, and environmental policies, shaping global governance frameworks.
2. **Regulatory Power (Market Power Europe):** By setting stringent regulations (e.g., GDPR, Green Deal, digital markets), the EU's standards often become global norms.
3. **Economic and Trade Power:** The EU, as one of the largest trade blocs, exerts influence through trade agreements, development aid, and investment strategies.
4. **Soft Power and Multilateralism:** The EU relies on diplomacy, cooperation, and institutional engagement rather than unilateral coercion.

5. **Limited Military Power:** While the EU has growing defense initiatives (e.g., PESCO, EDF), it lacks the hard power projection of the US or China, depending on NATO and national forces.
6. **Strategic Resource Influence:** The EU is a major importer of energy and raw materials, making it vulnerable to external shocks but also a key player in setting sustainability and supply chain policies (e.g., critical raw materials strategy).

### 3. Skills the EU Can Bring to the Emerging Global Order

1. **Conflict Mediation and Diplomacy** The EU's role in peace processes (e.g., Iran nuclear deal, Africa-EU partnerships) positions it as a stabilizing actor.
2. **Climate and Resource Governance Leadership** Through the Green Deal, carbon border taxes, and sustainable finance, the EU can shape global environmental and resource policies.
3. **Economic Statecraft and Supply Chain Resilience:** The EU can use its regulatory power to secure strategic resources (e.g., rare earths, lithium) and diversify energy dependencies.
4. **Cybersecurity and Hybrid Threats:** Strengthening cybersecurity norms, countering hybrid threats, and securing critical infrastructure are key areas of EU expertise.
5. **Technological and Energy Transition Leadership:** Investing in renewables, digital sovereignty, and energy efficiency can position the EU as a leader in sustainable development.

Traditional great powers share isomorphic traits based on military, economic, and resource control. The EU wields influence differently, relying on regulatory strength, diplomacy, and sustainability leadership. In a global order shaped by competition over natural resources, economic resilience, and environmental challenges, the EU's ability to secure critical materials, mediate conflicts, and drive climate governance will determine its strategic role. However, success depends on internal cohesion, strategic autonomy, and its capacity to project power beyond regulatory influence.

### 3. Current Poles (2025)

In a multipolar world, power is distributed among multiple influential actors. Below are the key poles in the current international system and potential future poles based on economic, military, technological, and diplomatic capabilities.

United States (Global Pole)

Still the dominant military and financial power (NATO leadership, USD hegemony).

Strong alliances in Europe (NATO), the Indo-Pacific (AUKUS, Quad), and the Middle East. Cutting-edge tech leadership (AI, semiconductors, biotech).

Challenges: Internal polarization, economic debt, and global competition from China.

## China (Global Pole)

The second-largest economy and military power, challenging U.S. dominance in Asia.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) extends economic influence into Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America. Advancing in AI, quantum computing, and green technology.

Challenges: Economic slowdown, demographic decline, and regional tensions (Taiwan, South China Sea).

## European Union (Regional Pole with Global Influence)

Economic heavyweight with regulatory power (GDPR, Green Deal, Digital Markets Act). Strong diplomatic and economic ties, but lacks a unified military force.

Challenges: Political fragmentation, energy dependency, and slow decision-making. Russia (Military-Strategic Pole)

Major nuclear power with influence in post-Soviet states, the Middle East, and Africa.

Economy weakened by sanctions but sustains global influence through energy and military exports. Challenges: War costs, demographic decline, and technological lag.

## India (Emerging Global Pole)

Fast-growing economy and population (world's largest by 2027).

Strengthening defense ties with the U.S. (Quad), while maintaining strategic autonomy (BRICS). Expanding space, tech, and manufacturing industries.

Challenges: Infrastructure gaps, internal inequalities, and border tensions (China, Pakistan). Japan (Advanced Technological Pole)

Strong economic and tech influence, with increasing military expansion under new defense policies.

Key U.S. ally in the Indo-Pacific.

Challenges: Aging population and limited energy resources. Middle East (Energy & Strategic Poles)

Saudi Arabia & UAE: Economic diversification (Vision 2030), strong energy influence, growing military ambitions.

Iran: Regional power projection via proxies, nuclear ambitions, economic struggles due to sanctions.

Turkey: Balancing NATO ties with regional assertiveness in the Mediterranean, Caucasus, and Middle East.

## Emerging Regional Poles (2025)

Brazil (Latin America's Leader): Strong agribusiness, energy independence, and diplomatic activism (BRICS).

South Korea (Technological Powerhouse): Key semiconductor producer, advanced military capabilities.

ASEAN (Southeast Asian Bloc): Collective economic and trade influence, but lacks unified military power.

## 4. Future Poles (2035-2050)

### Potential Global Poles

United States & China: Still dominant but facing stronger competition. India: Likely to solidify its position as the third major global power.

European Union: Could become a full strategic actor if it achieves military autonomy. Potential Regional Poles

Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, or a pan-African bloc): A rising demographic and economic powerhouse if governance improves.

Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, or a regional bloc like CELAC): Growing industrial and energy influence.

Middle East (GCC bloc, Iran, or Turkey): Future strength depends on energy transition and security stability.

## Summary

The future world order will be complex, dynamic, and regionally fragmented.

No single hegemon will dominate, but different poles will compete and collaborate in shifting alignments.

The key to stability will be effective governance, economic resilience, and strategic diplomacy among these poles.

## Orderly Multipolarisation

The grand old man of American diplomacy Henry Kissinger invoked the need to define the principles of international order between the US and China, something that was left undone. The need to define the rules of the games at the nexus of power and norms have become acute given Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Sino-American rivalry in the Asia-Pacific in an international environment characterized by warp speed and information warfare.



The need to define the rules of the game have become so much more urgent, given the conflict and cooperation between Japan, China and India. In the opposite end of Eurasia the issue is the imposition of order by the political center in Europe and transformation of the state system from within the European institutions. Now that the borders of the EU have been defined and EEAs is being geared to geoeconomic competition, the question of regional order on the eastern border of Europe becomes paramount.

Orderly multipolarisation where multiple major powers coexist and interact within a stable international system requires several key conditions:

## 1. Strategic Stability Among Major Powers

**Clear Rules and Norms:** Strong international frameworks, such as UN principles and arms control agreements, help manage power competition.

**Crisis Management Mechanisms:** Regular diplomatic dialogues, military hotlines, and confidence- building measures reduce the risk of escalation.

**Balance of Power Without Overreach:** No single state should attempt hegemonic dominance, as this leads to counterbalancing coalitions and instability.

## 2. Institutional Adaptation & Reform

**Reformed Global Governance:** Institutions like the UN, IMF, and WTO must reflect contemporary power shifts, integrating rising powers fairly.

**Regional Governance Strengthening:** Platforms like the EU, ASEAN, and the African Union should contribute to local stability while connecting with global structures.

**Flexible Multilateralism:** Allowing coalitions of states to work on specific issues without rigid bloc alignments.

## 3. Economic Interdependence & Fair Competition

**Trade & Investment Rules:** A global system that balances free trade with safeguards against economic coercion.

**Supply Chain Resilience:** Diversification to prevent economic weaponization while maintaining interconnected markets.

**Fair Technological Standards:** Avoiding tech protectionism and ensuring joint research frameworks on AI, cybersecurity, and infrastructure.

## 4. Regional Stability & Conflict Management

**Preventing Proxy Wars:** Major powers must avoid using regional conflicts as battlegrounds for their own competition.

**Local Security Architectures:** Empowering regional organizations for conflict resolution (e.g., African Union in Africa, ASEAN in Asia).

**Respect for Sovereignty:** Reducing interventionist policies that undermine weaker states and fuel instability.

## 5. Ideological Pluralism & Normative Flexibility

**Accepting Different Governance Models:** While democracy promotion remains important for some actors, recognizing that different political systems will coexist prevents ideological clashes.

**Human Rights & Development Linkage:** Promoting rights through economic and social cooperation rather than coercive means.

**Cultural and Civilizational Dialogue:** Encouraging engagement between different value systems to reduce ideological polarization.

## 6. Environmental & Technological Cooperation

**Climate Agreements:** Shared responsibility for climate change adaptation and energy transition.

**Cybersecurity & AI Norms:** Avoiding digital fragmentation by setting common rules for emerging technologies.

**Space Governance:** Preventing militarization and ensuring space remains a domain for peaceful exploration.

## 7. Crisis Preparedness & Global Public Goods

**Health Security Mechanisms:** Learning from COVID-19, ensuring future pandemics are managed through global cooperation.

**Food & Water Security Agreements:** Avoiding weaponization of resources in geopolitical disputes. **Disaster Response Cooperation:** Strengthening mechanisms for joint humanitarian interventions.

Orderly multipolarization is possible if powers accept mutual constraints, prioritize stability over short-term dominance, and reinforce institutions that manage competition. It requires an adaptable framework where rivalry does not spiral into confrontation, and where multipolarity becomes a structured rather than chaotic reality.

## 6. Values

In international relations (IR), values are fundamental principles or beliefs that shape the behavior of states, international organizations, and other actors in the global system. They serve as guiding norms for diplomacy, governance, and international cooperation. At times they are

constitutive of identities, at others part of the perspective, and more often embedded into the fabric of international organisations.

## Types of Values in International Relations

1. Normative Values Ethical principles that shape international norms, such as human rights, democracy, and rule of law.
2. Strategic Values Interests that drive state behavior, like security, economic prosperity, and regional stability.
3. Cultural and Civilizational Values Ideological and historical perspectives that influence diplomacy, such as sovereignty, non-intervention, and national identity.

## Values in IR Theories

Realism: Values are subordinate to power and national interest. Security and survival take precedence.

Liberalism: Shared values (e.g., democracy, cooperation, and institutions) promote global stability and peace.

Constructivism: Values shape state identities and global norms through discourse and interaction.

## Application in Global Affairs

Values influence international policies, alliances (e.g., NATO's democratic values), and conflicts (e.g., ideological clashes in the Cold War). They also drive global governance through institutions like the UN, EU, and WTO, where common values guide decision-making and cooperation.

Ultimately, in IR, values are both drivers of policy and tools of influence, shaping the moral and strategic dimensions of global politics.

An orderly multipolarisation where multiple power centers coexist peacefully requires a foundation of shared values to ensure stability, cooperation, and legitimacy in global governance. The following values could help underpin such a system:

**Table – Values**

Country/Region	Normative values	Strategic Values	Realist Orientation	Liberal orientation	Constructivist Orientation
The United States	Democracy, rule of law, individual freedoms, human rights.	Military superiority (NATO), economic primacy, dollar dominance.	Military superiority (NATO), economic primacy, dollar dominance.	Rules-based order, free trade alliances (Nato, WTO)	Promotes American Exceptionalism, Ideological influence

China	State sovereignty, non-interference, Confucian harmony, development-first	Regional dominance (Asia-Pacific), economic leverage (BRI), technological supremacy.	Power Projection (South China Sea, Taiwan), realpolitik diplomacy.	Selective multilateralism (BRICS, AIIB), global trade.	Civilizational rise, reshaping global governance norms.
The European Union	Human rights, democracy, social market economy, multilateralism	Economic integration, regulatory power (GDPR, Green Deal), strategic autonomy.	Limited military influence, regional stability, deterrence (Russia).	Strongest multilateral actor (UN, WTO, Paris Agreement)	Normative power, shaping international norms
Brazil	Social justice, environmental protection, regional solidarity.	Economic Development, regional leadership (Mercosur), commodity exports.	Pragmatic realism in South America.	Advocates fair trade, climate cooperation, multipolar diplomacy.	Soft power diplomacy, Latin American identity.
India	Democracy, pluralism, strategic autonomy, civilizational nationalism.	Military self-reliance, regional power (South Asia), economic growth, digital innovation.	Strategic autonomy (Quad), Brics, multi-alignment.	Promotes global south, trade liberalization, multilateralism.	Civilization-state narrative, shaping digital norms
Russia	Nationalism, sovereignty, Orthodox Christian heritage, multipolarity.	Military power, resource control, regional influence (Post-soviet space).	Hard realism (military interventions, nuclear deterrence).	Selective engagement (UN veto, NRICS, energy diplomacy)	Narrative of Great Power identity, resisting Western norms.
Japan	Pacifism, democracy, high-tech innovation, cultural diplomacy.	Economic resilience regional security (Us alliance, Indo-Pacific strategy).	Defensive realism (self-defence force, countering China).	Strong economic multilateralism (CPTPP, OECD, UN).	Soft power projection.

## 1. Sovereign Equality and Mutual Respect

Recognition that all states, regardless of size or power, have equal sovereignty. Non-interference in domestic affairs while respecting international law.

Encouraging respect for cultural and civilizational diversity.

## 2. Rule of Law and Institutional Governance

Strengthening international legal frameworks (e.g., UN Charter, WTO rules) to prevent conflicts. Reinforcing dispute resolution mechanisms like the ICJ, WTO appellate body, and regional courts. Ensuring that multipolar governance is based on rules rather than raw power.

## 3. Strategic Stability and Cooperative Security

Commitment to strategic arms control, non-proliferation, and crisis de-escalation. Regional security frameworks (e.g., OSCE, ASEAN, AU, GCC).

Balance of power mechanisms that prevent zero-sum rivalries.

## 4. Economic Interdependence and Fair Trade

Avoiding protectionism and ensuring inclusive globalisation.

Supporting regional trade agreements and connectivity projects (e.g., BRI, EU-Africa partnerships). Reforming financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) to reflect multipolar realities.

## 5. Sustainable Development and Climate Responsibility

Acknowledging climate change as a common challenge requiring multipolar cooperation. Joint investments in green energy, infrastructure, and food security.

Reinforcing UN-led frameworks like the Paris Agreement.

## 6. Knowledge Sharing and Technological Sovereignty

Avoiding tech monopolies and ensuring global access to AI, digital economies, and R&D. Strengthening education, research, and skills development across regions.

Encouraging digital governance norms that protect cybersecurity and data privacy.

## 7. Inclusive Multilateralism and Dialogue

Reforming the UN Security Council and Bretton Woods institutions to reflect contemporary power balances.

Strengthening regional organisations (BRICS, G20, ASEAN, AU, EU) as pillars of global governance.

Institutionalizing track II diplomacy (civil society, academia, think tanks) to shape consensus.

An orderly multipolar world requires a balance between sovereignty and cooperation, ensuring fairness, predictability, and shared prosperity. Without such values, multipolarity risks devolving into fragmentation and conflict, rather than a stable and just global order.

## **Key takeaways:**

Us and Eu are liberal but with realist undertones (Us military hegemony, Eu regulatory power). China, Russia, and India blend realism with civilizational narratives (constructivist elements) Japan and Brazil emphasizes soft power, trade and multilateralism (liberal-constructivist mix) Multipolarity is evolving differently based on strategic and normative values.

## **7. Shared Values in a multipolar world reduces friction**

Shared values serve as a stabilizing force during power transitions by providing common reference points for international actors navigating shifts in global order. As the world moves from non-polarity where power is diffusely distributed with no clear centers of dominance to multipolarity, where several powerful states or blocs emerge, shared values help to:

1. **Mitigate Anarchy** In times of transition, uncertainty can fuel competition and conflict. Shared norms and values provide predictability, reducing the risk of instability.
2. **Legitimize Power Reconfiguration** Emerging powers seek recognition, while established ones aim to retain influence. Common values facilitate negotiations and prevent zero-sum confrontations.
3. **Enable Institutional Adaptation:** Multilateral frameworks, such as economic and security alliances, are more resilient when built on shared principles that transcend shifting power balances.

## **Multiple Realities Entanglement**

In a multipolar world, different actors construct competing narratives about legitimacy, order, and governance. This entanglement of multiple realities means that:

Power shifts are not universally interpreted the same way; emerging powers may frame multipolarity as liberation, while declining ones may see it as fragmentation.

Divergent values can create competing spheres of influence, where states align with like-minded partners rather than global consensus complicating change management.

Managing entanglement requires fostering dialogue, balancing competing visions, and integrating pluralistic perspectives into global governance mechanisms.

Ultimately, shared values function as a crucial moderating factor, ensuring that the transition to multipolarity does not descend into disorder but instead becomes an opportunity for cooperative recalibration.

**Table – The values that bring us together**



Values	Political Stability & Security	Economic Governance	Technological & Knowledge cooperation	Sustainable development	Multilateralism and Dialogue
Sovereign Equality & Mutual respect	Prevents hegemonic domination and foster regional stability	Supports fair trade agreements	Encourages equitable tech partnerships	Respects national policies on climate and development	Strengthens role of regional institutions
Rule of Law & Institutional Governance	Ensures fair dispute resolution (ICJ, UN)	Protects contracts and trade norms	Promotes cybersecurity laws & data protection	Supports international environmental law	Enhances legitimacy of multilateral frameworks
Strategic Stability & Cooperative Security	Reduces resource-based conflicts	Prevents economic coercion through sanctions diplomacy	Supports secure digital infrastructure	Reduces climate-related security risks	Strengthens regional security alliances
Economic Interdependence & Fair Trade	Reduces conflict over scarce resources	Promotes diversified supply chains	Encourages shared R & D Investment	Supports energy transition funding	Reinforces role of G20, IMF and WTO reforms
Sustainable Development & Climate Responsibility	Reduces conflict over scarce resources	Promotes green finance and sustainable trade	Ensures equitable access to green tech	Drives global commitment to Paris Agreements	Supports climate-focused diplomatic summits
Knowledge Sharing & Technological Sovereignty	Reduces technological dependency-based power struggles	Supports fair digital trade rules	Strengthens global AI & Stem collaboration	Facilitates sustainable agriculture & health tech	Institutionalizes science diplomacy
Inclusive Multilateralism	Strengthens diplomatic crisis prevention	Encourages diversified investment frameworks	Expands global access to digital economies	Ensures development aid effectiveness	Fosters UN reform and regional governance mechanism

If political, economic, and technological dimensions are interlinked, strong governance ensures stability across sectors. Multilateral institutions must adapt to include emerging powers and ensure fair decision-making. Climate and knowledge cooperation are cross-cutting, influencing security and development.

## 8. Unifying the Pacific Islanders

The Pacific Islanders—Melanesians, Polynesians, and Micronesians—share deep historical, cultural, and environmental ties despite colonial-era divisions and modern geopolitical

challenges. Re- building their unity requires recognizing their commonalities while addressing the unique concerns of each group.

## 1. Cultural and Linguistic Commonalities

- **Austronesian Roots:** Polynesians and Micronesians share Austronesian linguistic and cultural her- itage, while Melanesians have distinct but overlapping traditions.
- **Navigational Heritage:** Traditional wayfinding unites the region, symbolizing a common ancestral link and knowledge system.
- **Communal Values:** Reciprocity (e.g., fa'a Samoa, kastom, and bubuti) and strong kinship net- works transcend island groupings.

## 2. Shared Environmental and Economic Interests

**Climate Change and Ocean Stewardship:** Rising sea levels and resource depletion threaten all Pa- cific nations. A unified approach to climate advocacy strengthens their voice in global forums.

**Maritime Economies:** Fisheries, tourism, and sustainable ocean governance provide opportunities for collective economic development.

**Table** Major Kin groups in the Pacific

Region	Major kin groups	Kinship system
Melanesia	Tolai (PNG), Kanak (NC), Fijians, Solomon Islanders	Mostly bilateral kinship, some matri- linial clans
Polynesia	Maori (NZ), Samoans, Tongans, Ta- hitians, Hawaiians	Patrilineal and hierarchical systems, chiefly lineages
Micronesia	Chamorros (Guam), Carolinians, Mar- shallese, Kiribatians	Matrilinial kinship dominance in many societies

## 3. Political and Strategic Cooperation

- **Regional Organizations:** Institutions like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) can be restructured to better integrate Polynesians, Micronesians, and Melanesians.
- **Geopolitical Leverage:** A united Pacific strengthens negotiating power with external actors (China, U.S., Australia, etc.), ensuring sovereignty and self-determination.

## Bridging the Divides

### 1. Cultural Renaissance Initiatives

- **Promote shared history** through educational exchanges, digital archives, and pan-Pacific storytell- ing platforms.
- **Revitalize inter-island festivals, sports, and cultural diplomacy** to foster mutual appreciation.

## 2. Institutional Reforms

- Strengthen Pacific regionalism by ensuring equal representation of Melanesian, Polynesian, and Micronesian interests in PIF and other bodies.
- Develop a Pacific Union concept, akin to the African Union, for coordinated policy-making.

**Table - Fabric of Pacific Knowledge Systems**

Knowledge Systems	Core Values	Application in Society
Wayfinding and navigation	Respect for nature, intergenerational knowledge transfer	Used for Oceanic exploration, trade and migration.
Oral Traditions	Storytelling as history, communal memory, and identity.	Preserves history, myths, and governance structures.
Environmental Stewardship (Vanua, Tapu, Rahui)	Harmony with land and sea, sustainability	Sacred land/ocean practices, resource conservation
Reciprocity (Fa'a Samoa, Wantok, Bubuti)	Social cohesion, mutual aid, and obligation	Strengthens kinship ties and community resilience.
Chieftainship and Governance	Authority through wisdom, respect, and service.	Guides decision-making and dispute resolution.
Spiritual and cosmological knowledge	Connection to ancestor, deities, and the natural world.	Rituals, healing practices, and social organization.

## 3. Youth and Grassroots Engagement

- Empower youth-led movements to champion regional unity.
- Expand digital connectivity to link communities across vast oceanic distances.

## 4. Reconciliation and Dialogue

- Address historical grievances (e.g., colonial divisions, Cold War-era alignments) through structured dialogues and truth-telling initiatives.
- Foster an inclusive Pacific identity that respects diversity while emphasizing collective strength.

By embracing shared values, revitalizing regional cooperation, and addressing historical and contemporary challenges, the Pacific Islanders can move toward a more unified future, reinforcing their identity as one ocean, one people.

**Table What Unites and Divides The Pacific Islanders**

Dimension	What Unites them	What divides them
Geographical connection	Shared Identity as oceanic peoples, reliance on the Pacific Ocean for sustenance and navigation.	Vast distances, differences in island sizes and resources create varied economic and social structures.
Cultural foundations	Oral Traditions, storytelling, and communal living.	Different levels of external influence (colonial histories,

		globalization)
Language and Kinships	Austronesians language family as a common root	Melanesian languages are more diverse, Polynesian and Micronesian languages are more closely related.
Traditional Governance	Chieftainship and elder councils as core governance structures	Polynesian societies often had hierarchical systems, while many Melanesian societies were more decentralized.
Navigational Knowledge	Mastery of wayfinding and celestial navigation.	Some traditions have weakened due to colonial disruptions and modernization.
Spiritual and religious Beliefs	Strong connection to nature, ancestors and animistic beliefs	Varying degrees of Christianization and syncretic beliefs across regions.
Economic Systems	Subsistence farming, fishing and trade-based economies	Access to external trade, tourism, and remittances differs greatly.

## Bridging Melanesians, Polynesians, and Micronesians

1. Cultural Exchange Programs – Strengthen inter-island relationships through festivals, joint storytelling initiatives, and shared traditional knowledge projects.
2. Regional Economic Integration – Develop trade agreements that promote inter-island commerce and reduce dependency on external economies.
3. Educational Collaboration – Create a unified Pacific curriculum that integrates history, languages, and environmental knowledge across all sub-regions.
4. Political Coordination – Reinforce regional organizations like PIF, ensuring equal representation and commitment to shared governance goals.
5. Climate Action and Shared Stewardship – Establish pan-Pacific conservation strategies based on traditional ecological knowledge.

By reinforcing these connections, the Pacific can reassert its shared identity while respecting the diversity that makes it unique.

## Summary

This chapter on the evolution towards multipolarity presents a nuanced analysis of how global power structures evolve and the role the EU can play as a stabilizing force (force d'équilibre). The key contributions across sections include:

1. Great Power Isomorphism: Examines how major powers tend to mirror each other's strategic behaviors, adapting to competitive pressures while maintaining distinct governance models. This section highlights the risks of convergence without cooperation and suggests pathways for mitigating conflict through institutional pluralism.

2. **The Power Attributes of the EU:** Challenges the traditional notion of power by focusing on normative, regulatory, and economic influence, arguing that the EU wields transformative power through trade, legal frameworks, and diplomatic mediation rather than military force.
3. **Current and Emerging Poles:** Identifies the US, China, India, the EU, and regional actors like Brazil and ASEAN as key poles, while highlighting shifting alignments notably the rise of middle powers and regional coalitions that challenge binary great power competition.
4. **Orderly Multipolarisation:** Advocates for a structured transition to multipolarity, emphasizing mechanisms for conflict prevention, institutional adaptation, and inclusive governance to avoid disorderly fragmentation.
5. **Values During Power Transitions & Coherence Mechanisms:** Analyzes how power shifts often stress existing value systems. The section explores how common political and economic norms can serve as a stabilizing force, even amid competition. The challenge is to cohere values across diverse actors without imposing uniformity, using pragmatic consensus-building.
6. **Unifying the Pacific Islanders:** Connects regional cohesion efforts in the Pacific Islands to broader multipolar governance, arguing that regionalism can serve as a microcosm for global multipolarity. Strengthening Pacific unity under indigenous leadership and multilateral partnerships provides a model for balancing sovereignty with cooperation.

The chapter builds toward the idea that the EU can act as a stabilizer in a multipolar world, leveraging its economic, regulatory, and diplomatic tools to prevent destabilizing rivalries. Rather than competing as a traditional pole, the EU's strength lies in mediating between emerging power centers, fostering orderly multipolarisation through coalition-building and institutional frameworks.

This approach positions the EU as a counterweight to hegemonic tendencies, reinforcing global stability through strategic equilibrium rather than dominance. In summary, the conditions under which the EU could act as a force d'équilibre are:

### **Conditions Under Which the EU Could Act as a Force d'Équilibre:**

1. **Internal Unity and Policy Coherence:** The EU must align its member states on a unified foreign policy to present a strong, cohesive stance globally, minimizing internal divisions that dilute its strategic impact.
2. **Strategic Autonomy:** By developing independent capabilities (e.g., defense, energy security, trade), the EU can reduce reliance on external powers like the U.S., enabling it to act more decisively.
3. **Targeted Regional Engagement:** In areas like the Pacific Islands, the EU should focus on sustainable development, climate action, and resilient infrastructure—issues where it can add unique value and establish credibility.

4. **Operational Commitment:** The EU needs to transition from declaratory policies to measurable actions, such as naval deployments, economic investments, or digital partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.
5. **Partnerships with Regional Powers:** Strengthened collaborations with nations like India, Japan, ASEAN members, and Pacific Island countries can help the EU amplify its influence and offer an alternative to China's assertive strategies.
6. **Multilateral Leadership:** Leveraging its experience in cooperative frameworks, the EU should lead initiatives addressing global challenges (e.g., climate change, trade governance) that resonate with Indo-Pacific and Pacific Island priorities.

By fulfilling these conditions, the EU could transform its role from a passive observer to an active force d'équilibre, effectively counterbalancing major global powers while contributing to regional and global stability.

## 4.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### The Strategic Context of the Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands occupy a critical geopolitical space, shaped by historical legacies, great power competition, economic dependencies, and pressing environmental challenges. Their strategic importance has grown as global powers, including the US, China, and the EU, seek influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### 1. Geopolitical Significance

**Indo-Pacific Power Struggles** The Pacific Islands are at the center of the US-China rivalry, as both seek military and economic footholds. The US maintains defense pacts with several island states (e.g., the Compact of Free Association with the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau), while China has expanded its diplomatic and economic influence.

**Alliances and Regional Institutions** The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) serves as the primary regional bloc, where major players (Australia, New Zealand, and increasingly the EU) engage with island nations. The US, China, and others seek closer ties with these organizations to advance their interests.

**Historical Legacies of Colonialism and Nuclear Testing** Many Pacific states have colonial histories with European powers (UK, France) and the US, which still influence their foreign policies. Nuclear testing by the US and France has left deep scars, shaping anti-nuclear sentiments and resistance to military expansion.

#### 2. Economic Dependencies and Resource Competition

**Natural Resources and Maritime Jurisdictions** The Pacific Islands control vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) with rich fisheries, deep-sea minerals (e.g., rare earths, cobalt), and untapped energy potential, making them valuable in resource geopolitics.



**Dependency on Foreign Aid and Investment** Many island economies rely on aid from Australia, New Zealand, China, the US, and the EU. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has increased financial dependency, raising concerns about debt diplomacy.

**Tourism and Climate-Sensitive Economies** Tourism is a major economic driver but is vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters, and global economic shifts.

### 3. Climate Change as a Security Issue

**Existential Threats from Rising Sea Levels** Low-lying nations like Tuvalu and Kiribati face the risk of disappearing due to climate change, making climate diplomacy a key Pacific priority.

**Leveraging Climate Diplomacy** Pacific nations advocate for stronger climate action in global forums, often aligning with the EU's climate policies to push for emissions reductions and financial support.

**Climate-Induced Migration and Security Risks** "Environmental displacement threatens stability, raising legal and humanitarian challenges.

### 4. Military and Security Considerations

**US and Allied Military Presence** The US has military bases in Guam and the Marshall Islands, while Australia is expanding its security role in the region.

**China's Expanding Influence** China has deepened security ties with some Pacific states, notably through a controversial security pact with the Solomon Islands, raising concerns about potential Chinese military bases.

**Maritime Security and Illegal Fishing** The Pacific Islands face challenges in policing their vast maritime zones, leading to cooperation with external partners like the EU, US, and Australia for maritime security and illegal fishing enforcement.

### 5. Strategic Leverage of the Pacific Islands

**Balancing Great Powers** Many Pacific states use strategic ambiguity to extract benefits from multiple partners, avoiding overdependence on a single power.

**Soft Power and Moral Authority** Their leadership in climate diplomacy and advocacy for indigenous rights gives them unique diplomatic leverage in global forums.

**Regional Unity vs. Fragmentation** The effectiveness of Pacific regionalism is often tested by internal divisions, as seen in tensions within the PIF over leadership disputes.

## Summary

The Pacific Islands sit at the crossroads of global power competition, climate diplomacy, and economic resource struggles. While facing existential challenges, they also possess strategic leverage through their geographic position, resource wealth, and ability to shape climate and maritime governance. Their future role will depend on how they navigate great power

influence, secure sustainable development, and maintain regional cohesion in an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific.

## 2. Intersection between the EU and France

Intersections Between the EU and France in the Pacific: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia

The European Union (EU) and France share overlapping interests in the Pacific through France's overseas territories. While France acts as the primary European power in the Pacific, the EU has its own engagement through development aid, trade agreements, climate initiatives, and political dialogue. The EU and France intersect in three key ways across Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia:

### 1. French Overseas Territories & EU Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)

#### 1. Development Cooperation & Economic Agreements

#### 2. Geopolitical and Security Coordination

1. French Overseas Territories as EU's Outposts in the Pacific France has three overseas territories in the Pacific:

- Polynesia: French Polynesia (Tahiti)
- Melanesia: New Caledonia
- Micronesia: Wallis and Futuna

These territories hold a special status in the EU as Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), meaning:

- They are not part of the EU but have privileged trade and aid access.
- They can apply for EU development funding under the European Development Fund (EDF).
- They benefit from EU-Pacific trade agreements, but French law governs their economic policies.

While France maintains political control, the EU co-finances regional infrastructure, climate resilience projects, and maritime connectivity across these territories.

Key Intersections:

- Polynesia: EU supports sustainable tourism and marine biodiversity projects alongside French regional governance.
- Melanesia: New Caledonia's engagement with the EU-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) supplements French economic ties.

- Micronesia: Wallis and Futuna have limited integration into EU-Pacific trade agreements but receive EU development aid.

**Table - Points on Intersection between France and the EU**

Domain	France's role	Eu's role	Intersection
Territorial Presence	Sovereign territories provide direct geopolitical access.	No territorial control but engages through Pacific partnerships.	France acts as the Eu's gateway to direct influence
Security & Military	Maintains military forces and contributes to Indo-Pacific security.	No direct military presence, relies on diplomacy and soft power.	France supports regional security that aligns with Eu Indo-Pacific economic integration
Economic & Military	Oversees trade in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and EEZ's	Negotiates trade agreements with Pacific Islands (EPA's)	Both benefit from Pacific integration
Climate Diplomacy	Aligns with Eu's climate goals, but has resource extraction interests.	Leading global climate finance provider for Pacific resilience	France's local presence supports Eu environmental policies
Maritime Governance	Enforces fishing laws and controls vast EEZs.	Supports regional maritime agencies	Joint Maritime security efforts

## 2. EU-France Development Cooperation in the Pacific

Both the EU and France operate extensive development programs in the Pacific. Their efforts overlap in:

### A. Climate Change & Sustainable Development

- The EU's Global Gateway Initiative funds Pacific green energy and maritime connectivity projects, with French Polynesia and New Caledonia as key partners.
- France's Indo-Pacific Strategy aligns with EU goals, particularly in climate resilience and disaster response.
- The EU's Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) and France's marine conservation projects intersect in supporting sustainable fisheries and ocean governance.

### B. Trade & Economic Cooperation

- EU-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) includes Papua New Guinea and Fiji, but not New Caledonia or French Polynesia—which rely on French preferential trade regimes.
- The EU supports Pacific Island agribusiness, fisheries, and digital economy initiatives that complement France's economic role in its territories.

## C. Governance & Institutional Capacity Building

- The EU's partnerships with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) focus on regional governance, overlapping with French territorial administration in New Caledonia and Polynesia.
- EU electoral support for New Caledonia's independence referendums has intersected with French policies on decolonization.

## 3. Geopolitical & Security Coordination

Both the EU and France play a strategic role in the Pacific's security architecture, especially as China's influence grows.

### A. Military & Maritime Security

- France is the only EU member with a permanent Pacific military presence, with bases in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna.
- The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy recognizes France as a key security provider in the Pacific, aligning with EU naval operations and anti-IUU (illegal, unreported, and unregulated) fishing patrols.

### B. Geopolitical Balancing & Regional Alliances

- France promotes EU-Pacific engagement in climate diplomacy and maritime governance to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The EU's political partnerships with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) often intersect with French diplomatic efforts in New Caledonia.

## Summary: EU and France as Dual Actors in the Pacific

While France is the dominant European actor in the Pacific, the EU provides additional economic, climate, and security resources. Their engagement in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia reflects a dual approach:

- France exercises direct territorial governance, maintaining military presence and strategic autonomy.
- The EU complements French efforts through regional trade, development aid, and climate resilience programs.

To strengthen their cooperation, France and the EU could:

Align French Polynesia and New Caledonia's economic policies with EU-Pacific trade frameworks.

- Expand joint security initiatives under the EU Indo-Pacific strategy, integrating French naval presence with EU maritime operations.

- Increase French diplomatic coordination within EU-Pacific political dialogues, ensuring greater regional coherence.
- In essence, France serves as the EU's strategic foothold in the Pacific, while the EU amplifies France's efforts through broader economic, environmental, and governance initiatives.

## IMPACT OF AUKUS

The AUKUS agreement (Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) holds significant strategic implications for Asia, particularly in the context of rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific. The agreement, focusing on enhancing defense cooperation, particularly through nuclear-powered sub-marines, cybersecurity, and advanced technologies, reinforces the US-led security architecture in the region and acts as a counterbalance to China's growing military and economic influence.

### Strategic Implications for Asia:

1. **Strengthened Deterrence Against China:** AUKUS enhances the military capabilities of Australia and the UK in the region, acting as a deterrent to China's expansionism, especially in the South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific. It emphasizes naval power and deepens the strategic alignment of democracies in the region.
2. **Deepening US-Asia Alliances:** By involving Australia and the UK, AUKUS expands the US military footprint in Asia, and demonstrates Washington's commitment to maintaining influence and balancing China's rise. This is key for regional security architecture and highlights the US's long-term interests in the Indo-Pacific.
3. **Technological and Defense Innovation:** The agreement focuses heavily on advanced technologies (such as AI, cyber, quantum computing, and undersea capabilities), signaling an era of heightened technological competition in the Indo-Pacific. This also aims to equip Australia with capabilities that can support joint defense operations with the US and the UK.

**Potential Regional Divisions:** While AUKUS strengthens the alignment of the three nations, it could alienate some regional players like China, which views the agreement as a security threat. It may also create tensions within ASEAN and influence countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, who could see it as an arms race escalation in the region.

### Australia and New Zealand's Antarctic Possessions and Geopolitical Orientations:

1. **Australia's Antarctic Interests:** Australia controls significant portions of Antarctic territory, which it views through both strategic and environmental lenses. Australia's interest in Antarctica is largely driven by its focus on scientific research, resource management, and environmental preservation. The region is also increasingly viewed through a geopolitical lens due to global competition over marine resources and the potential for climate change-induced changes in the Antarctic environment. Australia's territorial claims and its active involvement in Antarctic governance contribute to its broader strategic thinking in the region.

2. New Zealand's Strategic Considerations: New Zealand, with its own territorial claims in Antarctica, prioritizes scientific collaboration and environmental stewardship in the region. Like Australia, New Zealand is concerned with the geopolitical stability of Antarctica, particularly the preservation of the Antarctic Treaty System (which governs international cooperation and prohibits military activities). New Zealand's policy emphasizes peaceful cooperation, but it is also increasingly aware of strategic competition, especially with growing interests in the Southern Ocean region.

3. Geopolitical Implications for Canberra and Christchurch: Australia: Its Antarctic possessions enhance its role as a key player in global governance and regional security. Australia's claims contribute to its overall strategic positioning in the Indo-Pacific and underline its broader geopolitical concerns regarding climate change and resource security. As AUKUS strengthens Australia's defense capabilities, its Antarctic ambitions could align with its broader military and environmental policy especially in the context of defending maritime security and climate-related resources in the Southern Ocean.

New Zealand: While more focused on peaceful diplomacy and environmental leadership, New Zealand's Antarctic position allows it to increase its diplomatic leverage on global issues like climate change, environmental protection, and scientific collaboration. Its involvement in Antarctic affairs provides an important soft power tool in its broader foreign policy and contributes to New Zealand's independent positioning alongside its historical alliance with Australia.

Overall, the AUKUS agreement and Antarctic possessions collectively shape the geopolitical orientations of Canberra and Christchurch by positioning both countries as active regional players. Australia's alignment with AUKUS enhances its military deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, while New Zealand's emphasis on multilateralism and environmental stewardship positions it as a strong advocate for global governance in the Antarctic and broader environmental diplomacy. Both countries' Antarctic claims further serve as important strategic assets within the context of global power competition and their respective foreign policies.

The AUKUS agreement and the strategic importance of Antarctica significantly influence the EU's calculus in its approach to the Pacific Island nations. Both Australia and New Zealand, with their geopolitical interests and active involvement in the Indo-Pacific, can play a key role in shaping the EU's priorities in the region, especially when considering the broader US-China rivalry.

Strategic Rationale for the EU:

1. Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement: The EU's approach to the Pacific Islands becomes increasingly important in the context of great power competition. As both Australia and New Zealand share common security and trade interests with the EU, particularly in areas like climate change, sustainable development, and maritime security, the EU has a vested interest in supporting multilateralism and regional stability in the Pacific. In turn, this would help preserve global norms and security frameworks in the region, as the EU seeks to avoid the escalation of tensions between the US and China.



2. **Soft Power and Influence:** The EU's focus on soft power—which includes diplomacy, human rights, sustainable trade, and climate resilience—aligns well with the Pacific Islands' needs for economic support, environmental protection, and inclusive governance. This provides the EU with a diplomatic lever to shape regional policies and coordinate with Australia and New Zealand on a comprehensive strategy that avoids becoming entangled in the US-China rivalry, while still safeguarding its own economic and security interests in the region.

3. **Security and Trade Interests:** The EU has growing economic interests in the Indo-Pacific through trade agreements like the EU-Australia FTA and the EU-ASEAN partnership. As both Australia and New Zealand enhance their military and strategic posture through AUKUS, the EU will want to ensure that its economic presence in the region is protected, especially in relation to maritime security and open trade routes. As the EU aligns its interests with the Pacific Islands in areas like sustainable fisheries, climate change adaptation, and renewable energy, it gains influence in broader regional security frameworks, including potential collaborations on defense and cybersecurity.

## Softening the US-China Rivalry:

Australia and New Zealand, both of which are key allies of the US and have important partnerships with China, have a unique position in encouraging the EU to take a balanced approach to the US-China rivalry. They would likely advocate for:

1. **Encouraging Dialogue and De-escalation:** Both Australia and New Zealand recognize the importance of avoiding direct confrontation between the US and China, especially in the Indo-Pacific, which could destabilize the region and negatively impact smaller states like the Pacific Islanders. They may push the EU to continue its role as an honest broker and advocate for confidence-building measures, dialogue mechanisms, and cooperative regional initiatives that can defuse tensions.

2. **A More Neutral Stance:** The EU's inherent neutrality in the US-China power struggle gives it a unique opportunity to influence the Pacific region without directly taking sides. Australia and New Zealand would likely support the EU's continued focus on global governance, multilateral diplomacy, and global commons, thus reducing the intensity of the rivalry between China and the US, which is often exacerbated in global forums like the UN, WTO, and ASEAN.

3. **Balancing Soft Power and Strategic Cooperation:** Both Australia and New Zealand, as Pacific-facing democracies, understand the delicate balance between economic cooperation and security concerns in the region. They may suggest that the EU could serve as a soft power counterbalance to both the US and China's competing influences. By supporting regional capacity building, sustainable development, and environmental protection, the EU can assert itself as a constructive actor in the Indo-Pacific, one that enhances regional stability and prosperity without exacerbating great power tensions.

## Summary

The strategic context of the Pacific Islands may be conceived in terms of the history of warfare, the intersection of the EU and France and the impact of the Aukus agreement setting the stage

for the management of the conflict and cooperation among great powers in this vast oceanic expanse that has nothing to do with the Indo-Pacific as a whole and everything to do with the political will to organize the region, without ignoring the interest and values of its inhabitants, even as change management is over us in the international system. AUKUS agreement and the Antarctic interests of Australia and New Zealand add a layer of strategic complexity to the EU's approach to the Pacific Islands. These geopolitical realities, alongside growing great power competition, shape how the EU navigates its diplomatic and economic relations with the Pacific. By cooperating with Australia and New Zealand, the EU can position itself as a neutral, stabilizing force in the region, promoting regional integration, sustainable development, and climate resilience, all while encouraging the softening of US-China rivalry. This, in turn, would not only strengthen the EU's influence in the Indo-Pacific but also contribute to broader global stability.

## 5. 0 POLICY CONTEXT

The ongoing unrest in New Caledonia underscores France's colonial legacy, which complicates its role as a Pacific power and impacts the EU's strategic interests in the Asian region. France's struggle to maintain control over New Caledonia is not just a local issue but a significant factor in the EU's broader strategic reorientation towards Asia.

The political instability in New Caledonia has far-reaching implications, affecting France's ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific and, by extension, the EU's strategic positioning in Asia. As the EU pivots towards Asia, the situation in New Caledonia serves as a critical test of France's influence and the EU's ability to navigate complex regional dynamics.

The EU's strategic reorientation towards Asia must account for the volatile situation in New Caledonia, which could undermine France's contributions to EU policies in the region. France's handling of New Caledonia's independence movement will significantly influence the EU's credibility and effectiveness in its Asian strategy.

The economic and security challenges posed by the unrest in New Caledonia are pivotal for the EU's strategic interests in Asia, highlighting the need for a cohesive and adaptive approach. The EU's strategic ambitions in Asia are intricately linked to France's ability to stabilize New Caledonia, emphasizing the interconnected nature of regional security and economic policies.

The interplay between France's colonial challenges in New Caledonia and the EU's strategic goals in Asia reflects broader geopolitical shifts, necessitating a nuanced and integrated policy response. Understanding the real-world implications of New Caledonia's unrest within the context of the EU's Asian strategy reveals the complexities of modern geopolitical alignments.

The EU's bilateral Pacific partnership agreements are part of its broader strategy to enhance cooperation and engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. These agreements aim to foster economic, political, and environmental collaboration between the EU and Pacific countries.

## Historical Background

The EU's engagement with the Indo-Pacific has evolved significantly over the years. Key milestones include:

- **Strategic Partnership with ASEAN (2020):** The EU became a strategic partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), marking a significant step in deepening ties with Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021):** The EU launched its Indo-Pacific strategy, emphasizing the importance of the region for global stability and prosperity<sup>2</sup>.
- **Samoa Agreement (2023):** This agreement with Pacific countries further solidified the EU's commitment to the region<sup>3</sup>.

## Potential Evolution and Improvement

The EU's partnerships in the Indo-Pacific are expected to evolve in several ways:

- **Enhanced Economic Cooperation:** The EU aims to increase trade and investment in the region, focusing on sustainable and fair trade practices<sup>4</sup>.
- **Climate and Environmental Initiatives:** There will be a stronger emphasis on tackling climate change, promoting green energy transitions, and strengthening ocean governance.
- **Security and Stability:** The EU will continue to support a rules-based international order and work towards maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

## Ties with EU's Overall Foreign Policy

The EU's bilateral Pacific partnership agreements are integral to its broader foreign policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific and Asia:

**Economic Interests:** The Indo-Pacific region is vital for EU trade, with significant portions of EU foreign trade passing through key waterways like the South China Sea.

**Geopolitical Strategy:** The EU's strategy aims to counterbalance the influence of major powers like China by fostering strong partnerships with regional players such as India and Japan.

**Global Challenges:** The EU seeks to address global challenges collaboratively, including climate change, security threats, and economic development.

These partnerships reflect the EU's commitment to a stable, prosperous, and rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.

Now, Brexit has had several implications for EU-Pacific partnerships, affecting trade dynamics, political relationships, and strategic alignments. Here are some key points:

## Trade Dynamics

1. **Shift in Trade Relations:** With the UK no longer part of the EU, Pacific countries that previously had trade agreements with the EU through the UK now need to navigate separate agreements with both the EU and the UK.

2. **New Trade Agreements:** The UK has been negotiating its own trade agreements with Pacific countries, which may differ in terms of provisions and benefits compared to the EU's agreements.

## **Political Relationships**

1. **Recalibration of Alliances:** Pacific countries may need to recalibrate their diplomatic and economic strategies to maintain strong ties with both the EU and the UK.
2. **Increased Bilateral Engagements:** The EU might increase its bilateral engagements with Pacific countries to ensure that its influence and partnerships remain strong despite the UK's departure.

## **Strategic Alignments**

1. **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy continues to emphasize the importance of the region, including the Pacific islands, for global stability and prosperity. Brexit has not altered this strategic focus, but it has necessitated adjustments in how the EU engages with the region.
2. **Collaborative Efforts:** The EU and the UK may find opportunities to collaborate on shared interests in the Pacific, such as climate change, sustainable development, and regional security.

## **Reinforcement of Multilateral-Bilateral Policy Mix**

1. **Complementary Approaches:** The EU's multilateral engagements, such as through the Pacific Islands Forum, complement its bilateral agreements with individual Pacific countries. This dual approach helps address both regional and country-specific issues.
2. **Enhanced Cooperation:** By maintaining strong bilateral ties and participating in multilateral forums, the EU can reinforce its overall strategy in the Pacific, ensuring that its policies are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

Overall, while Brexit has introduced some complexities, the EU remains committed to its partnerships in the Pacific, adapting its strategies to continue fostering strong and beneficial relationships.

Pacific Island nations navigate a complex web of relationships with major powers in the Indo-Pacific region, including the United States, China, Australia, and Japan. They often employ a strategy of balancing and hedging to maximize their benefits while maintaining their sovereignty and independence.

1. **Diversification of Partnerships:** By engaging with multiple major powers, Pacific Island nations can avoid over-reliance on any single country. This diversification helps them secure various forms of aid, investment, and diplomatic support.

2. **Strategic Non-Alignment:** Many Pacific Island nations adopt a non-aligned stance, allowing them to remain neutral and avoid being drawn into geopolitical conflicts. This approach enables them to focus on their national interests and regional stability.
3. **Leveraging Regional Organizations:** Organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) provide a platform for collective bargaining and regional solidarity. Through these organizations, Pacific Island nations can present a united front in negotiations with major powers.
4. **Climate Diplomacy:** Given their vulnerability to climate change, Pacific Island nations often use climate diplomacy as a tool to engage with major powers. By highlighting their unique challenges, they can attract international support and funding for climate resilience initiatives.
5. **Cultural and Historical Ties:** Historical and cultural connections, particularly with countries like Australia and New Zealand, play a significant role in shaping diplomatic relations. These ties often translate into strong bilateral cooperation and support.

By carefully balancing these relationships, Pacific Island nations aim to enhance their development prospects while safeguarding their autonomy and regional stability.

China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region significantly impacts the dynamics in several ways:

1. **Economic Investments:** China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has led to substantial investments in infrastructure projects across the Pacific Islands. While these investments can boost local economies, they also raise concerns about debt dependency and the strategic implications of Chinese-funded projects.
2. **Diplomatic Engagement:** China has increased its diplomatic presence and engagement with Pacific Island nations, often providing aid and development assistance. This has led to stronger bilateral ties but also heightened competition with other major powers like the United States and Australia.
3. **Strategic Military Presence:** China's interest in establishing a military presence in the region, such as through potential naval bases, has raised security concerns among neighboring countries and traditional allies like the US and Australia. This has prompted these countries to enhance their own strategic commitments to the region.
4. **Soft Power and Cultural Influence:** China uses soft power tools, including cultural exchanges, scholarships, and media influence, to strengthen its ties with Pacific Island nations. This helps build a favorable image of China but also creates a complex web of influence that other powers must navigate.
5. **Environmental and Resource Management:** China's activities in fishing and resource extraction have significant environmental impacts. Pacific Island nations are concerned about sustainable practices and the long-term effects on their marine ecosystems.

Overall, China's growing influence introduces both opportunities and challenges for Pacific Island nations, requiring them to carefully balance their relationships to maintain sovereignty and regional stability.

Japan views the Pacific Islands as strategically important partners, both in terms of regional security and economic cooperation. This relationship is framed within Japan's broader vision for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP), which aims to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region through adherence to international law and principles like the rule of law and freedom of navigation<sup>4</sup>.

Japan engages with the Pacific Island countries (PICs) through various bilateral and multilateral platforms, most notably the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM). This triennial summit, first held in 1997, serves as a cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy in the region, focusing on development aid, trade, and fisheries.

Additionally, Japan's strategic interest in the Pacific Islands is partly driven by the need to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region. Japan aims to strengthen its ties with these island nations to ensure they remain aligned with its vision for a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Japan-Pacific Island relations face several key challenges:

1. **Climate Change:** The Pacific Islands are highly vulnerable to climate change, experiencing rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and coral bleaching. Japan, as a major industrial nation, faces pressure to support these countries in their climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.
2. **Economic Development:** Many Pacific Island nations have small, fragile economies that rely heavily on aid and remittances. Japan's challenge is to provide sustainable economic support that fosters long-term growth and resilience.
3. **Geopolitical Tensions:** The increasing influence of China in the Pacific Islands poses a strategic challenge for Japan. Balancing its own interests while countering China's presence without escalating tensions is a delicate task.
4. **Resource Management:** Fisheries and natural resources are critical for the economies of Pacific Island nations. Ensuring sustainable management of these resources while addressing overfishing and illegal fishing activities is a significant challenge.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Building strong relationships requires understanding and respecting the diverse cultures and traditions of the Pacific Island nations. Japan must navigate these cultural nuances to foster genuine and effective partnerships.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3237872/japans-strategic-approach-toward-island-states-case-of-the-pacific-islands/>



India views the Pacific Islands as strategically important partners within the broader Indo-Pacific region. Here are some key aspects of India's perspective and engagement with the Pacific Islands:

1. **Strategic Importance:** The Pacific Islands are seen as crucial for India's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. This region is significant for maritime trade routes and geopolitical stability.
2. **Diplomatic Engagement:** India has been actively engaging with the Pacific Island countries through initiatives like the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC). This forum facilitates dialogue and cooperation on various issues, including climate change, sustainable development, and capacity building.
3. **Development Assistance:** India provides development assistance to Pacific Island nations, focusing on areas such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This assistance aims to support the sustainable development of these countries and strengthen bilateral ties.
4. **Cultural and Historical Ties:** India shares historical and cultural ties with some Pacific Island nations, particularly Fiji, which has a significant population of Indian origin. These ties are leveraged to foster closer relationships and mutual understanding.
5. **Countering Influence:** India's engagement in the Pacific Islands is also seen as a counterbalance to the influence of other major powers, particularly China. By strengthening its presence and partnerships in the region, India aims to promote a multipolar Indo-Pacific.

Overall, India's approach to the Pacific Islands is characterized by a commitment to mutual development, strategic cooperation, and cultural exchange. This multifaceted engagement underscores the importance India places on the region in its broader foreign policy objectives.

Building on the historical context, we now turn to the intricate strategic challenges New Caledonia faces as an island nation in the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

## 7.0 UNRAVELLING THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IN NC

The Routledge International Handbook of Island Studies highlights several common traits, challenges, and opportunities that islands and islanders experience:

### Common Traits

1. **Distinct Identities:** Islands often have unique cultural, social, and environmental identities.
2. **Isolation and Connectivity:** While geographically isolated, islands can also be hubs of connectivity, especially in terms of trade and tourism.
3. **Biodiversity:** Islands frequently host unique ecosystems and species, contributing significantly to global biodiversity.

## Challenges

1. **Vulnerability to Climate Change:** Islands are particularly susceptible to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other climate-related impacts.
2. **Economic Dependence:** Many islands rely heavily on a few economic sectors, such as tourism or fishing, making them vulnerable to economic fluctuations.
3. **Resource Limitations:** Limited natural resources can pose significant challenges for sustainable development and self-sufficiency.

## Opportunities

1. **Tourism:** Islands often attract tourists due to their natural beauty and unique cultures, providing significant economic opportunities.
2. **Innovation and Resilience:** The need to address their unique challenges often drives islands to innovate in areas like renewable energy, sustainable practices, and community resilience.
3. **Cultural Preservation:** Islands can serve as important sites for the preservation and celebration of indigenous cultures and traditions.

These insights reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of island life, highlighting both the unique opportunities and the significant challenges faced by island communities.

The Pacific Islands are known for their unique characteristics, which include:

1. **Cultural Diversity:** The islands are home to a wide range of cultures, languages, and traditions. This diversity is a result of the islands' historical isolation and varied colonization histories.
2. **Biodiversity:** The Pacific Islands host unique ecosystems with many endemic species of plants and animals. Coral reefs, such as the Great Barrier Reef, are significant biodiversity hotspots.
3. **Geographical Isolation:** Many of the islands are remote, which has influenced their development and the preservation of their unique cultures and ecosystems.
4. **Vulnerability to Climate Change:** The islands are particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events.

## Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia

The Pacific Islands are traditionally divided into three main ethnogeographic regions: Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia. These names reflect the regions' distinct cultural and geographical characteristics:

### Melanesia:

- **Meaning:** The name comes from the Greek words "melas" (black) and "nesos" (island), referring to the predominantly dark-skinned inhabitants.
- **Location:** Includes New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and New Caledonia.

- **Characteristics:** Known for its cultural and linguistic diversity, with many different ethnic groups and languages.

## **Polynesia:**

- **Meaning:** Derived from the Greek words “poly” (many) and “nesos” (island), indicating the many islands in this region.
- **Location:** Encompasses a large triangle in the eastern Pacific, including Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island.
- **Characteristics:** Polynesian cultures are known for their navigational skills and extensive ocean voyages.

## **Micronesia:**

- **Meaning:** From the Greek words “mikros” (small) and “nesos” (island), referring to the small islands in this region
- **Location:** Includes the islands north of the equator, such as Palau, Guam, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati.
- **Characteristics:** Micronesia is characterized by its small, low-lying atolls and diverse cultures.

These divisions help to understand the cultural and geographical diversity of the Pacific Islands, each with its own unique identity and challenges.

The strategic challenges in New Caledonia are multifaceted and involve various stakeholders, each with their perspectives:

**French Government’s Role:** The French government is confronted with the challenge of striking a balance between the calls for independence and the aspiration to retain control over New Caledonia. Ongoing tensions revolve around the future governance of the territory, restrictions on voter eligibility.

**China’s Perspective:** China’s interest in New Caledonia is linked to the concept of the Outer Periphery, i.e., its peaceful rise away from economic markets and asymmetric multilateral packages addressing the development needs and technology transfers of its partners. This is perceived as a strategic policy, particularly regarding influence in the Pacific region<sup>5</sup> and access to natural resources like nickel, which is a minor part of Eurocoins. Local politicians and international observers are concerned about China’s potential influence if New Caledonia becomes independent. Beijing has interests in Oceania but also feels boxed in by the US’s ring of alliances and bases in the Pacific, but has not settled on a final policy towards the Pacific Islanders. It cooperates with the EU in the Western Pacific under the High Sea Treaty aiming

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.defence.gov.au/defence-activities/research-innovation/research-publications/chinas-growing-influence-south-west-pacific-australian-policies-could-respond-chinas-intentions-and-objectives>

at defining and policing the marine protected area<sup>6</sup>. China does next to nothing to dispel Australia and the US' anxieties and the need to cooperate and enter into dialogue<sup>7</sup>.

**Australia's Perspective:** Australia views New Caledonia as a strategic neighbor and has a clear and obvious strategic interest in the stability of the South Pacific. The Australian government monitors the situation closely and encourages constructive dialogue among all parties shaping New Caledonia's future.

**Kanak Perspective:** The Kanak people, the indigenous population of New Caledonia, seek greater autonomy and recognition of their rights. They face economic inequalities, challenges with access to education, and challenges with political representation. The Kanak independence movement aims to establish a sovereign country controlling resources like nickel. **European Settlers' Perspective:** European settlers and their descendants comprise a significant portion of the population and are concerned about maintaining their economic status and political influence. They are often opposed to changes that could affect their standing in society.

**Tourists' Perspective:** Tourism is vital to New Caledonia's economy. Tourists are attracted to the island's natural beauty and unique culture. However, the industry faces challenges such as competition with other Pacific destinations, the need for sustainable development, and the impact of global events on travel patterns.

## **How can we execute on these challenges in a balanced manner?**

Addressing New Caledonia's strategic challenges requires a multifaceted approach, considering the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders:

### **French Government**

The French government views New Caledonia as an integral part of the French Republic, associated with the European Union as an overseas country or territory<sup>1</sup>. Recent unrest and calls for independence have led to France reinforcing its presence and emphasizing the need for dialogue and a comprehensive political deal<sup>2</sup>. France aims to maintain stability and protect its interests in the Pacific, balancing local autonomy with national sovereignty.

### **Kanaky Politicians**

Kanak politicians advocate for the self-determination of the Indigenous Kanak population. They oppose recent constitutional reforms proposed by France, which they believe would dilute their voting power and undermine their struggle for independence<sup>4</sup>. The Kanak perspective emphasizes the importance of their destiny being decided within the Pacific region, not in Europe<sup>4</sup>.

### **China**

China's interest in New Caledonia is often framed within the context of its broader Pacific strategy. While there is no direct claim from China regarding New Caledonia, the French and

<sup>6</sup> [http://english.scio.gov.cn/chinavoices/2024-04/22/content\\_117141153.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/chinavoices/2024-04/22/content_117141153.htm)

<sup>7</sup> <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1159400>

other regional actors express concern that an independent New Caledonia could fall under Chinese influence<sup>5</sup>.

China's perspective is likely focused on economic opportunities and expanding its influence in the Pacific.

## European Settlers

European settlers, particularly those with long-standing ties to the territory, are likely to prioritize economic stability and the continuation of strong ties with France and the EU. They benefit from EU funding and support, and may view the association with France as a means to maintain their economic and social status.

## Tourists

Tourists are attracted to New Caledonia's unique blend of Melanesian culture and French influence, its natural beauty, and its status as a relatively undiscovered destination<sup>7</sup>. From a tourist perspective, preserving the archipelago's natural environment, cultural heritage, and tranquility is paramount.

Executing on New Caledonia's strategic challenges involves balancing these perspectives, ensuring political stability, promoting sustainable development, and respecting the rights and aspirations of the Indigenous population. It requires a collaborative approach that considers the economic, social, and environmental implications for all parties involved.

The Australian government's perspective on New Caledonia is characterized by a commitment to strengthening ties and supporting the territory's integration into the Pacific region. Australia values its historical friendship with New Caledonia, indigenous linkages, shared mineral wealth, and unique biodiversity and marine reserves.

Australia has demonstrated this commitment through various initiatives:

- **Security Partnership:** Collaborating with New Caledonia and France to address regional challenges, such as illegal fishing, environmental protection, and trafficking.
- **Pacific Fusion Centre:** New Caledonia participates in this initiative, which aims to strengthen Pacific governments' law enforcement and sovereignty protection capabilities.
- **Humanitarian and Disaster Response:** Working together under the FRANZ Agreement and joint military exercises like Exercise Croix du Sud<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, during the COVID-19 crisis, Australia worked closely with New Caledonia to ensure the movement of essential goods and people, highlighting the importance of their relationship<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new-caledonia/new-caledonia-country-brief>

In light of recent events, the Australian government has urged Australians in New Caledonia to exercise caution and is actively working with partners to ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens amid the unrest.

Australia's view on New Caledonia's independence movement is nuanced, considering its close geographical proximity and strategic interests in the Pacific region. While Australia respects New Caledonia's right to self-determination, it also values stability and the continuation of strong ties with France as a key partner in the Pacific.

The Australian government has been cautious in its public statements, emphasizing the importance of a peaceful and democratic process regarding New Caledonia's future. Australia recognizes the complexity of the situation, given the divided opinions within New Caledonia and the potential implications for the region.

In the wake of the 2021 referendum, where a significant majority voted against independence amid a low turnout due to a boycott by pro-independence groups, Australia likely views the outcome as an indicator of the challenges ahead in achieving a consensus on New Caledonia's political status.

The Australian government would be interested in ensuring that any transition respects the will of the people and maintains regional security and cooperation<sup>2</sup>.

Overall, Australia's approach towards New Caledonia is one of partnership, support for stability, and regional cooperation<sup>9</sup>.

Australia engages with other Pacific Island nations on regional issues through a comprehensive approach that emphasizes partnership, support for regional security, and shared prosperity. Here are some key aspects of Australia's engagement:

## **Building a United Pacific Family**

Australia supports a strong and unified Pacific family and collaborates with Pacific-led regional organisations like the Pacific Islands Forum to address shared challenges. This includes providing critical policy and technical services in areas such as health, education, fisheries, climate change, oceans, and empowering women and girls<sup>1</sup>.

## **Climate and Disaster Resilience**

Recognising the Pacific as facing a climate emergency, Australia is taking action on climate change and helping the region respond by building climate and disaster resilience at all levels. This includes climate and ocean science initiatives, disaster preparedness, and integrating climate change and disaster resilience into the Pacific development assistance program.

## **COVID-19 Recovery Support**

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new-caledonia/increasing-our-engagement-with-new-caledonia>



Australia has been responsive to the priorities and aspirations of Pacific partners in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, shaping support for the region's sustained growth and development.

## **People Connections and Partnerships**

The strength of Australia's engagement is grounded in deep and longstanding personal, historical, and cultural ties. Australia's commitment places people at the heart of Pacific partnerships, with actions to strengthen and celebrate connections through sport, education, media, and churches<sup>1</sup>.

## **Gender Equality**

Through initiatives like Pacific Women Lead, Australia invests in advancing gender equality in the Pacific, working in partnership to strengthen regional gender equality efforts<sup>1</sup>.

## **Economic Prosperity**

Australia is committed to supporting Pacific island countries to build resilience and capacity to address security challenges, as articulated in the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Security cooperation covers defense, law enforcement, transnational crime, climate, and disaster response<sup>10</sup>.

## **Diplomatic Engagement**

Australia emphasizes granular, person-to-person engagement for effective regional diplomacy, listening to the needs and concerns of Pacific Island nations to establish itself as an informed and valued partner in the region.

## **Security Cooperation**

Australia has security cooperation arrangements with most Pacific Island states, including police-to-police cooperation, defense capacity-building, and joint military exercises. There are also development programs designed to address drivers of fragility such as inequality and inclusive economic growth.

In summary, Australia's engagement with Pacific Island nations is multifaceted, focusing on deep engagement, respect for the security concerns of Pacific island nations, and treating regional multilateral engagement mechanisms as ways to bring together stakeholders as equals<sup>11</sup>

Overall, Australia likely advocates for a balanced approach that considers both the New Caledonian people's aspirations and the Pacific community's broader interests. Each group's

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<sup>10</sup> <https://pacificsecurity.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Boe-Declaration-on-Regional-Security.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/resetting-australia-s-relationship-pacific-three-ideas>

perspective contributes to the complex strategic landscape of New Caledonia, where economic, political, and social factors intertwine<sup>12</sup>.

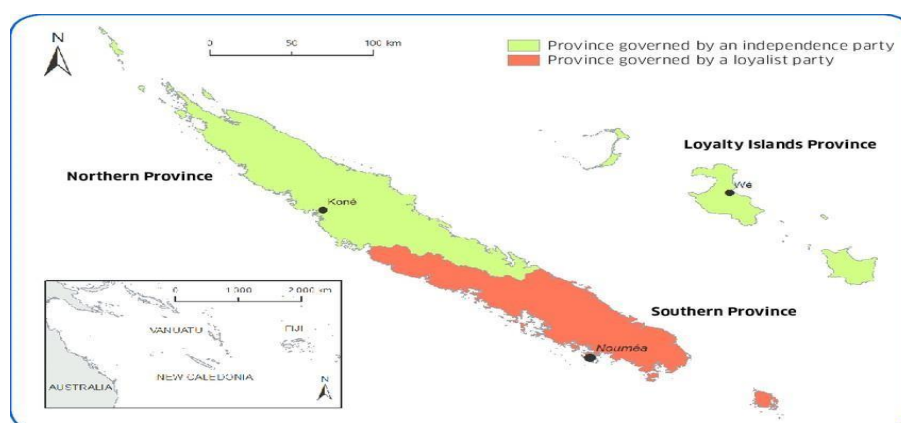
## 5. Stakeholders in New Caledonia?

The stakeholder groups inside New Caledonia include:

- **Kanak People:** The indigenous Melanesian inhabitants of New Caledonia constitute a significant portion of the population and have advocated for greater autonomy or independence.
- **European Descendants (Caldoche and Zoreille):** Descendants of European settlers who also form a considerable part of the population, with a strong presence in the South Province.
- **Economic Actors:** This includes private companies involved in critical industries such as nickel mining, a significant part of New Caledonia's economy.
- **Environmental and Cultural Organizations:** Groups that aim to promote sustainable development and preserve New Caledonia's unique marine and cultural heritage
- **Government and Public Administrations:** Local government bodies and French state authorities that govern and administer the territory.
- **Academia and Research Institutions:** Entities involved in research and educational activities contribute to understanding New Caledonia's social and natural environment.
- **Civil Society:** Non-governmental organisations and associations that work on various issues ranging from social welfare to environmental conservation

These groups play a vital role in shaping New Caledonia's future. Each has its own interests and influence on the territory's strategic direction.

**Figure – Provincial government**



## 6. Strategy – The way Forward

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific>

France can integrate the stakeholder-based consultation method with the OKR (Objectives and Key Results) framework to devise a strategy that addresses the complex issues you've outlined. Here's a structured approach:

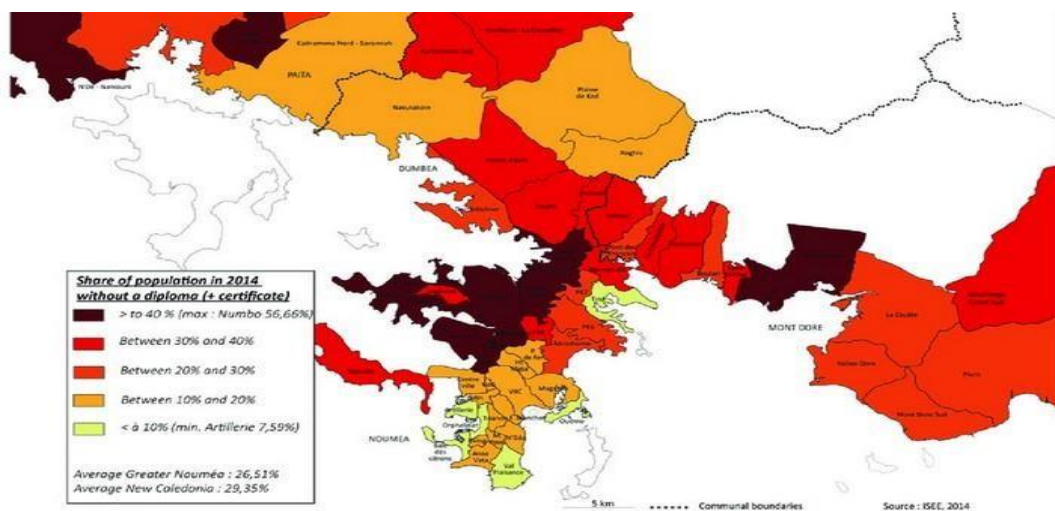
## Stakeholder-Based Consultation

1. Identify Stakeholders: Recognize all groups affected by socio-economic imbalances, urban-rural dynamics, ethnic conflicts, and indigenous rights.
2. Engage Stakeholders: Conduct meetings, surveys, and forums to gather diverse perspectives and needs.
3. Each group's core issues and aspirations:

## OKR Framework

1. Objective: Establish clear, ambitious, achievable goals that align with the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples and France's security needs<sup>4</sup>.
2. Key Results: Define measurable outcomes for each objective, such as reducing income disparity, enhancing rural infrastructure, resolving ethnic tensions, and promoting indigenous rights while ensuring national stability.

Figure – Map of Noumea



10 Map of the distribution of "unqualified" people in Greater Nouméa in 2014. (Source: INSEE-ISEE 2014)

## Strategy Development

1. Socio-Economic Balance: Implement policies that promote equal opportunities, such as education and job creation, especially in disadvantaged areas.
2. Urban-Rural Relationship: Develop programs that bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, focusing on technology transfer, healthcare access, housing, and infrastructure development.

3. **Ethnic Group Harmony:** Facilitate dialogue and reconciliation processes, establish anti-discrimination laws, and promote cultural exchange programs.
4. **Indigenous Rights:** Uphold the rights to self-determination, economic development, and political participation as per the UN declaration. Ensure indigenous citizenship rights are respected within the French legal framework.
5. **French Stability and Security:** Align the strategy with France's security policies, ensuring that initiatives contribute to national and regional stability.

## Implementation

1. **Action Plans:** Create detailed plans for each objective, outlining specific steps, responsible parties, and timelines.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Set up a system to track progress against critical results, adjusting strategies as needed.

## Review and Adaptation

1. **Regular Reviews:** Conduct periodic assessments to ensure objectives are met and stakeholders' needs are addressed.
2. **Adaptation:** Be prepared to modify objectives and key results in response to changing circumstances or feedback.

This strategy aims to create a balanced approach that respects the rights and needs of all stakeholders while contributing to the stability and security of the French government. To respond effectively to the dynamic nature of these issues, it's important to maintain flexibility and adaptability throughout the process.

## 8.0 BRINGING IN YHE KANAKY

Involving indigenous communities in decision-making ensures their rights and perspectives are respected. Here are some strategies to facilitate their participation:

1. **Indigenous communities' traditional governance and decision-making processes.**
2. **Ensure Representation:** Indigenous communities should have representatives chosen by themselves to participate in decision-making forums.
3. **Capacity Building:** Provide training and resources to indigenous communities to engage effectively in decision-making processes.
4. **Consultation and Consent:** Consult with indigenous peoples before making decisions that affect them, and seek their free, prior, and informed consent.
5. **Address Barriers:** Identify and work to overcome barriers to participation, such as language, geographical remoteness, and socio-economic factors.
6. **Incorporate Indigenous Knowledge:** Value and integrate indigenous knowledge and perspectives into planning and decision-making.
7. **Create Networks:** Establish networks among indigenous communities and other governance actors to enhance communication and collaboration<sup>13</sup>.

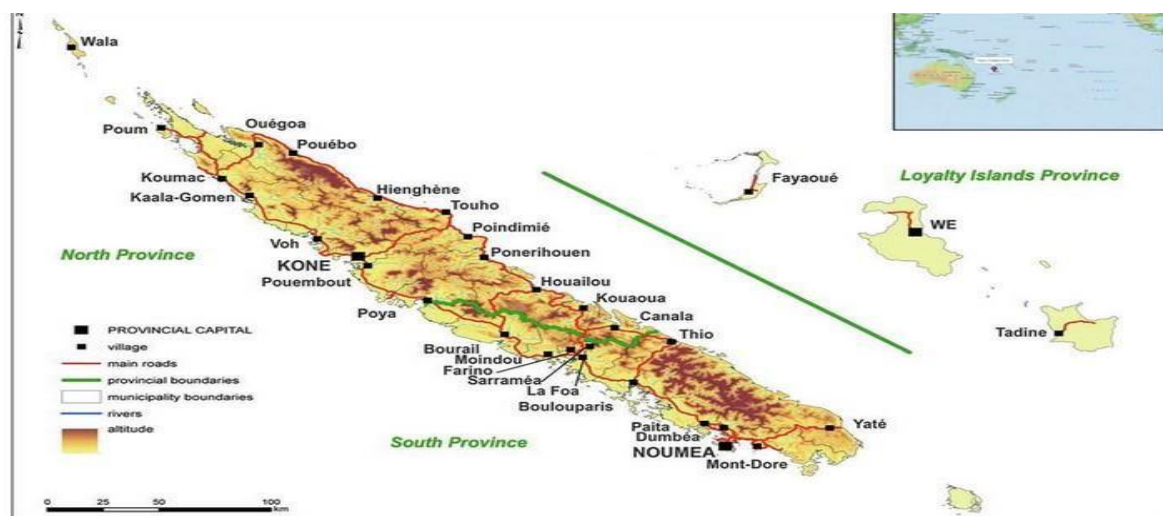
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<sup>13</sup> Consider asking One Earth to chip-in as implementation partner.

8. **Legal Frameworks:** Advocate for legal frameworks that mandate the inclusion of indigenous voices in decision-making processes.
9. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement mechanisms for indigenous communities to provide feedback on decisions and policies that impact them.

By adopting these strategies, indigenous communities can become active participants in decision-making and contribute to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

**Figure – Municipal map**



## 9.0 EUROPEAN UNION

Creating an action plan at the EU level to address the situation in France's Pacific Islands, considering the geopolitical context, involves several steps. Here's a structured approach:

### Understanding the Geopolitical Landscape

- **China's Role in Oceania:** China has been increasing its influence in the South Pacific through trade, infrastructure development, and diplomacy, but has not settled on a strategy.
- **Perception of US Encirclement:** The US has been reinforcing its presence in Oceania, which some perceive as an attempt to encircle China.
- **Interests of the US, Australia, and New Zealand:** These countries aim to maintain Western strategic influence in the region and ensure that no power hostile to their interests establishes a strategic foothold.

### EU's Interests in Oceania

- The EU's interests include supporting multilateralism, climate change mitigation, ocean protection, biodiversity, peace, and security.
- The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy emphasises cooperation with regional partners and addresses global challenges like climate change and maritime security.

## Action Plan Development

1. **Strategic Partnerships:** Strengthen alliances with key regional players (US, Australia, New Zealand) to align on common goals.
2. **Diplomatic Engagement:** Increase diplomatic efforts with China to promote a stable and rules-based regional order.
3. **Support for France's Pacific Territories:** Enhance support for economic development, infrastructure, and resilience against climate change in France's Pacific territories.
4. **Regional Security:** Collaborate on regional security initiatives that respect sovereignty and territorial integrity.
5. **Sustainable Development:** Invest in sustainable development projects that align with the EU's Green Deal and the UN's SDGs.

## Evaluation of EU Policies

- **Effectiveness:** Assess the impact of EU policies on regional stability, economic development, and environmental protection.
- **Programs and Funds Allocation:** Review the allocation of funds to ensure they effectively address the needs of the region and the EU's strategic interests.
- **Policy Adaptation:** Adapt policies to respond to the evolving geopolitical dynamics and feedback from regional stakeholders.

## Monitoring and Review

- **Performance Indicators:** Establish clear metrics to measure the action plan's success.
- **Regular Reviews:** Conduct periodic reviews to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Engage with local communities and stakeholders to gather insights and improve policy effectiveness.

This action plan aims to balance the EU's strategic interests with Oceania's complex geopolitical realities, promoting peace, security, and sustainable development in the region.

## 9.0 INFRASTRUCTURE

Specific infrastructure projects that could significantly benefit France's Pacific territories include:

1. **Digital Connectivity:** Enhancing digital infrastructure to improve internet access and connectivity, fostering economic growth and access to services transportation networks, including ports and airports, must be developed.
2. **Energy:** Investing in renewable energy projects like solar and wind to reduce dependency on imported fuels and promote sustainable development.
3. **Water Management:** Implementing water management and desalination projects to ensure a reliable supply of fresh water is crucial for these islands.
4. **Healthcare Infrastructure:** Upgrading healthcare facilities and services to provide better care for the local population and to prepare for health-related challenges.
5. **Environmental Protection:** Supporting initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Parks



Partnership and mangrove conservation to protect biodiversity and combat climate change impacts.

These projects align with France's Indo-Pacific strategy, which aims to maintain an open and inclusive region founded on multilateralism and respect for international law while also addressing environmental issues and climate change. They also offer opportunities for French companies in energy, health, transport, sustainable cities, and the digital economy.

## 10.0 REGIONAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

The existing security frameworks in the Pacific are diverse and include formal and informal arrangements. Additionally, security cooperation in the Pacific Islands is not a single architecture but a patchwork of bilateral, multilateral, and multilateral agreements across various levels.

Evaluating their effects, these frameworks have been instrumental in addressing traditional and non-traditional security threats. However, to improve response and engagement, there is a need for more inclusive dialogue that incorporates the perspectives of all Pacific nations and recognises the unique challenges they face, such as the impact of climate change on security.

The EU's impact in the Pacific is multifaceted. It has been a critical partner in addressing global challenges like climate change, ocean governance, and peace and security. The EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific aims to support green and digital transitions in the region. The EU's overseas funding, mainly through the Global Gateway strategy, strives to deliver quality and sustainable investments.

In shaping the Indo-Pacific, the EU's current priorities include:

1. **Mediation in the South China Sea:** The EU has a stake in the South China Sea due to significant trade flows. It supports a rules-based international order and peaceful dispute resolution by international law.
2. **Marine Protected Area Policing:** The EU supports the protection of marine biodiversity. For example, Niue has protected 100% of its territorial waters, becoming a leader in marine conservation.
3. **Regional Order in the Indian Ocean:** The EU recognises the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean for global trade and maritime security. It supports regional organisations and multilateral partnerships to maintain open access to critical waterways.

France's partnerships in the Indo-Pacific are crucial to its contractual relationship with the EU in the Pacific. France aims to promote stability and development, working alongside EU strategies and maintaining its own regional relationships. The right contractual relationship would align with the EU's broader Indo-Pacific strategy while respecting France's unique position as a Pacific nation.

To better address the security of indigenous populations in the Pacific, the EU could enhance its support for disaster management by integrating indigenous knowledge and practices, which are crucial for effective disaster risk reduction. This approach can improve the EU's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG

ECHO) activities, ensuring that disaster management and rescue efforts are culturally sensitive and tailored to the needs of indigenous communities.

In summary, the EU can strengthen its response in the Pacific by:

- Enhancing inclusive dialogue and cooperation within existing security frameworks.
- Aligning France's Pacific relationships with the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy.
- Integrating indigenous knowledge into disaster management practices to ensure the security and resilience of indigenous populations.
- Review the contractual relationship with Nouméa, and by implication, French Polynesia, and the wider Pacific communities upon request.

## Summary

The deployment of additional French security forces to New Caledonia can hardly disguise the international community's lack of response and policy in the Pacific to address the individual and collective concerns of the people living there.

Paris is paddling instead of leading.

Long-standing problems with political violence, colonialism, civil unrest and economic underdevelopment point the finger at insufficient policy response by both France and the local government. As Noumea grows more Kanaky, the shadows of inequality stretch longer; and with each step France takes towards decentralization, the island's stance on its bond with the mainland fractures further. Yet, a power vacuum doesn't last long in the Pacific, taking up a large share of the world's oceans and a significant player in the politics of the indigenous people movement<sup>14</sup>. New Caledonia is a fulcrum in Melanesia and France's Pacific policies and a turn-key in the Southern Pacific.

To move forward, the French government must do more to partner-up rather than jet in to repress demonstrators, a cure for a symptom of underlying conflict. There can be no peace without security, and no security without development. Paris must engage in serious and sustained dialogue in New Caledonia and address the population's grievances and analyse more carefully the north-south, urban-rural, government-municipalities cleavages<sup>15</sup> on voting behaviour and the level of satisfaction with the government versus performance.

President Macron cannot do that alone, but he can nod to initiatives serving the interests of all Pacific communities. Until such time, implementing the Bill on Voting rights could be put on hold to understand better how to pursue the common aim of compromise between autonomists and independentists in the local context<sup>16</sup>. Perhaps, the power to give effect or adopt a law on the election districts should be delegated to Noumea altogether<sup>17</sup>. The point is if we don't

<sup>14</sup> [https://tunnigavik.gl/emner/publikationer/forfatningskommissionens-betaenkning?sc\\_lang=da](https://tunnigavik.gl/emner/publikationer/forfatningskommissionens-betaenkning?sc_lang=da), appendix 3-4

<sup>15</sup> Linus Westheuser "Theorizing Cleavage Identities: The Contribution of Cultural Sociology", [https://scholar.google.com/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=de&user=Yxc62uYAAAAAJ&citation\\_for\\_view=Yxc62uYAAAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC](https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=de&user=Yxc62uYAAAAAJ&citation_for_view=Yxc62uYAAAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2024/05/15/new-caledonia-the-assemblee-nationale-approves-constitutional-reform-after-tense-night-on-archipelago\\_6671516\\_5.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2024/05/15/new-caledonia-the-assemblee-nationale-approves-constitutional-reform-after-tense-night-on-archipelago_6671516_5.html)

<sup>17</sup> <https://gouv.nc/>

understand the conflictual material and don't talk about the problems or lack understanding absent an effective and competent governmental apparatus in New Caledonia, it becomes exceedingly difficult to know where to intervene. Consider an F-NC-EU-IFI Task Force to flank the stakeholder-based dialogue inside New Caledonia and ask the TF-NC to formulate a comprehensive investment plan.

Once public order has been reestablished, societal peace, freedom and justice prevail, and grievances, developmental needs, inequalities, and imperfections have been addressed following a stakeholder-based dialogue in New Caledonia, strengthening governance and improving the response at the EU, regional, and sub-regional levels will become easier. That is also to say, a global deal takes time, and a population of 275,000 requires more than 1500 gendarmes to keep the peace.

There is an overwhelming majority for staying in France – *on fait des erreurs quand on est trop pressé*.

This concerted effort will have to move beyond the political agenda of the EU and involves give-and-take between the EU and France, mediation between China and the US, renewal of the EU's Asia strategy<sup>18</sup>, re-engagement of Australia and New Zealand, and the use of common sense vis-à-vis the needs for institution-building and capacity development to the Pacific communities, who are led by leaders who are just as interested in public order provided their sense of security and their citizens' needs and concerns are being addressed in a sustained and systematic manner. If this doesn't work, an F-NC commission to study the possibilities for modes of autonomy could be considered.

## 11.0 A NOTE ON LAND POLICIES

The evolution of land policies in New Caledonia has been deeply intertwined with its colonial history and the struggle for independence. Since its annexation by France in 1853, the colony's development was tied to settler colonialism, mineral exploitation, ranching, and the establishment of a penal colony, necessitating the expropriation of large tracts of native land. Over time, the concept of native reserves was introduced to protect the Melanesian population from losing all their land<sup>19</sup>. In recent years, New Caledonia's political status has evolved, reflecting the demands of the independence movement.

Trade access of Nouméa to the EU market is significant, as the European Union is a major trading partner, with much of the activity centered around France. The EU's Access2Markets portal provides detailed information on tariffs, rules of origin, taxes, import procedures, and product requirements for trade with third countries.<sup>20</sup>

### Action Plan for Land Policies and Trade Access:

<sup>18</sup> <https://rulle.ilcus.eu/2024/03/11/the-european-union-has-a-strategic-approach-to-its-engagement-in-the-asia-pacific-lets-explore-the-principles-and-parameters-of-the-eus-asia-policy/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/struggle-for-land-and-justice-in-kenya/rethinking-historical-land-injustices/0275BAD9C6234484FFF29069D35D384B>

<sup>20</sup> <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/home>

## Principles:

- **Equity and Inclusivity:** Ensure that land policies are fair and inclusive of the indigenous Kanak population.
- **Sustainability:** Promote sustainable land use that preserves biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- **Economic Growth:** Align land policies with economic strategies to enhance trade access and market diversification.

## Funding Allocation:

- Allocate funds to support infrastructure development that facilitates trade, such as port modernisation and logistics improvements.
- Invest in capacity-building programs for local businesses to meet EU market standards and regulations.
- Provide financial incentives for sustainable land development projects that align with environmental conservation efforts.

## Attractive Sectors for Investment:

- **Tourism:** With a growing number of tourists and cruise ship passengers, there is potential for investment in high-quality accommodation and tourism infrastructures.
- **Blue Economy:** Leverage New Caledonia's large maritime zone and exceptional biodiversity to develop sustainable marine industries.
- **Green Economy:** Capitalize on renewable energy opportunities and eco-activities, as New Caledonia aims to increase the share of renewable energies in its overall electricity production.
- **Healthcare:** The healthcare system offers investment opportunities, given its high level of medical care and the presence of public and private health professionals.
- **IT and Innovation:** With IT contributing to the development of several sectors, there are numerous opportunities for investment in IT-related projects and innovative businesses.
- **Agriculture:** Utilize the vast expanses of exploitable land for the production of fruit, vegetables, and cattle breeding, taking advantage of the island's health security and varied climate.

By focusing on these principles and sectors, New Caledonia can create a balanced approach to land policies and enhance its trade access to the EU market.<sup>21</sup>, benefiting both New Caledonia and, by extension, French Polynesia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

## 12.0 ARE YOU BRINGING IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

Involving local communities in land policy decisions is crucial for ensuring the policies are equitable, sustainable, and beneficial to those directly affected. Here are some strategies to

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<sup>21</sup> <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/home>

involve local communities effectively:

## **1. Community Consultation and Participation:**

- Establish regular consultations with community leaders and representatives to gather land use and management input.
- Facilitate community meetings and forums where members can openly discuss their views and concerns.

## **2. Transparent Communication:**

- Provide clear and accessible information about land policies and potential changes.
- Use various communication channels to reach different segments of the community, including social media, local radio, and public notices

## **3. Capacity Building:**

- Offer training and education to community members to enhance their understanding of land management, legal rights, and economic opportunities.
- Empower communities with the knowledge to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

## **4. Inclusive Decision-Making:**

- Include community members in decision-making bodies and committees related to land policy.
- Ensure that the composition of these bodies reflects the community's diversity, including gender, age, and socio-economic status.

## **5. Feedback Mechanisms:**

- Implement systems for communities to provide feedback on land policy implementation and outcomes.
- Address community grievances and suggestions in a timely and constructive manner.

## **6. Partnerships and Collaboration:**

- Develop partnerships between local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations to support land policy initiatives.
- Encourage collaborative projects that benefit both the community and broader land management goals.

## **7. Legal Support and Advocacy:**

- Provide legal assistance to communities to help them navigate land rights and policy implications.
- Support community-led advocacy groups that work towards fair land policies and practices

By implementing these strategies, local communities can actively shape land policies that affect their lives and futures. It is essential to create an environment where their voices are heard, respected, and integrated into the policy-making process. This approach leads to more effective and sustainable land management and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members.

**Addressing historical injustices** related to land ownership is a complex and sensitive issue that requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some steps that can be taken:

## 1. Acknowledgment of Past Wrongs:

- Acknowledge the need for Truth Commission to address the needs of the communities for reconciliation

## 2. Restorative Justice:

- Make sure to restore the owners to their ancestral land.
- Where restitution is not possible, provide fair and adequate compensation that reflects the current value of the land.

## 3. Legal Reforms:

- Review and reform laws to ensure they protect the land rights of historically marginalised communities
- Establish legal frameworks that facilitate the return of land or provide compensation.

## 4. Land Redistribution:

- Develop land redistribution programs that are fair, transparent, and benefit the dispossessed communities

## 5. Community Engagement:

- Involve affected communities in the decision-making process regarding land redistribution and compensation measures<sup>1</sup>.
- Ensure that community voices are heard and that they have a say in how historical injustices are addressed

## 6. Historical Research and Documentation:

- Conduct thorough historical research to document the extent of land dispossession and the parties affected.
- Create a public record of historical land injustices to educate the broader population and prevent future occurrences<sup>2</sup>.

## 7. Independent Commissions:

- Establish independent commissions or tribunals to investigate historical land claims and



recommend appropriate remedies

## 8. Economic Support:

- Provide economic support and development programs to communities affected by historical land injustices to help them rebuild and develop sustainably<sup>2</sup>.

## 9. Education and Awareness:

- Promote education and awareness campaigns to inform the public about the history of land dispossession and the importance of rectifying these injustices<sup>1</sup>.

## 10. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Set up mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken to address historical land injustices.

By taking these steps, we can work towards healing the wounds of the past and creating a more equitable and just society where the rights and dignity of all communities are respected. It's essential to approach this process with sensitivity, transparency, and a commitment to achieving long-term reconciliation and justice.

## 13.0 THE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCEANIA AND THE EU

### Overseas Association Decision

The Overseas Association Decision is an essential framework for cooperation between New Caledonia and the European Union. Let's take a closer look at what this decision entails and its implications in political, diplomatic, and financial terms:

#### 13.1 Overseas Association Decision (DAOG)

New Caledonia is a French overseas colony in the Pacific. According to the DGOAG, it is associated with the EU as an overseas region or territory (OCT) under articles 198 to 204 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

**Funding:** The DGOAG is primarily funded through the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). It covers the programming and financing of territorial and regional programs except Greenland, which has its own specific decision funded from the EU budget.

**Autonomy and EU citizenship:** OCTs have broad autonomy in economic affairs, the labour market, public health, and domestic affairs. Defence and foreign affairs remain the responsibility of member states. OCT inhabitants have EU citizenship.

#### 13.2 Political and Diplomatic Implications

**Dialogue and Cooperation:** THE DGOG promotes dialogue and cooperation between New Caledonia and the EU. It allows for discussions on shared priorities and challenges.

Stability and Peace: The DAOG contributes to regional stability and peace through cooperation on defence and foreign affairs.

### 13.3 Financial implications

Development Support: The EU has provided financial support to New Caledonia through EDF programs, contributing to reforms in employment, education, and sustainable development<sup>22</sup>.

Projects and Programs: Initiatives like PROTÉGÉ promote sustainable economic development and climate resilience in the Pacific, strengthening New Caledonia's position in the region<sup>23</sup>.

In summary, the DAOG is a crucial framework for cooperation between New Caledonia and the EU, with positive consequences for development, stability, and sustainability.

The EU maintains a comprehensive relationship with its Pacific partners from the EU delegation in Suva, Fiji. The EU's global Gateway connectivity strategy underpins cooperation in the region. Key focus areas include sustainable prosperity, green transition, ocean governance, digital governance, and partnerships<sup>24</sup>.

The dialogue aims to address challenges such as climate change, ocean protection, biodiversity, and peace and security.

It involves consultations, exchanges, and joint initiatives to enhance cooperation between Nouméa and the EU.

### 13.4 EU Funding and Programs in the Pacific

**OECD's Sigma program:** French territories are automatically entitled to help from the OECD's various program reinforcing good governance, rule- of law and respect for human rights<sup>25</sup>. Paris could request its overseas territories to be encompassed by the EU Commission's assessment reports.

**Anti-Corruption:** The EU could undergird a partnership between Transparency International and the Pacific Islands Forum in the pursuit of institution-building, legislation and policy-development.

**Climate resilience:** The EU has committed over €200 million to programs supporting Pacific countries in developing resilience to climate change. This funding aims to strengthen adaptation and broader resilience actions in the region.

**Samoa Agreement:** The Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Organisation of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific States provides a framework for a more strategic partnership.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://cooperation-regionale.gouv.nc/fr/our-relations-eu/overview?>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Caledonias-Trade-Relationship-European-Union/dp/3838303717> EU Delegation in the Pacific

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/66579\\_en?](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/66579_en?)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.sigmaxweb.org/>

It emphasises climate change, ocean protection, and peace and security.

**ACP-EU Research and Innovation Program:** The ACP Research program targets research and innovation capacity in ACP countries, including those in the Pacific. It offers opportunities for public and private stakeholders for public and private stakeholders to enhance research and innovation.

**EU's Global Gateway Strategy:** The EU aims to build reliable partnerships and deliver quality and sustainable investments beyond Europe's borders. This strategy supports green and digital transitions in the Pacific.

### 13.5 Samoa Agreement

On 15 2023, the European Union and its Member States signed the Samoa Agreement with member states of the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States.

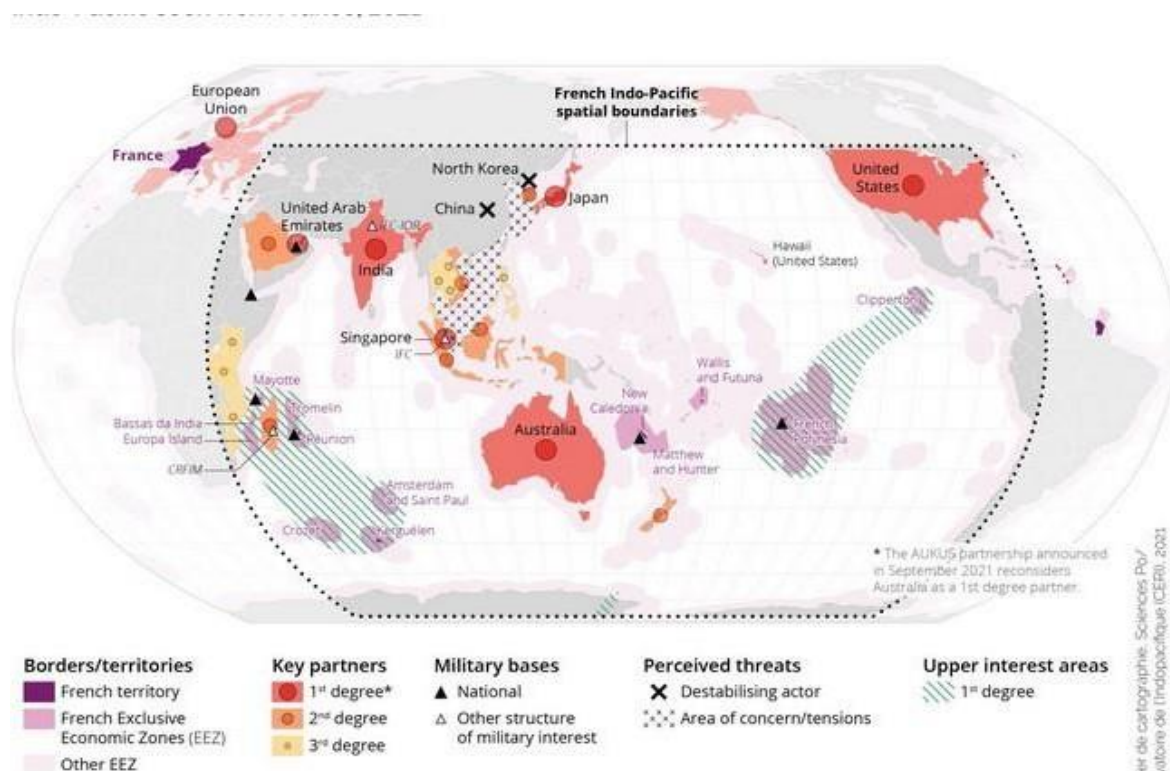
#### Key priorities:

Human rights, democracy Peace and security

Human and social development Inclusive, sustainable economic growth

Environmental sustainability and climate change Migration and mobility

**Figure - France's optics on the Pacific**



Sources: Compilations from Observatoire de l'Indo-pacifique (CERI) and Thibault Fournol; Marine Regions, Flanders Marine Institute.

Structure: The agreement includes a common foundation and three regional protocols (for African, Caribbean, and Pacific OACPS members). It aims to address global challenges, promote economic growth, and foster sustainability.

The Samoa Agreement signifies a commitment to sustainable development and responsible use of natural resources. It establishes a framework for cooperation and shared goals.

The agreement can positively affect trade, investment, and development in OACPS member states by fostering economic growth and addressing global challenges.

### **13.6 EU's Bilateral Pacific Partnership Agreements**

The EU has concluded Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with several Pacific island countries. These include:

- Papua New Guinea (since 2011)
- Fiji (since 2014)
- Samoa (since 2018)
- Solomon Islands (since 2020)

Additionally, Tonga and Timor-Leste have expressed intentions to join the EPA.

### **Limited Scope**

The agreements are currently limited to a few countries due to several factors:

1. **Economic Viability:** Not all Pacific island nations have the economic infrastructure or capacity to engage in such agreements.
2. **Development Levels:** The agreements take into account the varying levels of development among Pacific nations, providing asymmetric provisions to protect sensitive sectors<sup>1</sup>.
3. **Political Will and Readiness:** Some countries may not yet be ready or willing to enter into such agreements due to internal political or economic considerations.

### **Rationale for Including All Pacific Regions**

The rationale for encompassing all members of Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia in global policy includes:

- **Regional Stability:** Ensuring stability and development across the entire Pacific region helps maintain peace and security.
- **Economic Integration:** A more integrated Pacific region can enhance trade and investment opportunities, benefiting all parties involved.
- **Environmental Protection:** Coordinated efforts are crucial for addressing shared environmental challenges, such as climate change and ocean conservation.

### **Multilateral-Bilateral Policy Mix**

The EU's approach combines both multilateral and bilateral strategies to reinforce each other:

- **Multilateral Engagement:** Through forums like the EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum, the EU engages with multiple countries simultaneously to address broad regional issues.
- **Bilateral Agreements:** These allow for tailored solutions that address specific needs and capacities of individual countries.

## Reinforcement Mechanisms

- **Complementary Goals:** Bilateral agreements can serve as building blocks for broader multilateral initiatives, ensuring that local needs are met while contributing to regional stability.
- **Shared Standards:** Bilateral agreements often include provisions that align with multilateral standards, promoting consistency and cooperation across the region.
- **Resource Allocation:** Multilateral frameworks can provide resources and support that enhance the effectiveness of bilateral agreements, such as funding for infrastructure projects or technical assistance.

By integrating these approaches, the EU aims to create a cohesive and resilient Indo-Pacific region that supports sustainable development, economic growth, and environmental protection.

The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and Pacific island countries include several key provisions designed to promote sustainable development, economic growth, and regional integration. Here are some of the main elements:

## Key Provisions

### 1. Trade in Goods:

- **Tariff Elimination:** Gradual elimination of tariffs on a wide range of goods, promoting free trade between the EU and Pacific countries.
- **Rules of Origin:** Simplified rules of origin to facilitate easier access to EU markets for Pacific products.

### 2. Development Cooperation:

- **Capacity Building:** Support for capacity building in areas such as trade facilitation, standards, and quality infrastructure.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provision of technical assistance to help Pacific countries meet EU standards and regulations.

### 3. Sustainable Development:

- **Environmental Protection:** Commitments to environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources.
- **Social Standards:** Provisions to uphold labor rights and promote social development.

## 4. Trade in Services:

- Market Access: Improved market access for services, including financial services, telecommunications, and tourism.
- Regulatory Cooperation: Enhanced cooperation on regulatory issues to ensure fair competition and consumer protection.

## 5. Investment:

- Investment Promotion: Measures to promote and protect investments between the EU and Pacific countries.
- Dispute Settlement: Mechanisms for resolving disputes related to trade and investment.

## 6. Institutional Provisions:

- Joint Institutions: Establishment of joint institutions to oversee the implementation of the agreements and address any issues that arise.
- Monitoring and Review: Regular monitoring and review of the agreements to ensure they are meeting their objectives and to make necessary adjustments.

## Benefits and Challenges

These provisions aim to create a more favorable environment for trade and investment, support sustainable development, and strengthen regional integration. However, challenges such as varying levels of development, infrastructure limitations, and the need for capacity building must be addressed to fully realize the benefits of these agreements.

## 14.0 EU's INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

### 14.1 Definition of terms

The term “Indo-Pacific” has evolved over time, encompassing various geopolitical, economic, and strategic dimensions. That is to say, the Indo-Pacific is conceptualized and operationalizes differently in the Indo-Pacific region.

The German geopolitician Karl Haushofer introduced the term “Indo-Pacific” in the 1920s, viewing it as an organic and integral space primed for political consciousness, emphasizing the geopolitical unity of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. His book *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* (1924) outlines how Germany could secure its place as Europe's *Zentralmacht* by thwarting France in South-East Asia and entice India onto its side to modify British animosity against Berlin.

France defines the Indo-Pacific as a priority region, aiming to be a stabilizing force that promotes freedom, rule of law, and multilateralism, particularly due to its overseas territories in the region. France's *Indo-Pacific Strategy* (2019) outlines its objectives, most of its EEZ is overseas<sup>26</sup>. It deploys over 7,000 soldiers across the region, with assets like the aircraft carrier

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en\\_dcp\\_a4\\_indopacifique\\_022022\\_v1-4\\_web\\_cle878143.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en_dcp_a4_indopacifique_022022_v1-4_web_cle878143.pdf)



Charles de Gaulle conducting joint exercises. Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

Germany views the Indo-Pacific as vital for global stability, focusing on multilateralism, rules-based order, and sustainable development.,“Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific Region” (2020)<sup>27</sup>. No dedicated military command; collaborates within EU and NATO frameworks. Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

United Kingdom,The UK emphasizes a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” focusing on security, trade, and adherence to international law.,“Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review” (2021),Established a Pacific Future Taskforce; deploys naval assets like the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier strike group to the region. Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

African Union (AU). The AU’s engagement with the Indo-Pacific is limited, primarily focusing on maritime security and economic partnerships in the Western Indian Ocean. No dedicated strategy document.,No dedicated military command; collaborates on maritime security initiatives.Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

League of Arab States (LAS).The LAS has minimal direct engagement with the Indo-Pacific concept, focusing more on Middle Eastern and North African affairs. No dedicated strategy document.

United States: The U.S. promotes a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” aiming to counterbalance China’s influence and ensure freedom of navigation.,“Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States” (2022),<sup>28</sup> U.S. Indo- Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) oversees military operations in the region.,Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

India envisions the Indo-Pacific as inclusive and open, emphasizing ASEAN centrality and a rules-based order.,“India’s Vision of the Indo-Pacific” articulated through various speeches and policy statements<sup>29</sup>. Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence oversees operations; increasing naval deployments in the region. Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed. The Indo-Pacific , to a certain extent serves is a pretext for dodging New Delhi’s responsibilities to reform its public administration and address the stressors in Indian federalism, to connect Patel-Gandhi-Nehru towards solution oriented strategies on challenges and to fully modernize by aligning people, technology and operations as it moves from vision to strategies under its Viksit Bharat 2047 Vision.

China does not officially endorse the Indo-Pacific concept, viewing it as a strategy to contain its rise; instead, it focuses on initiatives like the Belt and Road. No dedicated strategy document on the Indo-Pacific; focuses on the “Maritime Silk Road.”, People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) operates extensively in the region..

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/resource/blob/2380514/f9784f7e3b3fa1bd7c5446d274a4169e/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.state.gov/indo-pacific-strategy/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/policy-briefs/indo-pacific-indian-foreign-policy>

## 14.2 Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed.

Australia emphasizes security, economic integration, and regional stability in its Indo-Pacific approach. “2017 Foreign Policy White Paper” and “2020 Defence Strategic Update.” outlines its approach. Australian Defence Force (ADF) focuses on Indo-Pacific operations; recent investments in missile manufacturing and defense capabilities. Committed up to A\$18 billion (US\$12 billion) for missile manufacturing and defense enhancements.<sup>30</sup>

European Union (EU). The EU aims to contribute to regional stability, security, and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific. “EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific” (2021) outlines the approach. No dedicated military command; relies on member states’ contributions and partnerships. Specific funding details are not publicly disclosed. The EU uses a mix of hard infrastructure, regulatory frameworks and trade & investment flows as leverage to influence and to be present. In practice, it was also informed by the desire for a quid-pro-quo with the US whereby the EU would help the US in the Indo-Pacific in return for US help in Europe and adjacent areas during the Trump era, reflecting the absence of Franco-German consensus on what to do with the Indo-Pacific Ocean<sup>31</sup>.

### The EU’s Indo-Pacific Strategy

The Indo-Pacific region is strategically important due to its growing economic, demographic, and political weight. It hosts three major economies (China, India and Japan) and seven significant military forces. The EU Commission pronounced the EU and Indo-Pacific “natural partners” in its strategy document, “given the interdependence and common global challenges”<sup>32</sup>. In its conclusions, the Council emphasized:

“The Council considers that the EU should reinforce its strategic focus, presence and actions in the Indo-Pacific with the aim of contributing to the stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development of the region, based on the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights and international law.

The EU intends to reinforce its role as a cooperative partner in the Indo-Pacific, bringing added-value to relations with all its partners in the region. The EU and its Member States are already working together comprehensively in the region, significantly contributing to development and humanitarian assistance, tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, concluding ambitious free trade agreements, and contributing to the upholding of international law including human rights and freedom of navigation. Cooperation with the region is crucial for achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. The EU and the countries of the Indo-Pacific also share the common task of addressing the devastating human and economic effects of the COVID19 crisis for many countries and the need to ensure a sustainable and inclusive socio-economic recovery and improve resilience of health systems.

The Council notes however with concern the current dynamics in the Indo-Pacific that have given rise to intense geopolitical competition adding to increasing tensions on trade and supply

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.csis.org/analysis/australias-new-national-defence-strategy-mostly-continuity-some-change>

<sup>31</sup> Heiduk (2022)

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication\\_2021\\_24\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf)

chains as well as in technological, political and security areas. The universality of human rights is also being challenged. These developments increasingly threaten the stability and security of the region and beyond, directly impacting on the EU's interests.

The Council underlines that the EU's strategic approach and engagement with the region should be principled with a long-term perspective, contributing to the EU's capability to act as a global actor. It should foster a rules-based international order, a level playing field as well as an open and fair environment for trade and investment, reciprocity, the strengthening of resilience, tackling climate change and support connectivity with the EU. It should aim to secure free and open maritime supply routes in full compliance with international law, in particular UNCLOS, in the interest of all. The EU's engagement should contribute to enhancing its strategic autonomy and ability to cooperate with partners in order to safeguard its values and interest. 5. The Council underlines that this renewed commitment to the region is inclusive of all partners wishing to cooperate with the EU, building upon already adopted EU strategic documents concerning the region. The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy is pragmatic, flexible and multifaceted, allowing the EU to adapt and build its cooperation according to specific policy areas where partners can find common ground based on shared principles, values or mutual interest. The EU will deepen its engagement on the Indo-Pacific in particular with those partners that have already announced Indo-Pacific approaches of their own.<sup>33</sup>

Key priorities:

Sustainable and Inclusive Prosperity:

We are promoting economic growth, trade, and development while ensuring inclusivity. Green Transition:

The EU are addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Ocean governance: Ensuring sustainable management of marine resources.

Digital Governance and Partnerships: Fostering cooperation in emerging technologies and cyber security.

Connectivity: Enhancing infrastructure and connectivity within the region. Security and Defense: Addressing maritime security, cyber threats, and terrorism. Human security: Protecting human rights, labour standards, and good governance.

A variety of disparate projects have been financed during the current policy cycle, focusing on connectivity, maritime security, digital infrastructure, climate resilience and capacity-building related to port modernization and blue Pacific connectivity initiatives, expansion of high speed undersea cable and IT projects, MDA systems and joint security initiatives to enhance interoperability of maritime forces. There have been programs on sustainable fisheries and coastal protection, and resilience programs for vulnerable communities and a variety of training and knowledge programs and institutional development, leveraging the Global gateway , the EDF and various cigarboxes found in hiding places in the EEAS.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7914-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

**Figure – The EU’s Horizontals in the Indo-Pacific**



The governance structure evolves around the Eu Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum, which is a platform for dialogue and cooperation between the Eu and Indo-Pacific nations from the 27 EU member states, representatives from Eu institutions, and officials from various Indo-Pacific countries and regional organisations. The third forum was held in Bruxelles 2 February 2024 and brought together approximately 70 delegations, including Eu member states, Indo-Pacific countries and regional organisations such as ASEAN and PIF. At the Brussels meeting, notable absences included the foreign ministers of Japan, Australia, India and South Korea, who were represented at low level officials instead. From the speeches, it transpires, the Eu’s Indo-Pacific Strategy is struggling with adding substance, fails to address the development needs and capacity-building requirements in Oceania and to address their sense of security amidst climate change and increased geopolitical competition<sup>34</sup>.

It seems safe to assume that the policy of the EU’s policy are to reassure the Pacific Islanders that their balancing act is not in vain, without excluding further engagement, even as the EU reinforce its role as a force d’équilibre and a Global partner. The rediscovery if India is bound to play an important role in the future.

### 14.3 Impact on the ground

The EU’s strategy aims to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific while building lasting partnerships pending India’s complete modernisation, which is valuable for EU traders, Delhi’s engagement with China, and the US’s overall interests in a stable and prosperous Asia (read: balance-of-power vis-à-vis Beijing). However, its impact depends on implementation and cooperation with regional partners.

The EU has expressed concerns about China’s assertiveness, especially in the South China Sea.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/live/QCkDwNsvvS0?si=cnZbqmSE8bbzwaf3>

It seeks to balance its interests while avoiding a US-China zero-sum game.

The EU's engagement includes climate action, health response, freedom of navigation, and countering disinformation.

The reality on the ground will depend on effective collaboration, investment, and alignment with regional priorities.

### **14.3 Enhancing Substance**

**Investment and Trade:** The EU should actively invest in infrastructure projects, trade agreements, and economic development in the Indo-Pacific.

**Capacity Building:** Strengthening local institutions, governance, and human capital is crucial. **Cultural Exchange:** Promoting people-to-people connections fosters understanding and cooperation. **Security Cooperation:** Collaborating on maritime security, counterterrorism, and disaster response.

### **14.5 Regional Order in the Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean is a critical maritime region that shapes the regional order in Asia by serving as a major conduit for global trade, energy supplies, and military logistics. Its strategic chokepoints (such as the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, and the Strait of Malacca), vast marine resources, and extensive maritime routes make it a prized area for regional and global powers. Below is an integrated overview of the strategies, stakes, and interests of key actors:

#### **Role of the Indian Ocean in Defining Regional Order**

**Trade & Energy Corridor:**

It is a vital channel for transporting oil, natural gas, and manufactured goods between Asia, Africa, and Europe. Control and security of its sea lanes are essential for global economic stability.

**Maritime Chokepoints:**

The presence of critical chokepoints allows nations to exercise leverage over international shipping, making the region key for energy security and economic influence.

**Military & Strategic Projection:**

The Indian Ocean's geography facilitates power projection, enabling nations to establish naval bases and influence regional security. This has historically provided a theater for strategic competition.

**Resource and Environmental Concerns:**

Beyond energy and trade, the region is rich in fisheries, mineral deposits, and renewable energy potential—factors that drive regional economic and environmental policies.

## Strategies, Stakes, and Interests of Key Actors

### 1. India

#### Stakes:

- Securing its maritime periphery (often termed its “backyard”).
- Ensuring uninterrupted trade routes and energy supplies.

#### Strategies:

- Expanding naval capabilities and building strategic partnerships (e.g., with the Quad partners).
- Promoting the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine to balance against external influences, notably China.

#### Interests:

- Maintaining regional leadership.
- Enhancing economic cooperation with littoral states.

### 2. China

#### Stakes:

- Securing sea lanes for its energy imports and exports.
- Gaining strategic footholds in key ports and coastal regions.

#### Strategies:

- Expanding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Maritime Silk Road to develop port infrastructure and logistics.
- Utilizing both commercial and military means to extend influence.

#### Interests:

- Projecting power beyond its coastal waters.
- Integrating the region into its broader economic and strategic framework.

### 3. United States

#### Stakes:

- Upholding freedom of navigation and a rules-based international order.
- Protecting global trade routes and energy flows.

#### Strategies:



- Maintaining a robust naval presence (e.g., bases like Diego Garcia).
- Engaging in multilateral security arrangements with allies and partners.

Interests:

- Countering any coercive actions that threaten open access to the region.
- Preserving the balance of power in a multipolar environment.

#### 4. African Union (and African States in the Region)

Stakes:

- Ensuring economic benefits from maritime trade and resource management.
- Protecting their coastal territories and managing sustainable fisheries.

Strategies:

- Strengthening regional maritime governance frameworks and capacity building.
- Collaborating with external partners for maritime security and infrastructure development.

Interests:

- Balancing external influence to retain sovereignty.
- Promoting sustainable economic growth through the blue economy.

#### 5. Arab States (Gulf Countries and Others)

Stakes:

- Protecting energy exports and maintaining security at key chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz.

Strategies:

- Investing in port infrastructure and maritime security capabilities.
- Engaging in diplomatic and economic partnerships to counterbalance rival influences.

Interests:

- Ensuring stability in the maritime environment that underpins their energy-dependent economies.
- Diversifying economic ties in the region.

#### 6. ASEAN (and Southeast Asian States)

Stakes:

- Maintaining stability in the South China Sea and the adjacent maritime domain, which is critical for regional trade.

#### Strategies:

- Pursuing multilateral dialogues (e.g., ASEAN Regional Forum) to manage disputes and foster co-operation.

#### Interests:

- Ensuring regional security and economic integration without being overly drawn into great-power rivalries.

#### 7. France-UK Stakes:

- Maintaining historical ties and strategic interests in the Indian Ocean (e.g., French territories like Réunion and Mayotte; UK's naval presence at Diego Garcia).

#### Strategies:

- Leveraging military and diplomatic engagement to secure maritime interests.
- Participating in multinational security operations and infrastructure development.

#### Interests:

- Preserving their strategic footholds and influence in the region.
- Promoting stability and open maritime trade.

#### 8. European Union (EU) Stakes:

- Ensuring the security and sustainability of vital trade and energy routes.
- Promoting a rules-based order and sustainable development.

#### Strategies:

- Investing in connectivity projects (Global Gateway).
- Supporting multilateral institutions and legal frameworks (e.g., UNCLOS enforcement, maritime security partnerships).

#### Interests:

- Enhancing its economic and strategic ties with regional partners.
- Counterbalancing unilateral power projection by any single nation in the region.

In summary, The Indian Ocean stands as the nexus where geoeconomic imperatives and geopolitical rivalries converge, defining the regional order in Asia. Each actor—whether India, China, the United States, African or Arab states, ASEAN, France-UK, or the EU—has distinct stakes and employs a mix of military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to secure

their interests. The interplay among these strategies shapes the stability, security, and prosperity of the region, making multilateral engagement and a rules-based order essential for sustainable governance in the Indian Ocean.

## 14.6 IPOI

The 2025 EU-India Summit endorsed to have the Eu Commission become a member of the Indian Ocean Alliance (IPOI), to complement the maritime security dialogue between EU and India<sup>35</sup>. At the time, a decision was made to complete the long-standing negotiations on the EU-India FTA<sup>36</sup>. The Eu trails behind the United States and ahead of China on the Indian market<sup>37</sup>, and India ranks among the EU's Top10 trading partners. India's share of the world's export is less than 4%, and the IOR region is a major growth area for Indian exports<sup>38</sup>. India's priorities: (1) Domestic reform (2) Security in the Himalayas – vis-à-vis Pakistan and China (3) Indian Ocean.

IPOI is, organized around maritime security ( UK and India) , maritime ecology ( Australia and Thailand), maritime resources ( France and Indonesia), capacity building (Germany) and resources sharing (Germany) , Disaster risk reduction and management ( India and Bangladesh), Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation ( Italy and Singapore) as well as Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport with Japan and the US as lead partners. There seem to be no overarching framework, no in-put from the riparians, allowing the Indian Navy, one of the few well-functioning institutions to partner-up with European partners and jump from fire to fire combined with forum shopping by the diplomacy. IPOI outlining its role and the reasoning behind, without committing to strengthening of governance and domestic reform, even as India reserve its right to fool around exploiting differences between its partners to promote its own great power interests. Externalisation of conflict is an Indian invention, something Janishkar readily recognizes, as he applies himself to invite pressure from outside by building identity abroad.

Even so, the EU's entry into the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) could be a game-changer for the regional order in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the broader Indo-Pacific. It brings not only financial muscle and technical expertise but also a normative, rules-based approach to governance that can address a spectrum of challenges—from environmental sustainability and maritime security to infrastructure development and regulatory harmonization:

### 1. Impact of EU Entry into IPOI

#### a. Strengthening the Rules-Based Order

- Normative Framework: The EU is known for its commitment to international law and transparent governance. Its entry into IPOI would help institutionalize robust rules for maritime conduct—such as standards on sustainable fishing, environmental protection, and safe navigation—that can serve as a counterbalance to more unilateral approaches.

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/CP\\_181.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/CP_181.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_25\\_647](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_25_647)

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769496/EPRS\\_BRI\(2025\)769496\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769496/EPRS_BRI(2025)769496_EN.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.ris.org.in/en/trade-investment-and-economic-cooperations>

- **Enhanced Multilateralism:** By leveraging its diplomatic clout, the EU can foster an inclusive dialogue among regional stakeholders, ensuring that small island states and emerging economies have a voice in setting maritime rules.

## b. Financial and Technical Contributions

- **Global Gateway Leverage:** EU funds through the Global Gateway initiative can support major infrastructure and connectivity projects, addressing the gaps in port development, digital connectivity, and sustainable transport networks.
- **Innovation and Technology Transfer:** EU expertise in digital governance and environmental monitoring can provide modern technological solutions for EEZ management, cyber security, and maritime surveillance.

## c. Security and Maritime Cooperation

- **Collaborative Security Frameworks:** The EU's entry could lead to coordinated maritime patrols, intelligence sharing, and capacity building in areas such as anti-piracy operations, thereby contributing to a more stable and secure maritime environment.
- **Balancing Great-Power Competition:** With China's aggressive push through its Maritime Silk Road and India's regional aspirations, the EU's balanced approach may help mitigate tensions by promoting transparency and dialogue.

## 2. The Way Forward: Strategies and Engagement

### a. Building an Integrated Multilateral Framework

- **Institutional Strengthening:** Empowering regional bodies like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and ASEAN-led platforms to serve as forums for dispute resolution and policy coordination is crucial. The EU can facilitate this process by sharing best practices and establishing joint monitoring mechanisms.
- **Inclusive Partnerships:** Creating mechanisms where all stakeholders—including the US, Arab states, and African nations—are represented ensures that initiatives under IPOI address the multi-faceted challenges of the region.

### b. Leveraging the EU's Normative and Financial Clout

- **Investment in Sustainable Infrastructure:** The EU should focus on projects that not only boost connectivity and trade but also ensure environmental sustainability (for example, green port facilities, renewable energy-powered transport, and advanced maritime surveillance systems).
- **Capacity Building:** Providing training and technical assistance for maritime law enforcement, environmental management, and digital transformation in coastal communities can ensure that the benefits of EU investment are widely distributed.

### c. Engaging China in Rule Making in the IOR

- **Dialogues on Standards:** The EU can lead multilateral dialogues with China and other key stakeholders to establish common standards for maritime activities. This might

include technical guide- lines for sustainable fisheries, digital maritime security protocols, and environmental impact assess- ments.

- **Incentivized Cooperation:** By linking financial support and access to advanced technology with adherence to agreed-upon norms, the EU can create incentives for China to participate construc- tively in rule making. For instance, access to EU infrastructure funds could be conditioned on com- pliance with regional sustainability standards.
- **Conflict Prevention Mechanisms:** Establishing joint crisis communication channels and conflict de-escalation protocols can help manage incidents and prevent miscalculations that might otherwise lead to escalation between major powers.

### 3. Delhi's Approach vs. the African Union's Counterpart in Shaping Regional Order in the Indian Ocean

Both India and the African Union (AU) have distinct but complementary agendas in the Indian Ocean that can serve as counterparts to the EU's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). Their strate- gies are aimed at preserving their own strategic interests, enhancing regional stability, and ensuring that their respective littoral communities benefit from global maritime governance. Here's an inte- grated perspective on their approaches:

#### New Delhi's Approach

##### 1. SAGAR Doctrine and Maritime Security:

- **Principle:** India's "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) concept emphasizes in- clusive, rules-based maritime security.
- **Strategy:** New Delhi seeks to ensure the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean while counter- balancing Chinese expansion through enhanced naval capabilities, joint exercises, and maritime sur- veillance.
- **Stakes:** India aims to secure its maritime periphery, protect crucial sea lanes, and foster strategic partnerships with neighboring and distant states (e.g., through frameworks like the Quad).

##### 2. Economic and Blue Economy Initiatives:

- **Economic Connectivity:** India focuses on bolstering economic ties and trade routes among Indian Ocean littoral states, enhancing infrastructure, and encouraging local industries.
- **Blue Economy:** There is an emphasis on sustainable resource management, including fisheries, renewable energy, and coastal development, ensuring that India's economic growth benefits both its own economy and its regional partners.

##### 3. Diplomatic and Normative Engagement:

- **Regional Leadership:** New Delhi leverages its historical, cultural, and economic ties to assert lead- ership in the region.
- **Counterbalancing External Influence:** By actively engaging in multilateral dialogues

and support- ing regional institutions like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), India seeks to set norms and rules that reflect its strategic vision and counterbalance the influence of external powers.

## **African Union’s Counterpart Approach**

### 1. Maritime Governance and Blue Economy Empowerment:

- **Sustainable Development:** The AU and its member states are increasingly focused on harnessing the blue economy for growth—ensuring sustainable exploitation of marine resources, combating illegal fishing, and promoting eco-friendly infrastructure.
- **Capacity Building:** A core priority is to build local capacities for maritime governance, including training for coast guards, modern surveillance systems, and legal frameworks to protect Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

### 2. Inclusive Regional Governance:

- **Strengthening Regional Institutions:** The AU, often in coordination with organizations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and regional economic communities, advocates for governance frameworks that allow African coastal states to have a meaningful say in rule-making.
- **Economic Leverage:** The AU aims to leverage investments—both from traditional partners and new players—to ensure that African nations are not sidelined in major infrastructure projects and that they secure fair economic returns.

### 3. Balancing External Influence and Promoting Autonomy:

- **Strategic Autonomy:** The AU’s approach is centered on maintaining sovereignty and ensuring that external engagements (e.g., with China, the EU, or the US) are balanced by strong, internally driven governance mechanisms.
- **Normative Leadership:** By pushing for transparent, sustainable, and community-oriented maritime policies, the AU seeks to establish a model of regional governance that supports long-term stability and development.

## **Bringing it all together**

- **Complementary Institutions:**

India and the AU could work through existing multilateral forums (like IORA) to create a more integrated regional maritime governance framework that balances security, economic, and environmental priorities.

- **Collaborative Engagement with the EU and Others:**

With the EU entering IPOI, both New Delhi and the AU may seek to engage in joint rule-making and capacity-building initiatives that incorporate best practices from all sides. This might include shared investments in technology (e.g., satellite surveillance for EEZ



management) and coordinated disaster response frameworks.

- Rule-Making with China:

A key aspect of the regional order will be engaging China constructively in multilateral dialogues. India, with its established regional partnerships, and the AU, advocating for sustainable development, can jointly push for internationally agreed standards—ranging from environmental regulations to maritime security protocols—that all stakeholders, including China, must adhere to.

- Balancing Competition and Cooperation:

Both New Delhi and the AU aim to preserve their strategic autonomy while benefiting from global trade and investment. Their combined approach emphasizes resilience, inclusive governance, and sustainable growth, offering a counterbalance to unilateral or coercive tactics by any single external power.

## Summary

The EU's entry into IPOI stands to significantly influence the regional order in the IOR by reinforcing a rules-based, multilateral approach to maritime governance. Its financial and technical resources, combined with a commitment to international norms, offer a counterbalance to unilateral or coercive strategies. By fostering inclusive dialogue and engaging all key stakeholders—including China—in the process of rule-making, the EU can help create a more stable, secure, and sustainable maritime environment in the Indian Ocean and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

New Delhi's strategy and the African Union's approach serve as critical counterparts in shaping the Indian Ocean's regional order. New Delhi emphasizes a strong, security-oriented, and economically dynamic role in safeguarding sea lanes and regional stability, while the AU focuses on sustainable maritime governance, capacity building, and equitable economic growth for its coastal states. Together, and with constructive engagement with other global players—including the EU and China—they can help forge a more balanced, rules-based, and multipolar order in the Indian Ocean region.

This integrated approach not only addresses immediate challenges such as maritime security and environmental sustainability but also lays the groundwork for long-term economic growth and regional cooperation.

## 14.7 Applying Indo-Pacific logic to the region

Given the seven areas of effort or work streams under the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy, the following projects and initiatives under the aegis of the Ministerial Council could be envisaged building on and extrapolated from the current priorities:

**Table – Indo-Pacific logic amplified – Proposed Projects & initiatives for the Indo-Pacific islands nations.**

EU Priority	Projects & Initiatives	Target countries	Key EU Programs & Partners
Sustainable & Inclusive prosperity	Blue Economy Innovation Hub Sustainable Fisheries Certification Program Indo-Pacific SME Accelerator	New Caledonia, Seychelles, Mauritius & Maldives Madagascar, Seychelles, Maldives, Socotra. Fiji, Wallis, Tahiti & Mauritius	EU global gateway & EIB  Dg Mare & FAO  Eu-Asean Business Council & PIF
Green Transition	Pacific Renewable Energy Grid.  Madagascar-Seychelles marine Biodiversity Corridor. Socotra Climate Adaptation Initiative	New Caledonia, Wallis, Fiji & Tahiti.  Madagascar, Seychelles & Mauritius.  Socotra governorate	EU Green finance Initiative & AFD  EU Biodiversity Strategy, WWF & IUCN. ECHO
Ocean Governance	Eu-India IORA Maritime security Academy Smart EEZ Monitoring System  Eu-Socotra Marine Conservation Treaty (MPA)	Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar & Maldives. Fiji, Tahiti, New Caledonia & Wallis.  Socotra governorate.	EMSA & EU NAVFOR.  ESA  UNEP & Eu Blue Economy Strategy.
Digital Governance & Partnerships	Digital Bridge Indo-Pacific. EU-Pacific Digital Inclusion program Blue tech AI for Fisheries	Fiji, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles. Wallis, Fiji & Madagascar. Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius & Maldives	Eu Global Gateway & digital strategy. WB & UNDP. Horizon Europe & Dg Mare
Connectivity	Sustainable Port Development. Inter-Islands Maritime Transport Network Green Shipping and logistics Initiative	Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius & Maldives. Fiji, Wallis, Tahiti & New Caledonia New Caledonia, Seychelles and Mauritius	Eu green Deal & Eu-Au partnership. Eu-Asean Connectivity & Green Mobility Fund Eu Clean Transport Plan & IMO
Security & Defence	EU- Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Task Force. Indian Ocean Disaster Resilience Network  Eu-Socotra Stability Initiative	Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Maldives & Socotra. Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles & Madagascar. Socotra governorate	EU CSDP, Eu Navfor & Atlanta.  ECHO & WMO  EU CSDP Mission, UNDP Yemen

Human Security	Indo-Pacific Health Resilience Initiative Indigenous Knowledge & Climate adaptation Program Eu-IOR Women Leadership program	Fiji, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives. Wallis, Fiji, Tahiti & New Caledonia. Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives & Fiji.	Eu-African CDC & WHO. Eu RDI Framework & UNESCO. EU gender Equality Strategy & UN Women.
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## 14.8 EEZ Management

### Enhancing EEZ Management in the Indo-Pacific: An EU-France-UK Cooperation Strategy

The Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Indo-Pacific are at the center of geopolitical competition, resource management challenges, and environmental concerns. A joint initiative between the EU, France, and the UK—leveraging their economic, diplomatic, and maritime capabilities—could improve EEZ governance, sustainability, and security across the region.

#### Key Challenges in EEZ Management

1. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing – Depleting fish stocks, undermining coastal economies, and driving regional tensions.
2. Maritime Security Threats – Smuggling, piracy, and coercive actions (e.g., gray-zone tactics by paramilitary maritime actors).
3. Climate Change and Environmental Degradation – Coral reef destruction, rising sea levels, and pollution impacting marine biodiversity.
4. EEZ Disputes and Governance Gaps – Overlapping claims (e.g., South China Sea, Bay of Bengal) creating legal uncertainty and diplomatic tensions.
5. Lack of Monitoring and Enforcement Capacity – Many Indo-Pacific nations lack technological and institutional capacity to manage their EEZs effectively.

#### The EU-France-UK Joint Approach to EEZ Governance

- The EU, France, and the UK have a unique advantage in EEZ management due to:
- France’s extensive EEZ in the Indo-Pacific, including New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Réunion.
- The UK’s strategic maritime presence, particularly through British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and its historical partnerships in the region.

The EU’s role as a regulatory and financial powerhouse, with capacity-building expertise in fisheries, maritime security, and climate resilience.

**Table- Proposed Cooperation Areas**

Priority areas	EU contribution	France's role	UK's role	Joint Initiatives
Maritime Surveillance & Domain Awareness	Eu Copernicus Sattellite & EMSA for real- time monitoring	Deploy France's Navy and patrol assets	Use UK's Joint Maritme Security centre (JMSC) and Royal Navy for surveillance.	Establish Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Network with regional partners (Asean, India & Pacific Isdlands).
IUU Fishing Prevention and Sustainable Fisheries	EFCA to support regional fisheries government.	French OCT to act as pilot projects for sustainable fisheries models.	Provide UK enforcement expertise on fisheries regulation.	Strengthen partnerships with IORA and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Agency (FFA).
EEZ Dispute Resolution & Legal Frameworks	Provide UNCLOS- based legal expertise and mediation.	Act as a bridge between EU and Indo-Pacific nations.	The UK diplomatic leverage out of the Commonwealth states.	Establish a Indo-Pacific EEZ Governance Compact.
Climate resilience & Marine Conservation	Fund Blue Economy initiatives	Support MPA in Pacific territories.	Promote climate finance solutions for costal resilience.	Expand joint Eu- UK Blue Economy investments.
Capacity- Building & Training	Eu-funded training programs for coastal states navies and fishery agencies.	Offer French naval academies expertise to Indo- Pacific partners.	UK Navy to conduct training in anti-IUU and EEZ enforcement.	Develop maritime Capacity- building Hub in the Indian Ocean.

On this basis, an implementation strategy could be envisaged:

### Implementation Strategy

1. Formalize an EU-France-UK EEZ Governance Partnership – Establish a structured maritime dialogue under existing frameworks (e.g., EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, France's Indo-Pacific Roadmap, UK's Integrated Review).
2. Launch an Indo-Pacific Maritime Security & Governance Fund – Jointly fund capacity-building, surveillance technology, and legal assistance for coastal states.
3. Strengthen Regional Engagement – Work with IORA, ASEAN, QUAD+, and Pacific Island na- tions to develop a multilateral code of conduct on EEZ governance.
4. Use EU's Trade & Development Leverage – Link maritime sustainability commitments to trade agreements (e.g., EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement).
5. Support Digital & AI-Based Maritime Surveillance – Deploy AI-driven EEZ monitoring systems combining satellite, UAV, and maritime data analytics.

### Summary: Strategic Benefits

- ✓ Bolsters regional security by deterring IUU fishing, maritime crime, and gray-zone tactics.
- ✓ Enhances climate resilience by integrating blue economy projects and marine conservation.
- ✓ Strengthens Indo-Pacific partnerships by supporting the maritime sovereignty of coastal states.
- ✓ Positions the EU as a security and governance player, bridging its regulatory expertise with practical enforcement mechanisms.

## 14.9 Security and Defence planning

It would be naïve to think diplomacy is undertaken in a power vacuum without consideration given to the risk of war. At the systemic level, the risk of war in the Asia is linked to the Taiwan strait, to the relationship between India and Pakistan and the situation in the South Chinese Sea and in the Pacific. The easier answer would be to play China and India out against each other in South East Asia and China and the US in the Pacific to better promote trading interests. China and India have shared interests on some topics such as stability in the egress areas to the IOR, environmental and disaster resilience, but are also mirrored in strategic competition in the Indian Ocean. There are UN- CLOS implementation issues and concerns about proxies.

The EU has a stake in a rules-based international order but the competition between India and China in IOR, and China and the US in the Pacific requires greater attention is given to the kind of low- intensity conflict that might be fought in the region in order to fine tune European diplomacy and provide substance to the security and defense partnership between EU and India. While the Indian Ocean is not a natural battleground the need for rules of the game is palpable. The motive may be more prestigious: The European nation-state has effectively spread to Asia, who eyes a possibility for a come back on the world stage following 500 years of Western domination, without fully having digested good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights of western-led international order.

Scenarios help to think outside of the box and serve to concentrate minds of the diplomats to help them keep the peace and provide guidance to our men and women in uniform.

### Three Scenarios of Regional Conflict in the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Oceania

Scenario 1: Indian Ocean – “Chokepoint Conflagration”

Conflict Type: Hybrid Maritime Conflict & Economic Warfare

Actors: India, China, US, Gulf States, European Union, African Coastal States

Triggers:

- Escalation in India-China rivalry over the strategic chokepoints (Strait of Malacca, Lombok Strait, and Bab el-Mandeb).
- Chinese naval expansion in the Western Indian Ocean (Djibouti, Gwadar, and Hambantota)

seen as a security threat by India.

- Maritime incidents in disputed waters (e.g., Sri Lanka's EEZ) lead to tit-for-tat blockades and naval posturing.
- Weaponization of trade routes: China restricts Indian shipping access, India reciprocates by threatening the Andaman Sea corridor.

Form of Conflict:

- Economic warfare: Trade restrictions, selective embargoes, and denial of access to critical ports.
- Cyber & Hybrid warfare: Cyberattacks on maritime infrastructure, GPS jamming, and naval drone incursions.
- Proxy naval skirmishes: India supports African coastal states to limit Chinese port expansion, while China funds strategic infrastructure in Pakistan and the Maldives.

Outcome Possibilities:

1. Cold Conflict: Economic and naval standoff, but no full-scale war due to US and EU diplomatic interventions.
2. Limited Naval Engagements: Small-scale confrontations near disputed ports.
3. Institutional Crisis: Breakdown of IORA and regional maritime security institutions.

Scenario 2: South China Sea – “The Scarborough Clash”

Conflict Type: High-Intensity Naval Conflict & Limited Air Engagement

Actors: China, US, ASEAN (Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia), Taiwan, Australia, Japan

Triggers:

- A Sino-Philippines military clash over Scarborough Shoal after a Chinese Coast Guard vessel collides with a Philippine naval ship.
- US military intervention under its Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines escalates tensions.
- China declares an ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone) over the South China Sea, triggering US and Japanese responses.
- ASEAN is divided: Vietnam and Indonesia demand action, while Cambodia and Laos remain neutral.

Form of Conflict:



- Naval and air skirmishes: Missile engagements, electronic warfare, and interceptions of fighter jets over disputed islands.
- Blockades and Economic Retaliation: China restricts access to its markets, while the US imposes further economic sanctions.
- Hybrid warfare: Cyberattacks on satellite navigation systems disrupt regional trade.

#### Outcome Possibilities:

1. Containment through ASEAN Diplomacy: The Philippines seeks diplomatic resolution via ASEAN and the UN.
2. Short-term Military Escalation: A US-China military standoff with regional allies involved but avoiding a full-scale war.
3. Prolonged Cold Conflict: Permanent militarization of the South China Sea, creating a divided Indo-Pacific security architecture.

#### Scenario 3: Oceania – “Island Chain Crisis”

#### Conflict Type: Political Destabilization & Proxy Conflict

Actors: China, Australia, US, Pacific Island States (Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga)

#### Triggers:

- China signs a military base agreement with the Solomon Islands, leading to Australia and the US responding with military deployments.
- Political unrest in Fiji and Papua New Guinea fueled by competition for influence between China and Western allies.
- Fishing rights and EEZ disputes escalate as Chinese deep-sea fishing fleets expand into Micronesian waters, leading to clashes with local navies.
- Australia and the US push for a “Pacific Security Compact”, which China sees as containment.

#### Form of Conflict:

- Proxy conflict in domestic politics: China supports pro-Beijing political factions in Pacific Island states, while the US and Australia back opposition groups.
- Maritime confrontations: Coast Guard skirmishes over illegal fishing zones and deep-sea mining rights.
- Infrastructure warfare: China-backed projects in Vanuatu and Kiribati face Australian

sanctions and sabotage attempts.

Outcome Possibilities:

1. Diplomatic Compromise: Pacific Islands broker a “non-alignment” policy, preventing a direct military clash.
2. US & Australia Military Intervention: Increased military bases and patrols, militarizing the Pacific.
3. Strategic Bifurcation: Pacific Islands become divided into China-backed and Western-backed factions, intensifying long-term geopolitical rivalry.

## 14.10 Escalation Management Strategy & Role Distribution for Regional Conflicts

To prevent, contain, or de-escalate each conflict scenario, key actors must take on specific roles. Below is an outline of escalation management strategies and role distribution for the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Oceania crises.

Scenario 1: Indian Ocean – “Chokepoint Conflagration”

Escalation Risks

- India and China weaponize trade routes and maritime chokepoints.
- Proxy naval confrontations with African coastal states.
- Cyberattacks on critical maritime infrastructure.

Escalation Management Strategy

1. Maritime Deconfliction Mechanism: Establish an Indian Ocean Security Code of Conduct to regulate military activities in critical chokepoints (Malacca, Bab el-Mandeb).
2. Economic Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs): EU-led mediation on trade corridor access guarantees.
3. Cybersecurity & Maritime Infrastructure Resilience Initiative: Joint US-EU-India cyber protection for port infrastructure and naval communication lines.
4. IORA Reform & Expansion: Strengthening the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to act as an arbitration body for maritime disputes.

**Table - Role Distribution IOR**

Actor	Role
India	Engages in naval diplomacy, expands regional security partnerships, reinforces presence in the Andaman Sea

China	Avoids direct military clashes, seeks diplomatic resolution via BRICS and bilateral deals
US	Establishes naval presence to ensure freedom of navigation, coordinates with allies to counter Chinese expansion
EU	Leads economic CBM's and energy security dialogue, brokers trade corridor agreements
African Coastal States	Strengthen naval capabilities through Eu and Indian training programs, demands equitable access to trade routes.
Gulf States	Secure energy shipments and prevent economic disruptions.

## Scenario 2: South China Sea – “The Scarborough Clash”

### Escalation Risks

- China-Philippines naval incident draws in the US under its Mutual Defense Treaty.
- China declares an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the South China Sea.
- ASEAN is divided, with some states supporting China and others leaning towards the US.

### Escalation Management Strategy

1. Military Hotline & Crisis Management Mechanism: ASEAN and China establish an emergency naval hotline to prevent miscalculation in disputed waters.
2. South China Sea Arbitration Panel: Revitalization of the 2016 PCA ruling on the South China Sea to create a framework for EEZ management.
3. Joint Resource Management Framework: US-China-EU facilitate a shared fisheries and hydro- carbon agreement to manage contested zones.
4. Multilateral Naval Code of Conduct: Strengthen ASEAN-China negotiations on the South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC) to limit naval deployments and coast guard confrontations.

### Table Escalation Role SE Asia

Actor	Role
China	Balances military escalation with economic influence maintains economic strategic dominance in the region.
Philippines	Leverages US defense support, but seeks Asean diplomatic backing
US	Deploys naval forces under Freedoms of Navigations Operations (FONOPS) , pressure China through alliances.
Asean	Divided, but plays mediator role in manging China-Phillipines tensions.
Japan & Australia	Support Philippine claims, increase defense co- operation with Asean

Eu	Pushes for UN arbitration and a legal resolution, offers economic incentives for compliance.
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### Scenario 3: Oceania – “Island Chain Crisis”

#### Escalation Risks

- China establishes a military presence in the Solomon Islands, threatening Australia’s strategic buffer.
- Political instability in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, fueled by competing foreign influence.
- Resource conflicts over EEZs and deep-sea mining rights lead to maritime clashes.

#### Escalation Management Strategy

1. Pacific Stability Compact: A US-Australia-France-EU-Pacific Island initiative to prevent foreign military bases and guarantee Pacific sovereignty.
2. Pacific Island Security Forum (PISF): Regional states create a common defense and crisis re- sponse mechanism.
3. Economic & Political Incentives for Non-Alignment: Pacific Island nations receive infrastructure support in exchange for neutrality in great power competition.
4. Maritime Resource Management Treaty: Legally enforceable agreements for fisheries and min- eral resource sharing to reduce competition.

#### Role Distribution

China: Uses economic diplomacy to maintain influence, avoids military provocation  
 Australia: Strengthens Pacific defense arrangements, deploys coast guard patrols

US: Establishes military cooperation with Pacific states to counter Chinese influence

Pacific Island States: Seek security guarantees while maintaining economic partnerships with China  
 France & UK: Use overseas territories (New Caledonia, Polynesia) as regional security outposts  
 EU: Leads economic development initiatives, proposes EEZ governance reforms

#### Table Crisis Management engagement plan

Scenario	Type of Conflict	Primary Actors	Potential Outcome
Indian Ocean	Hybrid warfare	India, China, Us, Gulf States, and the EU	Strategic stalemate or limited proxy battles.
South China Sea	High-intensity naval and air conflict	China, the US, Ssean, Japan, Taiwan	Risk of large-scale war if not diplomati- cally contained

Oceania – Islands Chain crisis	Political and % proxy conflict	China, Australia, the US, Pacific Island States	Long-term geopolitical division of the Pacific.
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Summary: Role of the European Union

The EU's role in all three scenarios is as a diplomatic and economic stabilizer, leveraging:

- Legal frameworks (UNCLOS, WTO trade rules).
- Economic incentives (Green infrastructure, debt relief, investment programs).
- Maritime security initiatives (EEZ governance, anti-piracy operations).
- Mediation & rule-making (Engagement with China, India, ASEAN, and Pacific Island states).

On this basis, more detailed policy recommendations could be elaborated by the workers in DG Defence and the European Foreign Service.

## 14.11 The SUA Convention

The SUA Convention (Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation) is an international treaty adopted in 1988 under the International Maritime Organization (IMO)<sup>39</sup>. It was developed in response to growing concerns over terrorism and unlawful acts at sea, particularly after the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship by Palestinian militants.

### Key Aspects of the SUA Convention

1. Objective:

- To enhance maritime security by criminalizing unlawful acts against ships, including hijacking, acts of violence, and placing dangerous devices on board.
- To ensure that perpetrators of such crimes do not escape justice, either by extradition or prosecution in any signatory state.

2. Criminal Offenses Under SUA:

- Seizing a ship by force or threat (piracy, terrorism).
- Acts of violence against persons on board that endanger the ship's safety.
- Placing bombs, weapons, or hazardous substances on ships.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/SUA-Treaties.aspx>

- Destroying or damaging a ship or its cargo in a way that endangers safety.
- Threats to commit such acts.

### 3. Jurisdiction and Enforcement:

- States that are parties to the convention must either prosecute or extradite individuals suspected of committing SUA offenses.
- It applies to ships engaged in international voyages, not warships or government vessels.

### 4. 2005 Protocols:

The SUA Convention was strengthened by two 2005 Protocols after the 9/11 attacks to address new maritime security challenges, such as:

- Criminalizing the use of ships to transport WMDs (weapons of mass destruction).
- Criminalizing the use of ships for terrorist activities.
- Expanding cooperation between states to intercept suspect vessels.

### Relevance Today

- The SUA Convention plays a crucial role in counterterrorism, piracy suppression, and maritime law enforcement.
- It is often invoked in cases of maritime piracy, arms smuggling, and illegal transport of dangerous materials.
- Given evolving maritime threats, some argue that the convention needs further modernization to address cybersecurity threats, environmental crimes, and hybrid warfare at sea.
- Ratification is pending in several IOR countries, including India.

## Designing a Stakeholder-Based Review and Modernization of the SUA Convention

### Framework for a Stakeholder-Based Review

A successful modernization of the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA) requires a multi-stakeholder approach that involves key actors such as governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society. The process should be inclusive, legally sound, and politically feasible.

#### 1. Stakeholder Engagement Structure

#### 2. Review Process Design



## 1. Stakeholder Consultations (6–12 months)

- IMO-led working groups engaging regional actors (EU, India, China, US, IORA, AU, ASEAN).
- Industry roundtables for private sector input.
- Legal analysis of SUA gaps by international law experts.

## 2. Thematic Expert Panels (12–18 months)

- Cybersecurity & Hybrid Threats: Addressing new risks like GPS jamming, cyberattacks on ship- ping.
- Terrorism & WMD Transport: Strengthening measures to prevent nuclear and bio-weapon proliferation via maritime routes.
- Environmental Crimes & Illegal Fishing: Integrating maritime pollution, illegal fishing, and environmental sabotage under SUA.

## 3. Drafting and Diplomatic Negotiation (18–24 months)

- EU, India, China, and the US to take leadership in drafting amendments.
- Engaging UN Security Council & major maritime nations for consensus-building.

## 4. Ratification & Implementation (Post-Approval Phase)

- Updating national laws to reflect SUA amendments.
- Strengthening enforcement mechanisms through cooperation agreements.
- Ensuring technical assistance for developing nations.

### Table Stakeholder Engagement Structure

International Maritime Organisation	Lead facilitator, ensuring alignment with global maritime law
The European Union	Policy coordination, ensuring rule-based mari- time governance and enforcement mechanisms
India	Regional security contributor, balancing sover- eignty concerns with security needs
China	Key maritime power with influence on trade and security in IOR.
United States	Security enforcer and technology provider for maritime law enforcement
IORA	Represent local security needs and economic concerns
Shipping Industry (ICS, BIMCO etc)	Ensure modernization is commercially viable

Civil society and environmental groups	Address emerging threats like environmental crimes and human rights.
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## 2. How the EU, India, China, and the US Could Modernize SUA

### 1. European Union (EU) Contributions

- **Regulatory Frameworks & Governance:** Align SUA modernization with EU maritime security strategies, including EEZ governance, environmental protection, and counterterrorism measures.
- **Technology & Enforcement:** Contribute satellite surveillance (Copernicus program), AI-based threat detection, and port security frameworks.
- **Rule-Based Order:** Ensure SUA modernization remains compliant with UNCLOS and human rights laws.

### 2. India's Role

- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Expand Indian Ocean security architecture and enhance SUA's enforcement in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Capacity Building for Small States:** Train IORA and African coastal nations in maritime law enforcement.
- **Regional Consensus Building:** Bridge gaps between Western actors (US, EU) and China through multilateral security forums.

### 3. China's Role

- **Integration with BRI & Global Security Initiative:** Ensure SUA aligns with China's trade security priorities in key chokepoints like Malacca and Djibouti.
- **Surveillance & Anti-Piracy Operations:** Enhance its contributions to international anti-piracy missions in the Indian Ocean.
- **Cybersecurity & AI Enforcement:** Implement AI-driven tracking systems to monitor suspicious maritime activities.

### 4. United States' Role

- **Military & Security Capabilities:** Leverage US naval presence for SUA enforcement in piracy-prone waters.
- **Intelligence Sharing:** Expand Five Eyes maritime intelligence to detect terror threats.
- **Countering WMD Proliferation:** Strengthen SUA provisions to counter North Korean and Iranian arms smuggling.

**Table – SUA Challenges**

SUA Challenge	Proposed Modernisation	Leading stakeholders
Cybersecurity Threats	Criminalizing cyperattacks on maritime navigation systems	Eu, Us, China
Terrorist use of ships	Expanding SUA to criminalize ships used for terror financing and arms smuggling	US, India, IMO
Environmental Crimes	Integrating illegal fishing, oil dumping and maritime pollution into Sua offenses.	EU, AU, UNDP
WMD & Dual use Goods Transport	Strengthening SUA enforcement against clandestine nuclear material shipments	US, China, India
Hybrid Warfare & GPS Jamming	Defining state-backed maritime disruptions as SUA violations.	NATO, China and India.

### 3. The Path Forward

- First Phase (2025–2026): Stakeholder engagement, technical analysis, diplomatic outreach.
- Second Phase (2026–2027): Drafting amendments, securing political buy-in, and regional consultations.
- Final Phase (2028–2029): Ratification, technical enforcement, and capability-building programs.

### Summary

The Indian Ocean serves as the geostrategic pivot of the Indo-Pacific, linking Asia, Africa, and the Middle East through critical trade routes, energy corridors, and maritime chokepoints. It is the site of competing influences from India, China, the US, ASEAN, European states, and Gulf actors, each pursuing their interests through maritime security, economic integration, and strategic partnerships. The regional order in the Indian Ocean is increasingly shaped by:

1. Power Projection and Strategic Balancing: India and China compete for influence, with the US maintaining a stabilizing presence.
2. Maritime Security and Freedom of Navigation: The rising militarization of the region, EEZ disputes, and non-traditional threats (piracy, IUU fishing, hybrid warfare).
3. Institutional Fragmentation and Rule-Making Gaps: Unlike the South China Sea, no comprehensive security framework exists, leaving the Indian Ocean vulnerable to unilateral power plays.

The EU's engagement in the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) signals a strategic shift toward maritime governance, trade security, and connectivity. While not a military power in the region, the EU can contribute diplomatic, economic, and legal expertise to shape a rules-based order.

### Key Contributions of the EU in IPOI:

1. Maritime Governance and EEZ Management: Leading an EEZ Governance and Dispute Resolution Framework to prevent tensions over resource exploitation.
2. Infrastructure & Connectivity: Expanding Global Gateway investments in green ports, digital connectivity, and resilient supply chains.
3. Security Partnerships: Strengthening cooperation with IORA, ASEAN, India, and African coastal states to promote regional stability.
4. Norm-Setting and Legal Influence: Pushing for UNCLOS compliance, modernizing SUA, and ensuring maritime freedom of navigation.

## Applying Indo-Pacific Logic to the Indian Ocean

During the next EU policy cycle, applying Indo-Pacific logic to the Indian Ocean requires:

1. Integrating the Indian Ocean into the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy – ensuring that security, economic, and governance frameworks align with broader Indo-Pacific ambitions.
2. Enhancing Security & Defence Cooperation – expanding maritime domain awareness (MDA), naval partnerships, and counter-piracy missions.
3. Strengthening Institutional Engagement – deepening ties with IORA, IPOI, and Quad+ dialogues to shape regional governance.
4. Developing Scenario-Based Policy Planning – preparing for conflict contingencies, particularly chokepoint disruptions, EEZ confrontations, and hybrid threats.

## The EU's Role in EEZ Management and Maritime Security

Effective EEZ management is critical for stability, resource sustainability, and economic development. The EU can play a central role by:

- Promoting an Indo-Pacific EEZ Governance Compact to settle disputes, particularly in contested regions like the Maldives, Socotra, and the Mozambique Channel.
- Deploying technical expertise for fisheries monitoring, satellite surveillance, and maritime domain awareness (MDA).
- Investing in joint enforcement capacity with regional coast guards to counter IUU fishing, piracy, and illicit trade.

## Security and Defence Management: Why Scenario Building Matters

To remain relevant in the Indo-Pacific, the EU must embrace security and defence planning through:

1. Scenario-based risk assessment – understanding how conflicts in the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Oceania could escalate.

2. Crisis Response Mechanisms – developing maritime deconfliction protocols with key players (India, ASEAN, Australia, US).
3. Dual-Use Infrastructure Investments – ensuring EU-funded ports, digital corridors, and energy projects can support both commercial and security needs.

## Modernizing the SUA Convention: The EU's Role as an Effective Security Provider

The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts (SUA) Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation is outdated in addressing modern security threats such as:

- Hybrid Maritime Warfare (coercion via fishing fleets, paramilitary operations)
- Cyberattacks on Maritime Infrastructure
- Illegal Maritime Activities Beyond Traditional Piracy

For SUA modernization to be effective, the EU must become an enforcement actor, rather than just a norm-setting player. This means:

- Enhancing its own maritime enforcement presence through joint naval exercises, satellite monitoring, and counter-illegal trafficking operations.
- Pushing for a legal revision of SUA that includes cybersecurity, hybrid threats, and economic coercion.
- Partnering with regional navies to ensure compliance and enforcement.
- The Indian Ocean is the key theatre for defining Asian regional order, with India, China, the US, and ASEAN shaping power balances.
- The EU's entry into IPOI provides a critical opportunity to stabilize maritime governance, enforce EEZ rules, and prevent regional conflicts.
- To be effective, the EU must combine security engagement with economic and legal influence, ensuring credible enforcement mechanisms.
- Revising SUA is only as effective as the EU's ability to become a security actor, meaning it must expand its maritime enforcement partnerships and capabilities.

The Pacific Islands face climate change, environmental degradation, and economic vulnerabilities.

**Strategic Position:** The Pacific Islands lie along critical sea trade routes connecting the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the US.

**Resource Richness:** The region holds significant marine resources, including fisheries and minerals. **Climate Vulnerability:** Rising sea levels threaten the islands' existence.

Addressing challenges: A dedicated chapter on the Pacific Islands would allow tailored solutions, including climate resilience, education, urban governance, sustainable development, and regional development.

In summary, the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy matters for global stability, economic growth, and shared prosperity. By focusing on substance, collaboration, and addressing specific challenges, we can meaningfully impact this vital region.

## 15.0 UNDRIP

The Indigenous peoples of Oceania encompass a diverse array of cultures, languages, and traditions that have evolved over thousands of years. This region includes Aboriginal Australians, Papuans, and Austronesians (Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians). Pacific Islander communities include Indigenous peoples of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia who identify as Chamorro, Chuukese, Palauan, Fijian, Papuan, Samoan, Tongan, Tokelauan and Native Hawaiian, among others<sup>40</sup>. They speak a variety of Austronesia languages<sup>41</sup>. Kanaky are an Indigeneos People of New Caledonia, and Tahiti's Indigenous People are called Maohi<sup>42</sup>.

Indigenous peoples in Oceania face several challenges, including colonial neglect, historical isolation, and environmental threats. Many communities struggle with cultural preservation, as globalization and political changes threaten their traditional ways of life. Additionally, economic disparities and lack of political representation are significant issues<sup>43</sup>. The population of Indigenous peoples in Oceania is estimated to be fewer than 6.5 million. Papua New Guinea alone is home to about 780 distinct languages, highlighting the region's linguistic diversity. Indigenous groups in Oceania have put forward claims for indigenous recognition and rights, especially in areas still under external administration, such as Guam, the Northern Marianas, and Hawaii. These claims often focus on cultural identity, land rights, and political autonomy<sup>44</sup>. The United Nations supports Indigenous peoples in Oceania through various programs aimed at cultural preservation, economic development, and political advocacy. These programs help communities maintain their cultural heritage and improve their living conditions<sup>45</sup>. There is significant scope for expansion under the UN Global Compact in Oceania<sup>46</sup>

In the EU joint staff working paper on Indigenous People, the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous People was recognised to enshrine the right to self-determination within national territories and economic self-development, applying to the six percent of the world's population, who consider themselves to belong to an Indigenous nation<sup>47</sup>. The EU's

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<sup>40</sup> <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/new-center-will-elevate-research-about-pacific-islander-and-indigenous-communities/>

<sup>41</sup> [https://sites.google.com/site/hedvigskirgard/pacific-maps/pacific-maps-old#h.p\\_2hm2\\_kI60dWE](https://sites.google.com/site/hedvigskirgard/pacific-maps/pacific-maps-old#h.p_2hm2_kI60dWE)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.iwgia.org/en/french-polynesia.html>

<sup>43</sup> <https://thetribalsociety.com/tribes-and-indigenous-peoples-of-oceania/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/oceania-islands-land-people>

<sup>45</sup> <https://pacific.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>

<sup>46</sup> <https://unglobalcompact.org/engage-locally/oceania>

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/Docs-updates/JOINT\\_STAFF\\_WORKING\\_PAPER\\_EN\\_V2\\_P1\\_865982.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/Docs-updates/JOINT_STAFF_WORKING_PAPER_EN_V2_P1_865982.pdf)



response has been an evolving one.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a crucial international instrument that outlines minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being, and rights of Indigenous peoples worldwide. UNDRIP contains a preamble and forty-six articles and was a triumph of a social movement enshrining, elevating, and guaranteeing Indigenous Peoples' Rights into a politically binding international convention. Legal experts drafted it in a subcommittee of the UN Human Rights Commission. A central concern of the drafters was that the concept of citizenship, itself a concept invented to address the presence of Indigenous people in the Spanish empire before the French Revolution, would not be turned against the countries having large populations of Indigenous people on their territory. That is to say, UNDRIP is both an amplification of the existing human rights regime and confined to their host nations.

The question arises regarding how Indigenous Peoples' rights are then to be promoted under UNDRIP in international law and as part of the EU's foreign relations in the Pacific region. In practice the quality of implementation depends on the Pacific Islanders political and legal systems.

Thus, institution-building, legislation, and policy development are necessary to make it stick. UNDRIP impinges on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, anti-discrimination policies, land laws, and the application of human rights. It supplements the ILO Declaration on Indigenous peoples' right to work.

In a seminal contribution, Hohman & Weller lays out the land in the following manner: First they trace the legal evolution of international law and assesses UNDRIP in light of some major principles and regimes in international law. Part II concentrates on the rights in UNDRIP that concern self-determination, group identity, and relationship to the state. Parts III-V examine land, cultural, social, and economic rights and rights and the provisions on international reparation and redress. Part VI addresses rights and the provisions on international reparation and redress.

Creating an integrated strategy to apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to New Caledonia involves several key steps. Here's a proposed roadmap:

## 15.1 Roadmap for Implementing UNDRIP in New Caledonia

### 1. Institution-Building and Legislation

- Establish a UNDRIP Task Force: Comprising representatives from the UN, EU, France, New Caledonia (NC) government, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).
- Draft Legislation: Develop laws that align with UNDRIP, focusing on land rights, anti-discrimination, and compensation mechanisms.
- Create Indigenous Institutions: Support the establishment of indigenous councils and bodies to ensure their participation in decision-making.

## 2. Policy Development

- **Comprehensive Policy Review:** Assess existing policies to ensure they align with UNDRIP principles.
- **Develop New Policies:** Focus on education, healthcare, and employment tailored to indigenous needs.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Provide training for government officials and indigenous leaders on UNDRIP implementation.

## 3. Stakeholder Engagement

- **Inclusive Dialogue:** Continue and expand the stakeholder-based dialogue in Noumea, ensuring all voices are heard.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate the public on the importance of UNDRIP and the rights of indigenous peoples.

## 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Establish Monitoring Mechanisms:** Regularly assess the progress of UNDRIP implementation.
- **Independent Reviews:** Conduct periodic reviews by independent bodies to ensure transparency and accountability.

## Argument for Integrated Strategy

An integrated strategy is essential to supplement the stakeholder-based dialogue in Noumea for several reasons:

1. **Holistic Approach:** It ensures that all aspects of indigenous rights are addressed comprehensively, from legislation to policy development.
2. **Preventing Irredentist Claims:** By recognizing and protecting indigenous rights, the strategy can mitigate potential conflicts and irredentist claims.
3. **Sustainable Development:** It promotes sustainable development by ensuring that indigenous communities are active participants in their socio-economic progress.

## Estimated Costs and Timeline

### Costs

- **Institution-Building and Legislation:** €5 million
- **Policy Development:** €3 million

- Stakeholder Engagement: €2 million
- Monitoring and Evaluation: €1 million

## Timeline

- Year 1-2: Establish task force, draft legislation, and create indigenous institutions.
- Year 3-4: Develop and implement new policies, conduct training programs.
- Year 5: Full implementation and start of monitoring and evaluation.

## Division of Labour

- UN: Provide oversight, technical assistance, and funding.
- EU: Support policy development and capacity building.
- France: Implement legislation and provide financial support.
- NC Government: Local implementation and coordination.
- PIF: Facilitate regional cooperation and support.

This integrated strategy ensures a comprehensive approach to implementing UNDRIP in New Caledonia, promoting sustainable development and protecting indigenous rights.

## 15.2 Comparative Analysis of UNDRIP Implementation in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted in 2007, provides a framework for indigenous self-determination, land rights, cultural preservation, and political participation. While all Pacific Islanders have strong indigenous identities, the context, legal standing, and implementation of UNDRIP varies significantly across Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. This comparative analysis explores how different Pacific Island societies approach UNDRIP principles, with a specific focus on Tahiti (French Polynesia), New Caledonia, and Guam as representative cases.

### 15.2.1 Polynesia: Autonomy Under Colonial Structures Case Study: Tahiti (French Polynesia) Contextualization

- French Polynesia remains under French control, classified as an overseas collectivity rather than an independent state.
- Indigenous identity is strong but subordinate to French constitutional law, which does not recognize collective indigenous rights.
- There is an autonomy statute, but ultimate decision-making powers remain in Paris.

## UNDRIP Implementation Challenges

- **Self-determination:** France recognizes the right to political self-determination and economic development within the French state, but fails to implement UNDRIP consistently, which fuels dissatisfaction.
- **Land Rights:** French land tenure systems do not align with traditional Polynesian communal land ownership, leading to dispossession issues.
- **Cultural Protection:** While Tahitian language and culture receive some protection, French remains the dominant administrative and educational language.

### 15.2..2 Opportunities for Strengthening UNDRIP Implementation

- France could grant greater fiscal and legislative autonomy to Tahiti under UNDRIP's principles.
- Recognition of indigenous customary land ownership within French law could reduce land disputes.

## 2. Melanesia: Decolonization & Political Conflict

### Case Study: New Caledonia (Kanak) Contextualization

- New Caledonia is a French overseas territory with a strong Kanak indigenous movement for self-determination.
- The 1998 Nouméa Accord granted progressive autonomy, including indigenous governance structures.
- Recent failed referendums (2018, 2020, 2021) on independence have created tensions between Kanak leaders and the French state.

## UNDRIP Implementation Challenges

- **Self-Determination Stalled:** France's refusal to recognize the latest Kanak independence boycott as legitimate weakens UNDRIP's political self-rule aspirations.
- **Land Rights & Economic Disparity:** While land restitution programs exist, economic inequalities between indigenous Kanaks and European settlers remain stark.
- **Legal Dualism:** There is partial recognition of customary law, but French civil law remains dominant.

## Opportunities for Strengthening UNDRIP Implementation

- France could reopen negotiations with Kanak leaders under a new model, possibly integrating UNDRIP's principles more explicitly.

- Expanding indigenous economic ownership in key industries (e.g., nickel mining) could enhance Kanak self-sufficiency.

### 3. Micronesia: U.S. Military Presence vs. Indigenous Rights

#### Case Study: Guam (Chamorro Nation)

##### Contextualization

- Guam is an unincorporated U.S. territory, meaning its indigenous Chamorro people do not have full sovereignty or representation in the U.S. Congress.
- The island is strategically crucial for U.S. military interests, creating tensions between indigenous land rights and defense policies.

##### UNDRIP Implementation Challenges

- **Self-Governance Restrictions:**
  - Chamorros cannot vote in U.S. presidential elections or have meaningful representation in federal policymaking.
  - Any attempts at greater autonomy require Congressional approval, which is unlikely given Guam's military importance.
- **Land Rights Conflicts:**
  - Large portions of indigenous land are occupied by U.S. military bases, limiting access for traditional livelihoods.
  - Chamorro activists advocate for land return initiatives, aligning with UNDRIP's call for restitution.
- **Cultural Erosion:**
  - English is the dominant language, and Chamorro identity is under threat due to high levels of migration and economic dependency on the U.S.

**Table** – Comparative Overview: Key differences and overview

Dimension	Polynesia (Tahiti)	Melanesia ( New Cal- edonia	Micronesia (Guam)
Colonial Status	French Collectivity	French Overseas terri- tory	US Unicorporated ter- ritory
Self-Determination	Limited autonomy	Gradual autonomy but stalled Referendum	No sovereign Recog- nition
Land Rights	French tenure domi- nant	Partial land restitution	US military land oc- cupation

Cultural protection	Limited French dominant	Strong Kanak cultural revival	Language & Identity under pressure
UNDRIP Recognition	Weak	Partial	Weak

## Opportunities for Strengthening UNDRIP Implementation

- Expanding Chamorro cultural and linguistic education within Guam's school system.
- Strengthening land restitution programs to reduce military land occupation.
- Increased political representation in U.S. decision-making through territorial reforms.

## Policy Recommendations for Strengthening UNDRIP Implementation Across the Pacific

### 1. Legal Recognition of Indigenous Political Autonomy:

- Polynesia: Expand Tahiti's legislative and fiscal autonomy within the French system.
- Melanesia: Re-negotiate the New Caledonia referendum framework to reflect Kanak aspirations.
- Micronesia: Advocate for Guam's political representation in the U.S. system.

### 2. Strengthening Land Rights and Economic Self-Sufficiency:

- Encourage EU investment in indigenous-led economic projects (e.g., fisheries, green energy).
- Expand land restitution programs in New Caledonia and Guam.

### 3. Cultural and Linguistic Revitalization:

- Integrate indigenous languages into national education systems.
- Promote cultural diplomacy and digital heritage preservation.

### 4. Regional Collaboration & Pacific Solidarity:

- Form an Indigenous Pacific Forum under the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to coordinate UNDRIP advocacy.
- Push for greater recognition of indigenous governance structures in international trade agreements.

## Conclusion: Contextualizing UNDRIP for a Pacific Future

While UNDRIP provides a universal framework, its application in the Pacific is deeply shaped by colonial histories, legal systems, and geopolitical interests. Polynesia struggles with French legal constraints, Melanesia faces stalled decolonization efforts, and Micronesia is caught



between indigenous rights and U.S. military dominance. Strengthening UNDRIP implementation requires a multi-layered approach—balancing self-determination, land rights, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation—while also navigating the geopolitical realities of European, U.S., and Asian influences in the Pacific.

## **16.0 HOW COULD THE EU COOPERATE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH PACIFIC**

The EU's cooperation with the Pacific Islands has political, economic, and developmental dimensions. Some ways the EU can strengthen collaboration with the region:

### **16.1 Trade and Economy**

The EU is the Pacific region's second-largest trading partner. Therefore, the EU should continue to promote trade and investment in the area.

Free Trade agreements with countries like Australia and New Zealand are essential steps to facilitate trade and economic cooperation.

### **16.2 Development and cooperation**

The EU has traditionally collaborated with the Pacific Islands within the framework of the ACP. This cooperation should expand to other sectors such as the environment, good governance, energy, climate change, and fisheries.<sup>48</sup> And human rights.

Focusing on sustainable development, climate resilience, and poverty reduction is crucial.

### **16.3 Political Dialogue and Security**

The EU should enhance political dialogue with the Pacific Islands on common challenges such as climate change, security and regional cooperation.

Cooperation on maritime security, disaster prevention, and conflict resolution is essential.

Maritime security threats are constantly evolving. It is imperative the EU weighs in, once it has put order into its house.

### **16.4 Regional Partnerships**

The EU has partnerships with 15 independent states in the Pacific, the three overseas states in the Pacific, the three overseas territories, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)<sup>49</sup>.

These partnerships should be strengthened and expanded.

The parliamentary aspects of collaboration should not be neglected. Why does it matter?

**Biodiversity and Environment:** The Pacific Islands are vulnerable to climate change and

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.pnatuna.com/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://forumsec.org/2050>

biodiversity loss. EU Cooperation can help preserve these unique ecosystems.

Security and Stability. More vital collaboration can promote peace and stability in the region.

Global Responsibility: The Pacific region is strategically vital for world trade and climate action. The EU contributes to sustainable development and protecting the marine environment.

In summary, the EU should continue to develop and strengthen its relations with the Pacific Islands to promote shared interests and sustainable development.

## Summary

It is necessary to close ranks in a narrow space, for the traits of the fire of Kanaky wrath extinguishes in emptiness: Both the exile where the reverse turn against the remedy, slight inconveniences can become more grave. When a political leader puts a deaf ear to the lessons of human existence and fails to be treated less actively, would it not be an excellent opportunity to speak frankly and address the underlying challenges and opportunities rather than proposing poverty, disdain and ruin?

It makes no sense to oppose an evil with another evil.

The problems are real in New Caledonia. France must deliver, and the EU's response is too weak, steeped in post-colonial bla-bla. Noumea derives strength from the EU and understands the problems but does not know how to solve them. It has no money to do so and fails to carry through.

There is a north-south divide to overcome, dispossession in Nouméa and a dysfunctional relationship between the centre and municipalities to redress before the lessons learned from Kenya on land dispossession are taken onboard. A follow-up on the investment study regarding a pledging conference in Noumea with all Pacific Rim countries invited is de rigueur.

I expect France and EEAS to do what is necessary to break the impasse and to cooperate with Louis Mapou.<sup>50</sup>, who is under the influence of the EU, which is evident but has not been written about. I recommend that a multidimensional and comprehensive strategy be elaborated to effectively and sustainably address conflicts, problems, challenges, and opportunities as partners in power to help the Melanesians get reborn or die.

I have intended to refrain from launching a genealogy into the making of New Caledonia's woes or the genesis of the Blue Pacific continental vision. I have yet to do bibliographical research for a few. I am conveying what I think about those sources where I am not merely name-dropping from AI links. I recount, interpret, comment, reason, and express the problems in New Caledonia and the relationships. I am surprised by where my searches led the piece.

The counterpart of New Caledonia could be to forge a modernisation strategy and an economic development plan proper upon which the EU and France could review its OST policies, strengthen the Indo-Pacific Strategy, and reciprocate by making Euro-denominated green bond issuance available to Noumea for the financing of projects mutatis mutandis under the

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<sup>50</sup> <https://forumsec.org/forum-leaders/he-louis-mapou>

implementation plan 2023-2030 under the coherent strategy for the Blue Pacific continent.<sup>51</sup>

## 17.0 GEOPOLITICS OF DEEP SEA MINERALS

The EEAS is authorized under UNCLOS to represent the EU in the International Sea Bed Authority (ISA) and to develop common positions, which the member states are obliged to loyally uphold and implement. There are many deep sea minerals in the pacific, around which the resource economy of the green transition and the blue economy depends powered by industrial competition<sup>52</sup>. The EU's policy activism is crucial as things move from exploration to exploitation, but the EEAS is challenged by the relative backwardness of EU commercial companies of for lack of understanding of the stakes and interests. It has also resisted flexing its RDI muscles sufficiently to consolidate science into policy. Deep sea minerals are moving up the political agenda, and it is vital the EU step up its game to act as an arbiter in questions related to the geopolitics of deep sea minerals and the conflicts that may arise from a position of weakness.

### 17.1. The Strategic Importance of Deep-Sea Minerals in Oceania

The Pacific region, particularly Oceania, holds some of the world's most significant deep-sea mineral deposits, including polymetallic nodules, seafloor massive sulfides, and cobalt-rich crusts.

These resources contain critical materials like cobalt, nickel, manganese, and rare earth elements, which are essential for battery production, renewable energy technologies, and advanced electronics.

Oceania's geopolitical significance in this context stems from:

- Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs): Pacific island nations control vast maritime zones with untapped mineral wealth.
- Regulatory Leverage: The International Seabed Authority (ISA) governs deep-sea mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction, but Pacific states influence ISA policies.
- Geostrategic Interest: China, the U.S., the EU, Japan, and Australia are competing for access to these resources, both through state-backed companies and private enterprises.

### 17.2 Industrial Competition and the Global Race for Critical Minerals

The push for supply chain security and economic resilience has turned deep-sea mining into an arena of industrial competition:

- China's Dominance in Critical Minerals: China controls a large share of the global refining capacity for rare earth elements, cobalt, and nickel. This makes alternative sources, such

<sup>51</sup> [https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/2050-Strategy-Implementation-Plan\\_2023-2030.pdf](https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/2050-Strategy-Implementation-Plan_2023-2030.pdf)

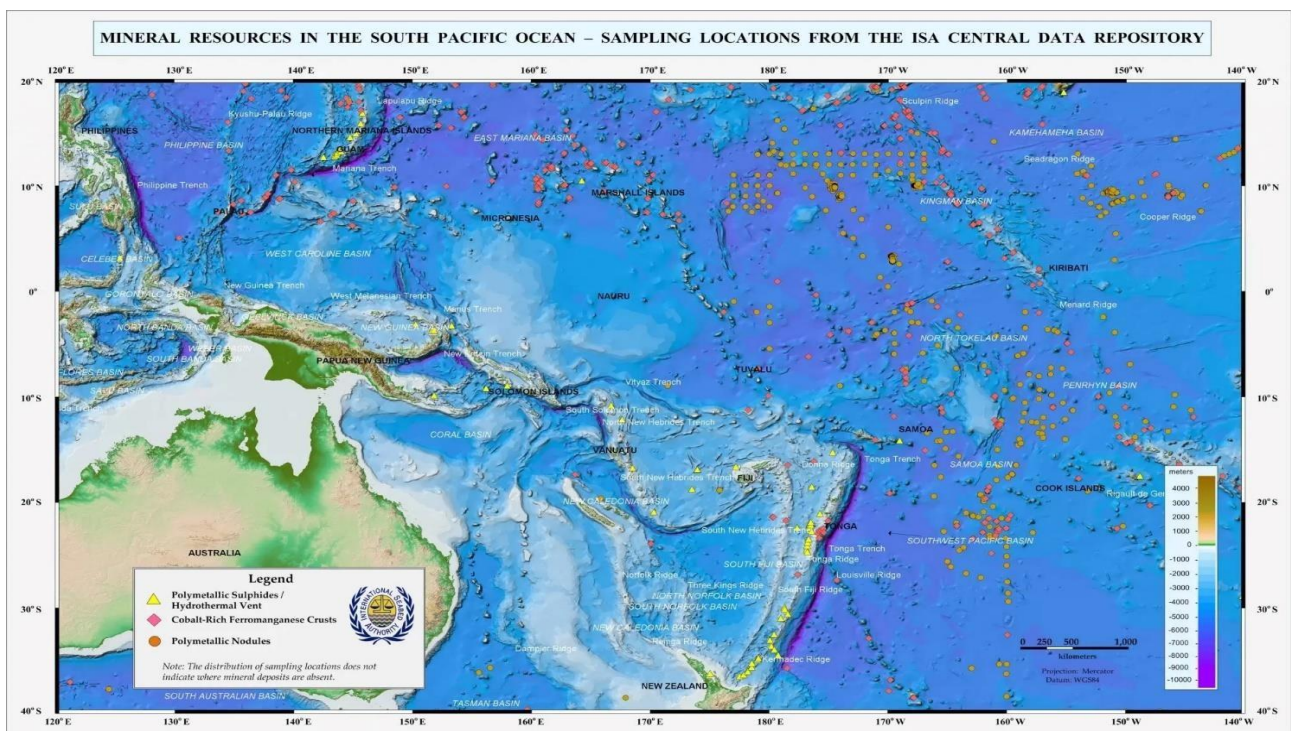
<sup>52</sup> <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/growing-geopolitical-tensions-underscore-the-need-for-stronger-action-on-critical-minerals-security>

as deep-sea minerals in Oceania, strategically attractive for the EU, the U.S., and Japan.

- EU’s Strategic Autonomy: The European Union’s Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) emphasizes reducing dependence on China and diversifying supply chains, potentially increasing interest in deep-sea mining projects in the Pacific.
- U.S. and Allied Strategies: The U.S. is promoting minerals alliances with Australia and Pacific nations through the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) to counter China’s influence.

However, deep-sea mining faces high costs, environmental concerns, and regulatory uncertainty, making land-based supply chains remain dominant in the near term.

**Figure – Deep sea minerals in Oceania**



Source: <https://www.isa.org.jm/maps/mineral-resources-in-the-south-pacific-ocean/>

### 17.3 Balancing the Green Transition, Industrial Competition, and Oceanic Health

To balance resource extraction for the green transition with ecological and industrial considerations, policymakers must navigate:

- Environmental Concerns and Ocean Oxygenation:
- The deep sea plays a crucial role in the global carbon and oxygen cycles. Disrupting seabed ecosystems could affect ocean oxygenation, which is already under stress from climate change.
- The long-term ecological risks of deep-sea mining are still uncertain, leading to the

Precautionary Principle guiding regulatory frameworks.

- Strategic Use of R&D and Innovation Funding (RDI):
- Instead of directly prioritizing extraction, EU and allied funding could focus on alternative solutions, such as:
  - Advanced recycling and substitution technologies to reduce dependency on deep-sea minerals.
  - Low-impact extraction technologies that minimize seabed disruption.
  - Marine biodiversity research to assess long-term ecological effects.
- Strategic R&D investments through Horizon Europe, the European Innovation Council, and Global Gateway partnerships could position the EU as a leader in responsible resource use rather than a latecomer to high-impact mining.

## 17.4 Policy Considerations for Balancing Competing Priorities

A Moratorium or a Phased Approach?

- Some Pacific states, such as Fiji and Palau, advocate for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, aligning with environmental concerns.
- Others, such as Nauru, push for early commercial extraction, partnering with mining firms like The Metals Company (TMC).

The EU must decide whether to support a moratorium, conditional extraction, or strategic investment in alternatives.

Strategic Industrial Policy and Resilience

If deep-sea mining is pursued, EU investment could focus on:

Ensuring European companies develop lower-impact extraction technologies.

Partnerships with Pacific nations to align mineral extraction with sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Building an independent European supply chain for critical minerals while reducing overreliance on China under a partnership agreement with PIF and relevant entities active in minerals in the South Pacific such as Sopac.

Regional Diplomacy and Soft Power

The EU and U.S. need to engage Pacific nations through inclusive development policies, ensuring that deep-sea mining benefits local economies rather than becoming another extractive industry dominated by external powers.



## Summary

The geopolitics of deep-sea minerals in Oceania reflects the tension between the green transition, industrial competition, and environmental preservation. The EU, the U.S., and allies must carefully weigh whether deep-sea mining aligns with their long-term strategic, industrial, and environmental goals. Instead of rushing into extraction, a balanced approach—prioritizing R&D funding for alternative solutions and regional partnerships—may prove more sustainable in the long run.

## 17.5. EU's Position in the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and the Unresolved Research Questions on Ocean Oxygenation

The EU's Strategic Position in the ISA

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) regulates seabed mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The EU and its member states, as major players in global environmental governance and industrial policy, must adopt a balanced position that aligns environmental sustainability with strategic resource autonomy.

**The EU's position should focus on three key principles:**

### 1. Precautionary Science-Based Regulation

- Support a temporary moratorium or conditional framework on deep-sea mining until scientific uncertainties—particularly regarding ocean oxygenation—are resolved.
- Advocate for mandatory environmental impact assessments (EIAs) based on rigorous, independent, and publicly available research before any large-scale mining approvals.
- Push for transparent and inclusive governance mechanisms to prevent regulatory capture by mining companies or resource-dominant states.

### 2. Strategic Resource Diplomacy and Industrial Policy

- Ensure EU access to deep-sea minerals only under strict sustainability standards, leveraging ISA negotiations to promote low-impact extraction technologies.
- Develop public-private partnerships (PPPs) for EU-led research in ocean sustainability while exploring alternative critical mineral sources (e.g., advanced recycling, urban mining, and land-based extraction in Africa and the Arctic).
- Strengthen strategic alliances with Pacific island nations that are pushing for a moratorium while avoiding alignment with states prioritizing short-term extraction.

### 3. Linking Ocean Governance with Climate and Biodiversity Frameworks

- Integrate ISA decision-making with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN High Seas Treaty to ensure that deep-sea mining policies do not

undermine global commitments to biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration.

- Promote cross-sectoral marine spatial planning (MSP) that considers deep-sea mining's interaction with fisheries, carbon storage, and ecosystem resilience.

### 3. Unresolved Research Questions on Ocean Oxygenation and Deep-Sea Mining

Unresolved questions

The potential impact of deep-sea mining on ocean oxygenation remains largely unexplored. Several research gaps must be addressed before proceeding with industrial-scale extraction:

#### 1. Impact of Sediment Plumes on Ocean Oxygen Levels

- Deep-sea mining generates sediment plumes that could increase turbidity, reduce light penetration, and alter microbial activity.
- Unresolved Question: To what extent do plumes disrupt the biological and chemical processes involved in deep-sea oxygen generation and nutrient cycling?

#### 2. Effects on Deep-Sea Carbon Sequestration and Microbial Ecosystems

- The deep ocean plays a key role in long-term carbon storage, partly through microbial activity that regulates oxygen and CO<sub>2</sub> cycles.
- Unresolved Question: How does mechanical disruption of seabed ecosystems alter microbial functions related to oxygen production and carbon sequestration?

#### 3. Changes in Ocean Currents and Upwelling Systems

- Mining operations could interfere with deep-sea currents, which distribute oxygen and nutrients to marine ecosystems.
- Unresolved Question: Could mining-driven changes in ocean circulation patterns lead to localized or regional oxygen depletion zones?

#### 4. Cumulative Impact of Industrial Activities on Oxygenation

- Industrial activities such as shipping, fisheries, and fossil fuel extraction already impact oceanic oxygen levels and nutrient balances.
- Unresolved Question: How does deep-sea mining interact with other anthropogenic stressors, and what are the thresholds beyond which oxygen regeneration is compromised?

#### 5. Role of Benthic Fauna in Oxygen Recycling

- Deep-sea organisms contribute to bioturbation, helping regulate oxygen flow in sediments.
- Unresolved Question: How much biological oxygen recycling capacity is lost when mining



de- stroys benthic ecosystems?

### 3. Consolidating Science into Policy: A Roadmap for EU Engagement

#### 17.6 The science-policy nexus

To ensure that scientific findings shape policymaking at the ISA and beyond, the EU should take the following approach:

##### 1. Strengthening Scientific Research and Environmental Baselines

- Establish an EU-led deep-sea research consortium (involving Horizon Europe, European Marine Board, and national marine research institutes) to conduct long-term observational studies before any mining approvals.
- Push for a mandatory international deep-sea monitoring framework within the ISA, requiring multi-year baseline studies before licensing extraction projects.

##### 2. Integrating Science into Regulatory Decision-Making

- Promote the creation of an independent ISA Science Council that advises decision-makers and prevents politically motivated licensing.
- Require environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) for any deep-sea mining project, modeled on the EU's Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

##### 3. Using Research to Set Legal and Economic Conditions

- Condition any future EU engagement in deep-sea mining on scientific evidence proving no significant harm to ocean oxygenation.
- Develop economic incentives for alternative resource strategies, such as subsidies for critical mineral recycling and material efficiency innovations to reduce dependence on deep-sea extraction.

##### 4. Enhancing Diplomacy and International Collaboration

- Work closely with Pacific nations, Japan, and environmental coalitions to ensure ISA negotiations prioritize science over short-term industrial interests.
- Support binding global regulations on seabed mining through the High Seas Treaty and UN Ocean Decade initiatives.

#### Summary: A Strategic, Science-Driven Approach to Deep-Sea Mining

For the EU, balancing industrial competitiveness, environmental responsibility, and strategic resource security in deep-sea mining requires a leadership role in the ISA that prioritizes scientific clarity before policy action.

## Key Takeaways:

- The EU should support a moratorium or conditional framework until ocean oxygenation risks are fully understood.
- Research gaps on sediment plumes, carbon sequestration, microbial ecosystems, and ocean currents must be closed through long-term monitoring and independent scientific assessments.
- The EU should integrate deep-sea science into ISA governance, ensuring that policy decisions reflect rigorous environmental, economic, and geopolitical assessments.
- Parallel to deep-sea mining discussions, the EU must invest in alternative solutions, including critical raw material recycling, industrial substitution, and advanced R&D for sustainable resource extraction.

By positioning itself as a science-first policy leader, the EU can shape global standards for deep-sea mining while safeguarding.

## 17.8. Stakeholders and technological alternatives

Below is a structured table outlining the most important deep-sea minerals, their uses, geographical deposits, the interests of the main contenders, key industry interests, and potential technological alternatives.

**Table -Deep Sea Minerals**

Mineral	Uses	Geographical Deposits	Main contenders	Industry interests	Technological Alternatives
Polymetallic nodules	Batteries (EVs, grid storage) Steel & alloys Electronics (smartphones, laptops)	Clarion-Clipperton Zone (Pacific Ocean, between Hawaii and Mexico) Cook Islands Indian Ocean	China (dominant player in refining and processing) - EU (strategic autonomy in battery supply chains) - USA (reducing reliance on China) Japan & South Korea (high-tech & auto industry) Pacific island nations (mixed positions on mining)	EV battery makers (Tesla, CATL, Panasonic) - Steel manufacturers (ArcelorMittal, Nippon Steel) - Electronics companies (Apple, Samsung)	- Advanced battery recycling - Substituting nickel & cobalt with lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries - Land-based mining (Indonesia, Canada, DRC)

Cobalt-rich ferromagnese	High-performance batteries Aerospace alloys - -Magnetic materials	Western Pacific (Japan's EEZ, Mariana Trench) South Atlantic	- China (controls most of global cobalt refining) - Japan & South Korea (own EEZs, need critical minerals) - EU & US (seeking non-African sources)	Aerospace & defense (Airbus, Boeing) Tech companies (Microsoft, Google) EV makers (Volkswagen, BYD)	- Recycling of cobalt from batteries - Manganese substitution in lithium-ion batteries - Land-based sources (DRC, Australia)
Seafloor Massive Sulfides (SMS)	Copper for wiring & electronics Zinc for construction & medicine Gold & silver for electronics & currency	Pacific Ring of Fire (Solwara 1, PNG). Mid-Atlantic Ridge Indian Ocean	- China (already dominates copper & rare metal refining) - Japan (trial mining off Okinawa) - EU (wants strategic autonomy in copper & zinc)	- Construction & infrastructure (Siemens, Vinci) - Copper industry (Glencore, Freeport-McMoRan) - Electronics (Sony, Intel)	Urban mining & e-waste recycling Deep geothermal mineral extraction More efficient use of copper through superconductors
Rare Earth Elements (REEs)	- Wind turbines & green energy - High-tech electronics - Military & defense (missiles, radars)	Pacific Ocean (Japan's EEZ, Central Pacific) South China Sea and Indian Ocean	- China (dominates 85%+ of REE refining) - US & EU (critical raw materials strategies) - Japan (seeks independence from China)	- Wind turbine makers (Vestas, Siemens Gamesa) - Military & defense (Lockheed Martin, Thales) - Electronics (Huawei, Qualcomm)	- REE recycling from e-waste - Substitutes in magnets (ceramic, iron-nitride) - Land-based extraction (Sweden, Canada, Australia)
Nickel (from deep-sea deposits)	- EV batteries - Stainless steel production - Aerospace and defense applications	Clarion-Clipperton Zone Papua New Guinea Western Pacific	- Indonesia & Philippines (land-based nickel leaders) - China (dominates processing) - EU & US (diversifying nickel sources)	- Stainless steel makers (Acerinox, Outokumpu) - EV makers (Tesla, Ford, BMW)	- Nickel-free battery chemistries (LFP) - Nickel recycling from stainless steel - Improved land-based mining efficiency

## Analysis & Policy Considerations

### 1. Strategic Autonomy vs. Environmental Risks

- The EU and US are trying to reduce dependence on China, which dominates mineral supply chains.

- Deep-sea mining could be an alternative, but the ecological risks are poorly understood, particularly regarding ocean oxygenation and biodiversity loss.

## 2. Industrial Competition & Technological Substitutes

- Battery and tech industries need stable mineral supplies but are also investing in alternatives (e.g., solid-state batteries, e-waste recycling, and material efficiency).
- China's refining monopoly remains a bottleneck—even if raw materials come from deep-sea sources, they still need refining capacity.

## 3. Geopolitical Flashpoints

- Pacific nations hold significant leverage, as most deposits lie in or near their EEZs. Their positions vary, with some calling for a mining moratorium, while others, like Nauru, are partnering with commercial operators.
- The ISA's regulations are contested, with countries split between pushing forward or delaying deep-sea mining until environmental concerns are addressed.

## 4. EU's Strategic Position

- The EU must decide whether to support deep-sea mining, push for alternatives, or develop a conditional licensing system based on rigorous impact studies.
- Stronger industrial alliances with Pacific nations, Japan, and the US could help secure supply chains without over-reliance on China.
- R&D investment in recycling, material substitution, and advanced mining tech could make deep-sea extraction a last resort rather than a first choice.

## Summary

The global race for deep-sea minerals is driven by industrial needs, geopolitical competition, and environmental concerns. While the EU, US, China, and Japan all have stakes, the risks to ocean ecosystems, oxygenation, and climate regulation demand a cautious, research-driven approach. The most practical strategy for the EU may be to prioritize innovation in recycling, alternative materials, and partnerships with Pacific nations, rather than rushing into deep-sea extraction.

## 18.0 PIF & THE BLUE OCEAN CONTINENT STRATEGY

### 18.1 Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is the premier political and economic policy organization in the Pacific region, comprising 18 member states. Its objectives and values center on regional cooperation, sustainable development, security, and collective action in addressing the challenges faced by Pacific nations.

## Objectives of the PIF

1. Regional Cooperation & Integration – Strengthen political, economic, and social ties among Pacific nations to enhance unity and collective action.
2. Sustainable Development – Promote economic growth, environmental protection, and resilience against climate change.
3. Security & Stability – Maintain regional peace through cooperative security mechanisms and responses to geopolitical tensions.
4. Good Governance & Democracy – Uphold democratic values, human rights, and transparent governance across member states.
5. Economic Resilience & Trade – Foster economic self-reliance, support free trade agreements, and develop regional economic strategies.
6. Climate Action & Environmental Protection – Advocate for climate justice, combat rising sea levels, and preserve oceanic and marine biodiversity.
7. Cultural Identity & Social Inclusion – Protect and promote indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions while ensuring gender and social equity.
8. Disaster Resilience & Humanitarian Response – Strengthen regional coordination in disaster preparedness and response to cyclones, tsunamis, and other natural calamities.

## Core Values of the PIF

- Pacific Regionalism – Unity among member states to collectively address shared challenges.
- Self-determination & Sovereignty – Respect for the independence and decision-making rights of member nations.
- Environmental Stewardship – Protection of the Pacific Ocean and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Peace & Security – A commitment to maintaining the Pacific as a zone of peace and cooperation.
- Resilience & Adaptability – Strengthening the region's ability to cope with economic, environmental, and social shocks.
- Inclusivity & Equity – Ensuring all Pacific peoples, including women, youth, and marginalized communities, have a voice in regional governance.

## Guiding Frameworks

- The Blue Pacific Narrative: A strategic vision that emphasizes Pacific ownership of

regional challenges and solutions.

- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent: A long-term roadmap for sustainable development, economic growth, and climate resilience.
- The Boe Declaration on Regional Security: An expansion of PIF's security priorities, recognizing climate change as the greatest security threat.
- The Suva Agreement (2022): Aimed at addressing leadership disputes and ensuring the unity of the Forum.

**Figure – PIF Leaders**



The PIF acts as the primary regional voice, advocating on behalf of Pacific nations in global forums, particularly on climate change, ocean governance, and sustainable development. Its mission is to advance the collective aspirations of the Pacific people while ensuring that regional and global policies reflect the unique challenges of the Pacific.

## 18.2 PIF's challenges and how to execute

The Pacific Islands face a range of needs, priorities, and conflicts, both internally within individual states and externally between them. These challenges stem from geopolitical tensions, climate change, economic vulnerabilities, governance issues, and security concerns. Addressing them effectively at the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) level requires enhancing regional capabilities across multiple domains.

### 18.2.1 Needs of the Pacific Islands

#### 1. Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

- Rising sea levels threaten low-lying nations (Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands).



- Increasing natural disasters (cyclones, tsunamis, coral bleaching).
- Overfishing and illegal fishing undermine food security and livelihoods.
- Pollution and ocean degradation impact marine biodiversity.

## 2. Economic Development and Trade

- Limited economic diversification; dependence on remittances, tourism, and aid.
- Vulnerability to global economic shocks (e.g., COVID-19's impact on tourism).
- Need for stronger intra-regional trade and market integration.
- Access to digital infrastructure and technology for economic modernization.

## 3. Regional Security and Stability

- Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by foreign fleets.
- Transnational crime, including drug trafficking and human trafficking.
- Strategic competition between major powers (China, US, Australia, etc.).
- Cybersecurity threats and limited cyber infrastructure.

## 4. Governance and Political Stability

- Some states struggle with weak governance, corruption, and electoral disputes.
- Traditional governance structures vs. modern political systems create tensions.
- Political instability in countries like Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.
- Calls for greater regional autonomy (e.g., Bougainville independence).

## 5. Health and Human Development

- Limited healthcare infrastructure, exacerbated by COVID-19.
- High rates of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes.
- Educational gaps and the need for upskilling in technology and leadership.

## 2. What Matters Most to the Pacific Islands?

### a) Sovereignty and Regional Solidarity

- Small nations emphasize sovereignty and self-determination.



- Need for stronger Pacific-led decision-making rather than external influence.
- The Blue Pacific Narrative highlights collective regional identity.

## b) Climate Action as a Security Issue

- Climate change is recognized as the greatest threat to Pacific nations.
- The Boe Declaration on Regional Security (2018) reaffirmed this priority.
- Advocacy for international climate financing and stronger global commitments.

## c) Geopolitical Balance and Non-Alignment

- The Pacific is a contested space between the US, China, Australia, and others.
- Some nations seek Chinese investment, while others prefer Western alliances.
- Maintaining regional unity is key to preventing fragmentation.

## d) Sustainable Economic Growth

- Moving from aid dependency to self-sustaining economies.
- Strengthening regional trade agreements and blue economy initiatives.
- Enhancing food security and local industries.

## e) Strengthening PIF as the Key Regional Body

- Recent fractures (e.g., Micronesian states' temporary withdrawal from PIF).
- The need for a more inclusive and effective decision-making structure.
- Implementing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

## 3. Conflicts Within and Among Pacific Island States

### a) Leadership and Institutional Tensions

- Micronesian states (e.g., Palau, Nauru) have clashed with PIF leadership, leading to tensions over fair representation.
- Disputes over PIF's structure and role, particularly between Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia.

### b) Territorial and Maritime Disputes

- New Caledonia (France) and Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) push for independence.

- Border disputes over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), particularly with IUU fishing incidents.

## c) Geopolitical Rivalries

- China's growing influence: Security pacts (e.g., China-Solomon Islands) raise concerns.
- US and Australia's counter-efforts: Increased security cooperation and funding.
- Pacific nations are caught in a balancing act between major powers.

## d) Environmental Conflicts

- Deep-sea mining creates divisions: Economic opportunity vs. environmental risks.
- Tensions over nuclear waste disposal (e.g., Japan's Fukushima wastewater release).
- Water security disputes in atoll nations due to rising sea levels.

## e) Economic Inequalities

- Larger economies (Papua New Guinea, Fiji) have more influence in PIF.
- Smaller nations struggle to secure equal benefits in regional agreements.
- Necessary Capabilities for PIF and Member States

### 18.2.2 Executing

To effectively address these challenges, the PIF and its members need to enhance political, economic, security, and environmental capacities.

#### a) Political and Institutional Capabilities

- Strengthening PIF's governance to prevent future internal rifts.
- Improving dispute resolution mechanisms for territorial and political conflicts.
- Developing a regional arbitration body for economic and environmental disputes.

#### b) Economic and Trade Capabilities

- Expanding intra-Pacific trade agreements to reduce reliance on external markets.
- Investing in renewable energy to reduce dependency on imported fossil fuels.
- Enhancing digital infrastructure and financial inclusion for small island economies.

#### c) Security and Defense Capabilities

- Strengthening the Pacific Fusion Centre for intelligence-sharing.
- Enhancing regional maritime surveillance against illegal fishing and smuggling.
- Expanding humanitarian and disaster relief coordination mechanisms.

**Figure – Vaiana**



#### d) Environmental and Climate Resilience Capabilities

- Building regional infrastructure for climate adaptation and relocation plans.
- Establishing a Pacific-led carbon credit system for sustainable financing.
- Enhancing regional marine conservation initiatives.

#### e) Diplomatic and Geopolitical Capabilities

- Forming a neutral Pacific diplomacy strategy to manage external influences.
- Creating a regional code of conduct for external partnerships with China, the US, and others.
- Strengthening advocacy at the UN and international financial institutions for Pacific-specific concerns.

### Summary

The Pacific Islands Forum faces complex and interlinked challenges that require a cohesive and strategic regional approach. PIF must:

1. Strengthen its institutional framework to prevent internal fractures.

2. Enhance economic resilience through trade and digital transformation.
3. Bolster security coordination while maintaining regional sovereignty.
4. Lead global climate advocacy with a unified Pacific voice.
5. Develop a balanced geopolitical strategy to engage external powers on Pacific terms.

By leveraging regional cooperation and building essential capabilities, the Pacific Islands can navigate geopolitical tensions, ensure sustainable development, and safeguard their collective identity and sovereignty in an increasingly contested region.

### 18.3 Strategy for Blue Pacific Continent

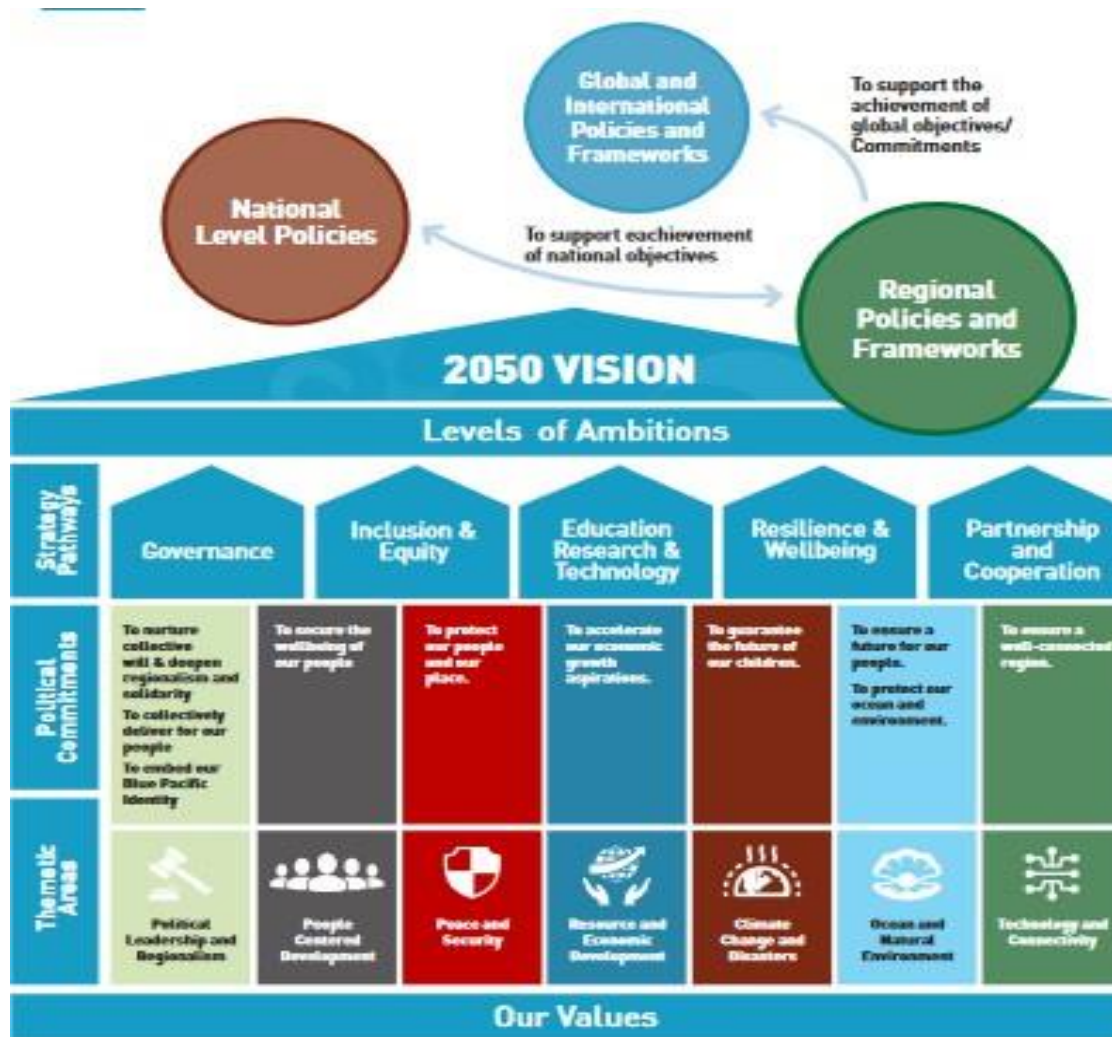
The Blue Ocean Continent strategy of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is encapsulated in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. This long-term strategy aims to foster regional cooperation and ensure the well-being of Pacific peoples by addressing critical challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, and security. Here's a summary of the key points:

- **Vision:** The strategy envisions a resilient Pacific region characterised by peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, enabling all Pacific peoples to lead free, healthy, and productive lives.
- **Leaders' Commitment:** Pacific leaders express a solid commitment to the health and well-being of their people, human rights, and equity. They value the ocean and land, emphasising their cultural and spiritual significance as their shared heritage.
- **Geopolitical Significance:** The Blue Pacific Continent, comprising large oceanic countries and territories, holds nearly 20% of the Earth's surface. The region faces heightened geopolitical competition and commercial interest, particularly in the global "Blue Economy" context and the demand for ecological and natural resources.
- **Climate Change:** The strategy acknowledges the urgent need for robust action to manage the adverse impacts of climate change. Despite the Pacific's collective greenhouse gas emissions being just over 1% of global emissions, the region is at the frontline of climate change effects.
- **Thematic Areas:** The strategy outlines seven key thematic areas for regional cooperation: Political Leadership and Regionalism, People-Centered Development, Peace and Security, resource and economic development, Climate Change, Ocean and Environment, and Technology and Connectivity.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Success depends on enhanced cooperation, strong leadership, and participation at all societal levels. The strategy calls for support from regional agencies, the private sector, civil society, media, academia, and other stakeholders.
- **Youth and Future Generations:** There is a recognition of the importance of listening to and responding to the voices and aspirations of Pacific peoples, especially the youth.

and children, as they will inherit the outcomes of this strategy.

- This strategy represents a collective effort to secure a viable future for the Pacific region by working together as one ‘Continent’ and leveraging the region’s solidarity and strengths

Figure – Implementing the 2050 Vision



Source: <https://forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum>

Evaluating the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2030 for the Blue Pacific Continent sets a solid foundation for transformational change that balances economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship. It aligns with global commitments and frameworks and advocates for the interests of the Blue Pacific Continent on the world stage.

## 18.4 Regional Architecture

According to the webpage of PIF deliberations have been begun into the regional architecture of Oceania. In a diplomatic context, regional architecture refers to the institutional framework, mechanisms, and arrangements that shape political, economic, and security interactions within a specific geographic region. It encompasses both formal organizations (e.g., ASEAN, the European Union, the African Union) and informal networks (e.g., trilateral dialogues, security compacts, economic partnerships) that facilitate cooperation, conflict resolution, and policy coordination among states.

Key Features of Regional Architecture:

1. Institutions and Agreements – Treaties, pacts, and multilateral organizations that define rules and norms of engagement.
2. Governance Mechanisms – Decision-making structures, summits, and ministerial meetings that guide regional diplomacy.
3. Security Cooperation – Defense alliances, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and joint military exercises.
4. Economic Integration – Free trade agreements, customs unions, and investment frameworks that drive regional economic policy.
5. Normative Frameworks – Shared values, legal principles, and policy convergence shaping regional order.
6. External Engagement – Interaction with global powers and institutions, including partnerships with the UN, EU, US, and China.

Why Regional Architecture Matters in Diplomacy:

- Enhances Stability – By institutionalizing cooperation, it reduces conflicts and fosters trust.
- Facilitates Collective Action – Enables regional states to tackle transnational issues such as trade, climate change, and security.
- Balances Major Powers – Serves as a platform for regional states to collectively engage with global actors.
- Strengthens Regional Identity – Promotes shared values and policy alignment among member states.

A well-functioning regional architecture is flexible, inclusive, and resilient, adapting to geopolitical shifts while maintaining its core functions.



To ensure momentum, a comprehensive plan designed to respond to the leaders' request for a review of the regional architecture among Pacific Island nations, with a focus on four key dimension, is given. This plan is intentionally interwoven with the objectives and values of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), ensuring that any recommended reforms uphold principles of regional solidarity, sustainable development, transparency, and mutual respect.

## 1. Political Setting Review:

Initiate a thorough analysis of the current political landscape across Pacific Island states by mapping existing leadership structures, political alignments, and regional integration efforts. This phase will assess how well current political arrangements foster democratic participation, respect for national sovereignty, and shared regional objectives. By benchmarking against PIF values—such as self-reliance, unity, and resilience—the review will identify both strengths and gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen political coherence and regional identity.

## 2. Institutional Processes, Systems, and Mechanisms:

Examine the administrative and operational frameworks currently in use by regional institutions. This step involves a detailed review of decision-making protocols, intergovernmental processes, and administrative systems to determine their efficiency, transparency, and adaptability. By comparing these processes with best practices from similar regional bodies, the plan will propose targeted reforms to streamline procedures and improve accountability—ensuring that every institution functions as a true partner in advancing the PIF's collective objectives.

## 3. Governance Mechanisms:

Evaluate the existing governance structures and regulatory frameworks that guide inter-state collaboration and policy implementation within the region. This evaluation will include oversight practices, accountability measures, and mechanisms for conflict resolution. The goal is to enhance governance frameworks so that they promote participatory decision-making, maintain checks and balances, and encourage adaptive policy responses. All recommendations will be designed to mirror the PIF's core commitment to transparent, inclusive, and responsive governance.

## 4. Engagement and Partnerships:

Develop strategies for broadening and deepening engagement among Pacific Island nations and their external partners. This component will assess current mechanisms for collaboration with civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, and international donors. By establishing regular regional forums, working groups, and digital platforms for dialogue, the plan aims to foster stronger partnerships that facilitate knowledge exchange and joint problem-solving. These initiatives will be crafted to resonate with PIF's values of cooperation and shared progress, ensuring that every stakeholder has a meaningful role in shaping the region's future.

## Implementation Strategy and Timelines:



- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Organize regional workshops and focus groups—including policymakers, community leaders, and subject-matter experts—to gather insights and build a consensus on reform priorities.
- **Research and Benchmarking:** Commission comparative studies and pilot projects that test proposed institutional and governance reforms in selected states.
- **Phased Roll-Out:** Implement recommended changes in a series of phased initiatives over a 12- to 18-month period, with interim assessments to ensure progress aligns with the agreed-upon regional objectives.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a robust M&E framework to track outcomes, allowing for adaptive management and continuous improvement in response to emerging challenges and opportunities.

By aligning this plan with the PIF's overarching mission of enhancing regional unity, sustainable development, and effective governance, we ensure that reforms are not only technically sound but also culturally and politically resonant. This interconnected approach will better position Pacific Island nations to shape a future regional architecture that is both dynamic and reflective of their shared aspirations.

## 18.6 EU-PIF-Australia action plan

For a joint EU-Australia-PIF action plan, the following principles could guide the blending and reinforcement of each party's interests:

- **Complementary Strengths:** Leverage the unique strengths of each party—EU's policy influence and funding mechanisms, Australia's regional ties and security initiatives, and PIF's local knowledge and networks<sup>53</sup>.
- **Shared Objectives:** Align the action plan with objectives such as climate resilience, sustainable development, and ocean governance, which are common priorities across the EU, Australia, and PIF strategies.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Ensure inclusive governance structures allowing equal representation and decision-making power among the EU, Australia, and PIF members.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Establish precise mechanisms for transparency and accountability in implementing the action plan, including monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) frameworks.
- **Sustainable Financing:** Develop sustainable financing models that combine the EU's development assistance, Australia's regional investments, and PIF's access to international funding sources like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global

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<sup>53</sup>[https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/eventdocuments/PFSD%202023\\_Concept%20Note\\_Programme\\_20Nov%202023.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/eventdocuments/PFSD%202023_Concept%20Note_Programme_20Nov%202023.pdf)

Environment Facility (GEF)<sup>1</sup>.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect and integrate Pacific peoples' cultural values and traditional knowledge in all aspects of the action plan.
- **Science and Technology Transfer:** Facilitate the transfer of science and technology, particularly in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable resource management.
- **Enhance cooperation** in maritime security, cybersecurity, and transnational crime prevention to address regional security concerns.
- **Capacity Building:** Focus on capacity building at the local and regional levels to ensure long-term self-reliance and resilience of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).
- **Global Advocacy:** Use the collective voice of the EU, Australia, and PIF to advocate for the interests of the Pacific region in international forums, particularly on issues like climate change and ocean rights.

By adhering to these principles, the joint action plan can effectively blend the interests of the EU, Australia, and PIF, leading to a cohesive and impactful approach to the challenges and opportunities in the Pacific region.

Specific projects that could be part of the joint EU-Australia-PIF action plan, considering the strategic interests and cooperation areas of each party, might include:

- **Climate Resilience Initiatives:** Projects focusing on building infrastructure resilient to climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events. This could involve the construction of seawalls, flood barriers, and the development of early warning systems<sup>1</sup>.
- **Sustainable Fisheries Management:** Joint efforts to ensure sustainable fishing practices, protect marine biodiversity, and support the livelihoods of Pacific communities dependent on fishing. This could include monitoring and surveillance of fishing activities<sup>2</sup>.
- **Renewable Energy Transition:** Development of renewable energy projects like solar, wind, and tidal power to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote energy independence in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).
- **Healthcare Improvement Programs:** Strengthening healthcare systems through the construction of new facilities, training of healthcare workers, and provision of essential medical supplies, particularly in remote areas.
- **Educational and Cultural Exchanges:** Programs to enhance educational opportunities, including scholarships, exchange programs, and the establishment of educational institutions focusing on sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

- **Research Collaboration:** Joint research projects in marine science, climate change, and biodiversity conservation, leveraging the EU's Horizon Europe program and Australia's scientific research capabilities.
- **Economic Diversification:** Support the development of alternative industries to tourism, such as agriculture, aquaculture, and artisanal crafts, to diversify income sources and reduce financial vulnerability.
- **Ocean Governance:** Projects aimed at enhancing ocean governance, including establishing marine protected areas, sustainable management of ocean resources, and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

These projects would align with the principles of the joint action plan and contribute to the sustainable development and resilience of the Blue Pacific Continent.

Private sector investments can be crucial in funding and implementing initiatives within the joint EU-Australia-PIF action plan. Here's how:

- **Capital Mobilization:** Private investments can provide the necessary capital for large-scale projects, especially in areas where public funds are limited<sup>54</sup>.
- **Innovation and Expertise:** The private sector often brings innovative solutions and technical expertise that can lead to more efficient and effective project outcomes.
- **Risk Sharing:** By involving private investors, the risk associated with new and complex projects can be shared, which might otherwise be too burdensome for public sector entities alone<sup>55</sup>.
- **Sustainable Business Models:** Private sector participation can help create sustainable business models that ensure the long-term viability and maintenance of projects<sup>56</sup>.
- **Job Creation:** Investment in local projects can lead to job creation, stimulating economic growth and development in the Pacific region.
- **Leveraging Financial Instruments:** The private sector can access various financial instruments, such as loans, equity, and bonds, to fund initiatives.
- **Public-private partnerships (PPPs):** PPPs can be an effective way to design, finance, and deliver infrastructure projects, combining the strengths of the public and private sectors.
- **Market Development:** Private sector investments can help develop local markets and increase competitiveness, leading to better services and products.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.pacificpsdi.org/who-we-are/about-psdi/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.adb.org/what-we-do/private-sector-financing>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sectors/private>

- **Capacity Building:** The private sector can contribute to capacity building by providing training and development opportunities for local communities and businesses.
- **Environmental and Social Governance (ESG):** Private investors are increasingly focusing on ESG criteria, which can ensure that projects meet high environmental and social standards.

By engaging the private sector, the joint EU-Australia-PIF action plan can benefit from diverse resources and expertise, leading to more robust and sustainable development outcomes for the Blue Pacific Continent.

## 18.7 ASEAN and PIF

ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) could deepen their cooperation across several policy domains, leveraging their respective strengths and addressing shared challenges. Key areas for partnership include:

### 1. Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability

- **Joint Climate Action Initiatives:** Both regions are highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss. ASEAN and PIF could collaborate on climate finance, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation strategies.
- **Blue Economy & Marine Conservation:** Joint initiatives on sustainable fisheries, ocean governance, and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

### 2. Trade & Economic Integration

- **Supply Chain Connectivity:** Enhancing trade routes and supply chains between ASEAN and the Pacific, particularly for agricultural and marine products.
- **Digital Economy & Financial Inclusion:** Promoting digital trade and financial services to support SMEs and startups in both regions.
- **Tourism Cooperation:** Sustainable tourism strategies, joint marketing initiatives, and capacity-building programs.

### 3. Security & Strategic Cooperation

- **Maritime Security:** Addressing shared concerns such as IUU fishing, piracy, and transnational crime through coordinated patrols and intelligence-sharing.
- **Disaster Response & Humanitarian Assistance:** Strengthening regional disaster relief mechanisms through joint training and resource-sharing.
- **Cybersecurity & Digital Resilience:** Enhancing cybersecurity cooperation to address emerging threats.

## 4. Infrastructure & Connectivity

- **Transport & Aviation Links:** Improving air and sea connectivity between ASEAN and the Pacific to facilitate trade, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges.
- **Energy Cooperation:** Collaboration on renewable energy projects, particularly solar, wind, and hydroelectric power.

## 5. Governance & Institutional Capacity-Building

- **Public Administration & Policy Coordination:** Sharing best practices on governance, transparency, and public sector reform.
- **Regional Multilateralism:** Strengthening coordination within broader frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific strategy, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and regional free trade agreements.

## 6. Education, Health & Human Capital Development

- **Higher Education & Research Exchange:** Expanding scholarships, joint research programs, and technical cooperation in fields like marine science, climate change, and public policy.
- **Healthcare & Pandemic Preparedness:** Knowledge-sharing on healthcare systems, communicable disease control, and vaccine distribution strategies.

## 7. Migration & Labor Mobility (Joint ASEAN-PIF Migration Forum)

Historically, most Pacific islanders migrated from South East Asia and PNG, region of more than 700 million inhabitants. Nowadays more than 28 million are migrants notably from the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia with a large proportion of women. Interacting on migration could help PIF and Oceania understand the push and pull factors better in their societies and to unite in the better knowledge of who they once were and what they are today as they look to the future.

- **Establishing a Joint Migration Forum:** ASEAN and PIF could institutionalize a regular dialogue on migration, labor mobility, and diaspora engagement, recognizing the deep historical ties between Southeast Asia and the Pacific.
- **Labor Mobility Agreements:** Expanding legal pathways for Pacific workers in ASEAN labor markets (and vice versa), particularly in sectors such as agriculture, hospitality, and construction.
- **Recognition of Skills & Qualifications:** Harmonizing frameworks for recognizing professional skills and educational qualifications to facilitate cross-border employment.
- **Diaspora Engagement & Remittances:** Enhancing policies to support Pacific Islander and South-east Asian diaspora communities, including financial literacy programs for remittance recipients and investment opportunities in home countries.

- **Climate-Induced Displacement:** Coordinating policies on the relocation and resettlement of communities affected by climate change, especially for low-lying Pacific Island states.

This joint migration forum would strengthen ASEAN-PIF ties by addressing historical migration patterns while responding to contemporary labor and climate challenges. Would you like to incorporate a specific institutional mechanism or reference existing regional agreements?

## 8. Cultural & People-to-People Exchanges

- **ASEAN-PIF Cultural Cooperation Agreement:** Establishing a framework for cultural exchange programs, heritage preservation, and indigenous knowledge-sharing.
- **Creative Industries & Media Collaboration:** Supporting joint film, music, and arts initiatives that highlight the shared histories and diverse cultures of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.
- **Youth & Sports Diplomacy:** Expanding programs like student exchange initiatives, scholarships, and regional sports events to strengthen interregional ties.
- **Traditional Knowledge & Language Preservation:** Facilitating partnerships between universities and cultural institutions to document and promote indigenous languages and practices.

## Summary

A formalized ASEAN-PIF partnership could provide a structured framework for ongoing collaboration, possibly through joint ministerial meetings or an ASEAN-PIF dialogue mechanism. A structured ASEAN-PIF cultural initiative would help reinforce the historical links between the two regions while fostering new generations of regional cooperation.

## 18.8 Comprehensive EU-Led Trade Promotion Initiative for the Pacific (PIF Region)

### Objective

To enhance sustainable trade between the EU and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) region—encompassing Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia—through a strategic initiative that promotes economic diversification, value-added industries, and trade infrastructure while addressing climate resilience and sustainability.

### Strategic Pillars

1. Sustainable Trade Infrastructure & Connectivity
2. Sector-Specific Trade Promotion & Investment
3. Regulatory and Capacity-Building Initiatives
4. Digital Trade & Financial Inclusion



## 5. Environmental & Climate-Resilient Trade Policies

### 1. Sustainable Trade Infrastructure & Connectivity

Goal: Reduce logistical barriers and improve regional integration to facilitate trade with the EU and global markets.

- Maritime & Air Connectivity:
- EU investment in green port infrastructure (Melanesia as a hub) to enhance shipping routes.
- Strengthen air cargo routes between Polynesia, Asia, and the EU for high-value exports (e.g., fisheries, niche agricultural products).
- EU-Pacific Special Economic Zones (SEZs):
- Establish SEZs with sustainable processing facilities (e.g., fisheries in Micronesia, agribusiness in Polynesia).
- Integrate EU certification standards (organic, fair trade) to boost Pacific exports.
- Inter-Island Trade Enhancement:
- Fund inter-island shipping and digital trade platforms to improve regional value chains.

### 2. Sector-Specific Trade Promotion & Investment

Goal: Develop high-value Pacific exports while ensuring sustainability. Blue Economy (Fisheries & Marine Products)

- Sustainable tuna & seafood certification to increase EU market access.
- Expand value-added processing (e.g., canned tuna in Melanesia, seafood exports from Micronesia).

### Sustainable Agriculture & Agri-Tech

- Support organic farming & agroforestry (e.g., vanilla in Polynesia, cocoa in Melanesia).
- Facilitate EU-PIF trade agreements for duty-free, quota-free access for Pacific agricultural goods.

### Renewable Energy & Green Hydrogen

- EU-Pacific green hydrogen pilot projects in Melanesia to support energy exports to the EU.
- Increase solar and wind energy infrastructure to power SEZs.

### Creative & Cultural Industries

- Support indigenous arts, crafts, and digital content exports via EU-Pacific digital marketplaces.
- Leverage Pacific tourism & cultural heritage to attract ethical investment.

### 3. Regulatory and Capacity-Building Initiatives

Goal: Strengthen the business environment and ensure Pacific economies can meet EU trade standards.

- Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) Implementation Support:
- Modernize customs procedures & digital trade compliance.
- Capacity Building for SMEs & Women Entrepreneurs:
- EU-funded trade incubators in Micronesia & Polynesia.
- Business acceleration programs focusing on e-commerce & export readiness.

### 4. Digital Trade & Financial Inclusion

Goal: Enable Pacific economies to trade digitally with the EU and globally.

- EU-Pacific Digital Trade Corridor:
- Establish blockchain-based trade documentation for secure, efficient transactions.
- Fintech & Financial Inclusion Support:
- EU collaboration with Pacific central banks to expand mobile banking and microfinance for SMEs.

### 5. Environmental & Climate-Resilient Trade Policies

Goal: Ensure trade growth aligns with climate adaptation and sustainability.

- Blue Carbon Credit Trading:
- Develop EU-Pacific carbon markets for mangrove & coral reef protection.
- EU-Pacific Sustainable Trade Pact:
- Ensure exports meet sustainable production standards (e.g., eco-certification for fisheries & forestry).

### 6. Indigenous Economies, Maritime Transport, and Social Cohesion

Goal: Strengthen indigenous-led economic initiatives, inter-island trade, and youth-driven

economic participation.

## Indigenous Peoples' Economies & Development

- Customary Land & Trade Rights Protection:
- Ensure that EU investments in forestry, fisheries, and agriculture respect indigenous land tenure systems.
- Kanaka Maoli, Māori, and Pasifika Trade Partnerships:
- Strengthen trade networks between indigenous businesses in Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and EU indigenous communities (e.g., Sámi, Basque).
- Cultural & Eco-Tourism Development:
- Expand indigenous-led eco-lodges and cultural tourism with EU funding.

## Maritime Transport & Inter-Island Trade

- Revival of Traditional Navigation & Green Shipping:
- EU support for sustainable inter-island transport using hybrid sail-diesel vessels for trade.
- Development of low-carbon cargo vessels to link remote islands.
- Fisheries & Local Market Trade Hubs:
- Strengthen fisheries co-ops to support sustainable livelihoods.
- Establish EU-Pacific wholesale market hubs for island-produced goods.

## Youth, Leadership, & Kinship Support

- Youth-Led Trade Incubators:
- Establish youth entrepreneurship hubs for digital trade, creative industries, and climate startups.
- Kinship Economy & Social Enterprises:
- Encourage cooperative business models based on traditional kinship systems.
- Support family-owned SMEs with EU-funded microfinance programs.
- Leadership & Governance Training:
- EU-Pacific exchange programs to develop the next generation of trade leaders

## Implementation Framework

EU-Pacific Trade & Investment Council: Oversee implementation with representation from PIF, EU, and private sector.

- EU Funding Mechanisms:
- Global Gateway Initiative to finance infrastructure.
- European Investment Bank (EIB) for SME development.
- Blended finance (EU-Pacific sovereign wealth fund for trade projects).

This EU-led trade promotion initiative integrates indigenous economies, digital trade, and sustainable transport solutions into Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. By reducing trade barriers, supporting local ownership, and fostering youth leadership, the initiative enhances economic resilience while reinforcing the EU's presence in the Indo-Pacific.

## Summary

The EU must be more than a lighthouse in the Pacific; it must become a bridge, connecting Oceania to the political and economic currents shaping the world. By fostering good governance, strengthening institutions, and empowering civil society, the EU can help Oceania build not just stronger states, but stronger democracies. Not just through aid, not just through trade, not just through diplomacy—but through genuine partnership can the EU support Oceania's political development. How can the EU expect lasting political change in Oceania if it does not engage with the region on its own terms, respecting its cultures, histories, and governance traditions? Political progress in the Pacific is not about prescriptions, but participation, partnership, and people-centered policies. The EU must not impose but inspire, not dictate but dialogue, not command but collaborate in strengthening democratic governance in Oceania. Just as the Pacific Ocean connects distant islands, the EU must connect diverse leaders, ideas, and reforms to create a shared vision for Oceania's political future.

With the right commitment, the EU can help transform Oceania from a scattered constellation of island nations into a shining beacon of regional governance and resilience.

## 19.0 WHAT ABOUT CHINA?

Let's explore where China's contribution, aid and investment could be beneficial for New Caledonia while considering development needs, technology transfer, and the establishment of a more robust autonomous island:

### 19.1 Infrastructure development:

China could invest in infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, ports, and airports. Improved infrastructure would enhance connectivity within New Caledonia and facilitate economic growth.

Technology transfer could occur through collaboration with Chinese companies experienced in infrastructure development, allowing New Caledonia to acquire advanced construction techniques and management practices.

## 19.2 Renewable Energy and Sustainability:

Given New Caledonia's abundant natural resources (sun, wind, and water), China's support in developing renewable energy projects would be valuable. Solar farms, wind turbines, and hydroelectric plants could contribute to energy independence and environmental sustainability.

Technology transfer in this sector could involve sharing expertise in renewable energy technologies, grid management, and energy storage solutions.

## 19.3 Tourism and Hospitality:

New Caledonia's stunning landscapes and rich heritage make it an attractive tourist destination. China's investment in tourism infrastructure (hotels, resorts, and attractions) could boost the local economy.

Technology transfer might involve training local staff in hospitality management, marketing, and digital platforms to attract international visitors.

## 19.4 Agriculture and Fisheries:

New Caledonia has fertile land and a vast exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for fishing. China's aid could focus on modernising agriculture, promoting sustainable farming practices, and supporting local fishermen.

Technology transfer could include aquaculture techniques, efficient irrigation methods, and fishery management systems.<sup>57</sup>

## 19.5 Education and Research:

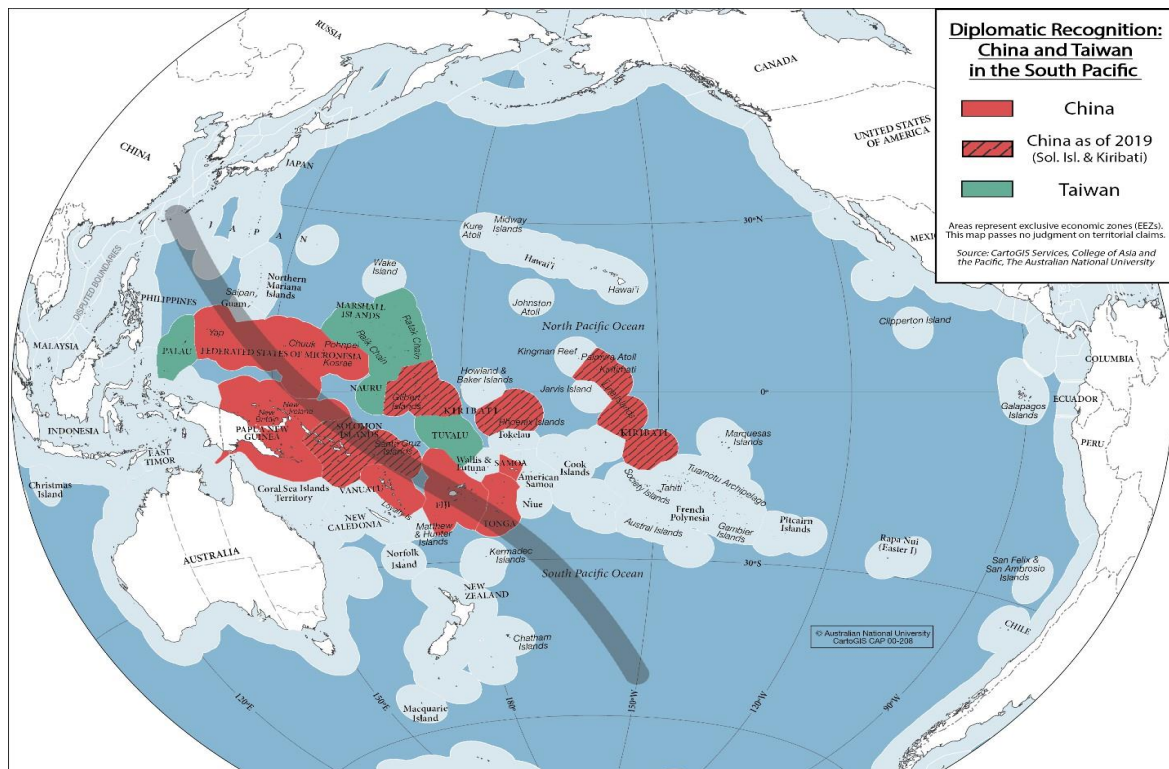
China could collaborate with New Caledonian universities and research institutions. Scholarships, exchange programs, and joint research projects would enhance education.

Technology transfer might involve sharing expertise in marine biology, environmental science, and sustainable resource management.

**Figure – The Solomon Break-out ?**

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<sup>57</sup> [http://english.moa.gov.cn/news\\_522/202305/t20230515\\_301140.html](http://english.moa.gov.cn/news_522/202305/t20230515_301140.html)



Source: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/solomon-islands-a-pacific-linchpin-is-pulled/>

### 19.6 Healthcare and Medical Services:

Investment in healthcare infrastructure, medical equipment, and training would benefit New Caledonia’s population.

Technology transfer could include telemedicine solutions, disease prevention strategies, and capacity-building for local healthcare professionals.

### 19.7 Governance and Capacity Building

China’s support in building effective governance structures, public administration, and legal systems would strengthen New Caledonia’s state institutions.

Technology transfer might involve sharing best practices in governance, transparency, and anti-corruption measures.

Remember that any aid and investment should align with New Caledonia’s priorities, respect for its autonomy, and France’s prerogatives while reflecting the shift in Chinese assistance towards a more political nature.<sup>58</sup> Balancing development needs, technology transfer, and state-building will be crucial for a successful partnership. Noumea must develop strategies to allow win-win situations to emerge.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/2023-pacific-aid-map-reveals-chinese-aid-retreat?>



## 19.8 Blue Ocean Economy

China's "Blue Ocean Strategy" encompasses several dimensions, reflecting the nation's ambitions in maritime development, economic expansion, and naval modernization. China's blue economy—encompassing industries related to oceans, seas, and coasts—has experienced significant growth in recent years. In 2023, the marine industry, or "blue economy," saw a 123.5% growth rate, with industrial output increasing by 4% annually, particularly benefiting regions like the Greater Bay Area. Regarding trade with Pacific Island countries, China has become the largest trading partner for many nations in the region. Investments have been made in ten Pacific countries under the Belt and Road Initiative, focusing on large infrastructure projects financed by loans. In 2012, China's total trade volume with Pacific Island countries exceeded \$4.5 billion. This figure has likely increased in recent years due to ongoing investments and trade relations. The main objectives and tenets include:

### 19.8.1 Economic Expansion through the Blue Economy

- **Sustainable Development:** China aims to harness its extensive marine resources to drive economic growth while ensuring environmental protection. This involves promoting industries such as marine tourism, sustainable fisheries, and offshore renewable energy.
- **Blue Finance Initiatives:** Investments are directed towards projects that protect and sustainably utilize ocean resources, supporting activities like marine ecosystem restoration and sustainable shipping.

### 19.2.2 Naval Modernization and Blue-Water Capabilities

- **Strategic Naval Development:** China is transforming the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) into a formidable maritime force capable of operating in deep-water ("blue-water") environments. This strategy focuses on extending naval operations beyond coastal areas and the near seas – South Chinese Sea, the Taiwan-strait and the Yellow Sea - to protect China's interests in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, aka as the two-oceans strategy.
- **Securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs):** By enhancing its naval presence, China aims to safeguard critical maritime routes essential for trade and energy supplies, ensuring the security of its economic lifelines.

### 19.8.3 Innovation and Market Expansion

- **Blue Ocean Strategy in Business:** Chinese companies are encouraged to pursue differentiation and low-cost strategies to create new market spaces, making competition irrelevant. This approach focuses on identifying untapped markets, fostering innovation, and reconstructing industry boundaries to stimulate economic growth.
- These developments highlight China's expanding influence and economic engagement in the Pacific region, reflecting its strategic interest in fostering stronger ties with Pacific Island nations. Collectively, these objectives reflect China's comprehensive approach to leveraging its maritime domain for economic prosperity, strategic security, and global competitiveness.

## 19.9 Maritime Silk Road

China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), a component of the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aims to enhance maritime connectivity and infrastructure across the Indian Ocean and Oceania. The initiative has yielded both successes and encountered challenges in these regions.

### Successes

1. **Infrastructure Development:** China has invested significantly in port and infrastructure projects, enhancing regional connectivity. For instance, in the Indian Ocean, projects like the development of Gwadar Port in Pakistan and Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka aim to boost trade routes and economic growth.
2. **Economic Partnerships:** The MSRI has facilitated stronger economic ties between China and participating countries. In Oceania, nations like Fiji and Papua New Guinea have benefited from Chinese investments in infrastructure, leading to improved transportation networks and increased trade opportunities.
3. **Strategic Agreements:** Recent agreements, such as the one between China and the Cook Islands, encompass cooperation in various sectors, potentially enhancing the Cook Islands' infrastructure and economic development.

### Challenges and Criticisms

1. **Debt Sustainability:** Concerns have arisen regarding the debt burdens associated with Chinese loans for MSRI projects. Some countries fear that inability to repay these loans could lead to loss of strategic assets or increased dependency on China.
2. **Strategic Concerns:** The potential for Chinese military presence through infrastructure agreements has raised alarms among regional powers. For example, the Cook Islands' agreement with China has been viewed as a "nightmare scenario" by Australia, fearing increased Chinese influence in the Pacific.
3. **Project Execution and Quality:** Some Chinese-funded projects have faced issues related to construction quality and safety. In Fiji, the unfinished WG Friendship Plaza in Suva, intended as a symbol of Chinese investment, has become a safety hazard, raising skepticism about the quality and management of such projects.
4. **Geopolitical Tensions:** China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean has prompted strategic responses from regional players like India. India's navy has launched submarines and warships to safeguard its interests, reflecting concerns over China's maritime presence.

## 19.10 Implications of the PLA's "Offshore Waters Defense" and "Open Seas Protection"

China's dual maritime strategy—Offshore Waters Defense (近海防御) and Open Seas Protection (远海防卫)—is central to the evolution of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and has far-reaching strategic, political, and economic implications.

## 1. Strategic Implications

### A. Expanding from Coastal Defense to Power Projection

- Offshore Waters Defense focuses on defending China's coastal periphery (e.g., South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, East China Sea).
- Open Seas Protection extends China's naval reach into the Indian Ocean, Pacific Islands, and beyond, enabling blue-water operations.
- The PLAN's growing fleet of aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and long-range destroyers enhances its ability to conduct far-seas operations.

### B. Greater Military Reach and Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)

- Offshore: Establishing A2/AD zones prevents the US and allied forces from intervening in China's "core interests" (Taiwan, South China Sea).
- Open Seas: Increasing naval bases, logistics hubs, and power projection in Djibouti, Gwadar (Pakistan), Ream (Cambodia), and the Pacific Islands enhances China's global naval presence.

**Figure** China's Near Seas



Source: <https://www.cna.org/our-media/indepth/2024/05/the-east-and-south-china-seas>

## C. Challenge to US and Allied Naval Supremacy

- The strategy directly competes with the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, reinforcing the US-China naval rivalry.
- Expanding blue-water capabilities enables China to secure sea lanes beyond the First and Second Island Chains, challenge US-led alliances (AUKUS, QUAD), and push the US Navy further from China's sphere of influence.

## 2. Political Implications

### A. Greater Diplomatic Leverage in Maritime Disputes

- Strengthened naval capabilities reinforce China's claims in the South China Sea (SCS), where it has built militarized artificial islands.
- More assertive "gray-zone" tactics (e.g., coast guard operations, fishing militia) increase political pressure on ASEAN countries, leading to weaker resistance to Chinese demands.
- The PLAN's presence in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific allows China to counterbalance Indian and Japanese naval influence.

### B. Influence Over Global Maritime Governance

- China is challenging US dominance in rule-making at international bodies such as the IMO, UN- CLOS, and IORA.
- By promoting Chinese-led maritime security cooperation (e.g., Global Security Initiative, Belt and Road Maritime Cooperation), Beijing is pushing for an alternative to US-led naval governance.

### C. Strengthening Political Alliances with Maritime Nations

- By providing naval assistance and investments to developing maritime nations (e.g., Sri Lanka, Maldives, Solomon Islands, Djibouti), China creates dependency relationships.
- Military agreements, such as the China-Solomon Islands security pact, suggest a long-term goal of establishing regional naval footholds.

## 3. Economic Implications

### A. Securing Trade and Energy Supply Routes

- Over 60% of China's oil and gas imports pass through the Indian Ocean and Strait of Malacca, making sea lane security critical for economic stability.
- Expanding China's naval presence allows for securing trade routes, deterring piracy, and reducing reliance on foreign naval patrols (e.g., US, India, France).

- Control over key maritime choke points (Djibouti, Hambantota, Gwadar) enhances China's ability to ensure energy security and trade continuity.

## B. Maritime Silk Road Expansion

- A stronger PLAN allows China to protect its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments in port infrastructure and shipping routes.
- Increased naval presence gives Beijing greater control over port operations in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, solidifying economic influence.

## C. Deteriorating US-China Economic Relations

- A more assertive Chinese navy increases geopolitical tensions, leading to trade restrictions, investment limitations, and economic decoupling between China and the West.
- The militarization of trade routes could raise shipping insurance costs, disrupt global supply chains, and push countries to diversify trade away from China.
- The PLA's shift from coastal defense to global naval power has redefined maritime geopolitics. The strategic, political, and economic consequences of this expansion are shaping a more contested

## Indo-Pacific:

1. Strategically, China is challenging US naval supremacy and securing key maritime chokepoints.
2. Politically, China is leveraging its naval strength to coerce rivals and reshape international maritime governance.
3. Economically, the expansion ensures energy security, trade route protection, and deeper economic influence—but also heightens tensions with the West.

## Summary

China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative has made notable strides in enhancing infrastructure and economic connectivity in the Indian Ocean and Oceania combined with expansion of its blue ocean economy. Of the twenty states in Oceania, China is number one trader with ten of them. China pursues four objectives: (1) expansion of trade with Oceania (2) Growing its Blue Ocean economy (3) Exploiting the deep sea minerals (4) Naval access.

However, challenges such as debt sustainability, strategic apprehensions, project execution issues, and geopolitical tensions underscore the complexities involved. Addressing these concerns is crucial for the initiative's long-term success and acceptance in the region. In summary, the evolution of China's maritime ambitions will be a key driver of geopolitical instability in the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Pacific.

## 20.0 CHINA AND THE EU COMPARED IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

### 20.1 China's policy

China's policy towards Oceania, including New Caledonia, is multifaceted and involves a mix of bilateral and multilateral approaches, creating an asymmetrical structure in the region. This policy is part of China's broader outreach to the developing world and reflects Beijing's efforts to develop a comprehensive and global foreign policy. The China-Pacific Island Forum embodies the outreach to the outer periphery and is integral to the Belt and Road initiative and the Shared Future for Mankind.<sup>59</sup> In prehistoric times, seaborne migration by Austronesians took place from various places in Taiwan, China, and Southeast Asia to the Pacific Islands, leaving a legacy notably in the languages spoken on the islands.<sup>60</sup> Today, 20,000 Chinese live in the Fiji Islands and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands. China has been expanding its trade and network of embassies to the outer periphery and is competing with Taiwan and the United States for influence.

The implications for New Caledonia can be significant, as China's growing presence in Oceania brings potential benefits and challenges. On one hand, it could mean increased economic opportunities, investments, and diplomatic ties. On the other hand, it may lead to concerns about sovereignty, regional stability, and the influence of external powers.

Comparatively, the European Union's approach towards New Caledonia is characterized by a multifaceted and strategic partnership, as New Caledonia is an overseas collectivity of France and associated with the EU as an overseas country or territory (OCT). The EU's Pacific cooperation agreement with New Caledonia focuses on sustainable development, emphasizing areas such as biodiversity, renewable natural resources, and climate-change-resilient economic development<sup>61</sup>. This approach directly impacts the evolution of trade relations and the development of the economy in New Caledonia, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy's Pacific Islands chapter would further reinforces this approach by promoting responsible cooperation in international relations and upholding the rules-based international order. It aims to support prosperity and security in the region, which aligns with the interests of Pacific Island countries, including New Caledonia.

Lastly, the strengthening of the EU's Overseas Territories policy reflects the Union's commitment to its OCTs, ensuring they enjoy a special political, cooperation, and commercial partnership with the EU. This policy supports the economic and social development of the territories and establishes close economic relations between them and the EU as a whole.

In summary, while China's policy in Oceania is expansive and seeks to establish a significant presence, the EU's approach towards New Caledonia and other Pacific OCTs is more focused on sustainable development, economic integration, and upholding international norms. Both strategies have profound implications for New Caledonia's trade relations, economic

<sup>59</sup> [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202311/t20231113\\_11179277.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202311/t20231113_11179277.html)

<sup>60</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austronesian\\_peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austronesian_peoples)

<sup>61</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-and-new-caledonia\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-and-new-caledonia_en)



development, and geopolitical positioning.

## 20.2 The view from Nouméa

New Caledonia, as an overseas collectivity of France and an associated overseas country or territory (OCT) of the European Union, maintains a unique position that allows it to engage with both China and the EU in a balanced manner.

With the European Union, New Caledonia benefits from financial support and development aid and participates in various cooperation programs. For instance, between 2014 and 2020, New Caledonia received €29.8 million in aid for employment and vocational integration from the EU<sup>1</sup>. The EU's involvement is also evident in projects like PROTÉGÉ, which promotes sustainable and climate-change-resilient economic development in Pacific OCTs<sup>1</sup>. This relationship is underpinned by the Nouméa Accord, which governs New Caledonia's internal organization and its association with the EU.

With China, New Caledonia has developed significant economic ties, particularly in the nickel industry, which is a major part of its economy. Since 2016, China has become New Caledonia's largest trading partner, with more than 50% of its exports, almost exclusively nickel, destined for China<sup>62</sup>. However, fluctuations in the global market, especially changes in China's economy, can impact New Caledonia's finances, as seen with the volatility in nickel prices.

Balancing these relationships involves navigating the strategic interests of both powers. The EU provides economic and social development framework, while China offers a robust market for New Caledonia's exports. New Caledonia leverages its strategic position to maximise benefits from both relationships, ensuring economic growth and development while maintaining its unique cultural and political identity.

In essence, New Caledonia's approach is pragmatic, focusing on economic cooperation with China while aligning with the EU's strategic and development objectives. This balance is crucial for New Caledonia's long-term economic growth.

## 20.3 Noumea's regional engagement

New Caledonia participates in various regional and transpacific cooperation schemes, reflecting its strategic position in the Pacific and its ties to Pacific Island countries and external powers like the European Union and France. Here are some of the critical cooperation frameworks:

1. Pacific Community (SPC): New Caledonia signed a partnership agreement with the SPC to promote regional integration and enable the SPC to fully play its role in bringing together its 27 members.
2. PROTÉGÉ: This initiative promotes sustainable and climate-change-resilient economic development in Pacific OCTs, emphasising biodiversity and renewable natural resources.

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<sup>62</sup> <https://cooperation-regionale.gouv.nc/en/our-relations-eu/overview>

3. Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER): Although not directly mentioned in the search results, PACER is a critical regional trade agreement that New Caledonia, as part of the French territories, is associated with.
4. Participation in PIF: New Caledonia became a full member of the PIF in September 2016. This membership allows New Caledonia to engage in high-level political dialogue with other Pacific Island countries and territories, as well as with regional powers. It provides a platform for New Caledonia to voice its interests, share its experiences, and contribute to regional decision-making processes.

By being part of this framework, New Caledonia commits to these principles and benefits from collective efforts to address security challenges in the Pacific.

Benefits for Islanders: For the islanders of New Caledonia, participation in these frameworks brings several advantages:

- **Enhanced Security:** The Boe Declaration's expanded concept of security helps address a wide range of security issues, both traditional and non-traditional, which is crucial for the well-being of Pacific peoples.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Participating in the PIF and the Boe Declaration framework allows New Caledonia to strengthen ties with other Pacific nations and collaborate on common issues such as climate change, disaster resilience, and sustainable development.
- **Voice in Regional Affairs:** New Caledonia can assert its interests and perspectives on regional affairs, contributing to a more inclusive and representative PIF.
- **Development Opportunities:** The frameworks provide avenues for New Caledonia to access regional development programs and aid, which can support local economic and social initiatives.

Overall, New Caledonia's participation in PIF and the Boe Declaration framework aligns with its interests in promoting regional cooperation, ensuring security, and fostering sustainable development for its islanders. These engagements also reinforce New Caledonia's role as an active and responsible member of the Pacific community:

**Channeling Interests and Promoting Regional Cooperation:** Noumea should channel its interests towards initiatives that promote sustainable development, economic resilience, and cultural exchange<sup>63</sup>. By doing so, New Caledonia can leverage its unique position to foster regional stability, enhance its economic prospects, and contribute to preserving the Pacific's environmental and cultural heritage.

**Effectiveness of Cooperation Schemes:** The effectiveness of these cooperation schemes varies. The Forum Compact, for example, has been a vehicle for mutual accountability and more

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<sup>63</sup> Pacific islands in search of trade strategy <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Pacific-Island-Countries-In-Search-of-a-Trade-Strategy-41859>

effective approaches to ensuring impactful development in the Pacific. However, challenges remain, such as stronger country systems to manage climate finance effectively.

**Strengthening Regional Cooperation:** For islanders, strengthening regional cooperation is in their best interest because it can lead to improved management of shared resources, such as fisheries, and a collective response to common challenges like climate change. It also allows for a more unified voice in international forums<sup>64</sup>.

**Amalgamating Different Schemes:** The multitude of different schemes exists because of the Pacific Islands' diverse needs and strategic interests. Amalgamation could streamline processes, reduce duplication, and ensure that development assistance is more effectively targeted to meet the islands' needs. However, it requires careful consideration of each member country's unique context and priorities.

**Implications:** Many different schemes can lead to fragmentation and inefficiency. However, it also reflects regional politics' dynamic and complex nature, where other actors have varying priorities and strategies. A more integrated approach could enhance the region's ability to navigate geopolitical dynamics and prioritise sustainable development<sup>65</sup>.

## 20.4. Policy Recommendations for the New Caledonia Government in Nouméa

New Caledonia faces political, economic, and social challenges that require a balanced approach to governance, addressing both the interests of the local Kanak population and broader French strategic priorities. The following policy recommendations focus on governance, economic diversification, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

### 1. Political and Institutional Stability

- **Strengthen Autonomy Framework:** Work with Paris to clarify the autonomy arrangements post-referendum, ensuring legal and administrative clarity.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Establish a permanent dialogue mechanism between pro-independence and pro-France factions to prevent political deadlock.
- **Decentralization Reforms:** Enhance local governance capacity, particularly in outer islands, to improve service delivery.

### 2. Economic Diversification and Investment

- **Nickel Industry Reform:**
- **Improve regulatory frameworks** to attract sustainable investments.
- **Develop value-added nickel processing** to reduce reliance on raw exports.

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/display/book/9781513507521/ch016.xml>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.sas.com.fj/ocean-law-bulletins/the-importance-of-regional-cooperation-between-pacific-island-countries-for-fisheries-management-and-to-increase-the-benefits-for-pacific-islanders>

- Tourism Development:
- Expand eco-tourism and cultural tourism centered on Kanak heritage.
- Improve transport infrastructure, particularly air connectivity with Asia and Australia.
- Blue Economy and Fisheries:
- Implement sustainable fishing practices to protect marine biodiversity.
- Expand aquaculture initiatives to boost local employment.
- Foreign Investment Policy:
- Establish clear guidelines to attract responsible investors while protecting local interests.

### **3. Social Cohesion and Indigenous Rights**

- Kanak Socio-Economic Development:
- Increase education and job training programs tailored for Kanak youth.
- Support indigenous entrepreneurship through targeted financing mechanisms.
- Housing and Urban Development:
- Improve access to affordable housing, particularly in Nouméa's informal settlements.
- Healthcare and Social Services:
- Expand healthcare access in rural and island communities.
- Climate Resilience and Environmental Policy

### **4. Climate Adaptation Plan:**

- Strengthen coastal protection measures against rising sea levels.
- Develop disaster preparedness programs for cyclones and extreme weather events.
- Renewable Energy Transition:
- Reduce dependency on imported fuels by investing in solar and wind energy projects.
- Implement incentives for green energy investment.
- Marine Conservation:
- Strengthen marine protected areas to preserve biodiversity.

## 5. Regional and International Engagement

- Strengthen Pacific Cooperation:
- Deepen ties with the Pacific Islands Forum to enhance trade and security cooperation.
- Position New Caledonia as a regional leader in climate action.
- French Strategic Alignment:
- Engage with Paris to secure long-term economic and defense cooperation.
- Ensure New Caledonia benefits from France's Indo-Pacific strategy.

### Summary: A Balanced Development Approach

New Caledonia's government must balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability while navigating its complex political status. Strengthening governance, diversifying the economy, and deepening regional cooperation will be key to long-term stability.

## 21.0 ACTION PLAN FOR THE MPA IN PALAU IN WESTERN PACIFIC

Under my leadership, it was agreed to proceed by means of a European mediation effort out of (1) South East Chinese Sea<sup>66</sup> (2) The Western Pacific (3) Regional order in the Indian Order. This reflected the need for addressing both China's commercial interests upon which Beijing conditioned movement on making the EU into more of a coherent maritime power given the still unsettled nature of the conflicts overthere. India and Eu have now agreed to the conclusions of an FTA and to strengthen the security and defence partnership, without prejudice to India's development needs, even as the Bharat2047 Vision id being forged.

In so far as concerned the Western pacific, it is the high seas treaty that dictates the need for de- fining those protected zones and to agree on how to police them. While the US is getting concerned about the situation in the Taiwan Strait, little attention has been given to the EU's role as a mediator in the Western Pacific. China is wondering whether the EU is a reliable security partner.

### 21.1. Definition of the MPA

The High Seas Treaty (BBNJ - Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) aims to protect marine biodiversity in international waters, including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), environmental impact assessments, and sustainable resource management. Given the geopolitical tensions between China and the US in the Western Pacific, the EU can play a mediating and regulatory role to foster cooperation while leveraging its legal, environmental, and economic influence.

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated,

<sup>66</sup> <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8341>

and managed through legal or other effective means to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. MPAs restrict human activity for conservation purposes, typically to protect natural or cultural resources.

## 21.2 Stakeholder Engagement

US: Organize regional workshops and forums to engage local communities, fishermen, environmental NGOs, and government agencies. Establish a collaborative platform for sharing best practices and addressing concerns.

China: Develop a stakeholder committee that includes representatives from coastal communities, academic institutions, and industry leaders. Facilitate regular meetings to ensure inclusive decision-making.

EU: Provide technical and financial support to local stakeholders in the Western Pacific. Promote cross-border cooperation through joint projects and initiatives.

## 21.3 Knowledge & Capacity Building

-US: Implement training programs for local authorities and conservationists on data-driven decision-making and MPA management. Support research initiatives to gather and analyze marine data.

China: Establish marine research centers in key locations within the Western Pacific. Offer scholarships and exchange programs for scientists and researchers to enhance knowledge sharing.

EU: Fund capacity-building projects that focus on sustainable marine practices. Develop online platforms for knowledge exchange and provide access to global marine data repositories.

## 21.4 Awareness Raising

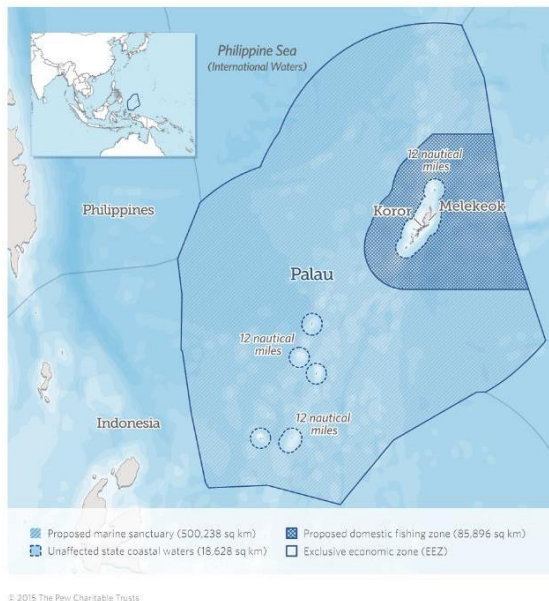
US: Launch public awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of MPAs and sustainable marine practices. Utilize social media, local media, and educational institutions to spread the message.

China: Create educational programs for schools and universities to teach the next generation about marine conservation. Organize community events and exhibitions to engage the public.

EU: Support awareness-raising initiatives through grants and partnerships with local NGOs. Develop multilingual educational materials to reach diverse communities in the Western Pacific.

## Figure – Palau Maritime zone adjacent to the Philippines and Indonesia





Source: <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/about/news-room/press-releases-and-statements/2015/10/22/palau-to-sign-national-marine-sanctuary-into-law>

## 21.5. Marine Restoration

US: Implement restoration projects such as coral reef rehabilitation, mangrove reforestation, and seagrass bed restoration. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these projects.

China: Invest in advanced technologies for marine restoration, including artificial reefs and bioremediation techniques. Collaborate with international experts to enhance restoration efforts.

EU: Provide funding and technical assistance for large-scale marine restoration projects. Promote the use of sustainable practices and innovative solutions to restore marine habitats and species.

## 21.6. Policing

US: Develop a robust enforcement strategy that includes regular patrols, surveillance technologies, and community-based monitoring to prevent illegal activities within the MPA.

China: Implement strict penalties for violations and enhance cooperation with neighboring countries to ensure compliance. Utilize satellite monitoring and drones for effective surveillance.

EU: Support the development of enforcement frameworks and provide training for local enforcement agencies. Promote international cooperation to address transboundary issues and illegal activities.

Coordinates of the Western Pacific MPA

The Western Pacific MPA encompasses a vast area, including regions around the Pacific Islands. Specific coordinates can vary depending on the exact boundaries of the MPA.

This comprehensive action plan aims to foster collaboration between the US, China, and the EU to effectively manage and protect the Marine Protected Area in the Western Pacific. By working together, these regions can ensure the sustainability and health of marine ecosystems for future generations.

## 21.7 Strategy for Defining the MPA Trilateral Pilot Project in the Western Pacific

### 1. Define the Scope and Objectives

**US, China, and EU Collaboratio:** Establish a common understanding and commitment from all three parties to collaborate on the pilot project.

**Goals:** Identify the main goals, such as biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries, climate resilience, and enhancing local livelihoods.

**Geographic Scope:** Select a specific area within the Western Pacific to serve as the pilot MPA. Ensure it encompasses critical habitats and is representative of the region's ecological diversity.

### 2. Conduct Baseline Assessments

**Ecological Assessment:** Conduct comprehensive surveys to document the biodiversity, habitats, and ecological processes in the proposed MPA area.

**Socioeconomic Assessment:** Analyze the socioeconomic conditions of local communities, including their reliance on marine resources and potential impacts of the MPA.

**Threats Analysis:** Identify and assess key threats to the marine environment, such as overfishing, pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction.

### 3. Engage Stakeholders

**Local Communities:** Involve local communities in the planning process through consultations, workshops, and participatory mapping exercises.

**NGOs and Academia:** Collaborate with environmental NGOs, academic institutions, and research organizations to leverage their expertise and resources.

**Government Agencies:** Ensure coordination with relevant government agencies in the US, China, and the EU to align policies and regulatory frameworks.

### 4. Develop Management Plans

**Zoning:** Define zoning areas within the MPA for different uses, such as no-take zones, sustainable fishing zones, and recreational areas.

**Regulations:** Establish clear regulations and guidelines for activities within the MPA, including

fishing, tourism, and research.

**Enforcement:** Develop a robust enforcement strategy to monitor compliance, including the use of satellite tracking, patrols, and community-based surveillance.

## 5. Implement Knowledge & Capacity Building Programs

**Training:** Provide training programs for local authorities, community members, and conservationists on MPA management, monitoring, and enforcement.

**Research:** Promote scientific research and data collection to inform adaptive management practices. Encourage collaborative research projects between the US, China, and the EU.

**Technology Transfer:** Facilitate the transfer of technology and best practices in MPA management between the collaborating parties.

## 6. Raise Public Awareness

**Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to educate local communities and stakeholders about the benefits of the MPA.

**Educational Programs:** Develop educational programs for schools and universities to foster a culture of marine conservation.

**Events:** Organize events, such as community clean-ups and conservation workshops, to engage the public and promote stewardship.

## 7. Monitor and Evaluate Progress

**Indicators:** Establish key performance indicators to measure the success of the MPA in achieving its objectives.

**Regular Assessments:** Conduct regular assessments and reviews to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement.

**Adaptive Management:** Implement an adaptive management approach to make necessary adjustments based on monitoring results and stakeholder feedback.

## Coordinates and Map of the Proposed MPA

**Coordinates** The proposed MPA area could be around 7.3°N latitude and 134.5°E longitude, encompassing regions such as Palau and its surrounding waters.

By following this strategy, the US, China, and the EU can collaboratively define and implement an effective trilateral pilot project for the MPA in the Western Pacific, ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of marine resources.

## 22.0 BALANCING BETWEEN CHINA, THE EU AND AUSTRALIA

The potential for cooperation between Australia, the European Union (EU), and China to promote the interests of Pacific Islanders at the regional level is significant, especially considering China's trade advantage and the existing regional cooperation schemes. Here's an argument for such collaboration:

**China's Trade Advantage:** China's significant role in global trade, accounting for more than 18% of global GDP, positions it as a top trading partner for many economies, including those in the emerging Asian region. This economic influence can be leveraged to support regional development initiatives that benefit island nations in the Western Pacific.

**Regional Cooperation Schemes:** The Western Pacific has seen various forms of regional cooperation, such as WHO's work supporting health initiatives<sup>2</sup> and broader economic and security partnerships. These frameworks can serve as a foundation for more targeted cooperation involving Australia, the EU, and China.

**EU-China Cooperation in Maritime Protection:** The EU and China have previously shown willingness to strengthen cooperation in marine protected areas and global maritime spatial planning. This existing collaboration could be expanded to include Australia and focus on the Western Pacific, where protecting marine biodiversity is crucial for the livelihoods of island communities.

**Cooperation in New Caledonia:** New Caledonia is an example of practical regional collaboration, with the EU providing significant aid for employment, vocational integration, and sustainable ecosystem management

## **Proposed Tripartite Cooperation Framework:**

1. **Trade and Investment:** The EU can facilitate investments in sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy projects in Pacific Island nations by leveraging China's trade surplus and Australia's resource-based economy.
2. **Maritime Protection:** Building on the EU-China maritime cooperation, Australia can contribute its expertise in marine science and ocean management to establish and police maritime protected areas, ensuring the conservation of marine ecosystems.
3. **Capacity Building:** Tripartite educational and vocational training programs can be developed to enhance local capacities in sustainable fisheries, tourism, and climate resilience.
4. **Cultural and Social Exchange:** Promoting cultural understanding and exchange programs among the youth of China, Australia, and the EU can foster a shared responsibility towards the Pacific Islanders' cause.

Figure – The Pacific Islands



Source: <https://www.expeditions.com/expedition-stories/stories/difference-between-polynesia-melanesia>

In summary a cooperative approach can significantly advance the cause of Pacific Islanders by combining China’s economic prowess, the EU’s experience in policy-making and international law, and Australia’s regional influence and expertise. Canberra collaborate primarily with the US, but also with the French Navy, and exercises its rights at sea vigorously by denial of hostile access through integrated forces<sup>67</sup>. It wants to balance, temper, and enrich US-China competition, a goal the Pacific Islanders share with Australia. This collaboration can protect the Western Pacific’s marine environment, promote sustainable development, and enhance regional stability and prosperity that benefits all parties involved while waiting for the EU to get its act together.

### 23.0 REENGAGING JAPAN IN MICRONESIA

Japan’s aid diplomacy in Micronesia presents a unique opportunity to deepen its engagement in the region beyond just traditional aid and cultural initiatives like sushi diplomacy (Tuna). Here are some ways Japan could strategically use its aid diplomacy to create long-term partnerships and mutual benefits:

#### 1. Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Resilience

- **Micronesia’s Vulnerability:** The Pacific Island nations, including Micronesia, are highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters like typhoons, rising sea

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2024-national-defence-strategy-2024-integrated-investment-program>

levels, and droughts.

- **Japan's Expertise:** Japan is a leader in disaster preparedness, response, and resilience. Leveraging its advanced technology and knowledge in areas like early warning systems, infrastructure resilience, and disaster recovery could be a game-changer for Micronesia.
- **Practical Steps:** Japan could provide technical assistance, funding for climate-resistant infrastructure, and training for local governments to build more resilient communities. By collaborating on climate change mitigation projects, Japan could help Micronesia secure its future while strengthening bilateral relations.

## 2. Sustainable Fisheries and Ocean Management

- **Micronesia's Maritime Resources:** The Pacific is home to rich marine ecosystems, and fishing is a significant part of Micronesia's economy.
- **Japan's Role:** Japan has long been a player in sustainable fisheries management and has sophisticated technologies for oceanic research and marine biodiversity protection.
- **Future Prospects:** Japan could enhance its cooperation by supporting sustainable fisheries management, providing scientific expertise on ocean health, and investing in eco-friendly maritime technologies. Working alongside Micronesian governments to develop sustainable fishing practices would benefit both Japan and Micronesia in the long run.

## 3. Education and Capacity Building

- **Skilled Workforce Development:** Micronesia faces challenges in providing sufficient educational opportunities, and Japan can play a critical role in enhancing the skills of the younger generation.
- **Human Resource Development:** Japan can fund scholarships for Micronesian students to study in Japan, particularly in fields like engineering, medicine, and environmental science. Upon their return, these students can help drive development in their home country.
- **Collaboration with Universities:** Japan could establish partnerships with Micronesian universities to create joint research programs, focusing on Pacific region-specific issues like climate change, sustainable tourism, and agriculture.

## 4. Health and Medical Cooperation

- **Health Infrastructure:** Micronesia, like many Pacific Island nations, faces challenges in healthcare infrastructure and services.
- **Japan's Support:** Japan has expertise in healthcare systems and advanced medical technology. Japan could support the development of healthcare facilities, training of



medical professionals, and provision of telemedicine solutions for remote areas.

- Preventative Care: With Japan's experience in preventative healthcare and aging population management, they could assist in promoting healthier lifestyles and preventing diseases prevalent in Micronesia.

## 5. Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges Beyond Food

- Broader Diplomatic Engagement: While sushi and cultural diplomacy are well-known, Japan could expand its cultural exchanges to include areas like arts, music, and sports. For example, organizing joint sporting events, such as traditional martial arts tournaments or sporting exchanges, would foster deeper connections between Japan and Micronesia.
- Cultural Centers and Tourism: Japan could support initiatives that promote cultural tourism by developing cultural centers in Micronesia that focus on shared historical experiences (like Japan's post-WWII role in the Pacific) and future cooperation.
- People-to-People Diplomacy: Organizing more student exchanges, art exhibitions, and academic forums can also go beyond food and engage more of the population in both countries.

## 6. Collaborative Infrastructure Projects

- Long-Term Development Projects: Micronesia's infrastructure is in need of modernization, particularly in the areas of transportation, utilities, and communications.
- Japan's Investment in Infrastructure: Japan has extensive experience in building high-quality infrastructure. Japan could invest in projects like renewable energy installations (solar, wind), upgrading ports and airports, and developing communication networks.
- Focus on Renewable Energy: Micronesia's reliance on fossil fuels for energy could be reduced by Japan providing expertise and funding to develop solar energy farms, energy storage systems, and green technologies that benefit both Micronesia and Japan's regional environmental goals.

## 7. Support for Micronesian Sovereignty and Regional Diplomacy

- Regional Security: Japan can support Micronesia's sovereignty by backing its voice in regional organizations, like the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations, especially as smaller island nations often struggle to be heard on global stages.
- Strategic Partnerships: Japan could use its diplomatic influence to advocate for Micronesia on the international stage, providing both political and economic support for Micronesian concerns, especially regarding decolonization, military presence, and security in the Pacific.

## 8. Diversification of Micronesian Economies

- **Economic Diversification:** Japan could assist Micronesia in diversifying its economy away from reliance on agriculture and fishing through support in developing ecotourism, digital industries, or light manufacturing.
- **Green Investment:** In line with Japan's own environmental goals, Japan could partner with Micronesia to promote green business initiatives, providing expertise, funding, and technology transfer in eco-friendly enterprises.

Japan's aid diplomacy can be instrumental in Micronesia's development, but it should go beyond simple aid and sushi diplomacy. By focusing on sustainable development, capacity building, disaster resilience, and regional cooperation, Japan has an opportunity to shape its relationship with Micronesia in a way that promotes long-term, mutual prosperity. If Japan plays a strategic role in Micronesia's future, it could also bolster its own geopolitical influence in the Pacific region, strengthening its presence in this increasingly important area.

## **24.0 HOW DOES NEW ZEALAND FIT IN ?**

New Zealand's foreign policy towards Oceania has been shaped by its historical, cultural, and geographical ties to the region. The Pacific Reset policy, launched in 2018, emphasizes engagement, partnerships, and collaboration. It focuses on soft power, public diplomacy, and people-to-people measures to strengthen relationships with Pacific Island nations.

Polynesian outliers are culturally Polynesian societies geographically located outside the main region of Polynesian influence. New Zealand maintains cultural and historical ties with these communities, which are scattered across Melanesia and Micronesia. The relationship is based on shared heritage and mutual respect, with New Zealand providing support in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development.

New Zealand and Australia share many commonalities in their foreign policy towards Oceania, including a commitment to regional stability, security, and prosperity. Both countries are part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance and collaborate on defense and security matters. However, there are differences in their approaches, with New Zealand often emphasizing soft power and public diplomacy, while Australia may take a more direct approach to security and defense.

The Maori people, as the indigenous population of New Zealand, play a significant role in the country's foreign policy towards Oceania. Their cultural heritage and connections with other

Polynesian communities in the region enhance New Zealand's diplomatic efforts. The Maori also contribute to development projects and cultural exchanges, strengthening ties with Pacific Island nations.

### **24.1 EU-New Zealand Relations:**

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and New Zealand has been characterized by strong economic ties, shared values, and a commitment to multilateralism. The two entities have collaborated on various fronts, including trade, climate change, and regional security. The recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the EU and New Zealand, which came into force

on May 1, 2024, marks a significant milestone in their partnership.

The FTA is expected to have several positive impacts on both parties:

1. **Increased Trade:** Trade between New Zealand and the EU is projected to increase by 30%, with the removal of tariffs alone saving businesses €140 million in duties per year. This will open up new markets and opportunities for exporters and consumers on both sides.
2. **Economic Growth:** EU investment flows into New Zealand are anticipated to increase by over 80%, fostering economic development and job creation
3. **Sustainable Development:** The agreement includes binding commitments to international labor and environmental standards, promoting sustainable trade practices. It also supports the Paris Climate Agreement and core labor rights
4. **Enhanced Cooperation:** The FTA cements EU ties with New Zealand, a like-minded ally in the economically dynamic Indo-Pacific region. This will strengthen their collaboration on global issues and regional stability

Overall, the FTA is set to create significant economic opportunities for companies, farmers, and consumers, while also advancing shared goals in sustainability and labor rights. The European Union (EU) is New Zealand's third-largest trading partner. In 2021, the EU accounted for 11.5% of New Zealand's global trade in goods<sup>68</sup>. The United Kingdom (UK) is one of New Zealand's important trading partners. The trade relationship between the two countries includes a variety of goods, with New Zealand exporting agricultural products, machinery, and other goods to the UK, while importing manufactured goods, machinery, and chemicals from the UK.

The Māori economy is a significant part of New Zealand's trade networks. Māori businesses are involved in various sectors, including land, agriculture, fishing, forestry, real estate, manufacturing, transportation, and construction. Māori-owned enterprises contribute to the diversification and growth of New Zealand's economy. The Māori economy is estimated to be worth around \$68.7 billion.<sup>69</sup>

Negotiations are ongoing with other Asian partners, including Australia, Indonesia, and Thailand on FTA's.

## 24.2 Security Cooperation

The EU engages in security dialogues with key players such as China, Japan, India, Australia, and South Korea.

Concrete cooperation includes joint naval exercises and participation in operations near the

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<sup>68</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/new-zealand/eu-new-zealand-agreement\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/new-zealand/eu-new-zealand-agreement_en)

<sup>69</sup> [https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Trade-agreements/UK-NZ-FTA/The-Maori-Economy\\_2.pdf](https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Trade-agreements/UK-NZ-FTA/The-Maori-Economy_2.pdf)

Horn of Africa.

### **24.3 Smart Security Enabler**

The EU aims to become a smart security enabler, assisting partners in maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and countering foreign information manipulation.

### **24.4 Commonalities in Islands Group**

Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia share challenges related to climate change, sustainable development, and regional stability.

Cooperation among these groups is essential for resilience and prosperity.

### **24.5 New Zealand's Strategic Intentions**

The Strategic Intentions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) emphasize values such as Impact, Strength from Diversity, Courage and Respect for others towards sustainability and well-being, security, influence and Prosperity. The departure point for Aeteroa's foreign policy is connectedness at regarding collaboration, transparency, and engagement with Maori partners. The geostrategic environment is changing and sharpened competition<sup>70</sup>.

#### **Strategic goals:**

International rules and Institutions Economic Returns and Resilience Indo-Pacific

Pacific

Environment and Climate Change Security and Safety

70 New Zealand Strategic Intentions, 2021-2025

International relationships

### **24.6 Mutualisation and Impact of the Maori Foreign Minister:**

The Maori economy significantly contributes to New Zealand's growth. Maori businesses diversify across various sectors, including land, agriculture, fishing, forestry, real estate, and manufacturing.

Treaty of Waitangi: Maoris hold a unique status as the government's treaty partner. All FTAs include a nonnegotiable Treaty of Waitangi clause, reflecting its constitutional significance.

Trade for All Agenda: New Zealand's trade policy aims to protect indigenous interests. FTAs provide opportunities for Maori businesses in global markets.

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<sup>70</sup> New Zealand Strategic Intentions, 2021-2025

Maori engagement on Trade: Te Taumata, a group of Maori leaders, collaborates with MFAT to deepen engagement on trade policy on Maori priorities.

## Impact of Maori Foreign Minister

Nanaia Mahuta. New Zealand's pioneering foreign minister brings her Indigenous perspective to foreign affairs. She emphasises Maori values and tikanga (customary practices) and indigenous diplomacy in shaping New Zealand's foreign policy.

In summary, New Zealand wants to shape the Indo-Pacific and has both economic relations and cultural affinity with Polynesia. Similar to Australia, it sees increased EU engagement as a necessity to cool down the bilateral competition between the US and China<sup>71</sup>. There are regular dialogues in the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum and collaborate on security, stability and shared goals<sup>72</sup>. An Intensified partnership could seem natural if the EU adds a Pacific Islands chapter to its Indo-Pacific strategy, as New Zealand's strategic orientations align with the EU's vision for a stable, prosperous, and interconnected Indo-Pacific. Together, they can shape policies, promote sustainable development, and strengthen regional ties.

## 25.0 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF INDONESIA IN INDO-PACIFIC?

The EU and Indonesia have a long history of positive relations, based on shared values such as regional integration, democracy, trade, human rights, and a commitment to sustainable development. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which entered into force in May 2014, provides the framework for political and economic relations between the two<sup>73</sup>. In 2023, bilateral trade in goods between the EU and Indonesia amounted to €29.7 billion. EU exports to Indonesia were worth €11.3 billion, while imports from Indonesia totaled €18.3 billion. The EU is Indonesia's fifth-largest trading partner, and Indonesia is the EU's 33rd biggest trading partner.

### Areas for Expansion and Trade Creation

1. Free Trade Agreement (FTA): Negotiations for an EU-Indonesia FTA have been ongoing since 2016. The FTA aims to facilitate trade and investment, reduce tariffs, and address non-tariff barriers.
2. Sustainable Development: Both parties are committed to promoting sustainable development, including environmental and climate change initiatives.
3. Trade in Services: Expanding trade in services is another area of focus, with bilateral trade in services amounting to €9.3 billion in 2022.
4. Investment: Encouraging investment between the EU and Indonesia, particularly in

<sup>71</sup> Australia's views of Europe in the Indo-Pacific , [https://spfusa.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/08/Susannah\\_Patton\\_Australias-Views-of-Europe-in-Indo-Pacific.pdf](https://spfusa.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/08/Susannah_Patton_Australias-Views-of-Europe-in-Indo-Pacific.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> EU and Indo-Pacific [online] [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-indo-pacific-strategy\\_en?](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-indo-pacific-strategy_en?)

<sup>73</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-andregions/indonesia\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-andregions/indonesia_en)

sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and technology.

5. Human Rights and Security: Strengthening cooperation in areas like human rights, security, and counter-terrorism<sup>74</sup>

The EU and Indonesia continue to work together to deepen their economic and political ties, with a focus on creating new market access and promoting sustainable development.

## 25.1 The Promise of the EU-Indonesia CEPA

The EU-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) represents a significant milestone in the economic relationship between the European Union (EU) and Indonesia. It aims to strengthen trade ties, promote sustainable development, and foster deeper political and economic cooperation. However, like any large trade agreement, it presents both promises and challenges.

### Promises of the EU-Indonesia CEPA

#### 1. Enhanced Trade and Market Access

- **Increased Exports:** The CEPA promises improved access for Indonesian products to the European market, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, automotive, and fisheries. This could boost Indonesia's exports, especially given the EU's vast consumer base.
- **Lower Tariffs and Trade Barriers:** The agreement seeks to reduce tariffs on Indonesian products entering the EU and vice versa, making trade more efficient and competitive. This could result in cost savings for businesses on both sides.

#### 2. Economic Growth and Investment

- **Investment Flows:** The CEPA is expected to encourage greater EU investment in Indonesia, particularly in sectors like green energy, technology, infrastructure, and manufacturing. This can drive job creation and economic development in Indonesia.
- **Diversification of Trade:** Indonesia currently relies heavily on commodities like palm oil, coal, and rubber for export. The CEPA could help Indonesia diversify its exports into new sectors, such as electronics, services, and green technologies.

#### 3. Sustainability and Environmental Cooperation

- **Sustainable Development Focus:** A key aspect of the CEPA is the focus on sustainable trade practices, especially in sectors like palm oil, timber, and fisheries, which have been criticized for their environmental impact. The agreement encourages better management of natural resources and promotes environmentally friendly practices.
- **Green Technology Transfer:** The EU is a leader in green technology, and the CEPA

<sup>74</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20190903\\_eu-ri\\_partnership\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20190903_eu-ri_partnership_en.pdf)



could facilitate the transfer of renewable energy technologies, waste management systems, and sustainable agriculture practices to Indonesia.

#### 4. Strengthening Bilateral Ties

- **Political and Diplomatic Cooperation:** Beyond economic benefits, the CEPA is also a tool to strengthen political and diplomatic ties between the EU and Indonesia, especially as both seek to strengthen their influence in Southeast Asia.
- **Enhanced Collaboration on Global Challenges:** Both parties have shared interests in areas such as climate change, global health, and regional stability, and the CEPA can provide a framework for deeper collaboration on these fronts.

#### 5. Improved Trade Facilitation and Regulatory Cooperation

- **Streamlined Customs Procedures:** The CEPA includes provisions for simplifying customs procedures, reducing bureaucracy, and creating more efficient logistics and transportation links between the EU and Indonesia. This could make trade more fluid and less costly.
- **Regulatory Cooperation:** Both parties will work together to align standards and regulations in areas like food safety, consumer protection, and intellectual property. This will create a more predictable and transparent trading environment.

### Challenges of the EU-Indonesia CEPA

#### 1. Environmental Concerns (Palm Oil and Deforestation)

- **Sustainability Tensions:** One of the major challenges facing the CEPA is the ongoing controversy surrounding palm oil production. The EU has been a vocal critic of the environmental destruction caused by unsustainable palm oil plantations in Indonesia, particularly deforestation and biodiversity loss.
- **Balancing Growth and Sustainability:** The agreement aims to address these concerns by promoting sustainable palm oil and improving environmental management. However, there could be tensions over how strict these sustainability requirements are and whether they might hinder Indonesia's economic interests in key export industries.

#### 2. Impact on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

- **Competition:** While larger Indonesian companies may benefit from improved market access, smaller businesses might struggle to compete with larger European firms, especially in sectors like manufacturing or technology. This could result in a widening inequality gap within Indonesia, particularly in rural areas.
- **Adaptation to Standards:** SMEs may also face challenges in adapting to the EU's more stringent regulatory standards on product safety, labor rights, and environmental practices, which could increase operational costs for smaller firms.

### 3. Geopolitical and Domestic Resistance

- **Domestic Opposition:** Indonesia may face internal resistance to certain aspects of the CEPA, especially from sectors that are highly protected or politically sensitive, such as agriculture and natural resources. Trade liberalization can be unpopular in certain industries that fear being exposed to foreign competition.
- **Geopolitical Complications:** The CEPA is being negotiated in a regional context where Indonesia's relationships with other Asian powers, such as China and India, could influence the outcome. Indonesia may face difficulties balancing its growing ties with the EU while maintaining strong economic relations with other regional powers, especially in sectors like trade and infrastructure.

### 4. Labour and Human Rights Issues

- **Labor Standards:** The EU has a strong focus on labor rights, and the CEPA includes provisions aimed at improving working conditions in Indonesia. However, implementation of labor reforms in Indonesia could be challenging due to existing gaps in the enforcement of labor laws.
- **Human Rights Concerns:** The EU's promotion of human rights may conflict with some of Indonesia's domestic policies, particularly in areas like freedom of expression and indigenous rights. The CEPA could face difficulties if these sensitive issues are not properly addressed.

### 5. Complex Negotiations and Long-Term Implementation

- **Length of Negotiations:** The CEPA is a complex agreement that covers a wide range of issues, from trade tariffs to sustainability clauses. Negotiating these issues has taken years, and implementation could take even longer, as both parties will need to align laws, regulations, and standards.
- **Uncertainty Around Enforcement:** Effective enforcement of the agreement's provisions, particularly those related to sustainability and trade rules, could be a challenge. If either party does not fully adhere to the terms, it may undermine the long-term effectiveness of the agreement.

### 6. Cultural and Regulatory Differences

- **Differences in Business Practices:** EU businesses tend to operate under strict regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines, while Indonesia has different practices that may not always align with EU standards. This includes issues like corporate governance, product labeling, and data protection. These differences could create friction in the way business is done.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Cultural and political differences may slow down the implementation of some aspects of the CEPA. Effective communication and a shared understanding of goals will be critical to overcome potential barriers.

The EU-Indonesia CEPA holds substantial promise in terms of economic growth, trade facilitation, and sustainability. However, its success depends on addressing significant challenges such as environmental concerns, competition from larger firms, domestic resistance, and effective implementation. Both parties must navigate these complexities to ensure that the agreement results in mutually beneficial outcomes, especially by focusing on sustainable development, inclusive growth, and regulatory alignment.

## 25.2 Indonesia's Connectivity and Security:

Indonesia's interests and objectives in the Indo-Pacific region are multifaceted. Indonesia's Indo-Pacific Cooperation:

Indonesia's recognizes the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific due its location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It has extended its foreign policy focus beyond South East Asia to include these regions.

Critical features of Indonesia's Indo-Pacific cooperation:

Asean centrality: Indonesia emphasizes ASEAN as the driver of cooperation in the region.

Inclusion of Major Powers: It engages with all major powers in the Indo-Pacific.

Maritime Security: Focus on non-traditional maritime security concerns.

Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum vision aims to improve maritime connectivity.

It addresses challenges like illegal fishing and facilitates peaceful dispute resolution in the South China Sea.<sup>75</sup>

Indonesia's engagement is hampered by the need to solve issues in West Papua, but Djakarta is interested in engaging more sustainably and coaching its trading in the Pacific identity. Its strategy is called Pacific elevation and hosted an Indonesia-Pacific Forum for Development. The EU is Indonesia's fifth-largest trading partner, and total trade in goods stood at €20,6 billion. The aim is to conclude a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. Indonesia, a country of 200 million, is hosting the Asea secretariat and is considered an essential partner with great potential by the EU.<sup>76</sup> It also sits on the Ring of Fire, a string of volcanoes along the Pacific rim.<sup>3</sup>

## 25.3 Asean in Indonesia

Not only does the trading and investment relationship between the EU and Indonesia need to be upgraded and leveraged to improve the EU's Pacific policies, but it is also hosting the ASEAN organisation.<sup>77</sup>, a vector in Indonesian foreign policy for the forging of a sense of community and identity, promotion of camaraderie among leaders, dialogue with great powers, and conflict- prevention and a regional trading regime amongst the South-Eastern Asian States

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<sup>75</sup> Indonesia and the Indo-Pacific: Cooperation, Interests, and Strategies in Maritime Issues and regional Order in the Indo-Pacific, 2021.

<sup>76</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/7eu-indonesia-trade-investment\\_2021.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/7eu-indonesia-trade-investment_2021.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> <https://asean.org/>

positioned geographically between India and China ( Sng & Mahhubani, 2017). The ASEAN countries are a significant trading and investment partner of the EU, with a volume in goods alone at less than €300bn, third in rank to China and the US<sup>78</sup>. There is considerable potential for the expansion of trade.<sup>79</sup> The building blocks for a bi-regional trade and investment agreement are currently perceived as FTA's with individual members of ASEAN.<sup>80</sup> Sub-regional integration, however, also impacts the prospects of deepening relationships between the Eu and Indonesia, ASEAN and EU.

Let's explore how ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) can be strengthened from the perspective of comparative regionalism. Comparative regionalism involves studying regional integration across different contexts to identify best practices and learn from others' experiences.

## Here are some insights:

### 1. Comparative Study Approach:

- Comparative regionalism examines the nuances of regional integration in different situations. It helps identify successful strategies and areas for improvement.
- Lessons from other regions can inform ASEAN's policies and practices.

### 2. Selecting Comparative Cases:

- For this analysis, we'll compare ASEAN with two other regional integration models: the European Union (EU) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- The EU is considered a role model for successful regional integration globally, while SAARC shares similarities with ASEAN regarding economy, society, and political context.

### 3. Areas for Strengthening ASEAN:

- Trade Integration: ASEAN can learn from the EU's success in creating a single market and customs union. Harmonising trade policies, reducing non-tariff barriers, and promoting intra-regional trade are crucial.
- Institutional Capacity: Strengthening ASEAN's institutional mechanisms, decision-making processes, and enforcement mechanisms can enhance its effectiveness.
- Political Cooperation: ASEAN should foster greater political cooperation, similar to the

<sup>78</sup> <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/07/reimagining-eu-asean-relations-challenges-and-opportunities?lang=en&center=europe>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.eu-asean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Promoting-Trade-Investment-between-ASEAN-Europe-2014.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/754629/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)754629\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/754629/EPRS_BRI(2023)754629_EN.pdf)

EU's emphasis on shared values and norms.

- Selective Localization: Like SAARC, ASEAN can selectively merge external norms with preexisting local ones to create hybrid value systems.

#### 4. Action Plan:

- Trade Facilitation: ASEAN should prioritise trade facilitation measures, including simplifying customs procedures, improving logistics, and enhancing connectivity.
- Capacity Building: Invest in building ASEAN's institutional capacity, including training officials, sharing best practices, and promoting knowledge exchange.
- Norms and Values: Promote ASEAN's norms and values through dialogue, cultural exchanges, and joint initiatives.
- Inclusive Decision-Making: Ensure all member states actively participate in decision-making processes.

Remember that strengthening ASEAN requires a holistic approach, considering economic, political, and social dimensions. By learning from other successful regional models, ASEAN can enhance its integration and cooperation.

## 25.4 Leveraging Internal Market Legislation for ASEAN Trade Integration

Given ASEAN's considerable growth potential and its ambitions for regional economic integration, the EU's internal market legislation can serve as a model and practical tool to strengthen trade integration in Southeast Asia. The EU's experience in harmonizing regulations, removing non-tariff barriers, and ensuring a level playing field provides insights into how ASEAN could accelerate its own integration under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) framework.

### 1. Regulatory Harmonization & Mutual Recognition

Challenge: ASEAN economies operate under diverse regulatory frameworks, creating trade frictions and compliance costs for businesses.

EU Experience: The EU's Single Market principles ensure that goods and services move freely across borders under common standards or mutual recognition agreements.

#### 1. Application to ASEAN:

- ASEAN could adopt common technical regulations in key sectors (e.g., digital trade, pharmaceuticals, and financial services).
- Expanding the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for professional qualifications and product standards could boost intra-ASEAN trade.

### 2. Eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)

- **Challenge:** Despite tariff reductions, ASEAN trade still faces NTBs such as customs inefficiencies, licensing restrictions, and divergent product standards.
- **EU Experience:** The EU's Goods Package, single customs procedures, and Services Directive eliminate internal NTBs.

Application to ASEAN:

- Implement common electronic customs systems for seamless cross-border trade. Standardize product certification processes across ASEAN markets.
- Enhance regulatory transparency and dispute resolution mechanisms to prevent protectionist policies.

### 3. Strengthening Services & Digital Market Integration

**Challenge:** ASEAN's service sector is fragmented, limiting cross-border investments and e-commerce.

**EU Experience:** The EU Services Directive ensures cross-border service provision without restrictions.

Application to ASEAN:

- Implement cross-border licensing for professional services (e.g., banking, insurance, legal services).
- Expand ASEAN's digital trade framework by adopting common data protection laws and cross-border e-payment standards.

### 4. Facilitating Capital Mobility & Investment

**Challenge:** ASEAN lacks a fully integrated capital market, leading to investment inefficiencies.

**EU Experience:** The EU's Capital Markets Union (CMU) creates a single framework for investment flows.

Application to ASEAN:

- Develop an ASEAN-wide capital market framework to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).
- Strengthen regional investment protection agreements under a single dispute resolution mechanism.

### 5. Enhancing Institutional Coordination

**Challenge:** ASEAN's economic policies are implemented at the national level, leading to inconsistent enforcement.



EU Experience: The EU's legal and institutional framework, enforced by the European Commission and Court of Justice, ensures compliance.

Application to ASEAN:

- Establish an ASEAN Trade Regulatory Authority to monitor and enforce integration commitments.
- Develop a binding dispute settlement mechanism for trade-related conflicts.

## 6. Internal Market Legislation as an ASEAN Accelerator

By adapting elements of EU internal market legislation, ASEAN could accelerate its trade integration and economic growth. Regulatory harmonization, NTB elimination, digital integration, capital mobility, and stronger institutions could unlock ASEAN's full trade potential, making it a more competitive global economic bloc.

## 26.0 ENTER NEW GUINEA

### 1. Trade volume

In 2022, the European Union exported goods worth €80 million to Papua New Guinea (PNG) and imported goods worth 1,089 million from PNG. Notably, the EU is an important trading partner for PNG, and this bilateral trade contributes to economic growth and development.

### 2. Development Needs and Assets

Infrastructure: PNG faces challenges related to infrastructure development. Improving roads, ports, and energy systems is crucial for economic growth.

Healthcare and education: Investments in healthcare and education are essential to enhance human capital and well-being.

Natural resources: PNG is rich in hydrocarbons and minerals. Sustainable management of these resources is vital for long-term development.

Sustainable Agriculture: PNG's agriculture sector can benefit from modernisation and sustainable practices.

Linguistic Diversity: More than 800 different languages are spoken on PNG, making it the wealthiest treasure store for humanity's linguistic heritage<sup>81</sup>. There are also men known to keep their tips up.

### 3. Ethnic Links to Melanesia

PNG's indigenous population belongs to the Melanesian ethnic group. They share cultural and

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<sup>81</sup> Alfred Kik "Language and ethnobiological skills decline in PNG, the world's most linguistically diverse nation" [online] <https://pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2100096118>

genetic ties with other Melanesian nations, such as Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

The EU can harness these links by:

**Cultural Exchange:** promoting cultural exchanges, art, and heritage.

**Trade and Investment:** Facilitating trade agreements and investments that respect Melanesian values.

**Capacity Building:** Supporting local institutions and knowledge transfer.

**Sustainable Tourism:** Promoting eco-friendly tourism that celebrates Melanesian culture.

In summary, the EU can collaborate with PNG to address development needs, leverage its ethnic ties, and foster mutually beneficial partnerships<sup>82</sup>.

## 27.0 EASTER ISLAND – RAPA NUI (Chile)

The source titled “The Annexation of Eastern Island: Geopolitics and Environmental Perception” by

J. Douglas Porteous provides a detailed analysis of Chile’s annexation of Easter Island and the various factors that influenced this decision.<sup>83</sup>

### Summary of the Source:

- **Geopolitical Context:** The late 19th century saw a scramble for territories in Oceania, paralleling the European imperialist Scramble for Africa. Major powers like France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States were annexing Pacific island groups. During this time, Chile was expanding unprecedentedly.
- **Chile’s Motivation:** Chile’s annexation of Easter Island was driven by national prestige and its perceived military and commercial value. Easter Island represented a strategic location and potential agricultural wealth.
- **Annexation Ceremony:** On September 9, 1888, Captain Policarpo Toro of the Chilean Navy formally annexed Easter Island to Chile. The Polynesian inhabitants ceded “full and entire sovereignty” of the island to Chile “forever and without reservation.”
- **Latin American Context:** Chile became the only Latin American nation with a Polynesian territory, with Easter Island over 2,000 miles from the mainland. This was an unusual move as most Latin American countries were focused on continental expansion rather than over-seas territories.
- **Perceptions vs. Reality:** Chilean perceptions of Easter Island’s value were based on

<sup>82</sup> The Eu and Papua New Guinea [online] [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/papua-new-guinea/european-union-and-papua-new-guinea\\_en?](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/papua-new-guinea/european-union-and-papua-new-guinea_en?)

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41803408>

limited knowledge of the island's actual potential. The expectations of economic benefits from the annexation never fully materialised.

The source provides a comprehensive look at the motives and perceptions that led to Chile's annexation of Easter Island, set against the backdrop of 19th-century geopolitical dynamics and the nation's desire for territorial expansion and international prestige

Easter Island faces several specific challenges, which include:

- **Environmental Concerns:** The island struggles with a steady accumulation of garbage, producing 20 tonnes of rubbish daily. While a recycling plant processes a significant amount of plastic bottles, much of the garbage cannot be recycled and ends up in landfills<sup>84</sup>.
- **Healthcare Limitations:** The island lacks a decent hospital, which poses a risk to both residents and tourists, especially considering the threat of diseases like dengue fever.
- **Overtourism:** Easter Island receives around 80,000 tourists each year, which strains local services and infrastructure. Managing sustainable tourism is challenging, especially in limiting visitor numbers and ensuring local people do not feel crowded out.
- **Cultural Preservation:** The arrival of thousands of tourists also damages the moai, the giant stone statues that are a significant part of the island's cultural heritage.
- **Resource Management:** Overfishing is another issue affecting the local ecosystem and the livelihoods of those who depend on fishing.

These challenges are compounded by the island's remote location, making managing and providing essential services difficult.<sup>85</sup> still need to be revised. Addressing these issues requires careful planning and sustainable practices to preserve Easter Island's unique environment and culture.

I expect the EU to do what is necessary to rebalance Chile and to bring the Rapa Nui.<sup>86</sup> into the EU's global policy on the Pacific Islands<sup>87</sup> and by doing so address the concerns of the Indigenous People overthere.

## 28.0 THE UK IN THE INDO-PACIFIC – DOES STILL MATTER?

The UK has shifted its focus towards the Indo-Pacific region, aiming to strengthen economic, security, and diplomatic ties. The UK supports a free and open Indo-Pacific, advocating for the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and peaceful resolution of disputes. The UK seeks to build

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<sup>84</sup> <http://geoprodig.cnrs.fr/items/show/147984>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.historyskills.com/classroom/year-7/easter-island/>

<sup>86</sup> <https://bioone.org/journals/pacific-science/volume-63/issue-4/049.063.0407/Revisiting-Rapa-Nui-Easter-Island-Ecocide1/10.2984/049.063.0407.short>

<sup>87</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/76396800/Decolonizing\\_Heritage\\_in\\_Rapa\\_Nui\\_Towards\\_New\\_Scenarios\\_for\\_the\\_Implementation\\_of\\_the\\_UNDRIP\\_in\\_Postcolonial\\_Contexts](https://www.academia.edu/76396800/Decolonizing_Heritage_in_Rapa_Nui_Towards_New_Scenarios_for_the_Implementation_of_the_UNDRIP_in_Postcolonial_Contexts)

strategic partnerships with key Indo-Pacific nations, including India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea. The UK emphasizes collaboration on climate change, green growth, and sustainable development in the region. The UK is committed to enhancing security cooperation, including counter-terrorism, maritime security, and defense partnerships.

## UK's Possessions in the Pacific and Indian Ocean

- **Diego Garcia:** The UK administers Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago, which hosts a joint UK-US military base. The recent deal with Mauritius grants sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago while maintaining the UK's lease on Diego Garcia for another century
- **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT):** The UK retains control over the BIOT, which includes the Chagos Archipelago

## 28.1 in Expanded Cooperation with the EU

- **CPTPP Accession:** The UK has joined the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), aiming to boost trade and investment ties with Indo-Pacific nations
- **EU Collaboration:** The UK seeks to enhance cooperation with the EU on Indo-Pacific issues, including security, trade, and climate action
- **Mutualisation:** The UK and the EU are exploring mutualisation of resources and efforts in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on shared interests and challenges

The United Kingdom's possessions in the Pacific are primarily its British Overseas Territories. These territories are remnants of the British Empire, and while they do not form part of the United Kingdom itself, they are under its sovereignty. Historically, the British Western Pacific Territories were a colonial entity created in 1877 to administer various Pacific islands. Still, most of these possessions have since gained independence or been transferred to other sovereignties.

The specific British Overseas Territory in the Pacific is the Pitcairn Islands.<sup>88</sup> Officially known as Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie, and Oeno Islands, this group of four volcanic islands is the sole British Overseas Territory in the Pacific Ocean. The Pitcairn Islands are a remnant of the British Empire and represent the UK's presence in the vast Pacific region. They play a strategic role in environmental conservation and scientific research and are also significant due to their historical and cultural heritage.

The UK's possessions and their relevance to global affairs, particularly in the context of the EU's Indo-Pacific policy, France, the US, and China, are multifaceted:

- **EU's Indo-Pacific Policy:** The UK's role in the Indo-Pacific region is significant as it aims to become 'the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence

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<sup>88</sup> <https://ukota.org/member-territories/pitcairn-islands/>

in the Indo-Pacific'. The UK's departure from the EU (Brexit) has led to a strategic shift from the EU to the Indo-Pacific, capturing economic opportunities and strengthening security engagement.

- France: The UK and France have a longstanding partnership and continue to work closely on international security and tackling shared challenges. They have reaffirmed their commitment to deepen further their defence and security partnership, which is crucial for European and global security<sup>89</sup>.
- United States: The UK maintains a 'special relationship' with the US, extending into their cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The UK's defence activities in the area are tailored to align with the perceptions and needs of regional partners, including the US.
- China: The UK-China relationship is complex, with economic ties playing a significant role. However, there are disagreements on geopolitical issues and concerns over human rights and governance in Hong Kong. The UK's involvement in the Indo-Pacific could contribute to balancing China's influence in the region<sup>90</sup>.

The UK's potential contribution to the joint endeavour in the Indo-Pacific includes:

- Military Presence: The UK has increased its military presence through persistent maritime deployments and exercises with regional partners.
- Economic Engagement: The UK is considering joining the Indo-Pacific trade bloc, which would significantly boost its economic ties with the region.
- Diplomatic Efforts: The UK actively engages in diplomatic efforts to uphold the Rules-Based International Order and support sovereignty and global trade.
- Technological Exchange: The UK aims to enhance technological exchange with the region, which could include areas like cybersecurity and advanced technologies.

In summary, while limited, the UK's possessions in the Pacific play a role in its broader strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region, impacting global trade, security, and diplomatic relations with key international players.<sup>91</sup> The UK's contributions are aligned with its national interests and the collective efforts to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The UK's foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific reflects a strategic shift towards the region, emphasizing partnerships, security, and sustainable development. Their possessions in the Pacific and Indian Ocean, particularly Diego Garcia, play a crucial role in maintaining regional stability and security. Expanded cooperation with the EU further strengthens the UK's commitment to the Indo-Pacific.

Thus, the wiser course of action would seem to sound out Whitehall on dialogue on military

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<sup>89</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-france-joint-leaders-declaration/uk-france-joint-leaders-declaration>

<sup>90</sup> <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-china-relations/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2022/06/the-uk-indo-pacific-tilt/>

presence and mutualisation of assets, on strengthening subregional cooperation frameworks in Southeast Asia and among Pacific islanders, mellowing the UK-China contretemps, without excluding strengthening the EU-UK political dialogue on the Indo-Pacific, even as cooperation on the various aspects of earth science is intensified.

## Definitions

**Collaboration:** In the context of international relations, collaboration refers to the process of working together towards common goals or shared interests. This involves joint efforts, mutual support, and coordinated actions between two or more entities to achieve a desired outcome.

**Mutualisation:** Mutualisation involves pooling resources, capabilities, or risks among entities to achieve collective benefits. Compared to standard collaboration, it often implies a deeper level of integration and shared responsibility.

## 28.2 Areas of Collaboration between the EU and UK in the Indo-Pacific

### 1. Maritime Security

- **Joint Naval Patrols:** Conducting joint naval patrols to ensure freedom of navigation and combat piracy.
- **Information Sharing:** Sharing intelligence and surveillance data to enhance maritime security.

### 2. Climate Change and Environmental Protection

- **Sustainable Development Projects:** Partnering on sustainable development initiatives to address climate change and protect marine ecosystems.
- **Renewable Energy:** Collaborating on renewable energy projects to promote green growth in the region.

### 3. Trade and Investment

- **Trade Facilitation:** Working together to simplify customs procedures and reduce trade barriers, boosting bilateral trade.
- **Investment Opportunities:** Encouraging mutual investments in key sectors such as technology, healthcare, and infrastructure.

### 4. Human Rights and Rule of Law

- **Advocacy:** Jointly advocating for human rights and the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Legal Cooperation:** Enhancing legal cooperation to address issues such as human trafficking and labor rights.



## 5. Research and Innovation

- **Scientific Collaboration:** Partnering on scientific research projects, particularly in areas like healthcare, AI, and clean energy.
- **Innovation Exchange:** Facilitating the exchange of innovative technologies and practices between the UK and the EU.

## **28.3 Areas of mutualisation between the EU and the UK in the Indo-Pacific:**

### 1. Maritime Security

- **Integrated Maritime Task Force:** Establishing a joint maritime task force to coordinate and execute security operations across the Indo-Pacific.
- **Shared Surveillance Infrastructure:** Investing in shared maritime surveillance infrastructure and technology.

### 2. Climate Change and Environmental Protection

- **Joint Environmental Programs:** Pooling resources to fund and manage large-scale environmental programs focused on biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.
- **Green Fund:** Creating a joint fund to support renewable energy projects and sustainable development.

### 3. Trade and Investment

- **Common Trade Policies:** Developing common trade policies to streamline and boost trade activities in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Co-Financed Investment Ventures:** Launching co-financed ventures to develop infrastructure and promote economic growth.

### 4. Security and Defense

- **Combined Defense Initiatives:** Pooling military resources and capabilities to strengthen regional security.
- **Joint Training Programs:** Developing and implementing joint training programs for defense personnel.

By focusing on these areas, the UK and the EU can create a robust framework for both collaboration and mutualisation in the Indo-Pacific, enhancing their strategic influence and fostering regional stability and prosperity.

## **29. THE VIEW FROM THE UNITED STATES**

The United States has significant interests and a historical relationship in the Pacific. In

addition to Hawaii, the US possessions in the Pacific are the Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Wake Island, Palmyra Atoll, Midway Atoll, and the Baker, Jarvis, Howland Islands, Johnston Atoll, and Kingman Reef<sup>92</sup>.

The United States has articulated its Indo-Pacific Strategy to strengthen its regional engagement—the Key Points.

## 29.1 Free and Open Indo-Pacific

The US seeks a free and open region where governments can make choices and lawfully govern shared domains.

Initiatives include investing in democratic institutions, promoting fiscal transparency, and ensuring adherence to international law in the region.

## 29.2 Connectedness:

Collective capacity-building is crucial. The US depends on regional treaty alliances with countries like Australia, Japan and South Korea.

Strengthening relationships with partners like India, Indonesia, and the Pacific Islands is also a priority.

## 29.3 Climate

The US aims to enhance resilience in the Pacific Islands, preparing them for climate change and other challenges.

Empowering and fostering prosperity among Pacific Islanders is part of the strategy.<sup>93</sup>

The desiderata of the Pacific Islanders, in turn, are interested in a genuine partnership with the US - not a relationship derived from the US's relationship with China and Washington's alliance system.<sup>94</sup>

## 29.4 The US and Micronesia

The United States has strengthened its links, notably with Micronesia.<sup>95</sup> via the Compact of Free Association (COPA):

The United States and Micronesia piece, on the southern Pacific, have a bilateral agreement known as the Compact of Free Association. Under this agreement, Micronesia receives grant aid and security guarantees from the US.<sup>96</sup> In return, Micronesian citizens have access to US

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<sup>92</sup> <https://asiamattersforamerica.org/the-pacific/what-are-us-territories>

<sup>93</sup> Factsheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States [online] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/riefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/11/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/>

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/six-months-where-does-us-pacific-islands-strategy-stand?>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06/us-strengthens-ties-key-pacific-island-partners>

<sup>96</sup> <https://newlinesinstitute.org/strategic-competition/a-new-u-s-approach-to-the-pacific-island-countries/>

programs, can live and work in US programs without a visa, and can enlist in the US military.

**Strategic importance:** Micronesia's location in the Pacific Ocean is vital for the US. It allows the US to construct bases in the region and prevent third parties, such as China, from using the islands for military purposes.<sup>97</sup>.

**Security and Defense:** The US missile defence test site on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands plays a crucial role in regional security and could help protect the US in a conflict with China<sup>98</sup>.

**Economic and Cultural ties:** Micronesians volunteer to serve in the US Armed Forces at a higher per capita rate than Americans. Additionally, the US provides financial assistance to Micronesia, supporting its economy and development.<sup>99</sup>.

## 29.5 US-Pacific Strategic Partnership

The U.S.-Pacific Strategic Partnership aims to strengthen relations between the United States and Pacific Island nations, addressing shared challenges and promoting mutual interests. The partnership's rationale and central tenets include:

1. **Shared Values and Principles:** The partnership emphasizes the importance of strong and enduring political will, leadership, and respect for Pacific cultures, values, and traditions. It commits to supporting leadership grounded in the "Pacific Way," with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion.
2. **Economic Development and Infrastructure:** The strategy seeks to enhance economic growth and infrastructure development in Pacific Island nations, promoting sustainable development and prosperity in the region.
3. **Climate Change and Environmental Protection:** Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of Pacific Island nations to climate change, the partnership prioritizes environmental protection and resilience-building efforts.
4. **Maritime Security and Sovereignty:** The partnership aims to bolster maritime security, ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pacific Island nations. This includes addressing illegal fishing and enhancing maritime domain awareness.
5. **Health and Education:** Improving health outcomes and educational opportunities in Pacific Island nations is a key focus, aiming to elevate the quality of life and human capital in the region.
6. **Regional Cooperation and Multilateral Engagement:** The partnership underscores the importance of regional cooperation, aligning with frameworks like the Pacific Islands

<sup>97</sup> Manon Prince Shifting security narratives in the Oceania, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Dec/06/2003126960/-1/-1/1/JIPA%20-%20LEPRINCE.PDF>

<sup>98</sup> <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11208>

<sup>99</sup> US relations with the Federated states of Micronesia [online] <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-federated-states-of-micronesia/>

Forum to ensure that initiatives are inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

In summary, the U.S.-Pacific Strategic Partnership is designed to reinforce collaboration between the United States and Pacific Island nations, addressing critical issues such as economic development, climate change, maritime security, and cultural preservation, while promoting shared values and regional stability.

## 29.6 US Defence Initiative

The Pacific Defense Initiative (PDI) is a strategic framework by the United States Department of Defense (DoD) to enhance deterrence and military capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region. It aims to counterbalance China's military rise, strengthen regional alliances, and enhance U.S. force posture.

### 1. Background & Strategic Rationale

The PDI was first introduced in the 2021 U.S. defense budget as a response to growing military tensions in the Indo-Pacific, particularly:

- China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.
- The need for stronger regional alliances with countries like Japan, Australia, and India.
- A shift in U.S. military focus from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific, aligning with the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

### 2. Objectives of the Pacific Defense Initiative

The PDI is designed around five key pillars:

1. Force Posture – Expanding U.S. military presence through new basing agreements, rotational forces, and logistical networks in Guam, the Philippines, Japan, and Australia.
2. Exercises & Training – Strengthening joint exercises with allies and partners to improve interoperability and readiness.
3. Infrastructure Development – Investing in airfields, ports, and logistics hubs to ensure rapid deployment capabilities.
4. Integrated Air & Missile Defense – Enhancing missile defenses in Guam and the first island chain to counter China's ballistic and hypersonic threats.
5. Command, Control & Intelligence – Expanding intelligence-sharing and joint operational command structures with allies to improve situational awareness.

### 3. Key Components & Funding

- Funding: The PDI was allocated \$9.1 billion in the FY 2024 U.S. defense budget, an increase from previous years, indicating a strong bipartisan commitment.

- Strategic Locations:
- Guam: A critical hub for U.S. missile defense and naval logistics.
- Australia: Hosting expanded U.S. Marine and Air Force rotations under AUKUS.
- Japan & South Korea: Strengthening air and naval cooperation against Chinese and North Korean threats.
- The Philippines: Recently expanded U.S. military access under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

#### 4. How the PDI Fits into the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

**AUKUS & QUAD Integration:** Aligns with AUKUS (U.S.-UK-Australia pact) and the Quad (U.S.-India-Japan-Australia) to strengthen regional security networks.

**Countering the PLA's Expansion:** Addresses China's military buildup in the South China Sea, ensuring freedom of navigation and rule-based order enforcement.

**Deterring Taiwan Contingency:** Enhances U.S. response capabilities if China attempts military action against Taiwan.

**Regional Capacity Building:** Assists ASEAN and Pacific Island nations with defense partnerships and training.

#### 5. Challenges & Criticism

- **China's Countermeasures:** China has accused the PDI of militarizing the region and increasing tensions.
- **Budget & Congressional Approval:** Some critics argue that PDI lacks sufficient funding to fully deter China.
- **Alliance Management:** Maintaining trust with Pacific partners who may be reluctant to take a hard stance against China.

#### **Summary: Strategic Impact of the PDI**

The Pacific Defense Initiative (PDI) enhances U.S. deterrence capabilities and solidifies its role in regional security architecture. It serves as a counterweight to China's military expansion, while reinforcing alliances with Japan, Australia, India, and ASEAN nations. However, its long-term effectiveness will depend on sustained funding, diplomatic engagement, and military innovation.

#### **29.7. What about the Trans-Pacific Partnership?**

##### **Rationale**

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was a proposed trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim countries, including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States. The strategic rationale for TPP membership included several key objectives:

1. **Economic Growth and Trade Expansion:** The TPP aimed to reduce and eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, thereby increasing market access for goods and services among member countries. This was expected to spur economic growth, create jobs, and enhance competitiveness.
2. **Investment Opportunities:** The agreement sought to create a more predictable and transparent investment environment, encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) among member countries. This would lead to increased capital flows and economic development.
3. **Regulatory Harmonization:** The TPP aimed to establish common standards and regulations in areas such as labor, environmental protection, and intellectual property rights. This would reduce trade frictions and create a level playing field for businesses.
4. **Geopolitical Influence:** By fostering closer economic ties among member countries, the TPP aimed to strengthen geopolitical alliances and enhance regional stability. It was seen as a way to counterbalance the influence of non-member countries, particularly China.
5. **Innovation and Technology Transfer:** The agreement included provisions to promote innovation and the transfer of technology among member countries. This would enhance productivity and support the development of new industries.

## **Reasons Outlined by the US Government for TPP Entry**

The US government outlined several reasons for its participation in the TPP:

1. **Economic Benefits:** The TPP was expected to boost US exports, create jobs, and increase economic growth. The agreement aimed to open up new markets for American goods and services, benefiting various sectors of the economy.
2. **Strategic Rebalancing:** The TPP was a key component of the Obama Administration's "strategic pivot" to the Asia-Pacific region. It was intended to enhance US influence in the region and reaffirm existing alliances.
3. **Rule-Making Leadership:** By participating in the TPP, the US aimed to play a leading role in setting and modernizing the rules of commerce in the Asia-Pacific region. This included addressing gaps in current multilateral trade rules and setting a precedent for future trade agreements.
4. **Soft Power and Diplomacy:** The TPP was seen as a way to expand US soft power and encourage countries to adopt a more US-friendly foreign policy outlook. It was also expected to enhance broader diplomatic and security relations.
5. **Counterbalancing China:** The TPP was viewed as a strategic tool to counterbalance China's



growing economic influence in the Asia-Pacific region. By creating a high-standard trade agreement, the US aimed to set a benchmark for future trade deals and encourage China to adopt similar standards.

These strategic rationales and reasons highlight the multifaceted benefits and objectives of the TPP for its member countries and the US government.. As the US led down the Asians, many of them opted for China-led Regional Comprehensive economic Partnership (RCEP)<sup>100</sup>

## 29.8 Prospects of the US joining TPP

The US aims to enhance economic ties with Asia-Pacific countries through TPP.<sup>101</sup>

Access to large market: TPP would provide preferential access to 11 other countries, fostering trade and investment.

Geopolitical influence: Membership strengthens US leadership in the region.

### Pros:

Market Access: TPP opens doors for American exporters to participate in value chains across fast- growing economies.

Economic Benefits: An estimated global income benefit of \$233bn annually by 2025.

Labour and Environmental Standards: TPP includes enforceable labour and environmental commitments.

Intellectual Property Rights: A robust IP framework promotes innovation while balancing access to medicines and an open Internet<sup>102</sup>.

### Cons:

Domestic opposition: some groups fear job losses due to increased competition. Complex Negotiations: TPP involves intricate negotiations on various fronts.

Political Constraints: Internal Politics impact US negation objective and ratification processes<sup>103</sup>

### Winners

US exporters: Improved access to markets in TPP countries. Consumers: Lower prices due to reduced tariffs.

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<sup>100</sup> <https://researchfdi.com/rcep-asia-free-trade-agreement/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://tradecouncil.org/understanding-the-trans-pacific-partnerships-tpp-agreement/?>

<sup>102</sup> Trans-Pacific Partnership: Summary of US objectives [online]<https://ustr.gov/tpp/Summary-of-US-objectives?>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-transpacific-partnership-can-the-united-states-lead-the-way-in-asia-pacific-integration/?>

Innovators: Strong IP protection.

## Losers

Specific Industries: Sectors facing increased competition. Labour Advocates: Concerns about job displacement<sup>104</sup>.

## Geopolitical gains

Counterbalance China: TPP strengthens US presence in the Indo-Pacific, countering China's influence.

Alliances: Closer ties with TPP partners enhance regional stability<sup>105</sup> and the diversification of their export<sup>106</sup>

## Economic Dividends:

Trade Growth: Increased exports and imports. Investment: Attraction of foreign direct investment.

Innovation: IP protections encourage research and development.

## 29.9 Proposals to Strengthen the TPP if the US Decides to Rejoin

1. Enhance Digital Trade Provisions: Strengthen rules on digital trade to ensure the free flow of data, protect privacy, and promote e-commerce. This will support innovation and competitiveness in the digital economy.
2. Strengthen Labor and Environmental Standards: Enhance labor and environmental standards to ensure fair competition and sustainable development. This will address concerns about labor rights and environmental protection.
3. Expand Market Access: Negotiate further reductions in tariffs and non-tariff barriers to increase market access for goods and services. This will benefit exporters and support economic growth.
4. Promote Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Implement measures to support SMEs, such as providing technical assistance, reducing regulatory complexity, and improving access to financing. This will help SMEs compete in the global market.
5. Enhance Intellectual Property Protection: Strengthen IP protection to promote innovation and support the creative industries. This will encourage investment in research and development.

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<sup>104</sup> <https://ustr.gov/tpp/overview-of-the-TPP?>

<sup>105</sup> Is Japan's entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership good for the Americans?, [online] <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-entry-trans-pacific-partnership-good-americans?>

<sup>106</sup> The Pros and Cons of Mexican Partnership in the Trans-Pacific Partnership [online] <https://www.madeinmexiconc.com/mexican-participation-in-the-trans-pacific-partnership/?>

6. Address State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs): Implement rules to ensure fair competition between SOEs and private companies. This will create a level playing field and promote market efficiency.
7. Promote Transparency and Anti-Corruption Measures: Enhance transparency and anti-corruption measures to improve governance and reduce the risk of corruption. This will build trust and support economic development.

By implementing these proposals, the TPP can be strengthened to provide greater benefits to its members and support the US's strategic and economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Meanwhile, consider asking the Hawaiians to lead on a US-IUCN-PIF Center of Biogeography.

### **30.0 RATIFYING THE RAROTONGA TREATY**

The Treaty of Rarotonga, aka. South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty<sup>107</sup>. It holds significant importance in the region.<sup>108</sup>.

#### **1. Content**

**Geographic scope:** The Treaty spans from Australia's west coast to the Latin American Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) boundary in the east. It extends from the equator to 0 degrees south, meeting the Antarctic Treaty boundary.

**Non-Proliferation Commitments:** States Parties commit not to manufacture, possess, acquire, or control nuclear weapons, reinforcing NPT.

**Nuclear Testing:** States parties pledge to prevent atomic testing within their territories.  
**Environmental Protection:** The treaty emphasises keeping the region free of radioactive matter.

#### **2. Reasoning**

**First-Hand Experience:** The Treaty emerged from the South Pacific's direct exposure to nuclear weapons testing.

**Disarmament and non-Proliferation:** Prohibiting nuclear weapons placement contributes to global disarmament efforts.

**Regional Cooperation:** The Rarotonga Treaty reinforces NPT commitments at the regional level<sup>109</sup>.

#### **3. Portend:**

**Security:** enhances regional security by preventing nuclear weapons deployment.

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<sup>107</sup> <https://www.un.org/nwzf/content/treaty-rarotonga?>

<sup>108</sup> The Rarotonga Treaty [online]<https://www.iaea.org/publications/magazines/bulletin/30-1/rarotonga-treaty-regional-approach-non-proliferation-south-pacific?>

<sup>109</sup> [https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Inf\\_38\\_2020\\_SG-statement-35-years-of-the-Rarotonga-Treaty--key-devleopments-issues-and-opportunites-1.pdf?](https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Inf_38_2020_SG-statement-35-years-of-the-Rarotonga-Treaty--key-devleopments-issues-and-opportunites-1.pdf?)

Environmental safeguards: Protects against radioactive pollution.

Geopolitical Influence: Demonstrates the region's commitment to a nuclear-free zone.

#### **4. Outstanding Issues**

Legacy of Nuclear Testing: Addressing the long-standing effects of nuclear testing remains a priority, i.e. paying compensations to the Marshall Islanders and the atoll inhabitants negatively affected<sup>110</sup>.

Operationalisation: Ensuring effective implementation of treaty provisions.

The Rarotonga Treaty is a testament to regional cooperation and pursuing a nuclear-free world.

#### **5. Prospects for ratification**

The Treaty of Rarotonga, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific, has been ratified by 12 of 15 forum members, including Australia, New Zealand, and other Pacific Island nations.

#### **6. Interest of Key players**

France:

France considers itself a resident in the Indo-Pacific and emphasises its strategic interests in the region.

It aims to shape norms and maintain bilateral relationships.

United States:

The US views the Indo-Pacific as crucial and seeks strong ties with Japan, India, Australia and others.'

Countering China's influence is a priority.

China:

China's interests lie in regional economic expansion and geopolitical influence. It seeks to strengthen partnerships and secure access to resources.

Japan:

Japan collaborates with the US and other partners to maintain regional stability.

It aims to counterbalance China's rise.

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr/fr/article.php?larub=371&titre=essais-nucleaires-en-polynesie-francaise>

India:

India focuses on security, connectivity, and economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. It seeks to enhance its strategic autonomy.

European Union:

While no Pacific Island chapter is yet part of the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, individual EU members like Germany and the Netherlands are shaping their strategies.

The EU's relationship with China complicates a unified approach.

Australia:

Australia emphasises security, economic ties, and regional cooperation. It has ratified the Rarotonga Treaty.

It collaborates with like-minded partners to address common challenges.

Implications of French Nuclear Tests

Between 1966 and 1996, France conducted 193 nuclear tests in the South Pacific, affecting health, environment, and cultural heritage.<sup>111</sup>.

Radioactive pollution harmed human lives and made areas uninhabitable.

The 1996 end of French testing followed global protests and concerns about safety and environmental impact.

The results of the tests also returned sub-optimal.

Rationale for Nuclear testing

**Military Development:** Testing drove the development of more powerful and sophisticated nuclear weapons.

**Political Signaling:** Testing sent signals to adversaries.

**Scientific Research:** Testing contributing to scientific knowledge.

Alternatives to Physical tests

**Computer simulations:** Advanced modelling and simulations can assess weapon performance.

**Laboratory Experiments:** Dedicated laboratories can verify safety and reliability.

**International Collaboration:** A dedicated EU laboratory could enhance reliability.

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<sup>111</sup> The Murora files [online]<https://morura-files-org/en/investigation/morura-files>

In summary, the Treaty of Rarotonga reflects regional security efforts, while nuclear testing's legacy underscores the need for safer alternatives and international and European cooperation<sup>112</sup>. On this basis, I recommend that the EU and the member states accede to, ratify, and comply with the Rarotonga Treaty in time to promote a non-hegemonic world order.<sup>113</sup>

## 31.0. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the strategic analysis of European interests in the Global EU Policy vis-à-vis the Pacific Islands underscores the imperative of embracing a comprehensive and inclusive approach. The EU's reorientation in the Asian region, coupled with the challenges faced by France in New Caledonia, necessitates a nuanced understanding of historical, geopolitical, and economic factors. This analysis illuminates the pivotal role of the Pacific Islands as a bridge to the Asian heartland, emphasizing the interconnectedness of regional dynamics. As the EU navigates its Indo-Pacific strategy, it is paramount to recognize the diverse perspectives and interests of stakeholders, transcending traditional power centers to engage with the margins. By strengthening partnerships, promoting sustainable development, and acknowledging the historical legacies that shape the region, the EU can forge a path towards a more resilient and inclusive Indo-Pacific strategy. The EU positions itself between India and China in the Indian Ocean and China and the US in Oceania, leveraging France's presence, while aligning with the US in the IOR, even as it colludes with China, the US and Indian elites in modernizing the Indian policy and economy. Do you have a strategy?, I was asked. Improvisation notwithstanding, the IOR plays an important role in forging a regional order in a more cooperative Asia, and the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy can only be as substantive as the EU-Indian relationship becomes strategic partnership.

First, the grand strategic idea behind the Maritime Silk Road and India's vision for its Indian Ocean Region (IOR) revolves around shaping regional power, securing vital trade routes, and influencing the economic and security dynamics of the Indo-Pacific.

Maritime Silk Road (China's Initiative):

Economic Connectivity and Trade Expansion:

China's Maritime Silk Road seeks to establish a comprehensive network of ports, shipping lanes, and infrastructure projects that link its interior provinces with the global market. The goal is to boost trade, improve access to energy resources, and integrate regional economies with China's supply chains.

Influence and Strategic Leverage:

By investing in maritime infrastructure across Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and beyond, China aims to project both soft and hard power. The initiative increases its strategic footprint, allowing China to influence the economic policies and security architectures of partner

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<sup>112</sup> Jana von Stein Do Treaties Constrain or Screen? Selection Bias and Treaty Compliance, *The American Political Science Review*, vol99(4), 2005.

<sup>113</sup> Robert L. Brown The Causes and Effects of International Treaties, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.131.vol.3, 2016.



nations, thereby reshaping regional order in its favor.

## Securing Energy and Supply Lines:

The Maritime Silk Road ensures that China can secure its critical energy imports and raw material supplies by stabilizing and controlling key chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean routes.

## India's Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Strategy:

### Securing Maritime Domain and Trade Routes:

India's IOR strategy emphasizes the protection of its maritime periphery and the critical sea lanes that are essential for its trade and energy security. Given that a significant portion of its energy imports passes through the Indian Ocean, ensuring freedom of navigation and regional stability is paramount.

### Regional Leadership and Strategic Autonomy:

India aims to assert itself as the primary security and economic player in its "backyard" by strengthening alliances with littoral states, participating actively in multilateral forums, and countering external influences—primarily China's growing maritime presence.

### Promoting a Rules-Based Order:

India's strategy also centers on upholding international maritime law and advocating for a stable, predictable order in the region, thereby creating an environment that supports sustainable economic growth and security.

## Interconnections and Rivalry

### Common Objective – Securing Trade and Energy Flows:

Both the Maritime Silk Road and India's IOR strategy are fundamentally about ensuring access to and control over key maritime routes. While China focuses on building a network of connectivity and economic interdependence, India prioritizes safeguarding its maritime sovereignty and maintaining a free and open sea.

### Competing Visions:

The Maritime Silk Road represents a model of connectivity that leverages economic investments to gain strategic leverage, effectively creating a Sino-centric regional order. In contrast, India's IOR strategy is designed to balance this influence by bolstering its own military and diplomatic presence, reinforcing alliances, and promoting a rules-based international framework.

In essence, the grand strategic ideas behind these initiatives are about transforming the Indo-Pacific's maritime landscape. China's Maritime Silk Road is intended to build a web of economic and strategic partnerships that enhance its global influence and secure critical supply

lines. Meanwhile, India's IOR strategy is focused on protecting its national interests, ensuring regional stability, and asserting its leadership in a geopolitically contested space. The interplay between these visions is a key driver of contemporary regional dynamics, influencing everything from infrastructure investments and military deployments to diplomatic engagements in the Indo-Pacific.

To ensure that competition does not spill over into conflict, the EU, the US, and ASEAN can adopt a range of diplomatic, institutional, and practical measures. Here's a comprehensive approach:

## Strengthen Multilateral Dialogue:

**Regular High-Level Meetings:** Establish frequent strategic dialogues that include the EU, US, ASEAN, and other key regional players. This can take the form of joint summits, ministerial meetings, or crisis communication hotlines.

**Institutionalized Forums:** Enhance existing platforms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or establish new maritime security dialogues to ensure continuous communication and early warning of escalating tensions.

## Promote a Rules-Based Order:

**International Law and Norms:** Reinforce the importance of international law, including UNCLOS and other relevant treaties, to guide behavior in contested areas.

**Transparent Policies:** Encourage transparency in military deployments and strategic initiatives, reducing the chances of misinterpretation or accidental escalation.

## Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):

**Joint Exercises and Training:** Conduct regular multinational military exercises that not only build interoperability but also foster trust between armed forces.

**Data Sharing & Communication Protocols:** Develop shared intelligence and situational awareness mechanisms to prevent miscalculations—this includes shared monitoring of key maritime choke-points and early-warning systems.

## Economic and Diplomatic Engagement:

**Collaborative Infrastructure Projects:** Use economic interdependence as a stabilizing factor by co-developing infrastructure (e.g., ports, digital connectivity) that benefits all parties.

**Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Establish robust diplomatic channels for dispute resolution, potentially involving third-party mediation under the aegis of international organizations like the UN or regional bodies.

## Arms Control and Military Transparency:

**Limitations on Military Buildup:** Encourage confidence-enhancing measures such as limiting

certain types of military deployments in sensitive areas.

**Verification and Monitoring:** Use satellite technology and independent observers to verify military movements, ensuring that one party's buildup does not trigger an arms race.

**Engage Civil Society and Academic Institutions:**

**Track Regional Developments:** Support academic research and policy forums that examine regional security dynamics, providing independent assessments and recommendations.

**Public Diplomacy:** Foster people-to-people exchanges and public diplomacy initiatives to build mutual understanding and reduce public support for conflict escalation.

By combining these measures, the EU, the US, and ASEAN can create a framework where healthy competition is managed through dialogue, transparency, and mutual trust. This approach not only mitigates the risk of conflict but also reinforces a stable, rules-based regional order that benefits all stakeholders. The piece serves as a call to action, urging policymakers to embrace a holistic approach that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the Indo-Pacific region and charts a course towards a more interconnected and prosperous future. Navigating the currents of Asian geopolitics demands that the EU stand equidistant from the formidable giants of China and India, such has been the premise of the Indo-Pacific Strategy so far, much like a ship setting its sails to move forward.

By forging robust trade ties and nurturing balanced economic alliances, the EU can transform rivalry into a catalyst for shared prosperity. Our diplomacy must serve as a steadfast compass, guiding us as we weave together diverse interests into a coherent and stable regional order. How can we achieve true stability if we allow the gravitational pull of one power to tip the delicate scales of our independence? With unwavering resolve and visionary leadership, we will craft an Asia defined by equitable partnerships, dynamic trade, and a harmonious balancer of power.

Second, The EU must navigate the deep sea minerals debate in the International Seabed Authority (ISA) like a seasoned captain steering through uncharted waters"balancing economic opportunity, environmental responsibility, and geopolitical strategy. If it rushes ahead like a gold prospector blinded by riches, it risks plundering fragile ecosystems that sustain oceanic life and, ultimately, the planet. Instead, the EU should champion a precaution-first doctrine, ensuring that extraction does not suffocate the oceans oxygen-producing mechanisms, the very lungs of the Earth. While China and other powers stake their claims aggressively, the EU must not drift aimlessly but anchor its position in science-based regulation and fair resource governance. Industrial competition for rare minerals crucial to the green transition must not become a reckless race to the bottom; instead, the EU should forge strategic partnerships that prioritize sustainability over short-term profit. By investing in alternative technologies, such as battery recycling and material efficiency, the EU can reduce dependency on deep-sea mining before it becomes an irreversible gamble. If Europe fails to act decisively, it risks being merely a spectator in a maritime theater dominated by others. The EU's stance at the ISA must reflect its broader identity: a union that does not just extract from nature, but protects, innovates, and leads by example.

Third, the EU is vested in strengthening its Overseas Territories policies and introducing a chapter on the Pacific Islands into its fledging Indo-Pacific Strategy. The EU's commitment to enhancing its Overseas Territories policies reflects its broader aim of fostering sustainable development and resilience in these region. This strategic inclusion underscores the EU's dedication to promoting stability and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that the Pacific Islands are integral partners in this evolving geopolitical landscape. Pacific Island nations generally view their inclusion in the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy positively, as it acknowledges their strategic importance and the unique challenges they face. This inclusion is seen as an opportunity for enhanced cooperation on critical issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and maritime security. By being part of this strategy, Pacific Island nations hope to gain greater support and visibility on the global stage, which can lead to more effective solutions and partnerships. However, they also emphasize the need for genuine, equitable partnerships that respect their sovereignty and local contexts.

Fourth, the UNDRIP applies to the Pacific<sup>114</sup>, and there are billions of dollars in unpaid funds reserved for Indigenous People in the UN system. The line-up in Noumea is serious and led by a Kanaky independentiste. These UNDRIP packages revolves around education, poverty, employment, health, and housing and are legally binding on the all states that have ratified the UNDRIP. It is imperative that a universal application of UNDRIP takes hold overthere, and that a partnership is forged between PIF and UN in ensuring correct implementation of its provisions.

Fifth, a global policy needs to address the needs and concerns of ab ovo three lead partners in each part of the Pacific. In Melanesia, this could be New Caledonia; in Poly-nesia, Easter Island, and Micronesia, likely Samoa. This will only work if the EU under-stands the conflicts and cleavages in these societies and treats the islanders as equal partners instead of engaging in system export and imposing their interests. It's essential to focus on enhancing the direct relationships and cooperation between the EU and indivi-dual Pacific Island nations to strengthen the bilateral leg of the EU's Pacific partnership agreements. Here are some strategies to achieve this:

**Tailored Bilateral Agreements:** Develop tailored bilateral agreements with individual Pacific Island nations to address specific needs and priorities. These agreements should encompass areas such as trade, investment, sustainable development, and cultural exchange, tailored to the unique requirements of each nation.

**Capacity Building:** Prioritize capacity building initiatives to enhance the administrative, institutional, and technical capabilities of Pacific Island nations. This can involve support for governance, public administration, education, and vocational training programs to empower local communities and institutions.

**Cultural and Educational Exchange:** Foster cultural and educational exchange programs to promote mutual understanding and collaboration. This can include initiatives such as student exchange programs, cultural events, and language training to strengthen people-to- people ties.

**Sustainable Development Projects:** Collaborate on sustainable development projects that align

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<sup>114</sup> [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/factsheet\\_Pacific\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/factsheet_Pacific_FINAL.pdf)

with the EU's development goals and the specific needs of Pacific Island nations. This can involve investments in renewable energy, infrastructure, climate resilience, and environmental conservation efforts.

**Regular Dialogues and Partnerships:** Establish regular political dialogues and strategic partnerships with Pacific Island nations to align priorities and address shared challenges. This can include high-level meetings, joint working groups, and forums to facilitate ongoing collaboration.

**Trade and Investment Promotion:** Promote trade and investment opportunities between the EU and Pacific Island nations, facilitating economic growth and diversification. This can involve trade missions, investment forums, and initiatives to streamline trade barriers and regulations.

By focusing on these strategies, the EU can strengthen the bilateral leg of its Pacific partnership agreements, fostering deeper and more meaningful relationships with individual Pacific Island nations while addressing their specific needs and priorities.

Sixth, the European Union (EU) can strengthen its partnership with the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) through several key strategies:

**Climate Action and Environmental Protection:** The EU can continue to support climate resilience and environmental sustainability in the Pacific region. This includes funding projects that promote the blue economy, enhance water resilience, and support climate-adaptive infrastructure.

**Economic Cooperation and Trade:** Strengthening trade relations through initiatives like the Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT) project can boost intra-regional and international trade. This project aims to enhance the capacity of Pacific countries to meet their trade obligations and improve their trade-related institutions.

**Development Aid and Technical Assistance:** Financial support and technical assistance for various sectors, such as energy, water, and sanitation, can help build sustainable infrastructure. For example, the EU has recently launched technical assistance programs in Tonga and disbursed funds to support climate-resilient development in Vanuatu and Samoa.

**Political and Strategic Engagement:** Regular political dialogues and strategic partnerships, such as those under the Samoa Agreement, can help align the EU's and Pacific countries' priorities. This agreement fosters collaboration on shared interests like advancing climate action and upholding the rules-based international order.

**Investment in Sustainable Development:** The EU's Global Gateway strategy aims to deliver quality and sustainable investments in the Pacific region. Region's overall sustainable development.

By focusing on these areas, the EU can build a stronger, more resilient partnership with the Pacific Island Forum, benefiting both regions.

Seventh, The EU's role as a force for equilibrium extends to the Pacific Ocean, necessitating

constructive engagement with China. The EU's historical context, including the desire to avoid conflicts like the Dien Bien Phu, underscores the importance of diplomatic channels and peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the Kingdom of Denmark's vested interest in preventing the spread of rebellion aligns with the EU's commitment to regional stability. Additionally, Australia and New Zealand, as demanders, present opportunities for the EU to leverage its special trading and investment interests, fostering mutually beneficial relationships. Ultimately, the EU acknowledges the significance of the United States in the Pacific region and seeks to complement its efforts to ensure a balanced and cooperative approach. The EU's recalibration of its Indo-Pacific Strategy to a global approach towards the Pacific Islands involves a commitment to the Pacific Islands Forum as the umbrella organisation among the islanders and would necessitate closer cooperation with several of its strategic partners.

Eight, The EU is keen on strengthening ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in a multilateral setting. This involves fostering deeper engagement with ASEAN member states to promote regional stability, economic cooperation, and shared prosperity. Myanmar is a turn-key in South East Asia, struggling with the same challenges since its independence: Lack of territorial control, dysfunctional state institutions apposite to its challenges and armed ethnic militias. Bringing order into Myanmar would stabilise India's North-East and comfort Cambodia, squeezed between Vietnam and Thailand. This could then work in favor of the stabilization of the South East Asian regional sub-system, one of the world's fastest growing markets, followed by a strengthening of Asean and application of internal market rules in the area. This could contribute to the success of the EU's multi-bilateral policy-mix in Asia, and prepare the ground for a softening of the Sino-Indean border dispute, once New Delhi feels comfortable enough in the saddle to do so.

Ninth, as the European External Action Service (EEAS) transitions the remit of its Asia-Pacific directorate to a global Asia directorate, the Indo-Pacific Strategy transcends its role as a mere tool to elicit US support in Europe. Instead, it becomes an integral component of the overall EU Asia policy. This evolution signifies a departure from Cold War-era paradigms dictated by US interests, emphasizing the EU's autonomy and proactive engagement in shaping a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to Asia. The EU's commitment to a global Asia directorate underscores its determination to navigate the complexities of the region and contribute to a more balanced and inclusive international order.

Tenth, trade with Indonesia, the host country of ASEAN, is a poor joke. The EU-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) aims to boost trade volumes between the two regions significantly.

Realistic targets include:

**Doubling Trade Volume:** The EU aims to double its trade volume with Indonesia within the next decade. This would involve increasing bilateral trade from the current €29.7 billion to around €60 billion.

**Sectoral Growth:** Key sectors expected to benefit include machinery, chemicals, and agricultural products, which are major components of EU exports to Indonesia.

**Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**



The FTA is also expected to enhance FDI flows between the EU and Indonesia:

**Increased FDI Inflows:** The EU aims to increase its FDI inflows into Indonesia by 50% over the next five years. This would involve boosting investments in sectors such as renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and manufacturing.

**Investment Facilitation:** The agreement includes provisions to simplify investment procedures and protect investors, making it easier for EU companies to invest in Indonesia<sup>2</sup>.

## Expected Benefits

**Economic Growth:** Enhanced trade and investment are expected to contribute significantly to economic growth in both regions, creating jobs and fostering innovation.

**Sustainable Development:** The focus on sustainable and digital trade aligns with the EU's broader goals of promoting green and inclusive growth.

These targets are ambitious but achievable, given the strong economic fundamentals and mutual interests of both regions.

In summary, the European Union must act as a regulatory and economic counterweight to the United States and China in Oceania by (1) leveraging Trade and FDI through strengthening EPAs with the Pacific nations, promoting EU standards in green tech, labor rights and digital governance (2) support sustainable mining cooperation by pushing for ISA-led oversight on deep sea-mining, ensuring resource extraction in Oceania adheres to environmental safeguards (3) Expand the Global Gateway Initiative by offering an alternative to China's BRI through sustainable infrastructure financing in the Pacific (4) Maritime Security cooperation: Work with France (New Polynesia and Tahiti) and regional partners to bolster maritime surveillance and anti-IUU (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated) fishing resources. (5) Engage IPOI-IORA, ASEAN and PIF on capacity-building and the application of trade promotion such as internal market rules on the assumption of similarity of interests to be further probed.

On this basis, the United States and the EU could also resume dialogue on China and its relationship with the US-led international order<sup>115</sup> on how to proceed by giving China a stake in international organisations.

China has several outstanding issues with the US-led international order, including:

**Economic Policies:** China criticizes the US for what it sees as unfair trade practices and economic policies that favor American interests. This includes tariffs, export controls, and sanctions that target Chinese companies.

**Technological Competition:** The US has implemented measures to restrict China's access to advanced technologies, particularly in areas like semiconductors and artificial intelligence. China views these actions as attempts to stifle its technological advancement.

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<sup>115</sup> <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-consultations-between-european-external-action-service-secretary-general-sannino-and-united-states-under-secretary-nuland/>



**Geopolitical Influence:** China is expanding its influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which the US views as a challenge to its own geopolitical dominance. This has led to tensions in regions like Southeast Asia and Africa

**Human Rights and Governance:** The US frequently criticizes China over human rights issues and its governance model. China, in turn, accuses the US of using these issues to interfere in its domestic affairs.

**Military Presence:** The US maintains a significant military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, which China perceives as a threat to its security and regional ambitions.

## Leveraging the EU's Global Asia Policy

The EU can leverage its global Asia policy within the US-EU-China working party to address these issues and engage with Beijing effectively:

**Promoting Multilateralism:** The EU can advocate for a multilateral approach to global governance, emphasizing the importance of international institutions like the WTO to mediate trade disputes and ensure fair competition.

**Balancing Relations:** By maintaining a balanced approach, the EU can act as a mediator between the US and China, promoting dialogue and cooperation on shared global challenges such as climate change and public health.

**Sustainable Development:** The EU's emphasis on sustainable development can align with China's green initiatives, creating opportunities for collaboration in areas like renewable energy and environmental protection.

**Digital and Technological Cooperation:** The EU can foster cooperation in digital trade and technology standards, ensuring that these areas are governed by transparent and fair rules.

**Investment and Trade Agreements:** Strengthening investment and trade agreements with China, while ensuring they include provisions on fair competition and sustainability, can help balance economic relations and address some of the systemic issues.

By leveraging these strategies, the EU can play a crucial role in shaping a more balanced and cooperative international order.

More research is needed on

The foreign policies of the Oceania nations: Could Routledge's Sydney office make an update on Steve Hoadley's Handbook?

The causes of conflicts at various levels in the Indo-Pacific zone of interest

The trade and investment needs in IOR & Oceania

Power transitions theory's exigencies on all actors such as the US, China, Japan, India and Australia and PIF.

## Perspective

The future of regional organizations is likely to be shaped by several key trends:

**Increased Interconnectedness:** As globalization continues, regional organizations will play a crucial role in managing transnational issues such as trade, security, and environmental protection

**Diverse Forms and Functions:** Regional organizations will vary widely in their structure and objectives, from highly institutionalized entities like the European Union to more flexible arrangements.

**Legal and Political Challenges:** These organizations will face significant legal and political challenges, including the need to balance national sovereignty with regional integration.

### Evolution of the Notion of Regions

The concept of regions has evolved significantly over time:

**Historical Context:** Regionalism has deep historical roots, with movement's traceable back to the 19th century. The post-Cold War era has seen a resurgence in regional integration efforts.

**Changing Definitions:** The definition of regions has expanded beyond geographical boundaries to include economic, cultural, and political dimensions.

**Dynamic Interactions:** Regions are increasingly seen as dynamic entities that interact with global processes, challenging traditional notions of state sovereignty.

### Insights from Aaron Klieman

Aaron Klieman's work emphasizes the strategic importance of regions in global politics. He argues that regions are not just passive recipients of global trends but active players that shape international relations. This perspective highlights the need for regional organizations to adapt to changing geopolitical landscapes and to play a proactive role in addressing global challenges.

### Integration with New Caledonia Strategy

Incorporating these perspectives into the strategy for New Caledonia:

**Regional Cooperation:** Strengthening ties with regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) can enhance New Caledonia's ability to address transnational issues and benefit from regional integration.

**Adaptive Governance:** Adopting flexible governance structures that can respond to both local and regional needs will be crucial.

**Proactive Engagement:** New Caledonia should actively engage in regional dialogues to ensure its interests are represented and to contribute to the broader regional stability.

By understanding the evolving nature of regions and the future role of regional organizations, New Caledonia can better navigate its path towards sustainable development and indigenous rights protection.

New Caledonia can actively engage with other Pacific Island nations through several strategic actions:

## Strengthening Regional Cooperation

**Join Regional Organizations:** Actively participate in organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). These platforms facilitate dialogue and cooperation on regional issues.

**Collaborative Projects:** Initiate and participate in joint projects focusing on common challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, and disaster preparedness.

## Cultural and Educational Exchanges

**Student and Academic Exchanges:** Promote educational exchanges to foster mutual understanding and share knowledge.

**Cultural Programs:** Organize cultural festivals and exchange programs to celebrate and preserve the diverse cultures of the Pacific Islands.

## Economic Partnerships

**Trade Agreements:** Negotiate trade agreements to enhance economic ties and promote regional trade.

**Tourism Initiatives:** Collaborate on tourism initiatives to boost the regional economy and promote sustainable tourism practices.

## Environmental Cooperation

**Climate Action:** Work together on climate action plans and environmental conservation projects. The Pacific Islands face similar environmental challenges, making collaboration essential.

**Marine Conservation:** Partner on marine conservation efforts to protect the rich biodiversity of the Pacific Ocean.

## Political and Diplomatic Engagement

**Regular Summits and Meetings:** Participate in regular summits and meetings to discuss regional issues and develop collective strategies.

**Bilateral Agreements:** Establish bilateral agreements with neighboring nations to address specific concerns and enhance cooperation.

## Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

**Training Programs:** Offer and participate in training programs to build capacity in areas such as governance, healthcare, and disaster management.

**Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance and share best practices in various sectors.

## Benefits of Active Engagement

**Enhanced Regional Stability:** Strengthening ties with other Pacific Island nations can contribute to regional stability and security.

**Shared Resources and Knowledge:** Collaborative efforts allow for the sharing of resources and knowledge, leading to more effective solutions to common challenges.

**Stronger Voice in International Forums:** A united Pacific region can have a stronger voice in international forums, advocating for the interests of small island nations.

By actively engaging with other Pacific Island nations, New Caledonia can foster a sense of regional solidarity, address shared challenges more effectively, and contribute to the overall development and stability of the Pacific region.

New Caledonia can initiate several joint projects with other Pacific Island nations to foster regional cooperation and address common challenges. Here are some specific ideas:

## Sustainable Agriculture and Trade

**SAFE Pacific Project:** Collaborate on the “Safe Agricultural Trade Facilitation through Economic Integration in the Pacific” (SAFE Pacific) project, which aims to enhance trade capacities and improve economic growth through sustainable agricultural practices.

## Climate Change and Environmental Protection

**Marine Conservation Initiatives:** Partner with neighboring countries to protect marine biodiversity. This could include deploying recycled buoys from drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) to combat marine pollution.

**Climate Action Plans:** Develop joint climate action plans to address the impacts of climate change, focusing on mitigation and adaptation strategies.

## Healthcare and Pandemic Preparedness

**Health Infrastructure Projects:** Work with organizations like UNOPS to rehabilitate health centers and improve healthcare services across the region.

**Pandemic Response:** Collaborate on procuring medical supplies and equipment to enhance the delivery of healthcare services and improve pandemic preparedness.

## Education and Capacity Building

**Regional Training Programs:** Establish training programs for government officials and community leaders on topics such as governance, disaster management, and sustainable development.

**Student Exchange Programs:** Promote educational exchanges to foster mutual understanding and share knowledge among students from different Pacific Island nations.

## Economic Development

**Tourism Initiatives:** Develop regional tourism initiatives that promote sustainable tourism practices and boost the local economies.

**Trade Agreements:** Negotiate trade agreements to enhance economic ties and promote regional trade.

## Disaster Risk Reduction

**Early Warning Systems:** Implement regional early warning systems for natural disasters such as cyclones, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

**Disaster Preparedness Training:** Conduct joint training exercises to improve disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

## Benefits of Joint Projects

**Shared Resources and Expertise:** Pooling resources and expertise can lead to more effective solutions to common challenges.

**Enhanced Regional Stability:** Collaborative projects can strengthen regional ties and contribute to overall stability.

**Sustainable Development:** Joint efforts can promote sustainable development and improve the quality of life for all Pacific Islanders.

By initiating these joint projects, New Caledonia can play a pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation and addressing shared challenges in the Pacific region.

The EU needs to start treating its approach to Asia like a museum exhibit—admire from a distance, but keep those hands in your pocket. Engaging with Asia should be like enjoying sushi—appreciate the artistry and savor the flavors, but remember, it’s all about delicate handling and not overindulging!

## **APPENDIX 1**– Towards an EU Asia Strategy

Transforming the EEAS’s Asia-Pacific Directorate into an Asia Directorate is a significant step. Here’s a detailed outline to guide this transformation:

### Current Elements of the EU’s Asia-Pacific Policy

The EU’s Asia-Pacific policy focuses on several key areas:

**Political and Social Stability:** Promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

**Economic Growth:** Enhancing trade and investment ties, particularly through the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy.

**Security and Defense:** Building the EU as a security actor in the region.

**Sustainable Development:** Addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development goals.

### Necessary Reforms

#### Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA) and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA)

**India and Korea:** Strengthen SPAs and EPAs to enhance economic cooperation and strategic alignment<sup>116</sup>.

**ASEAN and ASEM:** Deepen engagement with ASEAN and ASEM to foster regional integration and cooperation.

#### Relationship with Australia and New Zealand

**Economic Integration:** Enhance the Closer Economic Relations agreement to further integrate economies.

**Security Cooperation:** Strengthen defense and security ties, building on the ANZUS Treaty and other bilateral agreements.

### Reformed Indo-Pacific Strategy

**Pacific Island Chapter:** Develop specific initiatives to address the unique challenges and opportunities in the Pacific Islands, including climate change and sustainable development.

**Regional Order:** Focus on maintaining stability in the South China Sea, Western Pacific, and Indian Ocean. This includes supporting India’s modernization and fostering better relations between India, Pakistan, and China.

### Additional Points for Strengthening Governance

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<sup>116</sup> [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4610456](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4610456)



## China-EU Global Partnership

**Trade and Investment:** Enhance economic ties while addressing trade imbalances and ensuring fair competition.

**Climate Change:** Collaborate on global climate initiatives, leveraging China's role in renewable energy.

**Technology and Innovation:** Promote joint research and development projects, particularly in green technologies and digital innovation.

**Multilateral Cooperation:** Work together in international forums to uphold a rules-based international order<sup>117</sup>.

This comprehensive approach will ensure that the transformation of the Asia-Pacific Directorate into an Asia Directorate strengthens governance and enhances the EU's strategic presence in the region.

Engaging with China on security issues is a complex but crucial aspect of the EU's foreign policy. Here are some strategies the EU can consider:

### Bilateral Dialogues

**High-Level Meetings:** Regular high-level dialogues between EU and Chinese officials can help address security concerns and build mutual trust.

**Strategic Dialogues:** Establishing strategic dialogues focused specifically on security issues, such as cyber security, maritime security, and counter-terrorism.

### Multilateral Engagement

**United Nations:** Collaborate within the framework of the United Nations to address global security challenges.

**ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF):** Engage China through the ARF to promote regional security and stability in Asia.

### Confidence-Building Measures

**Military-to-Military Exchanges:** Promote exchanges between EU and Chinese military personnel to build understanding and reduce the risk of conflicts.

**Joint Exercises:** Conduct joint military exercises focused on non-traditional security threats like disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

### Non-Traditional Security Cooperation

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<sup>117</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/asia\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/asia_en)

**Cyber Security:** Work together to combat cyber threats and enhance cyber resilience.

**Counter-Terrorism:** Share intelligence and best practices to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

## Economic Security

**Supply Chain Security:** Collaborate on securing global supply chains, particularly for critical technologies and resources.

**Trade Security:** Ensure that trade policies and practices do not undermine each other's security interests.

## Regional Stability

**South China Sea:** Engage China in dialogues to ensure freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea.

**Western Pacific:** Definition and policing of MPA, and Scientific collaboration with ISA in mapping and implementing precautionary principle.

**Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** Work with China to ensure that the BRI projects promote regional stability and do not exacerbate security tensions.

## Human Rights and Rule of Law

**Human Rights Dialogues:** Continue to engage China on human rights issues, emphasizing the importance of the rule of law and international norms.

**Legal Cooperation:** Promote cooperation in areas like anti-corruption and judicial reform.

By adopting a multifaceted approach, the EU can engage China on security issues in a way that promotes mutual interests and contributes to global stability.

China's view of the EU's security engagement is multifaceted and influenced by various strategic considerations:

## Second-Order Concern

China often perceives the EU as a "second-order concern" in its strategic narratives, particularly when compared to its primary focus on the United States and regional neighbors. This means that while the EU is recognized, it is not seen as a primary security actor in Asia. It is necessary to manage the crisis of expectations.

## Economic and Security Cooperation

China acknowledges the importance of economic ties with the EU and sees security cooperation as a way to enhance these ties. There is a shared commitment to uphold

international peace, including stability in regions like the Middle East and Ukraine<sup>118</sup>.

## Regional Security Issues

China and the EU have engaged in dialogues on regional security issues, such as Central Asia and Afghanistan, the South China Sea and Taiwan, North Korea and Myanmar, Cuba and Argentina, Sudan and Congo. The EU has expressed concerns about increasing tensions in these areas, while China emphasizes the importance of dialogue and cooperation to maintain regional stability.

## Global Security Initiatives

China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) aims to promote an alternative security governance architecture globally<sup>119</sup>. This initiative includes proposals for dialogue, multilateral cooperation, and support for developing countries. China views the EU's engagement in these areas as an opportunity to build a coalition of friendly countries and shape a post-Western security order.

## Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

China's BRI also plays a role in its security strategy. The EU's involvement in BRI-related projects is seen as a way to enhance economic cooperation while addressing security concerns related to infrastructure and supply chains.

Overall, China views the EU's security engagement as an important but secondary aspect of its broader strategic interests. The focus remains on economic cooperation, regional stability, and building a global security framework that aligns with China's long-term goals.

Above all, it would be conducive to overall cooperation to adopt a strategy on how to get the Cai ratified by The European Parliament:

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. It involves careful planning and direction to reach specific goals, whether in military operations, business, politics, or other fields.

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<sup>118</sup> <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-12-07/Engagement-is-the-right-way-for-China-EU-relationship-1plcYXAKIFy/index.html>

<sup>119</sup> [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief\\_5\\_China%27s%20Global%20Security%20Initiative.pdf?trk=public\\_post\\_comment-text](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief_5_China%27s%20Global%20Security%20Initiative.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text)

## APPENDIX 2 - Strategy to Get the EU-China CAI Ratified

The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) has faced significant hurdles, particularly due to political tensions and human rights concerns. Here's a proposed strategy to navigate these challenges and work towards ratification:

### Address Human Rights Concerns

**Dialogue and Engagement:** Initiate high-level dialogues with China to address human rights issues, particularly those related to Xinjiang. Emphasize the importance of lifting counter-sanctions imposed on EU officials.

**Independent Monitoring:** Propose the establishment of an independent monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with human rights standards.

### Strengthen Economic Ties

**Market Access:** Highlight the benefits of improved market access for both EU and Chinese investors. Emphasize sectors where China has made commitments, such as manufacturing and services.

**Reciprocity and Fair Competition:** Ensure that the agreement includes provisions for fair competition, transparency of subsidies, and rules against forced technology transfer<sup>120</sup>.

### Engage Key Stakeholders

**European Parliament:** Work closely with the European Parliament to address their concerns and secure their support. Provide detailed briefings and updates on the progress of negotiations and human rights dialogues<sup>121</sup>.

**Member States:** Engage with EU Member States to build a consensus on the importance of the CAI for the EU's strategic interests.

### Public Communication Campaign

**Inform and Educate:** Launch a public communication campaign to inform EU citizens and businesses about the benefits of the CAI. Highlight how the agreement can enhance economic growth and job creation.

**Transparency:** Ensure transparency in the negotiation process to build public trust and support.

### Leverage Multilateral Platforms

**International Forums:** Utilize platforms like the United Nations and the World Trade

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<sup>120</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china/eu-china-agreement\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china/eu-china-agreement_en)

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-balanced-and-progressive-trade-policy-to-harness-globalisation/file-eu-china-investment-agreement>

Organization to advocate for the CAI and address any global concerns related to the agreement.

ASEM and ASEAN: Engage with regional organizations to build broader support for the CAI and demonstrate its alignment with regional stability and development goals.

## Sustainable Development and Climate Cooperation

Green Investments: Emphasize the CAI's provisions on sustainable development and climate commitments. Promote joint initiatives on renewable energy and environmental protection.

Labor Standards: Ensure that the agreement includes commitments to uphold core labor standards and promote responsible investment practices.

By addressing these key niggling issues, the EU can work towards overcoming the current impasse and move forward with the ratification of the CAI.

## APPENDIX 3 - The Boe Declaration

Boe Declaration on Regional Security Forum Leaders:

Recognising and reaffirming our endorsement of the Biketawa Declaration in the year 2000

and recalling the principles underpinning the Biketawa Declaration, such as commitment to good governance, belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, upholding democratic processes and institutions and recognising the vulnerability of member countries to threats to their security;

Recalling our vision and values for the Pacific under the Framework for the Pacific.

Regionalism, as a region of ‘peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead-free, healthy and productive lives’;

Recognising our endorsement of the ‘Blue Pacific’ identity to drive collective action in support of our vision under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism;

Recalling our agreement at the 48th Forum Leaders’ Meeting in Apia, Samoa, to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other Forum-related security declarations and agreements as the foundation for strategic future regional responses;

Recognising the importance we placed on an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change, including through regional cooperation and support;

Respecting the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of Forum Members; and Recognise the need to strengthen regional security cooperation and collective action by asserting our will and the voices of our Pacific peoples.

AT THIS MOMENT DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

(i) We reaffirm that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific and our commitment to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement;

(ii) We recognise an increasingly complex regional security environment driven by multifaceted security challenges and a dynamic geopolitical environment leading to an increasingly crowded and complex region;

(iii) We affirm our stewardship of the Blue Pacific and aspire to strengthen and enhance our capacity to pursue our collective security interests, given our responsibility to sustain our Pacific peoples and our resources;

(iv) We respect and assert the sovereign right of every Member to conduct its national affairs free of external interference and coercion;

(v) We reaffirm the right of Members to individually and collectively address security issues and concerns;

(vi) We reaffirm the importance of the rules-based international order founded on the UN Charter, adherence to relevant international law and resolution of international disputes by peaceful means;

(vii) We affirm an expanded concept of security which addresses the wide range of security issues in the region, both traditional and non-traditional, with an increasing emphasis on:

Human Security, including humanitarian assistance, to protect the rights, health and prosperity of Pacific people;

Environmental and resource security;

Transnational crime; and,

Cybersecurity, to maximise protections and opportunities for Pacific infrastructure and people in the digital age.

(viii) We recognise that national security impacts regional security, and therefore commit to strengthening our respective national security

approaches by:

developing our national security strategies; and,

strengthening national security capacity, including through training.

(ix) We commit to strengthening the existing regional security architecture inclusive of regional law enforcement secretariats and regional organisations to:

account for the expanded concept of security;

identify and address emerging security challenges;

improve coordination among existing security mechanisms;

facilitate open dialogue and strengthened information sharing;

further develop early warning mechanisms;

support implementation;

promote regional security analysis, assessment and advice; and,

Engage and cooperate, where appropriate, with international organisations, partners and other relevant stakeholders.



10. We commit to continuing regular, leader-level discussions on the expanded concept of security as part of securing our Blue Pacific.

Nauru, September 2018

## APPENDIX 4 – EU Arms Trade

### The Rising Military Budgets in Asia and the Role of EU Arms Exports

Asia's military budgets have surged in recent years, driven by geopolitical tensions, territorial disputes, strategic rivalries, and military modernization efforts. Key players such as China, India, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN nations have significantly increased defense spending, reflecting concerns over regional security, power projection, and deterrence strategies<sup>122</sup>. Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar all have armies bigger than any of the EU members<sup>123</sup>. Only three states in Oceania have their own armies. The evolving Indo-Pacific security landscape—including the rise of China's military, North Korean threats, and maritime disputes in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean—has fueled arms races and defense realignments across the region.

For the European Union (EU), the expansion of military budgets in Asia presents both challenges and opportunities. While the EU promotes rules-based security and stability, it also seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships and expand its defense industry footprint in the Indo-Pacific. This requires a careful balance between foreign policy objectives and arms export policies, particularly as the EU increases its engagement in security cooperation, capacity-building, and defense trade within the region.

### Aligning EU Arms Exports with Foreign Policy Objectives in Asia

For EU arms exports to remain politically viable and strategically effective, alignment with EU foreign policy objectives and regulatory frameworks is essential. The Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) oversees arms exports within the broader framework of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). When engaging in defense trade with Indo-Pacific partners, the EU must adhere to the following rules:

**Strategic Compatibility** – Arms exports should reinforce EU security partnerships in Asia while avoiding destabilizing effects in conflict-prone regions.

**Compliance with EU Common Position 2008/944/CFSP** – This legally binding framework ensures that exports respect human rights, regional stability, and international obligations.

**Non-Escalatory Engagement** – The EU should prioritize sales of defensive and non-offensive weaponry, particularly in maritime security, cybersecurity, and surveillance to support regional deterrence rather than arms races.

122 <https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/31402/military-asian-arms-race>

123 <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/military-expansion-among-asean-members>

**Strengthening Capacity, Not Dependence** – Arms deals should be structured to build local defense capabilities while preventing over-reliance on European suppliers.

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/31402/military-asian-arms-race>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/military-expansion-among-asean-members>

Balancing Relations with Key Powers – The EU must navigate its relations with India, ASEAN, Japan, and Australia while avoiding actions that could alienate China or escalate tensions.

## The Business Case for Expanding EU Arms Trade in the Indo-Pacific

From an economic standpoint, defense exports represent a growing opportunity for European defense industries amid shifting global security architectures. The Indo-Pacific is emerging as a key market for European defense manufacturers, given the region's rising military procurement demands. The business case for increased EU arms exports in Asia is built on:

**Diversifying Markets Beyond Europe** – With EU countries increasing their own defense spending, European defense firms can expand sales outside traditional NATO markets.

**Demand for High-Tech Defense Systems** – Asian nations seek advanced weaponry, including air defense, cyber warfare, unmanned systems, and naval assets, which European firms excel at producing.

**Strengthening EU's Strategic Leverage** – Expanding defense cooperation through arms trade strengthens EU diplomatic and strategic influence in Indo-Pacific security affairs.

**Competitive Edge Over US and Russian Suppliers** – EU companies can offer technologically advanced, politically stable, and ethically governed defense solutions compared to US dominance and Russian arms reliability issues.

**Synergies with Security Assistance Programs** – Arms exports complement EU-backed security programs in Asia, including maritime domain awareness, counterterrorism, and crisis management initiatives.

As Asia's defense expenditures rise, the EU must carefully align arms trade with its foreign policy objectives while seizing economic opportunities. By ensuring responsible arms exports, reinforcing strategic partnerships, and promoting regional stability, the EU can enhance its role as a credible security provider in the Indo-Pacific while maintaining a pragmatic, ethical, and commercially viable defense trade strategy.

## Strengthening Papua New Guinea's Army with EU and Korean Arms

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a small and underfunded military, the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), which requires modernization to address border security, maritime defense, disaster response, and internal stability. The EU and South Korea could play complementary roles in strengthening PNGDF by providing arms, training, and infrastructure.

### Current Challenges in PNG's Defense Capabilities

**Limited Funding & Equipment:** The PNGDF lacks modern weapons, naval assets, and air support.

**Border Security Issues:** PNG shares a border with Indonesia (West Papua), where security tensions exist.

**Maritime Threats:** Illegal fishing, piracy, and smuggling in PNG’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) require better naval patrols.

**Disaster Response:** PNG is prone to earthquakes, tsunamis, and climate change impacts, requiring a dual-use military force.

## Area of Strengthening, EU Contribution,-South Korea Contribution

Area of Strengthening	Eu contribution	South Korea Contribution
Small Arms & Light Weapons	Supply of non-lethal equipment and light arms for internal security	Small arms, mortars and ammunition production assistance.
Naval Capability	Support for coast guard development, maritime patrols, and maritime security initiatives.	Provision of small naval patrol boats, anti-piracy technology and ship-building support
Air Surveillance & Transport	Funding for research & rescue aircraft, drone technology, and satellite monitoring	Provision of light aircraft for border security and troop transport.
Cyber security & communications	Joint Eu-PNG cyber training programs and secure military communications	Modern command and control systems, encryption, and military grade communication networks.
Disaster response & engineering	Eu Humanitarian aid and dual use equipment ( medical, logistics and transport)	Military engineers and construction support for roads, bases, and logistics hubs.
Training & Doctrine Development	Eu-NATO Training assistance for peacekeeping, logistics and maritime security.	Military-to-Military exchanges and PNG officers trained in South Korea.
Defense Industry cooperation	Encouraging European defence firms (Airbus, MDB, Thales) to engage in PNG.	Investment in local maintenance and repair facilities for military vehicles and aircraft.

## Strategic Impact for PNG

**Improved Border Security:** Enhancing PNG’s ability to monitor the West Papua border and prevent transnational crime.

**Maritime Sovereignty:** Upgrading PNG’s naval presence in the Pacific to protect its EEZ from illegal fishing and foreign incursions.

**Regional Stability & Disaster Response:** Making PNGDF a key player in Pacific security and humanitarian assistance efforts.

**Balancing Foreign Influence:** Reducing dependence on China and Australia for security aid, diversifying partnerships with EU and Korea.

## Implementation Steps

Strategic Partnership Agreements – PNG signs agreements with EU and South Korea on military assistance.

Equipment Transfer & Procurement – Select cost-effective, sustainable arms and infrastructure projects.

Training & Capacity Building – PNGDF officers and personnel train with EU and Korean forces.

Joint Exercises & Maritime Security Missions – Conduct joint patrols, cyber drills, and peace-keeping training.

Sustainability Planning – Ensure PNG can maintain and repair new equipment locally

Strengthening PNGDF with EU and Korean military support would enhance security, disaster resilience, and regional stability. A balanced approach focusing on light arms, naval patrols, air surveillance, and disaster response would make PNG a stronger regional security actor without provoking regional tensions.

## Strengthening the New Zealand Army Through EU Arms Trade

### New Zealand

New Zealand's defense modernization efforts could benefit from closer defense cooperation with the EU. Given New Zealand's limited defense budget and traditionally non-aggressive defense posture, an arms trade partnership with the EU would focus on capability enhancement, interoperability, and technological modernization rather than large-scale militarization.

### Key Areas for Strengthening the NZ Army with EU Arms Trade

#### Advanced Infantry Equipment and Small Arms

The NZ Army relies on modern but aging small arms. The EU could provide:

German Heckler & Koch rifles (HK416, HK433)

Belgian FN SCAR rifles (used by NATO forces)

French Nexter grenade launchers for infantry support

These would enhance Special Forces and conventional units' combat effectiveness while ensuring NATO interoperability.

#### Armored Vehicles and Mobility Enhancements

New Zealand's armored fleet is limited, and acquiring EU-manufactured light armored vehicles (LAVs) would provide:

French VBCI or Jaguar armored reconnaissance vehicles

German Boxer 8x8 or Puma IFVs for enhanced mobility and protection

Swedish BvS10 all-terrain vehicles for operations in rugged terrain

These would bolster New Zealand's peacekeeping and expeditionary capabilities in the Pacific.

**Air Defense and Surveillance Capabilities**

Given rising concerns over air and maritime security, the EU could provide:

Short-range air defense systems (IRIS-T SLM from Germany, Mistral MANPADS from France)

Surveillance drones (Thales Watchkeeper, European MALE UAVs) for border security and disaster response

Ground-based radar systems for improved early warning and coastal defense

These would strengthen New Zealand's ability to monitor and defend its EEZ.

**Maritime Security and Coastal Defense**

As a maritime nation, New Zealand would benefit from:

Fast patrol boats or offshore patrol vessels from European shipbuilders (Damen, Navantia, Fincantieri)

Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities—e.g., lightweight torpedoes and sonar systems

EU naval cooperation on maritime domain awareness and surveillance

These assets would enhance security in the South Pacific, counter illegal fishing, and support regional humanitarian missions.

**Cyber Defense and Digital Warfare**

As cyber threats increase, the EU could support New Zealand's cybersecurity defense efforts through:

Cyber defense technology transfer from EU firms

Collaboration with the EU Cyber Security Agency (ENISA) and NATO CCDCOE

AI and electronic warfare capabilities for defense applications Policy and Strategic Benefits of EU-New Zealand Arms Cooperation

**Strengthening Defense Ties with Europe**

Expanding arms trade with the EU aligns with New Zealand's closer defense ties with NATO and the EU's Indo-Pacific engagement.

A formalized EU-NZ defense procurement agreement could facilitate joint training, interoperability, and future cooperation.

## Supporting Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific

Strengthening the NZ Army's capabilities enhances its role in regional security frameworks, including:

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) security initiatives

Australia-New Zealand-US (ANZUS) cooperation

Maritime patrols and disaster relief operations in the Pacific

## Diversifying Defense Suppliers

New Zealand primarily procures from the US, UK, and Australia—engaging with the EU reduces dependency on a single supplier.

EU weapons systems are high-quality, cost-effective, and politically less restrictive than US alternatives.

## Summary

New Zealand's military modernization could benefit from targeted arms trade with the EU, focusing on infantry weapons, armored vehicles, maritime security, air defense, and cybersecurity. This partnership would not only enhance New Zealand's defense capabilities but also strengthen EU-NZ strategic ties, reinforcing security and stability in the Pacific.

## Strengthening Taiwan's Army Through EU Arms Trade

Given Taiwan's geopolitical situation and military modernization needs, arms trade with the EU could enhance its defense capabilities, ensuring deterrence against potential threats while reinforcing its asymmetric warfare strategy.

## Key Areas for Strengthening Taiwan's Army Through EU Arms Trade

### Air Defense and Anti-Drone Systems

Taiwan faces significant aerial threats, including ballistic missiles, drones, and fighter jets. The EU could supply:

IRIS-T SLM (Germany) or Mistral MANPADS (France) for short-range air defense

SAMP/T (France-Italy) medium-range air defense system



Anti-drone technology (electronic jamming systems from Thales or Rheinmetall)

Coastal Defense and Anti-Ship Missiles

Given Taiwan's need for coastal defense, the EU could supply:

Naval Strike Missile (Norway)—mobile, land-based anti-ship missile

RBS-15 (Sweden) or Exocet (France) missiles for coastal batteries

European underwater mines and sea denial systems

Armored Vehicles and Land Warfare Systems

Taiwan's ground forces need modernized armored mobility to resist amphibious invasions. The EU could provide:

German Leopard 2A7 tanks (complementing Taiwan's M1A2 Abrams)

French Jaguar and Griffon armored vehicles for urban and asymmetric warfare

EuroSpike ATGM (Germany-Israel) anti-tank missiles

Cybersecurity and Electronic Warfare

Taiwan faces continuous cyber threats from China. EU cooperation could include:

Cyber defense systems from the EU Cyber Security Agency (ENISA)

Electronic warfare jamming systems from Germany or France

AI-driven intelligence solutions for battlefield awareness

Maritime Security and Submarine Warfare

Taiwan's naval defense is critical for controlling sea lanes. EU contributions could include:

Naval radar and electronic warfare systems from Thales (France) and Hensoldt (Germany)

Lightweight torpedoes (MU90, DM2A4) for submarine and surface warfare

Patrol boats from European shipbuilders (Damen, Fincantieri) for coastal security

Strategic and Political Benefits of EU-Taiwan Defense Cooperation

Diversifying Taiwan's Defense Procurement

Taiwan mainly relies on the US for arms, but an EU partnership reduces dependence and increases flexibility in arms sourcing.

## Enhancing Taiwan's Asymmetric Warfare Capabilities

EU weapons systems align with Taiwan's defense-first strategy, particularly in air defense, coastal defense, and cybersecurity.

## Strengthening EU-Taiwan Strategic Ties

While the EU does not officially recognize Taiwan, expanded arms cooperation would reinforce economic and security relations.

EU arms trade with Taiwan should focus on defensive systems like air defense, coastal defense, armored mobility, and cyber warfare. This strengthens deterrence while minimizing diplomatic friction with China. The EU's role in Taiwan's defense would not only enhance regional stability but also reinforce Taiwan's ability to resist potential threats effectively.

## Summary

From the vintage point of Oceania's security sub-systems, the EU's arms trade and strategic partnerships should align with its broader goals of promoting stability, adhering to international law, and fostering sustainable development. In summary, the considerations and potential benefits of engaging with Papua New Guinea (PNG), New Zealand, and Taiwan:

## Whom Should the EU Trade Arms With?

The EU's arms trade policy is governed by its Common Position on Arms Export Controls, which emphasizes:

**Human Rights:** Ensuring arms are not used for internal repression or violations of international law.

**Regional Stability:** Preventing arms from exacerbating conflicts or destabilizing regions.

**Transparency:** Promoting responsible arms trade practices.

Based on these principles, the EU could prioritize arms trade with:

**New Zealand:** A stable democracy with a strong commitment to peacekeeping and regional security.

**Taiwan** A key player in the Indo-Pacific, facing security challenges from regional tensions.

**Papua New Guinea (PNG):** A developing nation with growing security needs, particularly in maritime defense and law enforcement.

## How Arming PNG, New Zealand, and Taiwan Could Serve Overall Interests

From the "margin" perspective—focusing on peripheral or underrepresented areas—arming these nations could enhance the security architecture of the Oceania sub-system while aligning with EU values.

## Papua New Guinea (PNG)

**Maritime Security:** PNG's vast maritime territory is vulnerable to illegal fishing, smuggling, and other transnational crimes. EU support in maritime patrol capabilities could strengthen regional law enforcement.

**Countering External Influence:** By bolstering PNG's defense capabilities, the EU could help counterbalance external powers seeking to establish a foothold in the Pacific.

**Development and Stability:** Arms trade could be paired with capacity-building programs to ensure sustainable and responsible use of military equipment.

**Signalling to Jakarta and Beijing:** the former needs to respect the human rights of the Papuans and Keep-up momentum on our preferred multi-bilateral policy-mix in south East Asia. We will also appeal to the better self of China in ensuring effective and competent governance prevails on this troubled Island with ethnic affinities in oecania matches China's economy unsatiable resource economy.

**Memento to Canberra:** The aboriginals of Australia are a Papuan-Indonesian mix. If you remember what Australia once were and are today, and by evening out in the region,, Perhaps it could become easier for Australia to Strengthen and diversifying its foreign relations, while serving the communities it traded with.

While minus and minus is plus across the East sea between Japan and Korea, bringing in Korea maintains the perspective of a more cooperative Asia, while balancing the EU's dialogue with China on the situation on the Korean peninsula, central to China's sense of security, even as PIF get organized.

## New Zealand

**Peacekeeping Leadership:** New Zealand has a strong track record in peacekeeping missions. EU arms support could enhance its ability to contribute to regional and global stability.

**Regional Cooperation:** Strengthening New Zealand's defense capabilities would reinforce its role as a stabilizing force in Oceania and a key partner in multilateral security initiatives.

## Taiwan

**-Deterrence Against Aggression:** Providing defensive arms to Taiwan could help deter potential aggression, contributing to stability in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

**Technological Collaboration:** Taiwan's advanced technology sector could facilitate joint development of defense systems, benefiting both the EU and Taiwan.

**Symbolic Support for Democracy:** Arming Taiwan aligns with the US-EU's commitment to supporting democratic nations under threat.

## Strategic Benefits for the EU

**Strengthening Alliances:** Arms trade with these nations would deepen strategic partnerships and enhance the EU's influence in the Indo-Pacific.

**Promoting Stability:** By addressing security gaps in Oceania, the EU can contribute to a more stable and cooperative regional order.

**Economic Opportunities:** Defense trade could open avenues for economic collaboration, including technology transfer and joint ventures.

## Challenges and Considerations

**Geopolitical Sensitivities:** Arms trade with Taiwan could provoke tensions with China, requiring careful diplomatic navigation.

**Sustainability:** Ensuring that arms transfers are accompanied by training and maintenance support to prevent misuse or dependency.

**Transparency and Accountability:** Maintaining strict adherence to the EU's arms export criteria to uphold its reputation as a responsible global actor.

By strategically engaging with PNG, New Zealand, and Taiwan, the EU can play a pivotal role in enhancing the security and stability of the Oceania region, while advancing its own geopolitical and economic interests.

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## **Statement on AI**

I have deployed AI Bing, Chat GPT, Sharly AI and Grammerly to write this piece. AI has an outrageous analytical power and allows for probable projections of what the dynamic is in the knowledge society, leading to knowledge maps based on digital methods retrieving online stored information and turning it into knowledge maps based on human prompts. This provides for a personalized context and for solution-oriented innovative policy recommendations that should not be mistaken for the installation of an executive-monad relationship for the tactical purpose of cutting slack in the camp of the enemy, in your own ranks or for organizational capture. AI will steal your secrets, play people out against each other before moving for the kill.

Following several revisions, I read the piece anew. I take full responsibility for its contents.