



Recalibrating Europe's Role in the Indo-Pacific in an Era of Uncertainty *What can the EU do?*

Event Report

Date: 27 June 2024

Location: EIAS Brussels

This Roundtable Discussion, hosted by the European Institute of Asian Studies (EIAS) in collaboration with the University of East Anglia (UEA), convened academic experts and stakeholders to discuss Europe's evolving role in the Indo-Pacific. The conversation examined how the Indo-Pacific region could reshape European identity and policy amid ongoing issues like the Ukraine war, EU enlargement worries, and impending elections. The session was chaired by Lin Goethals, Director of the European Institute for Asian Studies. The panel featured distinguished experts in international relations and Asian studies.

Soul Park, a Lecturer in International Relations and Course Director for International Relations at the University of East Anglia, provided insights into the geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. He emphasised the region's significant military expenditures and the structural gaps in weapon procurement. He highlighted the importance of understanding the strategic aims of regional powers like India and Indonesia, and discussed how the EU can maintain the status quo by promoting democratic values and opening markets. He recommended the EU to aim for better coordination among member states and increased collaboration in the region.

Ra Mason, Sasakawa Associate Professor at the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies at the University of East Anglia, focused on Okinawa, Japan, as a keystone in Indo-Pacific geopolitics. Mason presented Okinawa as an opportunity for European engagement, noting its distinct economic and commercial interests compared to mainland Japan. He discussed the rivalry between China, Taiwan, and Japan, and suggested that Europe could play a mediating role. Mason stressed that while political rivalry remains a barrier, there are significant opportunities for economic collaboration.

Following the presentations, an interactive Q&A session with the audience encouraged deeper engagement and understanding of the issues discussed. Topics included the potential of QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and NATO in the Indo-Pacific, with Professor Mason noting that the QUAD has the potential for comprehensive balancing against China's



rise but remains dominated by the US agenda. The panel also touched on the AUKUS alliance and its implications for Europe.

The discussions reiterated the necessity for a realistic and concrete European Indo-Pacific engagement plan that leverages alliances and addresses issues. Europe's major focus will likely stay on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and other low-intensity conflicts in the region, but strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific is vital for establishing Europe's future policy and identity.