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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ERA OF GREAT TRANSFORMATION AND MOUNTING SECURITY CHALLENGES

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TRANSFORMATION AND MOUNTING
SECURITY CHALLENGES**

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Executive Summary: Focusing on the Indo-Pacific, this paper explores the role and potential of the European Union in the unfolding great power conflict between the United States and China against the background of the war in Ukraine which is tantamount to an attack on the present international system built on the principles of the United Nations. The great transformation is analysed from the point of view of the main players, China, the USA and its prime allies in the region, Japan, and South Korea. Multilateralism and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality are presented as a means to maintain a regional order. Among the hotspots in the region, the Korean Peninsula and North Korea, which has turned into de-facto nuclear power, stick out. The transformative agenda of China and Russia, the role of the Global South and its would-be leader India is presented, which leads to the question whether globalisation has come to an end, whether a new system is in the making and whether this transformative process offers the European Union the chance to shape a new order which is guided by ‘cooperative autonomy’ based on strategic responsibility, terms which describe more accurately the new needs than ‘strategic autonomy’. Resilience of states, supply and production lines are the products of the geo-economics, which necessitates new tool kits and new rules of engagement. New technologies reinforce these trends as different raw materials are needed. Security policy means providing their supply and to ensure that old dependencies in terms of materials and suppliers are maintained but shifted to new products like rare earth and other suppliers.

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Overview

In 2023, the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) memorialize 60 years of diplomatic relations. In 2022 the EU and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held the first summit¹ to celebrate 45 years of the dialogue partnership and upgraded it to a strategic one – the eleventh for the EU and the fifth in Asia, in addition to China, Japan, South Korea, India. Although often forgotten, the creation of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996 with ASEAN, was an early step in recognition of ‘ASEAN centrality’ – even before this term has become popular. ASEM also added the missing link, Europe-Asia, in the triangle Europe-America-Asia, formed by the Transatlantic cooperation and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), respectively.

In the aftermath of the 2016 EU Global Strategy, the EU-Asia Pacific relationship was strengthened, on the bilateral and regional level. Bilaterally, the relationship with China came to a turning point in 2019 when the important economic partner was characterised by the tryptic “partner, competitor, systemic rival”. The relationship with Japan was elevated with the simultaneous conclusion of the Strategic and Economic Partnerships following on the comprehensive strategic partnership with the Republic of Korea. The latter is still the only country with which the EU has concluded a political, a crisis management (security) and a free trade agreement.

The 2016 Global Strategy recognised that security between Europe and Asia is intertwined – well before the accentuation of the Sino-USA conflict and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Consequently, the project of ‘Enhancing security cooperation in and

¹ Joint Leaders’ Statement, 14 December 2022; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/60846/eu-asean-leaders-statement.pdf>

with Asia² was started. In the series of relevant EU policy papers,³ the Connectivity Strategy was next, followed by the Indo-Pacific Strategy and its operational arm, the Global Gateway. Its important security dimension was confirmed by the Strategic Compass, the EU's first fully fledged security strategy. This adds up to a comprehensive Indo-Pacific policy framework, which now needs the most important element, its implementation.

In parallel and reflecting the intention of the EU to turn into a global player, the long-standing trade and economic relationships have to be completed by a robust political and security dimension. This must include hard security in view of the return of geopolitics and geoeconomics.

Nevertheless, the economic dimension remains the fundament of EU power and influence. This is crucial to master the trade and technological tensions and conflicts, to re-organise energy supply as well as production and value chains to become more resilient. In addition, these measures are necessary to meet the challenges posed by the emerging technologies and the weaponisation of many of the hitherto independent policies. A strengthened posture is necessary for the EU to become a global player and to translate this into influence, given the fact that the EU is the major trade and investment partner for practically all countries in the Indo-Pacific.

These facts are not always appreciated as the EU is often taken for granted as a partner, who is not resorting to pressuring partners into agreements or updates of existing ones. (The rapid revision by 2018 of the 2007 USA-Korea free trade agreements (FTA) is

² Council of the European Union (2018). "Enhanced EU Security Cooperation in and with Asia – Council conclusions". 28 May 2018; at [st09265-re01-en18.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/external-affairs/sites/default/files/2018/05/st09265-re01-en18.pdf) (europa.eu) Based on this policy paper is the ESIWA project jointly run by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and Expertise France; at <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/87412.html>

³ See Annex I for reference and links.

a pertinent example of diplomacy by pressure).⁴ To correct this perception and to pursue EU interests more vigorously and effectively, the European Commission devised in 2021 a new approach to its trade policy, the "Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy", based on a wide survey of interested parties. At the heart of the strategy is "a tougher, more assertive approach towards the implementation and enforcement of its trade agreements, fighting unfair trade and addressing sustainability concerns. The EU is stepping up its efforts to ensure that its agreements deliver the negotiated benefits for its workers, farmers, and citizens."⁵ This approach was also designed to facilitate actions by the EU to counter Chinese statecraft measures.

The proposed **European Economic Security Strategy**,⁶ once accepted by Member States and the European Parliament, follows the same logic, and aims at reducing hazards posed by economic linkages in the current geopolitical and technological environment which impact on security. At the intersection with security, risks relating to the resilience of supply chains, including energy security, to physical and cyber security of critical infrastructure; to technology security and technology leakage and risks of weaponisation of economic dependencies or economic coercion, shall be met. The strategy is not country-specific and non-discriminatory. This will require prudent management in order not to complicate relationships with like-minded partners and those having contractual relationships with the EU and should not lead to protectionism or isolationism.

⁴ Simon Lester, Inu Manak, Kyoungwha Kim (2019). "Trump's First Trade Deal: The Slightly Revised Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement". *CATO Institute, Free Trade Bulletin, No 73, 13 June 2019, 6 pp.*; at <https://www.cato.org/free-trade-bulletin/trumps-first-trade-deal-slightly-revised-korea-us-free-trade-agreement>

⁵ European Commission (2021). "Commission sets course for an open, sustainable and assertive EU trade policy", *Press Release, 18 February 2021*; at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_644

⁶ European Economic Security Strategy (2023). *Joint Communication, European Commission, 20 June 2023*; at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0020>

Hotly debated is whether ‘friend-shoring’ or rather to what degree technology should be controlled: excluding others from the present state of art of technology, or limit access to ‘friends’ through restrictions on investment or export control. Disadvantages for research and development, possible substitution effect including loss of market share and economic costs in general must be measured against the gains in security. The European Commission in line with its proposed Economic Security Strategy passed the ‘Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU’s economic security for further risk assessment with Member States’⁷ covering four sensitive areas: Advanced Semiconductors technologies, Artificial Intelligence technologies, Quantum technologies, Biotechnologies.

Interdependence matters, in terms of economics and politics. This message was driven home by the COVID-19 pandemic which interrupted production chains and raised awareness for the need to secure essential products already in times of peace to be prepared for crisis.

Facing the Sino-USA power competition and the Sino-Russian cooperation to build a new international order,⁸ the EU will have to leverage its strength through vigorous policies, based on an in-depth analysis of its economic and security interests. This endeavour is often referred to in an often-misleading manner⁹ as searching for or establishing “strategic autonomy”.

Concluding political and economic and trade agreements serves this purpose. The restart of trade negotiations with India, the intensification of the talks with Australia (ongoing since 2018) and striving for progress with Indonesia and Malaysia are part of this

⁷ https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/C_2023_6689_1_EN_ACT_part1_v8.pdf

⁸ Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development. 4 February 2022; at <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>

⁹ The misleading characterisation was reconfirmed in the aftermath of the visit of President Macron to China in April 2023.

policy. Thailand, although not back to full democracy, will profit from the geopolitical situation and talks are expected to resume soon; similarly with the Philippines, where talks are simmering since 2015. An EU-ASEAN agreement providing an overarching regional framework is envisaged as part of the recently concluded strategic partnership.

Nevertheless, the absence of the EU from the large regional trade agreements, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), risks to put the EU in a disadvantageous position in standard setting, which is an essential feature of these regional agreements.¹⁰ China uses its participation in the RCEP to this end and intends to join the CPTPP too. The UK joined to demonstrate that there is trade policy post-Brexit.¹¹ In contrast, the EU pursues a bilateral approach and has concluded trade agreements with Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore and New Zealand.¹²

The Economist devotes the main theme of its 23 September 2023 edition to Asians investing in their neighbourhood, concluding that “Asia’s economies are coming closer together”¹³ in terms of intra-regional trade, investment, financial flows and development aid. The Asia version of ‘de-risking’ from China is more investment within ASEAN, Vietnam outstanding, and India. Japan and South Korea offer, in contrast to China, development on concessional terms. Accordingly, they are popular and have become trusted partners, old rich economies investing in young poorer ones. However, there are no plans for de-investment. Therefore,

¹⁰ Michael Reiterer (2022). “Regional trade agreements in the IndoPacific: does the EU risk losing sight of their importance?”. *CSDS Policy Brief*, 1/2022, 28 January 2022; at https://brussels-school.be/sites/default/files/CSDS%20Policy%20brief_2201.pdf

¹¹ Nikkei Asia (2023). “U.K. formally joins CPTPP to little fanfare and low expectations”. 16 July 2023; at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade/U.K.-formally-joins-CPTPP-to-little-fanfare-and-low-expectations>

¹² This website offers an overview of free trade agreements concluded or under negotiation. European Commission. Negotiations and agreements; at https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en (accessed 27 February 2023).

¹³ The Economist (2023). A new era of Asian commerce. 23 September 2023; pp. 60-61.

two parallel supply chains, with and without China, might be necessary, which would lead to additional investment, including infrastructure.

Concluding economic and trade agreements is no longer an economic or trade matter only, but an important geoeconomic measure and policy tool to pursue national interests including security.

A positive example is the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, concluded between the EU and ASEAN. While negotiations on an interregional trade agreement between the EU and ASEAN were ridden with difficulties in the past, this is the first of its kind in international relations. This lays proof that inter-regional agreements are possible to reach, also in highly technical matters like aviation. As an open skies' agreement, it "replaces more than 140 bilateral air services agreements, thereby providing a single set of rules and reducing red tape. EU Members States without any bilateral agreements with ASEAN States are now also covered by a modern legal framework. All EU airlines will be able to operate direct flights from any airport in the EU to all airports in ASEAN States, and vice versa for ASEAN airlines. This will help EU and ASEAN airlines to compete with competitors targeting the lucrative EU-ASEAN market."¹⁴

Thus, contrary to an erroneous perception, the EU is neither a newcomer to Asia nor has it neglected the region because of a too narrow European perspective.¹⁵ However, it must constantly improve its engagement and demonstrate that it is a global player who is able to handle several crises at the same time.

¹⁴ European Commission (2022). "Aviation: Landmark EU–ASEAN agreement to connect 1.1 billion people", *Press Release*, 17 October 2022; at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6126

¹⁵ Please refer to the Annex I to this article.

The Great Transformation

Russia's war of aggression is not only an attack on Ukraine but also on the post-WWII order, its principles, rules and institutions, most importantly on the United Nations (UN) and its Charter. The Sino-Russian Declaration of February 2022 was another confirmation that the two powers strive for transformation of the present order, with 'Chinese' and 'Russian' characteristics.

This also impacts the economic system, which is already strained by the Sino-USA rivalry and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a post-globalisation mood, re-shoring, friend-shoring, resilience, strategic autonomy, economic sovereignty, and nationalism have become the new household names. This contrasts with the former notions of multilateralism, liberal international order, interdependence, and cooperation.

While history tells us that world orders are not to stay forever but change, we are presently in the difficult transition period: the old order and the underpinning balance of power is weakening, while the contours of a new order are not clear yet; the unexpected shock caused by the return of a war of conquest was too strong. There is a need for a vision to devise and implement the necessary changes to the system, otherwise the ghosts of the past will resurface and haunt the present: the rise of nationalism and of the far right, the promotion of chauvinism and unilateralism.

Dangerously divided societies and confrontational politics, in the domestic and international realm are the consequence. Radicalisation, arms race, sliding of democracy and a corresponding tilt towards autocratic leaders are treacherous trends which need leadership to counter them. However, leadership is unfortunately in short supply.

The divide between the Global South and North became visible in the reaction to Russia's aggression: while a large majority

expressed displeasure in the United Nations General Assembly for using force, only a minority participates in sanction regimes. The historic anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic rhetoric by the Soviet Union, continued by Russia, combined with arms sales still buys favour with those who regard themselves as or are losers in today's system.

While the ideologically charged political and military bi-polarity of the Cold War is missing today, there are other divisions, like the democracy-autocracy divide fostered by President Biden. The states which attempt to hedge their position in the Sino-USA competition form a heterogeneous group and use platforms, like middle-power cooperation, reminiscent of the Non-aligned movement. Their common interest is to be able to pursue their interests without turning into followers of either great power, although mostly having clear preferences. Members of this grouping, below the level of great powers and not necessarily part of the Global South, is a group ready to cooperate in some areas; the EU could take up this challenge and provide leadership making use of its cooperative and multilateral approach to foreign and security policy.

The USA-China rivalry

As the realisation of the “responsible stakeholder concept” (China joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001) e.g., economic, and political liberalisation in tandem, did not materialise as unrealistically hoped for by many, competition has become the main driving force, gradually enlarging in scope from economic to political competition and then turning into systemic rivalry. This bears the risk that competition spirals into confrontation.

A further change adds to this danger: the hitherto unequal competition between China and the USA is turning into more of a peer competition. Accordingly, and despite the Russian aggression in Europe, the USA considers China its most important strategic competitor, and aims to “compete vigorously” while managing this “competition responsibly”¹⁶ in pursuing the following three-fold approach:

- 1) *“To invest in the foundations of our strength at home – our competitiveness, our innovation, our resilience, our democracy,*
- 2) *To align our efforts with our network of allies and partners, acting with common purpose and in common cause, and*
- 3) *Compete responsibly with the PRC [People’s Republic of China] to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. The first two elements – invest and align – are described in the previous section and are essential to outcompeting the PRC in the technological, economic, political, military, intelligence, and global governance domains.”*¹⁷

¹⁶ USA National Security Strategy (2022). p. 25; at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

Responsible management of this competition is crucial and needs broad discussion with partners and allies to avoid decision making in a closed eco-system/echo-chambers of similar and reinforcing views. Here the EU has to stand its ground in the USA-EU Dialogue on China as well as in the related USA-EU High-Level Consultations on the Indo-Pacific.

As competition with China is regarded to be “most pronounced in the Indo-Pacific”,¹⁸ Taiwan takes centre-stage, followed by territorial conflicts in the South and East China Sea as well as mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Africa and South America have also become part of this globalising competition.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

China as a transformative power for a new order

There is clear evidence that China strives for an alternative global order in words and deeds. A few examples to illustrate this argument through deeds, e.g., institution and organisation building: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Silk Road Fund, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the New Development Bank as part of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa partnership) process. In terms of words, the contestation of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which China has voluntarily ratified, the Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development (February 2022) and statements under the auspices of BRICS and SCO. These concepts and policies are underpinned by the upgrading of military forces, in particular the building of a powerful blue navy with a regional and global reach. Limiting the influence and presence of the USA within the 1st island chain is an important strategic goal for China, which it regards as ‘disruptive’.

China's endeavours translate into political concepts like the ‘Chinese Dream’ whose flowery language sometimes seem to sooth competitors but are implemented by concrete plans and roadmaps: BRI as the overarching long-term one, while ‘Made in China 2025’ is a concrete plan for short term action.

President Xi's foreign policy ideas and initiatives (BRI, the Global Development Initiative, The Global Security Initiative, The Global Civilisation Initiative) were somehow condensed and summarized

in the 2023 ‘Proposal of the People’s Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance’¹⁹ – the program is in the name.

At the 2023 Munich Security Conference, China announced an initiative for peace in Ukraine as part of a charm offensive to rebuild their international reputation without criticising Russia for breaking international law and the UN Charter which China wants to uphold. This initiative as well as fostering a rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran are efforts to regain some global leadership lost in the seclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic, not least in view of leading the Global South. However, the peace initiative will not reach the goal to divide the EU and the USA; it will not materialise as it lacks essential proposals for a ceasefire or peace.

At the same time, China can demonstrate the shift in the power relationship with Russia: China has clearly become number one, not only in terms of economy but also in political leadership.

The above-mentioned BRICS meeting, dominated by China and strongly supported by Russia – like the SCO – has recently been activated (BRICS summit in South Africa, August 2023) as a vehicle for change. While enlargement by Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina, covers various continents and regions, with the goal to rival the G7 or even G20, the diversity of the grouping is further accentuated, and common interests further diluted as the difficulty to agree on enlargement demonstrated. The ‘Johannesburg II Declaration – BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism’

¹⁹ Proposal of the People’s Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance, 13 September 2023; at https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202309/t20230913_11142010.html

is a program for change, ranging from the UN Security Council (UNSC) to WTO and a fairer representation of emerging countries in international institutions.²⁰

While there are quite a few valid requests to consider by the international community, the Russian President, barred from attending in person since an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for genocide, would have forced the host to arrest him, signing up to “We express concern about the use of unilateral coercive measures, which are incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the UN and produce negative effects notably in the developing world” damages credibility of BRICS and will make it difficult to position BRICS+ as an alternative to either G7 or G20; not to mention the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which in contrast to BRICS is a well-established international organisation with defined tasks. The goal of de-dollarisation of the world economy to reduce the USA’s influence, the creation of another international transaction currency is easier said than done. Discussed in the run up to the Johannesburg summit, the proposal did not make it to the summit table. The issues will, however, remain on the agenda and agreements to use national currencies in bilateral trade are steps in this direction.

²⁰ Johannesburg II Declaration (2023). BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism, 24 August 2023; at https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1901504/

USA pivot or containment?

The USA pivot policy to Asia is to counter China. The first pivot by President Obama had more of an economic focus with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as its linchpin. This cooperative path was ended by President Trump, his rejection of the TPP and his focus on military matters, including arms sales. As part of his trade policy Trump took trade-war-like measures which produced negative regional and global effects. Japan rescued TPP as CPTPP. The Biden Administration will not re-join while China, Taiwan, South Korea are interested to do so. The UK was the first to join after the entry into force.

The USA also supported Japan in reactivating the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), with the potential of enlarging it to Quad Plus. In setting up AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, and United States of America partnership), the USA and Australia risked the relationship with France and indirectly with the EU. At the 2022 Madrid Summit, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) dealt for the first time with China in the context of security risks in the Indo-Pacific landscape. In pursuing its Indo-Pacific Strategy the USA nurtures the Indo-Pacific Economic Forum and promotes the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. In terms of hard power, organising joint military manoeuvres, not only with Japan and South Korea but also in a larger spectrum, such as Talisman Sabre 21,²¹ adds clout.

The 2023 NATO Vilnius Summit confirmed the importance of the Indo-Pacific “given that developments in that region can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. We welcome the contribution of our partners in the Asia-Pacific region – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea – to security in the Euro-Atlantic, including their commitment to supporting Ukraine. We

²¹ Exercise Talisman Sabre is the largest bilateral training activity between Australia and USA militaries.

will further strengthen our dialogue and cooperation to tackle our shared security challenges, including on cyber defence, technology, and hybrid, underpinned by our shared commitment to upholding international law and the rules-based international order.”²²

Concerning China, the statement provides context: “The People’s Republic of China’s stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security, and values. We remain open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency, with a view to safeguarding the Alliance’s security interests.”²³

Luis Simón, Daniel Fiott and Octavian Manea advocate more engagement in the region, ranging from liaison offices and officers in the Indo-Pacific (AP4: Asia-Pacific partners: Australia, Japan, South Korea), upgrading the NATO-AP4 consultations to a ‘NATO-AP4 Council’, leading “to strengthening the presence of AP4 countries in NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), Allies Command Transformation (ACT), Defence Planning Process (NDPP) or new innovation mechanisms such as the NATO Innovation Fund or DIANA [Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic]”²⁴.

However, there are also critical voices in the region and Europe: Lynn Kuok raises the important issue of acceptability and knowledge about NATO and its goals in the region. Beyond the AP4, “there are others in the Indo-Pacific, including in Southeast Asia, who are at best agnostic and at worst hostile toward NATO. More must be done to reassure these countries that NATO will not be a destabilising force in their backyards. The alliance is not well

²² NATO (2023). Vilnius Summit Communiqué. 11 July 2023; at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Luis Simón; Daniel Fiott; Octavian Manea (2023). “Two Fronts, One Goal: Euro-Atlantic Security in the Indo-Pacific Age”. *The Marathon Initiative, August 2023*, 23 pp.; at <https://themarathoninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Two-Fronts-One-Goal-website-publication-v.2.pdf>

understood in the region, with most commentary focusing on its military dimension”.²⁵ She warns, that this opens the door for China to spin its narrative. NATO needs to clearly communicate its strategy in an out-of-area region. In Europe, Ulv Hanssen and Linus Hagström doubt that a military role by NATO in East Asia would enhance European security; they regard such a move as changing the status quo NATO accuses China of changing.²⁶

Although the bilateral relationship is at an all-time low, the USA and China make efforts to keep lines of communication open, but there are only incremental signs of progress. Domestic policies play an important role: President Biden cannot afford to appear weak before a divided Congress and continues the policy lines of his predecessor Trump. President Xi is weakened by his erratic COVID-19 politics which showed the limits of suppression, as well as growing economic woes. The enemy abroad to be blamed for threatening stability and endangering the necessary domestic economic growth is helpful. Nevertheless, diplomacy continues, with some high-level meetings (USA’s Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, National Security Advisor Jack Sullivan and State Councillor Wang Yi in Malta) in the first half of 2023. A summit Xi-Biden in the margins of the APEC meeting in San Francisco in fall 2023 is possible and could contribute to a warming of relations as both leaders would need to bring home a success.

The Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol steers a more USA-friendly course compared to his predecessor, recognising the need for USA protection to meet the dual challenges of China and North Korea. While China will continue to restrain South Korea and force it to hedge its position to meet the expectations of its number one trading partner, China, and number one security provider, the

²⁵ Lynn Kuok (2023). “NATO Is on the Back Foot in the Indo-Pacific”. *Foreign Policy*. 10 August 2023; at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/08/10/nato-indo-pacific-china-australia-japan>

²⁶ Ulv Hanssen; Linus Hagström (2023). “The errors of NATO’s East Asia engagement”. *East Asia Forum*, 25 August 2023; at <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/08/25/the-errors-of-natos-east-asia-engagement>

USA, another trilateral summit (China, Japan, South Korea) could be triggered by the Camp David meeting as well as a bilateral Sino-Korean summit.

The rekindled proliferation debate, whether nuclear weapons of Korean production or those stationed by the USA on Korean and – by extension – Japanese territories, adds a conflict prone element to the discussion. At the same time North Korea, having missed the opportunity to mend fences with a more cooperative Moon-Administration,²⁷ must seek closer ties with the only remaining ‘friends’, China, and Russia. Providing the latter with weapons only deepens the rift with the international community while at the same time shedding light on the difficult military situation Putin has provoked by his ill-planned and ill-executed illegal war.

In the face of these deepening tensions on the Korean Peninsula and heightened tensions around the Taiwan Straits, a cautious rapprochement between South Korea and Japan is another side effect of the war in Ukraine which is not in the interest of Russia and its tacit supporter China. Trilateral security talks between the USA-South Korea and Japan are another negative secondary effect of the crisis seen through Chinese and Russian eyes. North Korean missiles tests provoked the first port call in decades by a nuclear capable USA Navy ballistic missile submarine in Busan, an event honoured by a presidential visit, severely criticised by the North.²⁸

In activating its alliance policy, in military and economic terms, the USA executes another pivot to the region. Its containment effects, ranging from collateral to intended, like in the field of high-tech and high-end semiconductors, fuel tensions.

²⁷ Moon Jae-in, South Korean President from 2017 to 2022.

²⁸ CNN (2023). “Nuclear capable USA submarine makes first port call in South Korea in four decades”. 18 July 2023; at <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/18/asia/us-navy-ballistic-missile-submarine-south-korea-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>

The European approach, as laid out in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, favours cooperation over containment or establishing the primacy of a specific player, a difference with the USA approach which wants to remain the major dominating power. Whatever the rhetoric, Giulio Pugliese sums up the ambitions of various players neatly: “denying China the possibility of building a regional sphere of influence as well as offering [others] alternatives to a potential Chinese hegemony.”²⁹

²⁹ Giulio Pugliese (2022). “The European Union’s Security Intervention in the Indo-Pacific: Between Multilateralism and Mercantile Interests”. *Journal of Intervention and State Building*, vol. 17, n°1, 2022, pp. 76-98; at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/17502977.2022.2118425?needAccess=true&role=button>

Economic security and resilience

The economic dimension of security gains momentum beyond former President Trump’s trade measures: supply chain resilience and awareness of technological competition in view of the 4th Industrial Revolution and its critical emerging technologies, and the need to secure new critical materials, move centre stage. The latter go characteristically by the name of ‘rare earth elements and minerals’ (lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, neodymium, promethium, samarium, europium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, holmium, erbium, thulium, ytterbium, lutetium, scandium, yttrium), required in high-tech consumer products as well as defence applications. Because of their strategic and critical nature, they bring a new dimension to the ongoing energy dependence and scarcity. As “Beijing has held an iron grip on the world’s supply chain for rare earth elements such that nearly all materials – no matter where in the world they are mined – travel to China for refinement before they can be used in technologies”,³⁰ securing safe supply sources becomes part of the overall competition. Alternative resources as well as the activation of formerly closed or new mining and processing places become essential. Deep-sea mining³¹ of resources gains strategic importance, as pursued by the USA and Japan. This message has also arrived in Europe: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen took it up in her 2022 State of the Union Address³² and the Commission proposed a Critical Raw Materials Act³³ in March 2023.

³⁰ Mikayla Easley (2023). “SPECIAL REPORT: U.S. Begins Forging Rare Earth Supply Chain.” *National Defence*, 10 February 2023; at <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2023/2/10/us-begins-forging-rare-earth-supply-chain>

³¹ Nikkei Asia (2022). “Japan to begin extracting rare earth metals from seabed in 2024.” 24 December 2022; at Japan to begin extracting rare earth metals from seabed in 2024 – Nikkei Asia

³² Ursula von der Leyen (2022). State of the Union 2022. At https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_5493

³³ European Commission (2023). “Proposal for a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials”, 16 March 2023; at (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0160>)

While these minerals are necessary inputs for the new emerging technologies needed in the digital as well as green transition, mining causes environmental concerns which must weighed against security risks.³⁴

Semiconductors are the new lifeline for the 4th Industrial Revolution economies. Therefore, they lend themselves for weaponization.³⁵ Depriving others, primarily not-like minded, of access to needed high end technologies and products or of required raw materials, have become part of enlarged toolboxes cf. CHIPS legislation, Chips4alliance, as well as more and stronger controls of inward investment (Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, CFIUS). As such measures also serve as strong incentives to develop quickly domestic alternatives, their efficiency needs to be evaluated ex ante.

Strategic planning must ensure, that in terms of raw materials the dependency on fossil fuels is not exchanged against another one, on rare earth and minerals. This also applies to the suppliers – the oil rich Middle East against mineral rich China. Concerning the provision of the latter, Canada, Australia, and the USA could take on an important role because of their relevant deposits.

This is geo-economics at its best: political competition interwoven with economic and technological competition in adapting or reorienting supply, production, and value chains to achieve prosperity through economic security and disadvantaging competitors.

³⁴ Politico (2022). "The EU wants to mine its way out of reliance on China for raw materials. It'll have to convince the locals". 20 October 2022; at <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-eu-wants-to-mine-its-way-out-of-reliance-on-china-for-raw-materials-itll-have-to-convince-the-locals/>

³⁵ Chris Miller (2022). *Chip War – The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*. Simon & Schuster, October 2022, 464 pp.

The end of globalisation?

Although the hey-days of globalisation are over – take more resilient supply, production and value chains, re-shoring, friend-shoring, and near-shoring as pointers – the bottom-line for policy makers should remain, that trade wars only produce losers and that turning back the clock has never worked.

This does not preclude pursuing economic interests or making use of economic tools to realise national interest but necessitates a rules-based environment to avoid the return of the Leviathan state and the law of the jungle where might is right.

To this end reforms are necessary: this change of policies, which will impact on the international system, is due to the Sino-USA competition, the effects of and policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis, the weaponisation of policies, especially those concerning trade, energy, food, and migration. Thus, adaptations of the present system, striving for more equality, openness and inclusion of the Global South are necessary elements of a new policy design.

In terms of trade, these adaptations are unfortunately difficult to develop with a WTO in crisis, an ongoing war in Ukraine, the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences, not to mention the impact of the shortage of energy, endangered food security and inflationary pressure.

The Korean Peninsula

Because of its geographical position, the Korean Peninsula has always served as bridge between the Pacific and its island chains to the Eurasian land mass, China, and Russia and in extension also to Europe. While in the 19th century the USA opened Japan, France tried to open Korea but was repelled. The Peninsula has been of special interest to naval powers, like the USA and neighbouring Japan, strategically juxtaposed between them and China, rendering it strategically important.

Throughout history, Korea has sought to mitigate the disadvantages it faces from its geography with astute diplomacy. Over the last two decades South Korea has even sought to transform the disadvantages of its geo-political location into an advantage. The current President Yoon seeks to use South Korea's growing political and economic leverage to expand its diplomatic footprint and role in global affairs, to turn the country into a global pivotal state.

South Korea's recent Indo-Pacific Strategy, although more a policy paper than a strategy, fulfils this purpose. It brings South Korea in the camp of those advocating a rules-based order inspired by values. It is built on three principles of cooperation, namely inclusiveness, trust and reciprocity. The main goal is to anchor Korea in the Indo-Pacific region, e.g. enlarging the scope of its foreign policy also conceptually beyond the Korean Peninsula: "Rising geopolitical competition involving diplomacy and security, economy and technology, and values and norms have stalled the drive for cooperation among Indo-Pacific nation [...] Korea aspires to become a Global Pivotal State that actively seeks out agenda for cooperation and shape discussions in the regions and the wider world."³⁶

³⁶ Government of the Republic of Korea (2022). "Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous IndoPacific Region". 10 December 2022; at <https://www.mofa.go.kr/>. The similarity of the title with the Japanese and USA strategies is striking and in itself a program.

In case of conflict between the USA and China or heightened Sino-Japanese tensions, South Korea's role would be crucial, as an ally of the USA but also in its own right. The European Union collaborates closely with its main strategic partners in the region, Japan, and South Korea. Considering the 'great transformation', this bilateral cooperations gain importance; a trilateral leg, EU-South Korea-Japan, or a quadrilateral one in adding the USA, could increase the effectiveness of all participants. Another quadrilateral, EU-Japan-South Korea-China, could be envisioned as a bridge builder for the USA and China, but is in the present situation it looks like a bridge too far. It risks being misread as a Chinese success in weakening USA alliances as part of great power competition.

The trilateral EU-Japan-South Korea could strengthen Korea's resilience without conflicting with the three 'no's' of former President Moon to sooth China – no installation of additional the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) missile interceptors, no joining a USA missile defence system, no trilateral alliance with the USA and Japan. Rendering THAAD fully operational adds to the already strained relationship between Seoul and Beijing.³⁷ In addition, the results of the 2023 Camp David³⁸ trilateral summit with the obligation to consult, comes close to a trilateral alliance (see below).

The Russian aggression against Ukraine brought increased international attention to Taiwan because of the possible link between the war in Ukraine and China's endeavours to implement the unification of the motherland by force – not only if the Taiwanese government were to declare independence.

³⁷ Nikkei Asia (2023). THAAD missile system agitates South Korea-China ties. 22 June 2023; at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/THAAD-missile-system-agitates-South-Korea-China-ties#>

³⁸ Naval Support Facility Thurmont

North Korea profiting from poly-crises

This concern has overshadowed the effect of the war in Ukraine on the Korean Peninsula. The North Korean regime makes it abundantly clear that it has no intention to denuclearise, drawing its own conclusion from the war in the Ukraine and specially the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. In this Memorandum, the Ukraine agreed in exchange for security assurances by the USA, Russia, and the UK to the transfer of nuclear arms to Russia as the successor state of the defunct Soviet Union. The Ukraine also joined the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state. China and France confirmed these arrangements in separate declarations. Ultimately, these decisions left Ukraine unable to deter the Russian attack on its territory. For many in South Korea, Putin's nuclear threats raise the spectre that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) could also resort in the future to threaten Seoul with nuclear attacks, trusting that its strategic nuclear weapons would deter a USA counteraction. In addition, China bought the only Soviet type aircraft carrier from Ukraine which after modernisation took up service as 'Liaoning', the first Chinese carrier. Other lessons learnt by North Korea are drawn from the policies pursued by India and Pakistan who got recognised as de facto nuclear powers, as well as from Colonel Gaddafi's shameful death after having foregone the nuclear option.³⁹

The reality of North Korea's nuclear arsenal means that the USA, South Korea, and Japan now have no other option but to emphasise deterrence and defence. Kim Jong-un can never be allowed to potentially misunderstand that his regime could survive a limited

³⁹ Reiterer Michael (2022). "The Crumbling Edifice of Global Peace" in Ursula Werther-Pietsch (ed.) *Envisioning Peace in a Time of War. facultas, 2022; pp. 19-40.*

nuclear exchange, using tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean or Japanese targets. However, this cannot be the only means to address the reality of a nuclear North Korea.

There is also a need to develop a new policy vis-à-vis North Korea considering the crumbling international order and the fact that the previous policy obviously has not prevented North Korea from going nuclear in the first place, and resist denuclearisation in the second place. The idea that the DPRK would one day agree to give up its nuclear weapons in return for access to the world economy is inconceivable in the context of China and Russia opposing the West. To continue insisting that this must be the policy objective is akin to sticking one's head in the sand. What is now needed is a policy that seeks to slow and freeze the DPRK's nuclear and missile programme and build a context where Pyongyang will never use or proliferate the weapons.

The Ukrainian crisis has enlarged the strategic space for North Korea. Kim Jong-un sees no need to answer the USA and South Korean calls for dialogue. He can proceed as fast as his resources allow in developing missile systems that will keep the USA, South Korea, and Japan in uncertainty whether they could intercept every incoming nuclear armed missile. Kim Jong-un has anchored the country's nuclear status in domestic law more firmly and conducts an unprecedented series of missiles tests. He also maintains the tension with the possibility of another nuclear test. This would be a further escalation, in addition to launching missiles flying over Japanese territory (4 October 2022) like in 2017 when the USA and North Korea were at the brink of war. The USA-Korean answer⁴⁰ in launching four ground-to-ground missiles was also unprecedented. The same applies to the agreement between President Yoon and Prime Minister Kishida that North Korea needs to be put on alert, that 'reckless provocations' will have consequences. The trilateral USA-South Korea-Japan summit in Camp

⁴⁰ Park Ki-Chul (2022). "The Korea-USA Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group: Evaluation and Issues". *The Diplomat*, 4 October 2022; at <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/the-korea-u-s-extended-deterrence-strategy-and-consultation-group-evaluation-and-issues/>

David in August 2023 united the three nations further in their endeavour for complete denuclearisation in line with the UN resolutions. Human rights and humanitarian issues will be addressed while they are open for talks “with no preconditions”.⁴¹

On the other end, President Putin’s repeated lose talk about the use of nuclear arms contributes to spreading insecurity and volatility.

While the Moon Administration acted as a motor of initiatives for diplomacy trying to get North Korea to engage, with Pyongyang now refusing to come back to the table and going full steam ahead with its weapons development, the Yoon Administration sees no other option than to emphasise defence and deterrence while pushing its allies and partners to increase pressure and reduce remaining flows of finance into North Korea.

The Biden Administration repeats that it is ready to engage without pre-conditions, which is not an incentive for the North. As former USA officials having experience with North Korea suggest, the USA as the stronger partner should do the first move in lifting some sanctions while continuing to pursue the goal of denuclearisation.⁴²

The Audacious Initiative

The three “Ds” of President’s Yoon’s North Korea policy – Deterrence – Dissuasion (pressure and new sanctions) still come with an openness to Dialogue. With his ‘Audacious Initiative’ of 2022, President Yoon Suk-yeol falls in line with his predecessors to postulate at one moment of their tenure better relations in improving the livelihood of North Koreans in stages. Measures proposed

⁴¹ The White House (2023). “Camp David Principles”. 18 August 2023; at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/camp-david-principles/#:~:text=As%20we%20move%20forward%2C%20we,shared%20norms%2C%20and%20common%20values.>

⁴² Yonhap News (2023). “U.S. deserves an A for effort to denuclearize N. Korea but needs to make first concession: U.S. experts”, 22 February 2023; at U.S. deserves an A for effort to denuclearize N. Korea but needs to make first concession: U.S. experts | Yonhap News Agency (yna.co.kr)

include large-scale food aid, power generation, infrastructure support, port and airport modernization, modernization in agriculture and the health sectors. These measures and the partial suspension of sanctions would be implemented in a staged manner depending on positive reaction by the North – firstly engaging ‘with sincerity’, then taking steps to denuclearise, and finally to denuclearisation. The Minister of Unification specified, “If the North reacts positively to our offer for talks, we will audaciously implement not just diplomatic but also political and military measures. We seek to build trust through all this and make the North realize that giving up its nuclear arsenal is the optimal path [for its future]”.⁴³

President Yoon reassures North Korea that it would see immediate benefits from returning to dialogue. The initial stages of these benefits before the DPRK had embarked on denuclearisation would concentrate on measures to improve the humanitarian welfare of the North Korean people. This would overcome the problem faced by President Moon in that he could not provide immediate economic incentives to North Korea as economic aid is ruled out by sanctions that cannot be lifted before denuclearisation actions.

The Audacious Initiative reiterates the message of the international community that North Korea has an alternative and better future if it begins to comply with international law. The problem is that it gives Kim Jong-un little reassurance that the end game would be to his advantage. The Initiative remains within the paradigm that engaging in a process of discussion with North Korea aimed at it giving up nuclear weapons in return for an improvement of its economy and political promises while assuring not to seek destabilisation of the regime, will at least slow the deterioration of the current situation, even if it never reaches the stage of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation.

⁴³ Jung Min-ho (2022). “Seoul unveils details of ‘Audacious Initiative’”. *Korea Times*, 21 November 2022; at https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/11/103_340257.html

In the current international context with China and Russia ready to support Kim Jong-un, he has no incentive to change his policy. On the contrary, he is going full steam ahead developing his weapons programme. The more credible Kim's policy becomes to create fear in the USA that he has a nuclear second-strike capability, the better his chances to get recognised as a de-facto nuclear power which would impact on the basic security equilibrium. Without considering new policy options, the USA, South Korea, Japan, and the EU risk that the current situation will soon reach a stage that is irreversible.

However, the strings attached to the Initiative, "if the North ceases the development of its nuclear program and embarks on a genuine and substantive process for denuclearization",⁴⁴ do not augur well for success. The North Korean leader has made it clear several times, that North Korea will remain a nuclear state, and could use its nuclear arsenal even pre-emptively in case of a perceived imminent danger of being attacked. This statement has contributed to the discussion whether South Korea should go nuclear, either directly or indirectly via the USA. According to various opinion polls, this idea rapidly gains traction in South Korea.⁴⁵ However, President Yoon musing about the re-deployment of nuclear weapons by the USA – President Bush had withdrawn them in 1992 to avoid, unsuccessfully, North Korea entering the nuclear race – or about the production of South Korean nuclear arms, does not create more security. On the contrary, such a step would give rise to proliferation and a nuclear arms race which would add to insecurity and volatility, not to more security.

Thus, the Initiative was rejected practically immediately by Kim Yo Jong, the dictator's sister who referred to former President Lee

⁴⁴ Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_25501/contents.do (accessed 17 February 2023).

⁴⁵ Moon Jang-ryul (2023). "Joint security of the Korean Peninsula is more audacious than nuclear armament". *Hankyoreh*, 12 February 2023; at https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/1079322.html

Myung-bak⁴⁶ and his 'Vision 3000: Denuclearization and Openness'.⁴⁷ Kim Jong-un is not interested in improving the situation for the Korean people but to secure regime survival in an unprecedented dynastic manner. The surprising promotion of his teenage daughter Kim Ju Ae confirms this attitude. North Korean propaganda instrumentalises the positive image of a child for its purposes e.g., either positioning a successor or using her as camouflage for the son to be groomed in silence. President Trump was not successful in presenting his 'beloved friend' Kim Jong-un with an iPad marvelling the potential development of North Korea if a deal were struck.

In addition, the geopolitical situation does not provide a fertile ground for such an initiative. North Korea drifts more in the Sino-Russian camp, as evidenced by the envisaged delivery of weapons for Russia in support of its war of aggression. A new form of trilaterals, naval manoeuvres by North Korea, China and Russia are in the media⁴⁸ as well as a meeting Kim-Putin.⁴⁹ Not having profited from the Moon Administration's soft approach was a tactical mistake by the North which confirms that Kim Jong-un is genuinely not interested in opening as this would endanger the survival of his regime. Openness, plurality of views or even voicing criticism are poison for dictatorial regimes. Having avoided such a step during the pandemic which worsened the economic situation and the prevailing food shortages demonstrate the resilience of the regime which has trained its population for decades in subsiding in austerity, scarcity and hardship attributed all the time to external factors.

⁴⁶ President of South Korea from 2008 to 2013.

⁴⁷ Bernhard Seliger (2022). "President Yoon's 'Audacious Plan': Neither Audacious nor a Plan, but Still Right." *38 North, Commentary*, 28 October 2022; at <https://www.38north.org/2022/10/president-yoons-audacious-plan-neither-audacious-nor-a-plan-but-still-right/>

⁴⁸ Yonhap News (2023). "Russia proposed three-way naval exercise with N. Korea, China: NIS." 4 September 2023; at <https://m-en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230904008951315?section=national/politics>

⁴⁹ Yonhap News (2023). "N. Korean leader Kim may visit Russia for talks with Putin on arms deal: report." 4 September 2023; at <https://m-en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230905000251325?section=news>

From Denuclearisation to arms control?

The international community – including the European Union – is not ready (yet) to switch to arms control talks, although India and Pakistan come to mind. The EU's position of 'critical engagement' developed in a completely different context, needs to be revisited: "The EU policy of "critical engagement" needs more engagement on the Peninsula and in wider East Asia."⁵⁰ Also in time of the war in Ukraine this is no 'luxury' as the rapid development of the North Korean nuclear and missiles capacity puts it firmly in the category of crisis hotspots of global relevance, competing or at par in seriousness with the Taiwan issue.

As I have already advocated earlier: "Just as in the children's story of the Emperor's New Clothes when nobody dare say the obvious, the international community's objective, whether it likes it or not, should be to limit the growth of North Korea's nuclear and missile capacity. This equates to a *de facto* focus on arms control and ensuring that Pyongyang never sees a reason to use or aid the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. Maintaining a constructive ambiguity may be useful: non-recognition as a nuclear state (unlike Pakistan and India, whose example weighs in negatively) may help to avoid a nuclear arms race. The North could go down the path of gradual denuclearization once the incentives are attractive enough, but achieving denuclearization up front, followed by normalisation of relations with the USA and the world is an unattainable goal."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Michael Reiterer (2021). "EU security interests in the Korean Peninsula." *The Defence Horizon Journal*, 19 February 2021; at <https://www.thedefencehorizon.org/post/eu-security-interests-in-the-korean-peninsula>

⁵¹ Michael Reiterer (2020). "The European Union and Security Cooperation: Bringing Northeast Asia into Focus." *Global NK, Commentary*, 10 November 2020; at Global North Korea (globalnk.org)

The Sino-Korean relationship

China remains a vital partner for South Korea, not only in terms of economic dependency, but also as the main supporter of North Korea. China is aware on the one hand of its influence as a the number one trading partner and growing military power, but also aware that "losing" South Korea would not be in its interest, neither economically, technologically nor strategically.

This enlarges the room of manoeuvre for South Korea. It also offers another strategic dimension for the cooperation between the EU and South Korea, as both recognise that engaging with China along the outlined tryptic (partner, competitor, systemic rival) is in their interest.

In turn, China is aware of the combined economic importance of South Korea, Japan, USA and the European Union for its own economic development, stability, and continued prosperity. This is an important difference with Russia, whose economy is only one tenth of China's and far less integrated in the world economy.

North Korea is aptly exploiting the present situation in getting closer to Russia (recognition of the annexation of parts of the Ukraine; delivery of weapons) as well as to China (recent reopening of freight train lines). More forthcoming support by both neighbours, China and Russia, will embolden Kim Jong-un even further vis-à-vis the USA, Japan and South Korea. It might also reduce North Korea's interest to reopen lines of communication with the EU, although such a back channel would be in their interest once diplomacy restarts and could also facilitate such a start.

China is concerned about the risk of conflict and the ensuing human, economic, and environmental costs to the region. Nevertheless, getting China engaged in problem solving on the Korean Peninsula requires a nuanced consideration of regional dynamics and China's interest to maintain North Korea as a sort of stable

buffer state. A nuclear active North Korea, however, is not in China's interest. Therefore, sustainable security and prosperity on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula e.g., North Korea, to avoid proliferation, should remain the rallying point for seeking cooperation with China. This meets China's interest in continued economic development in a stable environment.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula rules out South Korea to engage in an outright policy to contain China, including shutting it out from major critical components, especially in the high-end semiconductor field where Taiwan, Japan, the USA, and South Korea are in the technological lead.

China and the North Korean nuclear threat

President Putin's repeated threats to revert to nuclear weapons, which is not supported by China, could be an opportunity to engage China in talks on avoiding further nuclear proliferation which of course would include North Korea. South Korea and Japan going nuclear or allowing nuclear weapons on their territory is not in China's strategic interest.

Given the paralysis of the UNSC because of Sino-Russian mutual support, China emerges again as the main/sole hope to reign in on North Korea as economic stability and non-proliferation are key pillars of its policy. North Korea is probably welcome as a source of concern for the USA and its allies, but not as a troublemaker for China, which faces a cooling of its economy and some internal tensions due to severe problems in the real estate market, the banking system, job market, not to mention the vibes created by the unusual third term for Xi Jinping at the helm which seems to strain the system below surface.

Making use of institutional arrangements – a chance for multilateralism?

Building on China's interests in assuring stability, pursuing prosperity, a regional cooperative structure which includes China to achieve these goals might serve the common cause of peace better than efforts to contain China.

There are several options: ASEAN-centred (ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit), enlarging the Trilateral Secretariate (China-Japan-Korea), building on dialogues like the defunct Northeast Asia Peace Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI)⁵² and the ongoing Ulaanbaatar Dialogue. This also includes the inter-regional dialogue format, the ASEM. To develop dialogue platforms in difficult situations, like on the Korean Peninsula, taking methodological inspiration from the original talks with Iran which lead to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the EU could serve as the communication channel with the USA.

Enlarging the application of the legally binding Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)⁵³ and the Wassenaar Arrangement, the main export control regimes dealing with missile technologies could be a venue to explore. They cover exports of missiles with a range greater than 300 km and with a payload of more than 500 kg that could deliver weapons of mass destruction (WMD), useful tools to reduce proliferation and limit the dissemination of these systems. In the Asia-Pacific only Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea are partners of the MTCR and the

⁵² Michael Reiterer (2015). "The NAPCI in the Volatile Security Environment of North-East Asia: Which Role for the European Union?". *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 20, no.4, 2015; pp. 573-590; "Supporting NAPCI and Trilateral Cooperation: Prospects for Korea-EU Relations". Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome, *Working Papers* 17/01, January 2017; 11p. <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1701.pdf>

⁵³ Missile Technology Control Regime; at <https://mtcr.info/mtcr/> (accessed 3 March 2023).

Wassenaar Arrangement, but the guidelines could serve a wider audience. Reportedly China has shown interest to do so which could be part of building security governance.⁵⁴

As for North Korea, which is not part of ASEM, making use of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) could be an option allowing regional countries to provide the communication platform with the necessary backchannels, eventually as mentioned by the EU, drawing on the experience gained in the talks with Iran.

Such a multilateral context would also ease the perception of the USA-Japan-South Korea containment alliance against China and North Korea. A strengthening of this alliance because of the closer cooperation of the Yoon Administration with the USA and a sustained amelioration of the relationship between South Korea and Japan, as well NATO's anxieties with China following the Madrid Summit, is a source of concern for China and North Korea.

Such multilateral policies are a necessary corrective to attempts to bilateralise relationships where China can make full use of its economic and political strength. This is a feature of great power politics, to which also the USA adheres: its alliance system is based on the hub-spoke principle giving the USA as the hub the strong position. China's BRI in turn is also a series of bilateral agreements and not a multilateral framework.

In the regional context this policy will need discussion with partners whether in an alliance or like-minded to render it more effective in keeping the door open for functional cooperation with those sharing an interest, whether like-minded or not.

⁵⁴ Emmanuelle Maitre (2021). "Regulating Missile Competition in the Asia-Pacific". *Asia Pacific Leadership Network*, 25 November 2021; at <https://www.apln.network/analysis/commentaries/regulating-missile-competition-in-the-asia-pacific>

South Korea – Japan: turn around because of mounting tensions?

The increased tensions over North Korea as well as China's assertiveness serve as incentives for South Korea and Japan to cooperate more closely and effectively in security planning – as partners of the USA but also in response to their own pressing security concerns.

President Biden's invitation to an unprecedented trilateral meeting at the presidential retreat at Camp David, a place signifying a special event, pushed both sides to make further steps in overcoming past grievances.

This move was prepared: Then Foreign ministers Hayashi and Park calling each other "friends" on the podium of the 2023 Munich Security Conference was good news in this respect. President Yoon followed suit at his first March 1st Independence Movement commemorative speech, referring to Japan as a "partner" in tackling security and economic issues and other global challenges as Japan has "become more important than ever to overcome the security crises including North Korea's growing nuclear threats and global polycrisis."⁵⁵ Reflecting the politically divided country, the opposition leader Lee immediately criticised the move.⁵⁶ The first of March 1st speech in honour of the 1919 nationwide uprising against the Japanese colonial rule has traditionally been

⁵⁵ Korea JoongAng Daily (2023). "President Yoon calls Japan 'partner' in dealing with security, economic issues". 1 March 2023; at President Yoon calls Japan 'partner' in dealing with security, economic issues (joins.com)

⁵⁶ Yonhap News (2023). "Lee accuses Yoon administration of humiliating forced labor victims". 1 March 2023; at (LEAD) Lee accuses Yoon administration of humiliating forced labor victims | Yonhap News Agency (yna.co.kr)

an occasion to castigate Japan. The first Yoon-Kishida summit in Tokyo after twelve years in March 2023⁵⁷ led to a counter-visit in Seoul in May⁵⁸ – the path to Camp David was open.

The Camp David Principles, is a comprehensive joint policy statement, covering the situation in the Indo-Pacific, "based on a respect for international law, shared norms, and common values. We strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion ... peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait", technological cooperation, climate change, honouring UN principles, non-proliferation. Most attention drew the "Commitment to Consult" where the USA, Japan and South Korea agreed "to consult trilaterally with each other, in an expeditious manner, to coordinate our responses to regional challenges, provocations, and threats affecting our collective interests and security. Through these consultations, we intend to share information, align our messaging, and coordinate response actions."⁵⁹ Observers are wondering whether this commitment could be a precursor to a more formal alliance between South Korea and Japan,⁶⁰ in addition to the existing bilateral ties. While this rapprochement is another blow to Chinese and Russian diplomacy, its sustainability needs to be proven.

The first test came quickly when Japan released contaminated but treated water from the ruins of Fukushima nuclear plant: while

⁵⁷ NPR (2023). "Japan and South Korea renew ties in first summit in 12 years". 16 March 2023; at <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/15/1163633429/japan-south-korea-summit>

⁵⁸ AP (2023). "Yoon, Kishida vow better Seoul-Tokyo ties following summit". 8 May 2023; at <https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-japan-yoon-kishida-2451347b173896fd04ea633d7fe3986e>

⁵⁹ The White House (2023). "Commitment to Consult". 18 August 2023; at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/commitment-to-consult/>

⁶⁰ Hankyoreh (2023). "S. Korea, USA, Japan declare trilateral military alliance in all but name". 21 August 2023; at https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/1105182.html Nikkei Asia (2023). "Yoon dines on seafood as Fukushima discharge divides South Korea". 30 August 2023; at https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Yoon-dines-on-seafood-as-Fukushima-discharge-divides-South-Korea?utm_campaign=IC_asia_daily_free&utm_medium=email&utm_source=NA_newsletter&utm_content=article_link&del_type=1&pub_date=20230830123000&seq_num=8&si=856bbafd-83fb-4500-a6f9-0b2e1685006f

the government plays down the significance of the event,⁶¹ the Korean public is concerned⁶² – like Japanese fishers. China swiftly introduced a ban on food products from the region but was in turn accused of “hypocrisy and of using the incident to whip up anti-Japanese sentiment. Scientists have pointed out that China’s own nuclear power plants release wastewater with higher levels of tritium than that found in Fukushima’s discharge, and that the levels are all within boundaries not considered to be harmful to human health.”⁶³

The sustainability of the relationship depends on whether an equilibrium between mutual concessions can be found, mutual trust be rebuilt, and the respective publics positively engaged. The normalisation of bilateral trade relations – mutual abolishment of export procedures for products needed to produce semi-conductors – and the direct sharing of intelligence serve this purpose.

Coming to terms with history – primarily the issues of Korean sex slaves and forced labour – and forging a closer mutually supportive relationship between Japan and South Korea would also facilitate the acceptance of a politically more active Japan in the region to which Japan subscribes in its new security policy orientation.⁶⁴ Japan intends to increase its defence capacity, acquire a counter-strike capacity and increase its defence related expenses to 2%

⁶¹ Reuters (2023). “South Korea sees no scientific problem with Fukushima water release plan”. 22 August 2023; at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-sees-no-scientific-problem-with-fukushima-water-release-plan-2023-08-22/>

⁶² The New York Times (2023). “Radioactive Water Is Complicating Japan and Korea’s New Friendship”. 21 August 2023; at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/21/world/asia/korea-japan-fukushima.html>

⁶³ The Guardian (2023). “Fukushima: China accused of hypocrisy over its own release of wastewater from nuclear plants”. 25 August 2023; at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/25/fukushima-daiichi-nuclear-power-plant-china-wastewater-release>

⁶⁴ National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy Defense Buildup Program. See Ryan Ashley (2023). “Japan’s New Security Strategy Is Making Waves”. *Foreign Policy Research Institute, Analysis*, 4 January 2023; at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/japans-new-national-security-strategy-is-making-waves/>

of GDP by 2027. This trend has been started under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Japan can be expected to continue this policy under the new leadership.

Furthermore, NATO’s Asia Pacific partnership consisting of Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, the AP4, offers a platform to further bilateral cooperation.⁶⁵

In terms of security cooperation, the EU has already signed bilateral agreement on cooperation in crisis management with South Korea and Australia, but not (yet) with Japan and New Zealand.

⁶⁵ Nikkei Asia (2023). “NATO to upgrade ties with Australia, New Zealand, South Korea”. 13 June 2023; at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/NATO-to-upgrade-ties-with-Australia-New-Zealand-South-Korea>

Japan

Ambassador Sasae Kenichiro, President of the Japan Institute for International Affairs, put it succinctly in the foreword of the Institute's annual Strategic Report: "Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has fundamentally overturned the European security order, and brought the "post-Cold War" era to an end. In the Indo-Pacific region, tensions between the United States and China are on the rise, and the world has entered a new era of fragmentation and instability that threatens the foundations of the international order led by the USA since the end of the Cold War and even since the end of World War II."⁶⁶ Therefore, the report continues, "Japan needs to further security and other cooperation with European countries, the EU and NATO, with whom Japan shares common values, and cooperation through the G7 would be beneficial in strengthening relations with European countries. There are high expectations of Japan in its role as the G7 presidency, including continued active support for Ukraine."⁶⁷

The chapter on Europe recognises that European countries, despite the war in Ukraine where Japan is one of the few Asian countries sanctioning Russia, take "a growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region, and increasing their activities such as dispatch of ships and aircraft and participation in joint military exercises, although there are some differences in the level of interest and involvement."⁶⁸

This is good news for enhancing the strategic partnership between the EU and Japan⁶⁹ as the EU was for long perceived as showing

⁶⁶ Japan Institute of International Affairs -JIIA (2023). "Strategic Annual Report 2022". p.1 at https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic_comment/pdf/StrategicAnnualReport2022en01.pdf

⁶⁷ Ibid.; p. 7.

⁶⁸ Ibid.; p. 64.

⁶⁹ Michael Reiterer (2021). "Security Governance in Regional and Global Governance – Japan and the EU". Dimitri Vanoverbeke; Jan Wouters; Eiji Ogawa/Kolja Raube (eds.) Japan, the European Union and Global Governance. E. Elgar, 2021; pp. 178-200.

not enough interest in the Asia Pacific and matters of concern to Japan. Regarded as a soft power only, Japanese interests with the EU were reduced to trade, economics, and technological cooperation. To illustrate the change, the report lists various activities: "Despite the growing threat from Russia, Europe continued its engagement in Asia as the situation in Taiwan worsened; NATO noted in its new strategic concept formulated in June 2022 that China poses a "serious challenge", and in August, British, French, and German fighter jets participated in a multilateral air force exercise hosted by Australia. Germany also sent fighter jets to Japan, South Korea, and Singapore for training to deploy forces in the Indo-Pacific region. Until now, Europe's military involvement in Asia has been mainly naval, but the deployment of air power, which can reach Asia more quickly, gave the impression of growing European engagement in the region.

The AUKUS security pact among the USA, the UK and Australia also deepened cooperation, and Royal Australian Navy personnel began training on British nuclear submarines. France, the UK, and observers from NATO participated in the November USA-Japan joint integrated exercise "Keen Sword," and the UK included its naval vessels in the exercise alongside those of Canada and Australia. This indicated the possibility of involvement by USA allies from outside the region in an East Asian contingency."⁷⁰ The Prime Minister of Japan, Kishida touring Europe at the beginning of 2023 and the visit of NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg to Japan (and South Korea) complete the picture.⁷¹

This positive attitude is reciprocated by the EU which has continuously intensified its relationship with Japan in implementing the above-mentioned important agreements:

⁷⁰ Japan Institute of International Affairs -JIIA (2023). Strategic Annual Report 2022. p.38 at https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic_comment/pdf/StrategicAnnualReport2022en01.pdf.

⁷¹ Mina Erika Pollmann (2023). "Japan's Pivot to Europe". *The Diplomat*, Issue 100, March 2023; at [Is China's Reform and Opening Era Over? \(thediplomat.com\)](https://thediplomat.com)

1. The 2019 Strategic Partnership Agreement serves “as the charter defining and undergirding the overall relationship. The Agreement sets out an overarching framework for enhanced political and sectoral cooperation as well as joint actions on issues of common interest, including on regional and global challenges.”⁷²
2. The 2019 EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.⁷³ The 2019 Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure⁷⁴ and 2022 the Digital Cooperation Agreement,⁷⁵ the first ever concluded by the EU, provide more instruments to enhance the cooperation and strengthen the security cooperation of like-minded countries. This framework is also important in the process of revaluating and adapting value and production chains to increase mutual resilience as both partners aim to find their own way in the Sino-American competition, while recognising the importance of the Transatlantic and Transpacific partnership. Bridging the allies against the backdrop of the mentioned crises but also the technological competition in view of emerging and disruptive technologies are the challenges to meet.

⁷² EEAS (2019). “EU-Japan Strategic Partnership (SPA)”; at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/57491_en (accessed 24 February 2023).

⁷³ European Commission. EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement; at https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/japan/eu-japan-agreement_en (accessed 24 February 2023).

⁷⁴ The Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between the European Union and Japan, 27 September 2019; at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_partnership_on_sustainable_connectivity_and_quality_infrastructure_between_the_european_union_and_japan.pdf

⁷⁵ Japan-EU Digital Partnership. Concluded as part of the 28th EU-Japan Summit, Press Release, 12 May 2022; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/56091/%E6%9C%80%E7%B5%82%E7%89%88-jp-eu-digital-partnership-clean-final-docx.pdf>

ASEAN centrality

Close cooperation with ASEAN is a means to advance the EU’s position in the region while at the same time strengthening ASEAN’s standing power and resilience in the Sino-USA power struggle. The last 45 years have seen considerable progress – in terms of trade and investment but also in terms of political and security cooperation. COVID-19 was a strain but mastered successfully – with a € 800 million “Team Europe” package to alleviate the negative consequences; ASEAN countries profited from the COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) Facility, providing nearly 50% of the vaccines produced in the EU.

“Building Back Better” supports green and digital transition, of which connectivity is an important part. The ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity follows the same comprehensive approach as the EU, e.g., including trade facilitation, infrastructure, people-to-people mobility. To facilitate the implementation, the EU supported increasing the efficiency of the cooperation of customs authorities through the ASEAN Customs Transit System. The above-mentioned Comprehensive Aviation Agreement is the highlight of this cooperation.

The 30th ASEAN-EU Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC)⁷⁶ took stock of the relationship after the mentioned commemorative summit. Of the crucial issues, the need to respect the territorial integrity of the Ukraine was accepted albeit without mentioning Russia – Laos and Vietnam had abstained at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) from condemning the aggression. The palm oil conflict should be resolved in a Joint Working Group. The EU’s intention to spend € 10 billion for the implementation of Global Gateway in the ASEAN region was welcomed.

⁷⁶ Joint Press Release 30th ASEAN-EU Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) Meeting Convenes in Jakarta, 24 February 2023; at [30th-JCC-Press-Release-Final.pdf](https://asean.org/30th-JCC-Press-Release-Final.pdf) (asean.org)

The EU and ASEAN stand for multilateralism because of their very nature. Multilateralism should strengthen the cooperative element, the rule of law and ASEAN centrality. For these reasons it is in the interest of ASEAN to support the formal inclusion of the EU in the regional institutional framework: the EU's presence in the East Asia Forum process as a member, and not only as occasional guest of the chair, would strengthen the multilateral element as well as ASEAN centrality. However, ASEAN is still not ready to move as shown at the 30th Joint Cooperation Committee in February 2023 because of unresolved issues related to environmental concerns over palm oil (see below).⁷⁷

Strengthening the multilateral element is important for ASEAN to remain in the power game, which is also threatened by various mini-lateral arrangements like the Quad which reflects the USA preference for bilateral and functional cooperation of like-minded partners. EU support for ASEAN in the conflict with China on its activities in the South China Sea and of the award on the application of UNCLOS⁷⁸ is important as an expression of the support for the rule of law.

Application of value-based rules, if not entirely shared, can also lead to tensions: the EU's pursuance of its renewable energy targets led to disputes with Indonesia⁷⁹ and Malaysia⁸⁰ at the World

⁷⁷ Joint Press Release of the 30th JCC remains weak as: "the EU's commitment to adhere to all relevant ASEAN-led security mechanisms, including the ADMM-Plus and the EU's ambition to become an observer of two ADMM-Plus Expert Working Groups" was only "noted"; see above.

⁷⁸ Council of the EU (2016). "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Award rendered in the Arbitration between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China". *Press Release*, 15 July 2016; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/15/south-china-sea-arbitration>

⁷⁹ WTO Dispute Settlement (2020). "DS593: European Union – Certain measures concerning palm oil and oil palm crop-based biofuels". At https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds593_e.htm (accessed 23 February 2023).

⁸⁰ European Commission (2021). "WT/DS600 – European Union and certain Member states – Certain measures concerning palm oil and oil palm crop-based biofuels – Malaysia". At https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/enforcement-and-protection/dispute-settlement/wto-dispute-settlement/wto-disputes-cases-involving-eu/wtds600-european-union-and-certain-member-states-certain-measures-concerning-palm-oil-and-oil-palm_en (accessed 23 February 2023).

Trade Organisation. The proposed EU Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence bears the risk of aggravating tensions⁸¹ which should be handled proactively.

As internal and external strength correlate, solving the long-lasting problem of Myanmar is necessary. The EU recognised this issue in appointing in February 2022 the EU Ambassador to ASEAN as special representative in support of an ASEAN Special Envoy.⁸²

These few examples demonstrate the potential for cooperation of these two multilateral organisations, despite their different models and stages of integration. To be credible, the EU must demonstrate its capacity to engage with ASEAN despite the war in Ukraine and the problems with Russia.

In this respect the EU has difficulties to convince the Global South – a rather amorphous term bringing together quite different countries – that the support for Ukraine is not just a European or Western affair but collective resistance against the Russian attack on the UN-based world order. Measured in terms of the vote in the UNGA there is agreement to reject the aggression; however, measured in the rate of participation of states in sanctions against Russia, there is a clear indication of unhappiness with the present order while also reflecting Russia's influence as many countries rely on arms deliveries and are easy targets for the spinning of an alternative narrative reflecting the colonial and imperialistic past.

⁸¹ Lizza Bomassi (2022). "A Missed Opportunity on the EU-ASEAN Summit". *Carnegie Europe*, 13 December 2022; at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/88628>

⁸² Council of the EU (2021). "Myanmar/Burma: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union to support the work of the ASEAN Special Envoy". *Press Release*, 13 October 2021; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/13/myanmar-burma-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-to-support-the-work-of-the-asean-special-envoy/>

Is the Global South lost?

This poses for the EU the challenge to engage better and more convincingly with the Global South,⁸³ of which ASEAN is part. Despite the reduction of grain exports from Ukraine and Russia, the Global South feels less concerned by Ukraine and criticises that problems in their part of the world get less attention or are simply neglected.⁸⁴ This was confirmed by a recent survey by the European Council on Foreign Relations⁸⁵ whose main conclusions are:

- *“Europeans and Americans agree they should help Ukraine to win, that Russia is their avowed adversary, and that the coming global order will most likely be defined by two blocs led respectively by the USA and China.*
- *In contrast, citizens in China, India, and Turkey prefer a quick end to the war even if Ukraine has to concede territory.*
- *People in these non-Western countries, and in Russia, also consider the emergence of a multipolar world order to be more probable than a bipolar arrangement.”*

⁸³ While collective terms like “Global South” or the “West” are problematic as neither of them is monolithic, they serve as a useful shorthand in discussions but should not be taken as scientific terms as they can be misleading.

⁸⁴ Rosa Balfour, Marta Martinelli (2022). “The Southern Mirror: Reflections on Europe From the Global South”. *Carnegie Europe*, 22 June 2022; at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/06/29/southern-mirror-reflections-on-europe-from-global-south-pub-87306> Theodore Murphy (2022). “Principles for global order: How Europeans and the global south can shape the international order together”. *Ecfr.eu, Commentary*, 9 November 2022; at <https://ecfr.eu/article/principles-for-global-order-how-europeans-and-the-global-south-can-shape-the-international-order-together/>

⁸⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, Ivan Krastev, Mark Leonard (2023). “United West, divided from the rest: Global public opinion one year into Russia’s war on Ukraine”. *Policy Brief*, 22 February 2023; at United West, divided from the rest: Global public opinion one year into Russia’s war on Ukraine – European Council on Foreign Relations (ecfr.eu)

While for the EU better communication and fighting fake news is part of the answer, a constant and not only crisis driven policy of engagement with a visual presence and a ‘Team Europe’ approach with a European but not Europe-centric narrative is necessary. Otherwise, the EU will lose out further to Russia and China in Africa and parts of Latin America, not least Brazil. The positively perceived historic baggage of anti-colonial, anti-imperialistic rhetoric and support should not be underestimated; it needs to be countered by a future oriented agenda of deeds, not words only.

High Representative of the EU and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell addressed this criticism in his address to the UN Security Council in stating that the EU’s “principled support for Ukraine does not come at the expense of our engagement elsewhere in the world. On the contrary, the European Union remains fully mobilised to promote sustainable peace elsewhere because we know that there are many more wars, many more tragedies, many more problems around the world that need our support and our concern. It is not “instead of”, it is “on top of”.” Concrete examples cited were the €1,5 billion spent on food aid in Africa, the 21 crisis management operations with 5000 people deployed and the recent launch of two more missions in Armenia and Niger.⁸⁶

The latter, however, turned sour with the military coup against the democratically elected president in July 2023. Coups in Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and lately Gabon signal the end of decades of ‘Françafrique’ and at the same time the need for the EU to honour its promises of a joint vision for a renewed partnership made at the 2022 EU-Africa Summit.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ European External Action Service (2023). “Ukraine: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the UN Security Council session on Ukraine”. 24 February 2023; at Ukraine: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the UN Security Council session on Ukraine | EEAS Website (europa.eu)

⁸⁷ European Council (2022). “Sixth European Union–African Union Summit: A Joint Vision for 2030”. 18 February 2022; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/18/sixth-european-union-african-union-summit-a-joint-vision-for-2030/>

India – the post non-aligned leader of the Global South?

India, following the spirit of the non-aligned, is certainly part of the Global South and an unofficial speaker, or at least it would like to be. The Indian Minister for External Affairs, Jaishankar, criticised a Eurocentric view of the world during an interview at the 2022 GLOBSEC⁸⁸ conference: “somewhere Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems.”⁸⁹ He also criticised Europe’s silence on many issues happening in Asia.⁹⁰ In addition to the complex war in Eastern Europe, problems like food security, climate change, terrorism, a new world order and the realisation of security and sustainable development goals need answers.

The Minister was also clear that India refuses to choose between the West (USA, EU) and the East (China, Russia). India represents one fifth of the world population, has a large and growing economy and must pursue its own interests and values.

Like many other countries of the Global South, India had close ties with the Soviet Union in the Cold War and procured nearly the entirety of its weapons from the USSR, which continues nowadays with Russia. This leads to precarious triangular relations: India purchases Russian weapons because of China and the lingering border conflict. At the same time, China and Russia align

⁸⁸ International think-tank for security, prosperity and sustainability.

⁸⁹ The Print (2022). “‘India is not sitting on the fence’ says External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar”, 3 June 2022; at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R1z5_KBHw4&list=TLPQMDgwNjJw-MjJlUUP4ebTrZQ&index=11 starting 20.48 minutes.

⁹⁰ Ibid.; starting at 17.29, also at 19.10 minutes.

themselves more and more in their foreign policy, but Russia sells arms to India for potential use against its limitless⁹¹ best friend, China.⁹² Welcome to geopolitics!

India finds itself in a situation comparable to Europe: While the former depends on Russian weapons, which on top seem to underperform in the war in Ukraine, Europe depends on Russian energy, although with the striking difference that Europe managed to liberate itself significantly in only one year’s time.

Thus, both opposing camps make efforts to avoid India drifting into the other camp although the West harbours mischiefs for India which abstained like China and South Africa⁹³ in votes at the UN in 2022 and 2023 to condemn Russian aggression, is not joining the sanction regime, and continues buying – like others – Russian oil.

However, Prime Minister Modi was one of the first international leaders of the South to call at the 2022 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Summit for peace: “I know that today’s era is not of war, and we have spoken to you many times on the phone that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue are such things that touch the world.”⁹⁴

In a subsequent call with President Volodymyr Zelensky, Prime Minister Modi conveyed the message that his country is ready

⁹¹ See: Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development. Op.cit.

⁹² Patricia M. Kim (2023). The Limits of the No-Limits Partnership. Foreign Affairs, 28 February 2023; at The Limits of the No-Limits Partnership: China and Russia Can’t Be Split, but They Can Be Thwarted (foreignaffairs.com)

⁹³ Countries which abstained 23 February 2023: Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Zimbabwe. Countries voting against resolution: Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria.

⁹⁴ Indian Prime Minister’s Office (2022). “English Translation of Opening Remarks by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the bilateral meeting with President of Russia”. 16 September 2022; at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseSelfFramePage.aspx?PRID=1859972>

to contribute to peace efforts.⁹⁵ A peace initiative by India would have a better chance to get off the ground than the Chinese 12 points plan,⁹⁶ which lacks provisions for Russia to withdraw, not to mention holding it responsible as aggressor.

An Indian initiative could strengthen India's role in leading the Global South – if successful, this means taking a risk which is not a characteristic of Indian foreign policy. Making diligent use of its position as G20 leader in 2023 could be helpful, as Indonesia showed at the 2022 Bali summit.

Although the G20 Finance and Foreign Ministers had failed to agree on a joint declaration, built on the Bali declaration,⁹⁷ because of China and Russia, at the price of making concessions on the language on Russia – in recognition of the differing position of many non-G7 members – and renouncing to the tradition of a family photo (with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov) – a lengthy final document was agreed at the Delhi Summit⁹⁸. Noteworthy the commitment to the WTO and the reform of its dispute settlement procedure, digital trade and the importance of environmental standards. The lingering dangers of protectionism, re- and friend-shoring, de-risking..., seem to have motivated leaders.

The change of the guest-status of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to membership in the G20 – like the EU – at the Delhi summit can be read either to strengthen the Southern credentials

⁹⁵ Reuters (2022). "India's Modi says ready to contribute to peace efforts in Ukraine". 4 October 2022; at <https://www.reuters.com/world/indias-modi-says-ready-contribute-peace-efforts-ukraine-2022-10-04/>

⁹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2023). "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis". 24 February 2023; at https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html

⁹⁷ Council of the European Union (2022). "G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration". 16 November 2022; at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/60201/2022-11-16-g20-declaration-data.pdf> In referencing UN documents, the meeting "deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine."

⁹⁸ G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, 10 September 2023; at https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf

of both, India and the G20, or, as its weakening because it will be more difficult to forge common interests in the diverse membership. The jury is out for the positioning of the G20 in the global competition. If the infrastructure related pledges are implemented in a late response China's Belt and Road Initiative, development banks are activated and international financial institutions reformed, G20 would become a useful platform for reform with important players on board.

Nevertheless, President Xi's non-participation in the G20 summit – like President Putin but for different reasons – was a disappointment for Prime Minister Modi's ambitions.

Although the state of democracy with 'Hindu' characteristics and autocratic tendencies is of concern, the EU has also warmed up to India. Considering that the EU is India's third largest trading partner and India the EU's 10th largest partner, the European Union restarted in June 2022 negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement and launched separate negotiations for an Investment Protection Agreement as well as an Agreement on Geographical Indications (GIs)⁹⁹. In 2018 EU-India Connectivity Partnership¹⁰⁰ was another important steppingstone.

Following on the steps of the USA which had launched in January 2023 the United States-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies,¹⁰¹ the EU followed up the previous agreements by the creation of a new Trade and Technology Council (TTC) which is meant to deepen strategic engagement on strategic technologies, digital governance and digital connectivity; green & clean energy

⁹⁹ European Commission. "EU-India Free Trade Agreement, Investment Protection Agreement and Geographical Indications Agreement"; at https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/india/eu-india-agreement_en (accessed 24 February 2023).

¹⁰⁰ European External Action Service. "Factsheet: EU-India Connectivity Partnership". 22 April 2022; at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/factsheet-eu-india-connectivity-partnership_en

¹⁰¹ Rudra Chaudhuri (2023). "What is the United States-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)?". *Carnegie India*, 27 February 2023; at What is the United States-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)? – Carnegie India – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

technologies; trade, investment and resilient value chains.¹⁰² One fifth of mankind with a young population and an upward bended curve of economic development cannot be ignored.

In terms of security cooperation, the Strategic Compass refers to India in the context of “constructive security and defence consultations and security cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam”¹⁰³ and joint naval exercises and port calls. This dovetails with Japan which regards India an essential partner in the Quad to establish a strategic balance in the region.

¹⁰² European Commission (2023). “EU-India: new Trade and Technology Council to lead on digital transformation, green technologies and trade”. *Press Release, 6 February 2023*; at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_596

¹⁰³ European External Action Service (2022). “A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence”. At https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

Value vs. interest driven policies?

The ideological underpinning of this Sino-USA competition is formed by the dichotomy between democracy and autocracy and dictatorship, which gives rise to concerns about a new cold war – a concern which has been partly overtaken by the nightmare of a hot war in Ukraine.

While this challenge persists, it creates an additional one: the costs of a value driven policy, if not fully aligned with national interests, put the very policy at risk.

Democracies must explain and justify policies and may be forced to adjust or change because of democratic political processes. Thus, the element of pursuing (hopefully well-defined) national interests has become more acute. The cost-benefit relationship in pursuing them needs to be better explained to citizens. Otherwise, the calls ‘this is not our struggle’, ‘this is not our war’ will not only become louder but will determine politics and therefore policies.

Short-term costs and long-term gains are always difficult to explain and to shoulder. Without leadership, nationalistic and retro-oriented policies will prevail with an aggressive potential. “Make country X great again” – at the costs of others – has the potential of becoming a wider spread policy.

‘Cooperative’ instead of ‘strategic’ autonomy leading to ‘strategic responsibility’

While clearly allies of the USA, the EU, Japan, and South Korea share the interest to keep lines of communication and cooperation with China open and continue a mutually beneficial relationship in applying the mentioned tryptic ‘partner, competitor, systemic rival’. The EU should engage China bilaterally, while keeping the option to additional (trilateral) meetings with the USA, Japan, and South Korea and eventually enlarged to quadrilateral with India. This could build a common shared basis of mutual interests, in terms of economy, environment, climate change. These interactions could also serve to rebuilding trust which has diminished over the last years.

To this end, efforts to strengthen military capabilities, secure supply and production lines, maintain open trade and preserve technology ecosystems, to enhance resilience, not isolationism or protectionism, are necessary. These are elements to build a “cooperative autonomy”, a more appropriate term than ‘strategic autonomy’, which gave rise to misunderstandings in the sense of isolationism or decoupling from the USA or NATO. The essence of such a policy of cooperation to achieve autonomy should also be of interest to Japan and South Korea. This should lead to a “strategic responsibility” which carries the message that this does not come cost-free but means providing the tools necessary to achieve the envisaged goals.

A stronger partner who can shoulder more responsibility is a more valuable partner; a partner is not a subordinate receiving instructions, but a contributor to developing a common policy which of course implies finding common ground as interests do not merge entirely even among allies. Reaching out to like-minded partners where possible, cooperating with rivals where necessary is a viable maxim.

This maxim also indicates the limits of what used to be called the ‘liberal international order’. This should not ring the death bell for ‘order’, but the cooperative element is certainly weakened as the rise of re-shoring, protectionism, isolationism, and nationalism indicate. However, ultimately, globalised as the economy has grown over decades which cannot be reversed in the short-term and the very nature of problems which cannot be solved nationally, like climate change, will ensure that an interest-based, albeit reduced cooperation will continue on the global level.

The European Union – a nascent global player?

The EU's reputation and endeavour to become a global actor has always suffered from the paradox, that despite East Asia turning into an economic powerhouse and the EU being the largest economy, Asian countries measure strength and influence primarily in military terms. While this was partly due to the continuation of the Cold War in East Asia after it had subsided in Europe, it got new traction through the comprehensive resurgence of China after the 2008 financial crisis and its more assertive policies, especially military.

The EU's response is therefore to engage more, beyond economics. Focusing on non-traditional security issues emerging from the Korean Peninsula, pursuing cyber criminals on Chinese and North Korean territory, thereby also fighting Chinese disinformation, is an important new strand. As are new forms of security policy, like cyber¹⁰⁴ as well as maritime security.

Another crisis, the war in Ukraine provided the EU with the opportunity to show that it is able and willing to move beyond the traditional approach: in addition to severe sanctions on Russia, for the first time in its history the EU directly funded arms, military equipment, including lethal weaponry destined for Ukraine, a country in war as a defender against Russian aggression. Making use of its Peace Facility¹⁰⁵ to this end, the message was also sent that you must defend peace also when it has been broken. Spending €3 billion, split between lethal equipment and platforms (€2.82 billion) and non-lethal support (€0.18 billion), is a significant contribution.

¹⁰⁴ See Gertjan Boulet, Michael Reiterer, Ramon Pacheco Pardo eds. (2022). "Cybersecurity Policy in the EU and South Korea from Consultation to Action". Palgrave Macmillan, 2022; 317 pp.

¹⁰⁵ European Parliament Research Service. "European Peace Facility: Ukraine and beyond"; 18 November 2022; at <https://epthinktank.eu/2022/11/18/european-peace-facility-ukraine-and-beyond/>

Thus, the Indo-Pacific Strategy added military elements, such as the coordinated deployment of single European frigates to the region and extending the EU's Critical Maritime Routes in the Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO) capacity-building project to the Southern Pacific. While the challenge is on to implement these and other measures and to maintain the European engagement despite the war in Ukraine, these policies potentially render the EU more relevant in and to the region but also globally.

As part of the competition for a new and modernised international system, rule, and standard setting e.g., governance, in strategic fields is of primordial importance.¹⁰⁶ This requires participation in regional and global endeavours. In the Indo-Pacific regional trade agreements, like RCEP and CPTPP, are particularly important. The SCO tries to get involved in governance building in the field of cyber security.

Global and regional respect for WTO rules is important. "Frameworks" like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), below the level of a formal FTA, risk to provide a platform for unilateral standard setting, with no or conditional market access, no most favoured nation (MFN) and without a dispute settlement procedure. This deprives weaker states of the protection of rules and regulations, the rule of law. This is also part of endeavours to create a new order instead of building on and improving the existing one.

¹⁰⁶ See Anu Bradford (2023). "Digital Empires". Oxford University Press, September 2023, 352 pp.

Technology as the game changer

Absolutely crucial and linked to the standard setting is to maintain a competitive edge in new technologies which underscores the importance of science diplomacy, the EU research funding schemes, such as Horizon Europe 2020. Providing risk capital, fostering primary research and cooperation with the private sector and incentives to invest in research are crucial for the EU not to fall behind. The need to overcome the European scepticism concerning science is an important task to accomplish in an all-in approach.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) has recently launched the Critical Technology Tracker,¹⁰⁷ an important first in international politics, which starts with a stern warning: “Western democracies are losing the global technological competition, including the race for scientific and research breakthroughs, and the ability to retain global talent – crucial ingredients that underpin the development and control of the world’s most important technologies, including those that don’t yet exist.”

Out of 44 critical technologies examined China leads in 37 technologies, with the U.S. leading in the other 7 technologies, and coming second in most of the technologies that China leads in. “For some technologies, all of the world’s top 10 leading research institutions are based in China and are collectively generating nine times more high-impact research papers than the second-ranked

¹⁰⁷ ASPI’s Critical Technology Tracker | Australian Strategic Policy Institute | ASPI Full report: Jamie Gaida, Jennifer Wong-Leung, Stephan Robin and Danielle Cave (2023). “ASPI’s Critical Technology Tracker: The global race for future power”. *Policy Brief Report, No. 69/2023, February 2023*; at [https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2023-03/ASPIs Critical Technology Tracker_0.pdf?VersionId=ndm5v4DRMfpLvu.x69Bi_VUdMVLp07jw](https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2023-03/ASPIs%20Critical%20Technology%20Tracker_0.pdf?VersionId=ndm5v4DRMfpLvu.x69Bi_VUdMVLp07jw)

country (most often the USA). Notably, the Chinese Academy of Sciences ranks highly (and often first or second) across many of the 44 technologies included in the Critical Technology Tracker.”

According to ASPI, “the data demonstrates that the USA and other democracies are being left behind in the global race for ascendancy in critical technologies.¹⁰⁸ The report recommends democratic nations pursue a strategic critical technology step-up through 24 policy recommendations.”

¹⁰⁸ David J. Bier (2023). “Abandoning the US, More Scientists Go to China”. *Cato Institute, Blog Home, 11 April 2023*; at Abandoning the US, More Scientists Go to China | Cato at Liberty Blog

Public goods need financing also in times of budgetary constraints

It is necessary to continue focusing and promoting the resolve to transforming economies in order not to lose another crucial fight, the one against climate change. This necessary fight suffers a second challenge within a short time: first, the COVID-19 pandemic got all the attention and money to develop vaccines and to invest in economies to overcome the economic costs of the pandemic and to avoid a recession.

Secondly, the energy crisis due to the weaponisation of energy as part of the illegal aggression against Ukraine by Russia, will slow the transition to renewable energies as CO2 intensive energy will not be easy to phase out as planned under the Paris Agreement. Emitting methane in large quantity because of the destruction of pipelines and additional CO2 because of burning gas aggravate the problem and could be considered as crimes in destroying public goods.

Furthermore, military spending for actual warfare and the intensification of an arms race already under way will siphon away capital needed to fight climate change in line with commitments made in the Paris Agreement process.

Rebuilding after the various crises will further add to the financial constraints. International reconstruction, Marshall Plans cannot be limited to the Ukraine only. The devastating earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, the failed state Lebanon, the South Sudan and

Somalia, Angola, Columbia, Venezuela, Pacific Island states to name just a few examples all need attention and support¹⁰⁹ e.g., inclusion of the Global South in the (Western) relief efforts.

A strategic approach is necessary to meet the challenges of Chinese competition and statecraft but also as a precautionary measure for future pandemics which will occur, which should not be blended out again (Spanish and Hongkong influenza, cholera, bubonic plague, smallpox, Ebola, SARS ...).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ CARE (2023). "Breaking the Silence: The 10 most under-reported humanitarian crises of 2022". 12 January 2023; at <https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/breaking-silence-10-most-under-reported-humanitarian-crises-2022>

¹¹⁰ Jarus Owen (2023). "The worst epidemics and pandemics in history". *Live Science*; at <https://www.livescience.com/worst-epidemics-and-pandemics-in-history.html> (accessed 6 March 2023).

Conclusions: The EU as the midwife of a new order?

The EU and its partners in the Indo-Pacific/Asia share similar interests in the Sino-USA conflict and struggle to find solutions to match their economic interests with their security interests. Alliance structures impact on economics (geoeconomics), implementing values can conflict with economic interests and may require compromises either way. Cooperation could enlarge the collective leverage in maintaining a rules-based order, although parts of the rules require rethinking and rewriting to prevent un-order where 'might is right' reigns supreme. A strong cooperative element strengthens multilateralism to avoid unilateral directorates which are exclusive by nature and largely to the detriment of the EU (East Asia Summit, Quad, AUKUS...)

The EU is also uniquely positioned as member in both, the G7 and G20; in Asia, only Japan shares this position. This puts a special responsibility on these two strategic partners which could jointly consult with other partners in the Indo-Pacific to make their views heard as part of the necessity to include the Global South into the international governance system. To this end it is necessary to avoid a eurocentric or Global West dominated view which prioritises problems and conflicts there over those in the Global South. A Sino-centric approach would also be a mistake – there are clear signs that China's rise is under severe strains, ranging from rapid greying of the work force, youth unemployment, real estate bubble and problems in the banking sector to negative reactions to the all-out control endeavours by the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of Xi Ji-ping hampering not only the political but also economic system.

The Indo-Pacific security hotspots in Asia – South and East China Sea, Taiwan Straits, Korean Peninsula, border conflict between

India and China – are of direct mutual importance because the EU and its partners depend on open and secure production and supply lines as well as shipping lanes to keep their economies afloat.

All these issues have a global impact, are linked to rule of law and therefore of common concern. Niccolò Machiavelli's policy imperative, '*divide et impera*', whether pursued by external or internal actors, should not have a chance to succeed in weakening the EU.

As a result, the EU is on a new track after COVID 19 and because of Russian aggression, it has become more hard power oriented as spelt out in the Strategic Compass and demonstrated by financing for the first time ever weapons for Ukraine, a party in a war.

A paradigm shift towards more realism without throwing idealism overboard is in the making, which needs conceptual work as started with the Strategic Compass and close cooperation in the Transatlantic and Transpacific landscapes with the USA and interested partners. This needs to be done in a cooperative manner where the EU pursues its own interests in a collaborative strategic autonomy which in turn need to be reciprocated to be viable.

Supporting or initiating diplomatic efforts by third parties to find a mutually acceptable solution to end the war in Ukraine would pay respect for an EU-diplomacy. Other candidates for an active peace diplomacy are India, China, and those who are already involved like Turkey. The Global South has tried through an initiative by the OAU which was impolitely rejected by President Putin; while trial and error is a valid maxim in diplomacy, others might like to show leadership, individually or collectively. Last but not least, the UN, which failed in the Security Council because of the involvement of the permanent member of the Council to preserve peace, could engage in such efforts mandated by the General Assembly in Uniting for Peace.

There is a lack of diplomatic efforts in Ukraine. Thus, diplomatic initiatives or support of others would help the EU to overcome

lingering doubts in Asia whether it is an actor in its own right which is able and willing to sustain two crises at the same time. This includes devoting attention, time and means to the burning problems of the Global South. As a regional power it needs to become sufficiently strong to act as an independent guarantor of peace in Europe below the level of an Article 5 case (collective defence) of NATO.

Managing the relationship with China is another test case for the EU: first, If China were to switch from its pro-Russian neutrality in the war with the Ukraine to pro-Russia in delivering weapons to a limitless friend in need, this would escalate the situation further to a dangerous level. Pre-emptive diplomacy is required to avoid such an escalation. While the EU is in a difficult position to act as a mediator for a cease-fire or peace because of its military support for the victim of Russian aggression, it could work with China to this end. This could strengthen the bilateral relations between the EU and China and contribute to avoiding the sanction case described below.

Second, if Europe joins the USA in sanctioning China, either in response to the delivery of weapons, use of force against Taiwan or to exclude China from knowledge required in the new technologies, the European way of engagement where possible, would come to an end. This would unify China and Russia even more. While in the first two case joining sanctions would be rather inevitable, the EU would have to consider its strategic position carefully considering its own interests. Trans-Atlantic coordination would be required to reach a common position. Now is still time for preventive diplomacy, where trade wars would be counterproductive. Economic security is essential, but its implementation through industrial policy domestically, and economic diplomacy internationally, needs careful analysis of gains and losses and an implementation with “Fingerspitzengefühl”.

These developments as well as the described transformative initiatives lead by China and supported by the Global South require reforms of the international order in deeds and not only words.

The North in general and the EU in particular should not resist legitimate reforms but rather take the lead which is always the better tactic. The countries pursuing a hedging policy in the Sino-USA great power conflict could be interested to cooperate with a benign power, like the EU, which also strives to pursue its interests on its own terms, e.g. shouldering strategic responsibility in pursuing cooperative autonomy.

They also signal a transition from idealism to realism: values based on foreign policy become more and more difficult in times of geopolitics and geoeconomics when the great power competition favours binary solutions. An old order vanishing and a new one only nascent with unclear contours, creating a highly volatile situation. In this process, basic rules of the road are common denominator for all to avoid wars, war-like situations and ‘might is right policies’ whether in the Global South, North, East or West. Becoming the mid-wife of a new order embodying common values would be an attractive but very demanding task. “Could such a challenge provide the unity of purpose and action to turn the EU into a global player, in addition to and in competition with the USA and China? After all, foreign policy starts at home.”¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Michael Reiterer (2023). “The Indo-Pacific taking centre-stage for the EU’s security policy”. *EuZ – Zeitschrift für Europarecht*, 07/2023, p. 1-18; at https://eizpublishing.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/EuZ-07-2023-Hakenberg-Reiterer-V1_02-20230824.pdf

Annex I: Chronology of the main policy papers/events of EU activities in relation to Asia/Indo-Pacific

1980: EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement, since 1977 EU first dialogue partner (longstanding ASEAN centrality), the first EU-ASEAN Summit celebrating the 45th anniversary was held on 14 December 2022; since 2020 they are tied by a **Strategic Partnership**¹¹² in addition to **Japan, China, India, South Korea** (four out of ten).

1994: Towards a **New Asia Strategy**¹¹³

1994: **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**: EU is a founding member.

1996: **Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)**¹¹⁴ including **Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF)**¹¹⁵, in view of APEC, weakness in EC-ASEAN Agreement and need to engage with Asia beyond ASEAN (ASEAN+3)

1996: **Europe-Asia Cooperation Strategy for Energy**¹¹⁶

2000: EU joins **Pacific Islands Forum**¹¹⁷

2001: **Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships**¹¹⁸

¹¹² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/asean/european-union-and-asean_en

¹¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A51994DC0314>

¹¹⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/asia-europe-meeting-asem_en

¹¹⁵ <https://asef.org/>

¹¹⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:51997IP0134&from=DE>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.forumsec.org/european-union/>

¹¹⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0469:FIN:EN:PDF>

2003: **European Security Strategy**¹¹⁹ (In an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand.)

2006: Observer status in **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**¹²⁰

2012: **Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia**¹²¹

2012: EU joins **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia**¹²²

2016: **Global Strategy**¹²³ (There is a direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security)

2016: **EU strategy with Myanmar/Burma**¹²⁴

2018: **Connecting Europe and Asia: Building blocks for an EU strategy**¹²⁵

2018: **Enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia**¹²⁶

2018: **EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement**¹²⁷; **Strategic Partnership Agreement**¹²⁸; **2019 Connectivity Partnership**¹²⁹

¹¹⁹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15895-2003-INIT/en/pdf>

¹²⁰ <https://www.saarc-sec.org/index.php/about-saarc/about-saarc>

¹²¹ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/97842.pdf

¹²² <https://asean-aipr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Treaty-of-Amity-and-Cooperation-in-Southeast-Asia-1976-TAC.pdf>

¹²³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en

¹²⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/st_10482_2016_init_en.pdf

¹²⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf

¹²⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35456/st09265-re01-en18.pdf>

¹²⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A22018A1227%2801%29>

¹²⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISUM:4359401>

¹²⁹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_partnership_on_sustainable_connectivity_and_quality_infrastructure_between_the_european_union_and_japan.pdf

2018: **Elements for an EU strategy on India**¹³⁰ (replacing 2004 EC Communication on India)

2019: **EU-China Strategic Outlook**¹³¹ (China: partner, competitor, systemic rival)

2022: **EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**¹³²

2022: **European Parliament resolution** of 7 June 2022 on the EU and the security challenges in the Indo-Pacific¹³³

2022: **EU-USA dialogue on China, EU-USA consultations on the Indo-Pacific**

2022: **Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**¹³⁴, Paris, 22 February 2022

2022: **EU The Global Gateway**¹³⁵: adds i.e., financial means to realise the projects defined in the Indo-Pacific Strategy

2022: **EU Strategic Compass**¹³⁶ (“A new centre of global competition has emerged in the **Indo-Pacific**, where geopolitical tensions endanger the rules-based order in the region and put pressure on global supply chains. The EU has a crucial geopolitical and economic interest in stability and security in the region.”)

¹³⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jc_elements_for_an_eu_strategy_on_india_-_final_adopted.pdf

¹³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-china-strategic-outlook-commission-contribution-european-council-21-22-march-2019_en

¹³² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-communication-indo-pacific_en

¹³³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0224_EN.html

¹³⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/ministerial-forum-cooperation-indo-pacific_en

¹³⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/joint_communication_global_gateway.pdf

¹³⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

2023: **European Economic Security Strategy**¹³⁷ promoting the EU's economic base and competitiveness; protecting against risks; and partnering with the broadest possible range of countries to address shared concerns and interests.

¹³⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0020>

Annex II: Lexical of abbreviations

ACT: Allies Command Transformation

AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

AP4: Asia-Pacific partners, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

ARF: ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASEM: Asia-Europe Meeting

ASPI: Australian Strategic Policy Institute

AUKUS: Australia, United Kingdom, and United States Partnership

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative

BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CFIUS: Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States

COVAX: COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access

CPTPP: Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

CRIMARIO: Critical Maritime Routes in the Indian Ocean

DIANA: Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic

DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea

EAS: East Asia Summit

EU: European Union

FTA: Free Trade Agreements

IPEF: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity

JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

MFN: Most favoured-nation

MTCR: Missile Technology Control Regime

NAPCI: Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NDPP: NATO Defense Planning Process

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PRC: People's Republic of China

Quad: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

RCEP: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

ROK: Republic of Korea

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

SHAPE: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

THAAD: Terminal High Altitude Area Defense

TPP: Trans-Pacific Partnership

TTC: Trade and Technology Council

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

WMD: Weapon of mass destruction

WTO: World Trade Organisation

The Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe was created in 1978 by Jean Monnet, the designer and first president of the first European Community (Coal and Steel) and was the first honorary citizen of Europe. He donated all his archives to the Foundation. As an independent institution serving the public interest, the Foundation is non-partisan and does not engage in lobbying. It receives support from the Canton of Vaud, the Swiss Confederation, and the City of Lausanne. It operates out of the Dorigny Farm, which is located on the campus of the University of Lausanne, its main partner.

The Foundation also keeps and provides access to numerous other private archives, including those of Robert Marjolin and the European papers of Robert Schuman and Jacques Delors, as well as images and audio-visual documents. In addition, it houses a specialised library and a European documentation centre, and it collects first-hand accounts from participants and observers through a filmed interview programme. It thus provides users, and especially researchers, with a coherent corpus of documentary resources on the origins and development of European integration and on Swiss-European relations.

Thanks to the internationally recognised importance of these collections and to the collaboration between Jean Monnet and Professor Henri Rieben, who chaired the Foundation until 2005, the Foundation is a focal point for European studies and an essential venue for meetings, debates and analyses about major issues facing Europe. It regularly organises conferences, European dialogues, and international symposia, forming partnerships with renowned institutions. It periodically awards its Gold Medal to prominent political figures who have worked for the common interest of Europeans; past laureates include José Manuel Barroso, Emilio Colombo, Mario Draghi, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jean-Claude Juncker, Helmut Kohl, Romano Prodi, Helmut Schmidt, Martin Schulz, Javier Solana, and Herman Van Rompuy. The Foundation receives many visitors, regularly provides assistance to researchers and is involved in training university students. Each year, the Foundation awards the Henri Rieben Scholarship to several advanced PhD students. With support from the Canton of Vaud, in 2016 the Foundation created a think tank whose experts are currently working on the challenges of Society 4.0.

Finally, the Foundation also produces a number of publications. The Red Books Collection, which was created by Henri Rieben in 1957, now comprises 219 titles, while the Debates and Documents Collection, a series of shorter publications in open access, was launched in 2014. Taken together, these publications highlight the Foundation's documentary collections and public events, as well as its members' and partners' expertise.

Both the Foundation Board, with more than 600 members from all over the world, and the Scientific Committee meet annually. Pat Cox, former president of the European Parliament and the European Movement International, has been president of the Foundation and its Executive Board since 1 January 2015. This role was held in the past by José María Gil-Robles (2009–2014), former president of the European Parliament and the European Movement International; Bronisław Geremek (2006–2008), member of the European Parliament and former minister of foreign affairs of Poland; and Henri Rieben (1978–2005), professor at the University of Lausanne. Since 2012, the Foundation has been led by Gilles Grin, who holds a PhD in international relations and is a lecturer at the University of Lausanne.

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This paper focuses on the Indo-Pacific region, examining the European Union's role in the ongoing conflict between the United States and China, set against the backdrop of the Ukraine war challenging the existing international order. The paper analyzes the dynamics involving China, the USA, Japan, and South Korea as well as the role of multilateralism and ASEAN centrality in preserving regional stability. It highlights the Korean Peninsula and North Korea's nuclear capabilities. The paper also delves into China and Russia's transformative agendas, the role of India as possible leader of the Global South, and the potential for a new global order. The European Union's opportunity to influence this new order through "cooperative autonomy" and adapting to geo-economic shifts and technological advancements is discussed.

Michael Reiterer has served as ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Korea; Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein as well as Minister, Deputy Head of Mission of the European Union to Japan and Counsellor for the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), as well as Counsellor and Minister-Counsellor at the Austrian Permanent Missions to the GATT and to the European Union.

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