The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy: prospects for cooperation with South Korea

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KF-VUB KOREA CHAIR REPORT

THE EU'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY: PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION WITH SOUTH KOREA

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VUB BRUSSELS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The last couple of years have witnessed an outpouring of visions for regional order in the Indo-Pacific, the region spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific Island states. Following from the publication of a first outline in April 2021, the European Union (EU) formally presented its own long-awaited Indo-Pacific Strategy in September 2021. In the strategy the EU laid out how it will seek to "reinforce the rules-based international order, address global challenges, and lay the foundations for a rapid, just and sustainable economic recovery that creates long-term prosperity" in a region that EU High Representative Josep Borrell has called "the world's economic and strategy centre of gravity."[1] The publication of this strategy reflects the EU's commitment to implementing the ideas of its landmark 2016 Global Strategy to Asia. It emerged as the result of a long internal debate between the Union's 27 member states, incorporates their different priorities and bears testament to the EU's determination to establish itself as a credible and principled foreign policy actor in the region.[2]

As the successful implementation of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy depends on constructive cooperation with its partners in the region, this report seeks to understand the potential role of South Korea in this regard. The EU and South Korea are strategic partners, and South Korea is the only country in Asia with which the EU has three agreements covering the pillars of politics, economics and security in place. They currently cooperate in the areas of counter-piracy, cybersecurity, green growth and many others, and are both eager to expand their partnership going forward.[3] Building upon a comparative analysis of the

1 European External Action Service, 'The EU needs a strategic approach for the Indo-Pacific', 12 March 2021, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/94898/eu-needs-strategic-approach-indo-pacific_en> (accessed 13 July 2021); European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', 16 September 2021, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2021).

2 Eva Pesjova, 'The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy in 10 Point', *The Diplomat,* 20 April 2021.

3 Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Linde Desmaele and Maximilian Ernst, *EU-ROK Relations: Putting the Strategic Partnership to Work* (Brussels, Institute for European Studies and KF-VUB Korea Chair, 2018); Esther Chung, 'Indo-Pacific strategy signals renewed commitment: Top EU envoy', *Korea JoongAng Daily,* 10 May 2021; Alexandra Brzozowski, 'Ambassador: EU and South Korea born to be best like-minded partners', *Euractiv,* 5 May 2021.

EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and South Korea's New Southern Policy (Plus), this report identifies potential areas for increasing cooperation. It zooms in on four sectors in particular that are considered priorities today: health, physical connectivity, digital connectivity and maritime security. It concludes with a set of recommendations which will help the EU implement its strategy while at the same time consolidate (in the view of the authors) the EU-South Korea partnership through increased cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

1.1. The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy

The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy reflects the Union's determination to upgrade its role in the region and to better coordinate its ongoing activities in the region. The EU currently has five strategic partnerships in the region (with South Korea, Japan, China, India and most recently, ASEAN)[4] as well as four free trade agreements (with Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam).[5] It also has elaborated strategies on issues like maritime security and connectivity that apply to the Indo-Pacific region.[6] In addition, individual member states have sought to increase their role in the region in the past couple of years, as is clear from the publication of Indo-Pacific strategies or guidelines by France in 2018 (last updated 2021), and Germany and the Netherlands in 2020.[7] While the EU's efforts to strengthen its role in the Indo-Pacific predate the publication of the 2021 document, the new EU strategy is important because it makes explicit its

4 Laura Allison-Reumann, and Philomena Murray, 'What does the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership Mean?' *The Diplomat,* 30 January 2021; Michael Reiterer, 'The Role of "Strategic Partnerships" in the EU's Relations with Asia', in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

5 The EU also has general frameworks for bilateral economic relations in place with Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands; European Commission, 'Negotiations and Agreements', available at <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/negotiations-and-agreements/> (accessed 13 July 2021). It is currently negotiating free trade agreements with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand. Negotiations with ASEAN, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand are currently on hold; European Commission, 'Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)', available at <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/asean/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

6 Pierre Morcos, 'The European Union is Shaping Its Strategy for the Indo-Pacific', *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* 19 April 2021.

7 Gudrun Wacker, 'Europe and the Indo-Pacific: Comparing France, Germany and the Netherlands', *Elcano Royal Institute,* 9 March 2021; France published an updated strategy in 2021: France Diplomacy, 'The Indo-Pacific region: a priority for France', available at <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/asia-and-oceania/the-indo-pacific-region-a-priority-for-france/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

determination to adopt a more *strategic* approach to the region.[8] It serves as an enabling framework to project, connect and complement EU policies but does not seek to replace existing initiatives.

The 17-page long strategy document sets out the EU's long-term approach to the Indo-Pacific that is based on "promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and universally agreed commitments such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change."[9] The promotion of cooperation based on shared principles, values or mutual interest is at the core of the EU's vision for the region. The purpose of the Indo-Pacific Strategy is not solely to deepen engagement with existing partners and regional multilateral organisations like ASEAN, but also to enable cooperation with China in a manner consistent with the EU's 2019 Strategic Outlook on China. Inclusivity is central to the EU's approach and underlines the EU's recognition of the need to engage with China on issues of common interest.[10] Overall, however, the EU's strategy clearly hints at an attempt to diversify its partnerships and to join forces with 'middle powers' to enable the realisation of its interests in the region as geopolitical competition between the United States and China continues to intensify.[11] While the EU is in close consultation with the United States on issues relating to the Indo-Pacific, its approach is not fully aligned with Washington's approach of 'extreme competition' with China.[12] Investing in partnerships with other regional actors like ASEAN, India, Japan and also South Korea is of particular relevance in this regard.[13]

The need to address global challenges ranging from climate change and biodiversity to disaster risk reduction, pandemic management and sustainable and inclusive prosperity through "effective rules-based multilateralism" is

8 Michael Reiterer, 'The European Union in the Asia-Pacific: strategic reflections', in Weiqing Song and Jianwei Wang (Eds.) *The European Union in the Asia-Pacific: Rethinking Europe's Strategies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
9 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'.
10 Eva Pesjova,'The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy in 10 Points', *The Diplomat*, 20 April 2021.
11 Veerle Nouwens and Garima Mohan, 'Europe Eyes the Indo-Pacific, But Now it's Time to Act', *War on the Rocks,* 24 June 2021.
12 Demetri Sevastopoulo, 'Biden warns China will face "extreme competition" from US', *Financial Times,* 7 February 2021.
13 Lay Hwee Yeo, 'The EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership: What Next?', *CSDS Policy Brief,* 21 June 2021.

the central theme of the strategy. Moreover, the EU also wants to advance its economic agenda and is committed to further engagement on "open, sustainable and rules-based trade with partners in the Indo-Pacific region."[14] While it remains open to sustainable trade and investment, it will also be more assertive against unfair and coercive practices to ensure a level playing field.[15] Fostering sustainable connectivity is crucial in this context and has been a priority for the EU since the publication of the 2018 'Connecting Europe and Asia' strategy. Finally, in the security and defence sphere, the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy follows the policy paper 'Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia' (ESIWA) and prioritises transnational security issues such as free and open maritime supply routes.[16]

1.2. South Korea's New Southern Policy (Plus)

South Korea has so far remained hesitant to embrace the term 'Indo-Pacific' because of a widespread perception in Seoul that the concept is intrinsically anti-China.[17] South Korea is performing a delicate balancing act between the United States and China, and does not want to get drawn into the quagmire of Sino-American rivalry in the region. Thus, in November 2017, the Moon government set out its own approach to the region with the unveiling of its 'New Southern Policy' (NSP).[18] The main purpose of this policy is for South Korea to elevate its relations with South Asia and Southeast Asia, and thereby diversify South

14 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'.
15 European Parliament, 'Draft Report on new EU-China strategy', 30 April 2021, available at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/AFET-PR-691426_EN.pdf> (accessed 13 July 2021); European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy', available at <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2021/february/tradoc_159438.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2021).
16 Council of the European Union, 'Enhanced EU Security Cooperation in and with Asia – Council conclusions (28 May 2018)', available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35456/st09265-re01-en18.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2021); European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'.
17 Hayley Channer, 'South Korea Fails to Recognize Its Capacity to Shape the Indo-Pacific', *The Diplomat,* 30 June 2021.
18 New Southern Policy Special Committee, 'New Southern Policy', accessible at <http://nsp.go.kr/kor/main/main.do>; the NSP was announced together with the New Northern Policy that seeks to deepen engagement with North Korea, Russia, Mongolia and Central Asia.

Korean diplomacy from an excessive focus on Northeast Asia and the United States.[19] More concretely, the NSP puts a stronger focus on South Korea's relations with ASEAN and India based on the three pillars of 'people,' 'prosperity' and 'peace'. In November 2020, the Moon government announced a more advanced version of the strategy – or the NSP (Plus) strategy – which identified seven priority areas of cooperation for South Korea: public health, education and human capital development, cultural exchanges, economics, infrastructure development, future industries and non-traditional security.[20] While the scope of South Korea's strategy is significantly smaller than for the EU, it still offers an important indication of Seoul's foreign policy priorities. It offers a useful point of reference to assess areas of convergence with the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy described above.

A comparison of both strategies reveals several clear areas of overlap even if not in every policy area. Most importantly, both the EU and South Korea are interested in economic diversification to increase the resilience of their economies. Seoul also shares Brussels' emphasis on high-quality connectivity and infrastructure development to enable such diversification. A strong commitment to multilateralism and ASEAN centrality is another area of convergence. Finally, the NSP (Plus) focuses mostly on transnational security issues: climate change, maritime security, a loss of biodiversity but also the COVID-19 pandemic. This emphasis on soft security issues dovetails wells with Brussels' own approach and its efforts to present itself as a 'reliable and predictable' contributor to regional security and stability.[21]

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19 Government of the Republic of Korea, '2018 Defense White Paper', available at <https://www.mnd.go.kr/user/mndEN/upload/pblictn/PBLICTNEBOOK_201908070153390840.pdf> (accessed 13 July 2021); Jaehyeon Lee, 'South Korea's New Southern Policy and the US FOIP: Convergence or Competition?', in Kyle Springer (Ed.) *Embracing the Indo-Pacific? South Korea's Progress towards a Regional Strategy* (Crawley: Perth USAsia Centre, 2020).

20 Je-hae Do, 'Moon announces "New Southern Policy Plus strategy"', *The Korea Times,* 12 November 2020; Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, *New Southern Policy Plus* (Seoul: Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, 2021).

21 European External Action Service, 'The EU approach to the Indo-Pacific: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies', 3 June 2021, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/99501/eu-approach-indo-pacific-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-centre_en> (accessed 13 July 2021).

1.3. Towards EU-South Korea cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

Even if the EU and South Korea both prioritise their immediate neighbourhood in the formulation of foreign policy, they share a strong commitment to several basic principles of global politics: a rules-based international order, multilateralism and democracy. Starting from these shared broad principles underpinning both the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the South Korea's NSP (Plus), it is now up to the EU and South Korea to identify concrete options for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The EU and South Korea have a strong framework for cooperation in place that they have built over the past decade. The EU's increased interest in the Indo-Pacific creates a window of opportunity to deliver on the EU-South Korea Strategic Partnership in, among others, the four policy areas assessed in this report. While the importance of increasing cooperation in all four areas was already (if only implicitly) identified in the 2010 EU-South Korea Framework Agreement, much work remains to be done in the coming years.

Cooperation between the EU and South Korea occurs both bilaterally and in a broader multilateral setting. A key task going forward is to ensure that bilateral initiatives can serve as building blocks on which other partnerships can further build. Each chapter of the report unpacks the challenges and opportunities for EU-South Korea cooperation at both levels in the areas of health, physical connectivity, digital connectivity and maritime security, respectively. Building upon that, the final chapter presents a set of recommendations for strengthened cooperation to help safeguard both sides' interests in the near future.

2. HEALTH: UNTAPPED POTENTIAL, URGENT NEED FOR COOPERATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call for the international community, including of course the EU and South Korea. Pre-existing structures to prevent the spread of pandemics have proved inadequate. This is a warning that future health emergencies could not be dealt with either. In the early stages of the pandemic coordination was found wanting, including within the EU. As the

pandemic has continued, however, coordination has improved. Health authorities have been exchanging information, very transparently in most cases. The rapid development and manufacturing of vaccines has been a success story, with the EU and South Korea as two key actors since they are among the top five exporters worldwide. The COVAX Facility set up by the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations should eventually ensure that vaccines reach all the corners of the world. These instances of cooperation suggest that when there is political goodwill, health cooperation is achievable. However, the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines hitherto suggests that vaccine availability will more often than not favour the most developed countries.

The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy rightly prioritises the health sector as a new essential area for cooperation. The strategy focuses on ensuring the safety and diversification of pharmaceutical and health-related industrial supply chains; exchange of best practices in health systems, including crisis management, pandemic prevention or reciprocity in managing travel and open borders; and cooperation to develop healthier and environmentally friendly food systems. In short, the EU identifies improving the resilience of health systems as a priority as the world struggles to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.[22]

South Korea is a partner in prioritising cooperation in this area. The Moon Jae-in administration has stressed the need for international cooperation to address the current and future health emergencies.[23] In relation to the Indo-Pacific region, Seoul's NSP (Plus) makes clear the need to build strong public health systems, including cooperation to increase collaboration in epidemic response and public health. NSP (Plus) identifies health assistance, experience and expertise sharing, vaccine distribution through COVAX, capacity building or health dialogues as venues for cooperation.[24]

22 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', pp. 15-16.
23 Moon Jae-in, 'Address by President Moon Jae-in at 75th Session of UN General Assembly', 23 September 2020, available at <https://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/881> (accessed 12 July 2021).
24 Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, *New Southern Policy Plus* (Seoul: Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, 2021).

2.1. Bilateral cooperation

At the bilateral level, the EU and South Korea had already recognised the importance of cooperation in the health field in 2010 when they signed the EU-South Korea Framework Agreement. Unfortunately, cooperation has never taken off. COVID-19 served as a catalyst, as health bodies from both sides exchanged information at an early stage. The EU and South Korea have been among those demanding multilateral cooperation and greater transparency. There is willingness to work together and valorise this untapped potential urgently.

Title V, Article 21 of the EU-South Korea Agreed Framework of 2010 urges the parties "to encourage mutual cooperation and information exchange in the fields of health and the effective management of cross-border health problems".[25] But perhaps realising the limited cooperation in this area hitherto, the joint press release issued by Brussels and Seoul following their leaders' video conference meeting of June 2020 stressed that both sides "will seek to strengthen cooperation […] involving the respective health authorities and centers for disease control".[26]

As of 2021 there is no bilateral policy dialogue between the EU and South Korea in the area of health, even though the two sides have over 40 such dialogues. The closest existing bilateral structures to discuss health issues are the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee and the Pharmaceutical Products and Medical Devices Policy Dialogue.[27] But these are focused on technical aspects of sanitary, pharmaceutical and health cooperation. They are narrow in scope and they lack the public health cooperation component required to address pandemics and other major health issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, incited EU and South Korean health authorities to boost their cooperation. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Seoul's Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) have been cooperating throughout

25 *Framework Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States, of the One Part, and the Republic of Korea, on the Other Part* (Brussels, 10 May 2010).
26 *Joint Press Release: Republic of Korea-EU Leaders' Video Conference Meeting* (30 June 2020)
27 Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Linde Desmaele and Maximilian Ernst, *EU-ROK Relations: Putting the Strategic Partnership to Work* (Brussels, Institute for European Studies and KF-VUB Korea Chair, 2018).

the pandemic.[28] Similarly, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) have been sharing their information and expertise.[29] These are useful steps to continue building a sustainable and long-term cooperation framework. The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy advocates the need to exchange best practice in areas like crisis management or pandemic prevention.

The EU and South Korea both would profit from a regular interagency dialogue on health cooperation with the Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG Sante), the Directorate-General for Trade in charge of agriculture, food and sanitary and phytosanitary matters (DG Trade D3), EMA, ECDC and/or EIT Health present. On the South Korean side, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, MFDS, KDCA, Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs and/or Korea Public Health Association could be among the participating bodies. Such a dialogue would allow sharing of knowledge and best practices, help develop people-to-people links and informal networks and create a framework for emergencies such as epidemics or new pandemics.

The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy also calls for ensuring the safety and diversification of pharmaceutical and health-related industrial supply chains. China, India and South Korea are the three largest manufacturers and exporters of vaccines in Asia.[30] India's strength is the production of generic pharmaceuticals; when the country was severely hit by COVID-19 an export ban was enacted. In contrast, South Korea has become a key manufacturing hub of COVID-19 vaccines. AstraZeneca, Moderna, Novavax and Pfizer are among the drug firms to have signed or are in discussion to open vaccine manufacturing facilities in South Korea.[31] South Korea is bidding to become a leading drug producer and exporter while the EU is seeking to move away from manufacturing sensitive products in China, which makes a perfect match with South Korea. In the quest for supply chain diversification, South Korea – along with India – is likely to emerge as a main hub in Asia.

28 *Joint Press Release: Republic of Korea-EU Leaders' Video Conference Meeting.*
29 Ibid.
30 Yuka Hayashi, Sabrina Siddiqui and Andrew Restuccia, 'U.S. to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Experts Amid Global Pressure', *The Wall Street Journal,* 17 May 2021.
31 Sangmi Cha, 'S. Korea in talks with mRNA vaccine makers to make up to 1bln doses – govt official', *Reuters,* 5 July 2021.

Another potential area for cooperation is R&D. The EU prioritises the development of pharmaceutical products and research on diseases as part of its global health policy.[32] Brussels and Seoul already have the framework for cooperation in place, thanks to three science and technology agreements that they signed in 2006.[33] Horizon Europe, which South Korean universities and research centres have access to,[34] provides the necessary funds. This also meets the interests of South Korea: successive South Korean governments have prioritised health-related R&D since the early 1990s.[35] This fits with the EU's goal, laid down in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, to boost cooperation with technologically advanced, like-minded partners such as South Korea.

2.2. Multilateral cooperation

Multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region can take place on two levels: in the Indo-Pacific itself and as part of global cooperation.

On the global level, the EU and South Korea are active members of WHO, the Global Health Policy Forum, the Global Health Security Initiative and four multilateral initiatives with the goal to coordinate action and share information on the approval and regulation of pharmaceutical products.[36] Leaders confirmed in their June 2020 joint statement 'their support to the World Health Organization',[37] in line with their commitment to multilateralism and global governance. In walking the talk, the EU and South Korea are large financial and vaccine contributors to COVAX.

32 Susan Berger and Maike Voss, 'EU Global Health Policy: An Agenda for the German Council Presidency', *SWP Comment 2020 C/12*, March 2020.
33 See Council of the European Union, 'Treaties Office Database', 2021, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/treaties-agreements/> (accessed 12 July 2021).
34 European Commission, 'Horizon Europe', 2021, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en> (accessed 12 July 2021).
35 Ramon Pacheco Pardo and Jeong-ho Lee, *South Korea's COVID-19 Success: The Role of Advance Preparations* (Brussels: Institute for European Studies and KF-VUB Korea Chair, 2020).
36 Ramon Pacheco Pardo, 'Public Health Cooperation between Korea and Europe Post-COVID-19: The EU's Perspective', in Mario Esteban and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (Eds.) *Public Health in Korea and Europe: Contemporary Challenges and Possibilities for Cooperation* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 2021).
37 *Joint Press Release: Republic of Korea-EU Leaders' Video Conference Meeting.*

On the Indo-Pacific level the EU and South Korea have ample possibilities to cooperate and make a difference: both Southeast and South Asia are short on vaccines. Considering the regions' combined population of around 2.4 billion people and health infrastructure lagging behind Europe's and Northeast Asia's,[38] distributing sufficient COVID-19 vaccines to people across both regions is going to be a logistical challenge. The EU and South Korea should coordinate through COVAX and together with other partners such as Australia, Japan or the United States to ensure that a large percentage of the populations of Southeast and South Asia is fully vaccinated by 2022. Indeed, "to secure access to the COVID-19 vaccine" for low and middle-income countries in the Indo-Pacific is a priority set out in the September 2021 strategy towards the region.[39] After all, the COVID-19 pandemic will not be over until the whole world is safe from the virus.

Quad could be a partner in the region, as its leaders agreed to "join forces to expand safe, affordable, and effective production and equitable access" during their March 2021 meeting.[40] However, India – which was going to be the Quad member in charge of vaccine manufacturing – has, as mentioned above, banned exports until it has the pandemic under control internally.[41] South Korea has already expressed its commitment to cooperate with the Quad on an issue-by-issue basis, through its NSP (Plus) strategy.[42] Vaccine manufacturing and distribution is one of the areas in which South Korea could clearly cooperate with the Quad, as Seoul and the Biden Administration have indicated on several occasions. The same applies to the EU were there to be interest in working together with the Quad in this area. Without the need to become members, Brussels and Seoul could cooperate with the Quad for the benefit of the Indo-Pacific region.

38 Angela Clare, 'COVID-19 in South and Southeast Asia: A Quick Guide', 7 September 2020, available at <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Quick_Guides/COVIDSouthAsia> (accessed 12 July 2021).
39 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 15.
40 *Joint Press Release: Republic of Korea-EU Leaders' Video Conference Meeting.*
41 Stephanie Findlay and David Pilling, 'Indian Vaccine Maker Extends Freeze on Export of Covid Jabs', *Financial Times,* 18 May 2021.
42 Elizabeth Shim, 'South Korea Could Work with Quad on Aligned Issue, Report Says', ***UPI***, 6 April 2021.

Cooperation in the distribution of vaccines could also serve to upgrade the healthcare infrastructure of these two regions with an interest in the Indo-Pacific. The EU is developing a strategy to build 'high impact projects' across the world.[43] It also endorsed the Build Back Better for the World partnership at the June 2021 G7 summit.[44] Proposed by the Biden Administration, this initiative seeks to build high-quality infrastructure across the world. South Korea, meanwhile, has been boosting the number and scope of its infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region.[45] As invited G7 guest South Korea endorsed the Build Back Better for the World initiative, mentioned in the G7 Open Societies Statement that Seoul signed,[46] Brussels and Seoul could work with other G7+ members to improve the health infrastructure of the region.

COVID-19 has raised awareness for the need for safe and diversified pharmaceutical and health-related industrial supply chains. This is a priority clearly laid out in the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy of September 2021, with an emphasis on "quality medicines and health products".[47] The EU and South Korea could partner with Indo-Pacific countries such as India, Japan or Singapore. All three are very competitive in this sector, including R&D and manufacturing.[48] R&D by definition has to be open to other technologically advanced countries like the US. In fact, Brussels, Seoul and other like-minded partners from the Indo-Pacific and beyond could seek to cooperate to set updated standards for the research, approval and regulation of pharmaceutical products. As drug firms diversify their supply chains backed by their home country governments, the Indo-Pacific is likely to emerge as a key region in these efforts.

The EU and South Korea agree that inclusiveness is essential to secure and develop the health sector, which is also clearly spelt out in the Indo-Pacific

43 Stuart Lau, 'EU Starts Work on Rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Politico,* 6 July 2021.
44 *Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communique,* 13 June 2021.
45 Chiew-Ping Hoo, 'A View from Southeast Asia on South Korea', *The Asan Forum*, 23 April 2019.
46 *2021 Open Societies Statement,* 12 June 2021.
47 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 15.
48 Alex Philippidis, 'Top 10 Asia Biopharma Clusters 2019', *Gen*, 21 October 2019.

Strategy[49] and supported by the Moon Jae-in administration.[50] In contrast to the US, they believe that it is beneficial to cooperate with Beijing in areas of common interest, which includes fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and preventing future ones. However, there is mistrust towards China in both Brussels and Seoul due to its alleged lack of transparency in the early stages of the pandemic. The EU and South Korea will probably need to work with other partners in the Indo-Pacific to build trust and find a way to involve China in some aspects of health cooperation.

2.3. Concluding observations

As a result of their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of the EU's recently released Indo-Pacific Strategy, the EU and South Korea should be poised to boost cooperation in the health sector. So far, this is an area in which bilateral cooperation between Brussels and Seoul has clearly been inadequate. And WHO-led global governance has failed, as laid bare by the organisation's inability to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Increasing bilateral cooperation through a dialogue or joint R&D projects would signal that the EU and South Korea have entered a new phase in the area of health cooperation.

In turn, bilateral cooperation should help to boost and run in parallel with cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region. Countries in Southeast and South Asia need external support to procure vaccines and upgrade their health infrastructures. Countries such as Australia, Japan or the US have plans to lend their support in these areas. It would make sense for the EU and South Korea to join efforts with their like-minded partners. Neither the EU nor South Korea has the power or leverage to shape the Indo-Pacific region by itself. In joining multilateral efforts and working in the Indo-Pacific they can leverage their influence and assist in capacity-building in an area where no country can fend for itself.

49 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', pp. 15-16.
50 *U.S.-ROK Leaders' Joint Statement* (Washington, DC, 21 May 2021).

3. PHYSICAL CONNECTIVITY: OPPORTUNITIES WAITING FOR INVESTMENTS

This report defines physical connectivity as issues of supply chains and infrastructure for the movement of goods and people. The Council of the European Union "notes that the Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the fundamental importance of connectivity for economic growth, security and resilience" and "considers that strategic implementation of the EU connectivity agenda would boost the EU's competitiveness, contribute to the diversification of value chains, [and] reduce strategic dependencies, including on critical raw materials".[51] The EU and South Korea are on the opposite ends of Eurasia; the quality of the physical connection between Europe and Asia is of vital importance to the economic and political interests of both partners.

Economically, the EU is South Korea's third largest export market; South Korea is the EU's eighth largest export destination for goods. The EU is the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Korea with an FDI stock of €44 billion in 2019, while South Korea's FDI in the EU reached €29 billion in 2019.[52] In addition to these strong bilateral economic ties, they share strong interests in the development of physical connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region. The region "produces almost 60% of global GDP", "contributes two thirds of global growth", and "is central to global value chains, international trade and investment flows".[53] Given that wealth flows where physical connectivity is better developed, both the EU and South Korea are trying to ensure that the physical connectivity through the Indo-Pacific is developed in a way that serves their economic interests.

Politically, the Indo-Pacific has become the main stage for geopolitical competition between the United States and China. This will inevitably affect the foreign policy of both the EU and South Korea. South Korea is a decades-old

51 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions – A Globally Connected Europe', 12 July 2021, p. 3, available at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10629-2021-INIT/en/pdf>, (accessed 14 July 2021).
52 The European Commission, 'South Korea', available at <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-korea/> (accessed 13 July 2021).
53 European External Action Service, 'EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', Factsheet, April 2021, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu-indo-pacific_factsheet_2021-04_v.5.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2021).

military ally of the United States and hosts about 28,500 US troops. US military bases are geographically closest to Beijing. In the European context, 21 of 27 EU members are allied with the United States through NATO. Because of these alliance ties, shared democratic values and concerns about the increasing global influence of China, the EU and South Korea are concerned about China's role in the physical connectivity of the Indo-Pacific. These concerns extend even to Europe itself, where Chinese investments in infrastructure projects such as highways, ports, power plants and rail links have raised concerns about their political implications. Beyond the risk of creating direct security vulnerabilities, critics worry that China's connectivity investments buy Beijing political influence within the EU.[54] The EU adopted a regulation in March 2019 "for the screening of investments from non-EU countries (foreign direct investment) that may affect security or public order".[55] Outside its own territories, the EU has less political power to counter influence attempts by Beijing, and the EU has reasons to cooperate with like-minded partners such as South Korea to prevent the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) from making China's political influence unduly strong in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, however, China is also a crucial economic partner for both the EU and South Korea and plays an important role in issues Brussels and Seoul care about, such as climate change and diplomacy surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. In this sense, the EU and South Korea need not only to balance the increasing influence of China but also to avoid the escalation of tensions between the United States and China.

Thus, there is much room for cooperation on physical connectivity between the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and South Korea's policy towards the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

3.1. Bilateral cooperation

Despite the overlapping interests, the EU-South Korea bilateral cooperation on physical connectivity has been rather limited so far. On the one hand, this is

54 For instance, such a "concern was voiced loudly in the media when Greece was blocking an EU statement regarding human rights violations by China shortly after COSCO acquired the majority share of the port in Piraeus in 2016". Julia Gruebler, 'China Connecting Europe?', *Asia Europe Journal,* 7 July 2021.
55 European Commission, 'Screening of foreign direct investment', available at <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2006>. Last updated on 23 June 2021.

not surprising given the physical distance between them and the fact that the investments for physical connectivity are most needed in third countries lying between them. On the other hand, however, the EU has already developed bilateral institutional cooperation on physical connectivity with East Asian neighbours of South Korea—China and Japan. For instance, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport and the National Development and Reform Commission of China established the EU-China Connectivity Platform in 2015 to explore opportunities for cooperation between the EU's approach to connectivity and China's BRI.[56] The EU and Japan signed in September 2019 the Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure "based on sustainability as a shared value, quality infrastructure and their belief in the benefits of a level playing field", implicitly countering China's BRI.[57] The major themes of the EU-Japan agreement are echoed in the EU-India Connectivity Partnership launched in May 2021.[58]

The EU and South Korea already have a solid base to build on for their collaboration in physical connectivity: in the 2010 Framework Agreement the EU and South Korea had already agreed to cooperate on transport (Article 18) and maritime transport policy (Article 19).[59] In June 2020, the EU and South Korea signed a Horizontal Aviation Agreement.[60] The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy of September 2021 states that the EU "will aim to promote all dimensions of connectivity with Indo-Pacific partners" and "strengthen relations at the highest technical level through its Transport Dialogues with partners in the region, such

56 European Commission, 'The EU-China Connectivity Platform', available at <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international/eu-china-connectivity-platform_en> (accessed 14 July 2021).
57 European External Action Service, 'The Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between the European Union and Japan', 27 September 2019, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_partnership_on_sustainable_connectivity_and_quality_infrastructure_between_the_european_union_and_japan.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2021).
58 Council of the European Union, 'EU-India Connectivity Partnership', available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/08/eu-india-connectivity-partnership-8-may-2021/> (accessed 14 July 2021).
59 European External Action Service, 'Framework agreement between the European Union and its Member States, on the one part, and the Republic of Korea, on the other part', 10 May 2010, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/korea_south/docs/framework_agreement_final_en.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2021).
60 European Commission, 'European Union signs aviation agreement with the Republic of Korea', 25 June 2020, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1151> (accessed 14 July 2021).

as ASEAN, Singapore and Japan, and shortly with the Republic of Korea and Australia".[61] Moreover, both the EU and South Korea have been individually developing strategies to better connect Asia and Europe.

The Council of the European Union issued its conclusions on an EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific only in April 2021, but its 2016 Global Strategy had already emphasised "a direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security" and declared that the EU would "deepen economic diplomacy and scale up" its "security role in Asia".[62] A focus on connectivity between the two regions subsequently became a major theme for the EU's policy towards Asia. In the joint communication on connecting Europe and Asia adopted in September 2018, the EU proposed that it will engage Asian partners (1) "by contributing to efficient connections and networks between Europe and Asia through priority transport corridors, digital links and energy cooperation at the service of people and respective economies", (2) "by establishing partnerships for connectivity based on commonly agreed rules and standards enabling a better governance of flows of goods, people, capital and services", and (3) "by contributing to address the sizeable investment gaps through improved mobilisation of resources, reinforced leveraging of EU's financial resources and strengthened international partnerships".[63] Many saw this EU Connectivity Strategy as a response to China's BRI, which had created concerns about financial and environmental sustainability.[64]

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed risks inherent in global physical connectivity and also created large disruptions of the movement of people world-wide. This was in turn an incentive for the EU to actively develop global physical connectivity. The shortage of medical supplies due to the pandemic has led many, including EU policymakers, to reflect critically on the supply chains that heavily rely on

61 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 12.
62 European External Action Service, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy', p. 37, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2021).
63 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy', 19 September 2018, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018JC0031&from=EN> (accessed 15 July 2021).
64 Enrico D'Ambrogio, 'Prospects for EU-Asia connectivity: The "European way to connectivity"', European Parliamentary Research Service, April 2021.

one country like China. Governments and the private sector have emphasised the need for diversifying global supply chains.[65] Such a shift impacts directly on physical connectivity, which needs to be adapted and diversified.

Following the Free Trade Agreement, Framework Agreement and Strategic Partnership with the EU, the last decade has seen a steady development of South Korea's efforts to connect better to Europe. Then South Korean President Park Geun-hye launched in 2013 the Eurasia Initiative, which emphasised the strengthening of connectivity between Asia and Europe. Her North East Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative also had a strong physical infrastructure element as part of functional cooperation. The Park administration subsequently focused on contributing to physical connectivity, digital connectivity and cultural and educational connectivity.[66] South Korea also made use of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in organising the Symposium on Eurasia Transport and Logistics Network in September 2015; this was followed in July 2016 by the ASEM Eurasia Expert Group Meeting on Transport and Logistics.

With a new geographical focus on Southeast Asia and South Asia, President Moon Jae-in in November 2017 launched the NSP. According to a member of the advisory group for the presidential committee on the NSP, "diversification, realignment, and rebalancing are the key elements in Seoul's NSP drive, transcending the narrow boundaries of Seoul's economic and diplomatic relations, which have been heavily dependent on only 'major countries' such as the United States, Japan, China, etc".[67] Moon has demonstrated his commitment to the NSP by having visited all 10 ASEAN member states by September 2019. In November 2019, the South Korea-ASEAN commemorative summit was held in Busan.[68] The Korea International Cooperation Agency in May 2019 announced that it would

65 Jakob Hanke Vela, 'Coronavirus won't kill globalization, but will clip its wings', *Politico,* 7 April 2020.
66 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea, '2016 Diplomatic White Paper', p. 223, available at <https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5684/view.do?seq=317959&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=1&titleNm=.> (accessed 16 July 2021).
67 Wongi Choe, '"New Southern Policy": Korea's Newfound Ambition in Search of Strategic Autonomy', *Asie.Visions,* No. 118, Ifri, January 2021, p. 7.
68 'Co-Chairs' Statement of the 2019 ASEAN-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit', 26 November 2019, available at <https://asean.org/co-chairs-statement-of-the-2019-asean-republic-of-korea-commemorative-summit/> (accessed 15 July 2021).

double its Official Development Assistance for six Southeast Asian countries by 2023.[69] The central focus of the NSP has been on development cooperation, with transportation infrastructure development as one of the major investment targets.[70] In November 2020, President Moon announced the NSP (Plus), partly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; South Korea pledged to continue its contribution to "enhancing the connectivity among ASEAN countries" and "will encourage the participation of Korean companies by providing additional project financing for smart cities and transportation infrastructure in the NSP region".

Because physical connectivity has geopolitical implications, cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between the EU and South Korea will be influenced by their respective policies towards the United States and China, but this does not preclude functional cooperation between them. An analysis of Germany's 'Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific' points out that South Korean construction and engineering companies could become good partners for German investors in the Indo-Pacific and that the EU's 'Connecting Europe and Asia' project could "offer Korean companies a reliable alternative to participation in BRI projects".[71] Highlighting the similarities between the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and South Korea's NSP, South Korea's ambassador in Brussels in May 2021 remarked that "[South] Korea and the EU are on the same page" in their approach towards the region, but he also emphasised the importance of inclusiveness and a cooperative mindset rather than geopolitical competition for their Indo-Pacific strategies.[72]

3.2. Multilateral cooperation

For both the EU and South Korea, multilateral cooperation is the best instrument to effectively balance against the worrisomely large influence of China in physical

69 'S. Korea's aid agency to double ODA to ASEAN countries by 2023', *Yonhap News Agency,* 17 May 2019,.
70 Choe, 'New Southern Policy'.
71 Eric J. Ballbach and Laura Morazzini, 'A Restrained Embrace: South Korea's Response to Germany's Indo-Pacific Strategy', *SWP Comment,* No. 13, February 2021, available at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2021C13_SouthKorea_Indo_Pacific.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2021). Private firms, however, may be wary of the impact of such initiatives on their market shares.
72 Alexandra Brzozowski, 'Ambassador: EU and South Korea born to be best like-minded partners', *EURACTIV.com,* 5 May 2021.

connectivity while also avoiding the negative fallout of Sino-US geopolitical competition. As in their bilateral cooperation, however, the EU and South Korea pay attention to preferences of the United States and China for multilateral cooperation in physical connectivity.

G20 is a particularly relevant multilateral forum as it includes China, the United States, the EU and South Korea as well as other major economies of the world. In its pursuit of connectivity partnerships for sustainable infrastructure and a level playing field, for example, the Council of the European Union "considers the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment (G20 QII Principles) and G20 Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Financing as the baseline, with the need for more ambition".[73] The Council also encourages the use of multilateral tools such as the Public Investment Management Assessment of the International Monetary Fund and the Public-Private Partnerships Fiscal Risk Assessment Model of the World Bank.[74]

On the issue of supply chains, the leaders of the G7 summit meeting in Cornwall in June 2021, which the EU is a member of and South Korea attended as invited guest along with Australia, India and South Africa, declared that they "will consider mechanisms and share best practices to address risks to the resilience of the critical global supply chains, in areas such as critical minerals and semiconductors".[75] This is consistent with what the EU and South Korea have been working on with the United States, and it implicitly expresses concerns about the role of China in supply chains.[76] Multilateral cooperation is

73 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions – A Globally Connected Europe', 12 July 2021, p. 3, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10629-2021-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed 20 July 2021).
74 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions – A Globally Connected Europe', p. 5.
75 Group of Seven, 'Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communique: Our Shared Agenda for Global Action to Build Back Better', 13 June 2021, p. 9, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50361/carbis-bay-g7-summit-communique.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2021).
76 See, for example, Council of the European Union, 'EU-US Summit 2021 Statement: Towards a renewed Transatlantic partnership', 15 June 2021, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50758/eu-us-summit-joint-statement-15-june-final-final.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2021); The White House, 'U.S.-ROK Leaders' Joint Statement', 21 May 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/21/u-s-rok-leaders-joint-statement/> (accessed 21 July 2021). The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy of September 2021 also notes that the EU will cooperate with Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea to "address strategic dependencies in supply chains" for semiconductors. See European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p.6.

not always inclusive and can work against parties excluded from it. In this sense, some countries might prefer to shift the forum for cooperation away from G20, which includes China.

China, of course, is not the only one that has to worry about negative implications of multilateral cooperation by others. For instance, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) includes China and South Korea with other 13 Asia-Pacific states, and neither the United States nor the EU is part of it. Analysts have pointed out the risk of the RCEP members shifting their supply chains away from Europe as well as the risk that Europe's role as a standard-setter will be reduced.[77]

3.3. Concluding observations

To conclude, in overcoming past inertia the EU and South Korea have many opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in physical connectivity. In order to meet China's strength in financing projects, the EU and South Korea need to join efforts in offering alternatives. Provided that the momentum of the NSP (Plus) will not be lost after the next South Korean president takes office in May 2022, Southeast Asia would be a good place for physical connectivity cooperation between South Korea and the EU. In fact, the EU is expected to step up its connectivity cooperation with ASEAN based on the 'EU-ASEAN Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity' issued in December 2020.[78]

South Korea has been reluctant to embrace US and Japanese Indo-Pacific concepts for fear of provoking China. However, the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy is clearly inclusive and open, which is an important bridge for South Korea to join. Therefore, the EU and South Korea should follow previous examples (Japan, India) and conclude a connectivity partnership, which could become part of a network of partnerships in the larger Indo-Pacific context. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation and openness could ease the geopolitical competition between China and the United States.

77 Eleanor Mears, '5 reasons the Asia-Pacific trade deal matters for Europe', 19 November 2020, *Politico.*
78 Council of the European Union, 'EU-ASEAN joint ministerial statement on connectivity', 1 December 2020, available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/01/eu-asean-joint-ministerial-statement-on-connectivity/.

4. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY: FOR A GLOBAL, OPEN, FREE, STABLE AND SECURE CYBERSPACE

The 2018 ESIWA policy paper reflects the EU's conviction that the security of Asia and Europe is intertwined and indivisible, that strategic and like-minded partners need to work together. Recognising the importance of the Asia-Pacific[79] and now Indo-Pacific, the EU has continuously enhanced its engagement with Asian partners in general, and South Korea in particular.[80] This engagement is based on the notion of comprehensive security, eg, traditional and non-traditional threats and challenges.

Cyber-security is part of this comprehensive security and enhanced cooperation would not only render the strategic partnership more effective but also provide South Korea with the sought-for opportunity to diversify its political and security relations: China is its number one trading partner, the US its number one security provider. The EU is the number one investor in South Korea and the number one promotor of the rule of law and multilateralism – essential ingredients for the political system. The 'might is right' formula is detrimental to middle powers like South Korea.

4.1. Cyber-security as part of comprehensive security

Cyber-security sticks out from the other areas of bilateral security cooperation, namely nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; space policy and technology; and preventive diplomacy and the mentioned crisis management. As in any security consideration in the region, this is of particular importance as North Korea has already been identified several times as the originator of cyberattacks; ransom earned is a main source for financing the nuclear and missiles programmes which are part of the global threat scenario. Thus, this security threat has to be addressed in a larger context including the Indo-

79 Michael Reiterer, 'The European Union in the Asia Pacific – Strategic reflections,' in Weiqing Song and Jianwei Wang, *The European Union in the Asia Pacific: Rethinking Europe's Strategies and Policies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 17-38.
80 Nicola Casarini, 'The EU's Growing Security Cooperation With South Korea,' *The Diplomat,* 25 March 2021.

Pacific, a region which has moved quickly in the focus of international attention as evidenced by various strategies, guidelines and policy papers. Following France, Germany and the Netherlands, the EU published a first outline for its own strategy in April 2021 and a final version in September 2021 based on a thorough discussion with stakeholders.

4.2. EU-South Korea cooperation in cyber

Reminiscent of hacker attacks on the EU and South Korea and taking into account the ongoing EU-South Korea cyber dialogue which started in 2013,[81] cybersecurity was chosen as one of the pilot projects of the EU and South Korea in the implementation programme of the above-mentioned ESIWA policy.

The EU-South Korea Cyber Consultations on 6-7 October 2020 in the form of a track 1.5 event was the kick-off to this programme. Under the heading 'Resilience and Trust in Cyberspace', topics covered included (i) Building Resilient Critical Infrastructures in Crisis; (ii) Building Trust to Prevent Cyber Conflict Escalation; (iii) Managing the Geopolitics of 5G; and (iv) Combatting Cybercrime.[82]

This seminar, which included both officials and academics, was followed by the 6th Annual European Union – Republic of Korea Cyber Dialogue in November 2020.[83] The EU and South Korea share the view that cyberspace needs to be open, free, stable and secure. Cybersecurity is heavily influenced by the fast-developing emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT). Therefore, threat scenarios change quickly, rendering cooperation, sharing of information among like-minded partners, as well as

81 George Christou and Ji Soo Lee, 'EU-ROK cooperation on cyber-security and data protection', in Nicola Casarini, *EU-Korea Security Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 67.
82 See Delegation of the European Union to Korea, 'EU-ROK Cyber Consultations, 6-7 October 2020', 10 July 2020, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south-korea/86480/eu-rok-cyber-consultations-6-7-october-2020_en (accessed 16 July 2021).
83 European Commission, '6th annual European Union – Republic of Korea Cyber Dialogue', 25 November 2020, available at <https://cdn4.euraxess.org/worldwide/south-korea/6th-annual-european-union-%E2%80%93-republic-korea-cyber-dialogue> (accessed 7 July 2021); see also Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, '5th ROK-EU Cyber Policy Consultation and 2nd Meeting of ROK-EU Specialised Working Group on Counter-Terrorism Take Place', 1 July 2019, available at <https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=320587&srchFr=&amp%3Bsrch-To=&amp%3BsrchWord=&amp%3BsrchTp=&amp%3Bmulti_itm_seq=0&amp%3Bitm_seq_1=0&amp%3Bitm_seq_2=0&amp%3Bcompany_cd=&amp%3Bcompany_nm=> (accessed 7 July 2021).

cooperation in research and development crucial. At the same time, it is necessary to contribute to global trust-building through confidence- and capacity-building measures in order to facilitate international agreement, in particular within the UN framework. Supporting the establishment of a Programme of Action on advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace is part of this endeavour to form a consensus on cyber issues in the context of international law within the United Nations.

The EU can already draw on a broad programme[84] to address cybersecurity, domestically and internationally, through a specific cyber diplomacy toolbox. Part of this box is the 2019 cyber sanction regime which was applied for the first time in 2020 in form of "targeted restrictive measures" against Russian and Chinese persons and legal entities. The latter included one in North Korea in response to attacks ('WannaCry', 'NotPetya', 'Operation Cloud Hopper') against the EU, its Member States and also the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.[85]

The EU was able to trace the attack back to its roots, overcoming false flags, proxies and other difficulties of finding the origin of a cyberattack.[86] This 'first' can be a strong incentive for South Korea to deepen cooperation with the EU in learning from experience. Furthermore, sanction regimes are the more effective the more participants apply them. Multilateralisation of sanctions is also an important enabler – individual and/or weaker countries are less inclined to revert to sanctions even if the origin has been established because of the threat of reprisals in the form of counter-actions, whether in cyberspace or in another area. Concretely, it is rather unlikely that South Korea would unilaterally sanction China after a cyberattack; memories of the countermeasures taken after the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) are still fresh.

84 Council of the European Union, 'Cybersecurity: how the EU tackles cyber threats', available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cybersecurity/> (accessed 5 July 2021).
85 Franck Dumortier, Vagelis Papakonstantinou, and Paul de Hert, 'EU sanctions against cyber-attacks and defense rights: Wanna Cry?', *European Law Blog,* 28 September 2021, available at https://europeanlawblog.eu/2020/09/28/eu-sanctions-against-cyber-attacks-imposed-and-defense-rights-wanna-cry/.
86 Hannes Ebert and Laura Groenendaal, 'Cyber Resilience and Diplomacy in the Republic of Korea: Prospects for EU Cooperation', *The German Marshall Fund and EU Cyber Direct,* August 2020, available at https://eucyberdirect.eu/content_research/cyber-resilience-and-diplomacy-in-the-republic-of-korea/.

South Korea in turn offers its experience as one of the most connected societies and industries worldwide. This technological advantage increases the vulnerability to cyberattacks across the board, not just on critical infrastructure. Joint research on CT, 5G, cloud computing and IoT based on the Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (2007) is highly relevant for cyberspace and could therefore be sharpened and expanded[87] to increase resilience, a common goal. The EU has been proactive in rule and standard setting and building regulatory networks drawing on its experience of regulating the Internal Market[88].

Necessary additions are internet governance and rule setting in general as well as fighting cybercrime – South Korea is still considering signing the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe (Budapest Convention).[89] Having reached an agreement on the adequacy of Korean legislation on personal data protection with the EU regulation (e.g. GDPR) is a useful base for further cooperation, whether on expanding protection to industrial data, working towards the resilience and security of production and supply chains or preventing cyber theft. Fighting disinformation and misinformation is a particularly important area for like-minded partners who have to defend democracy, elections and human rights.

Therefore, a discussion of the implications of measures to secure cyberspace on the rule of law, human rights, privacy, as well as the impact of emerging technologies and tech industries should accompany the process.

There are various handles in South Korea´s 2020 Defense White Paper for cooperating with the EU. South Korea commits to protect its citizens at home and abroad against cyber-threats,[90] "pre-emptively prepare and actively respond

87 European Commission, 'Shaping Europe's digital future – Asia Pacific,' 2021, available at <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/asia-pacific> (accessed 7 July 2021).
88 Annegret Bendiek and Matthias C. Kettemann, 'Revisiting the EU Cybersecurity Strategy: A Call for EU Cyber Diplomacy', SWP Comment Nr 16, February 2021, pp. 6-7, available at https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/revisiting-the-eu-cybersecurity-strategy-a-call-for-eu-cyber-diplomacy/.
89 See Council of Europe, 'Budapest Convention and related standards,' 2001, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/the-budapest-convention#:~:text=The%20Convention%20on%20Cybercrime%20of,international%20instrument%20on%20this%20issue.&text=The%20Budapest%20Convention%20is%20supplemented,Racism%20committed%20through%20computer%20systems> (accessed 7 July 2021).
90 Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2020 Defense White Paper, p. 46, available at https://www.google.com/search?client=avast-a-1&biw=1280&bih=578&sxsrf=ALeKk02GTdKfrqTUKDyf47xEfEWc5Iu2PA%3A1626425126473&lei=JkfxYJmL

against cyber-threats" focusing on "the civilian-government-military police integrated defense posture [to] meet potential terrorist and cyberattacks"[91] and develop substantial education and training programmes to enable the military to meet cyber-related challenges.[92] The cyber-operation situation visualisation system could be linked up with the EU´s CARICOM to establish an "intelligent' situation sharing and integrated surveillance system "to build an AI-based 'cyber-defense system".[93]

As a champion of multilateralism, the EU can be the experienced partner in advancing a common cause in the context of the United Nations and its specialised organisations like the International Communication Union, the above-mentioned Council of Europe, as well as in the Indo-Pacific context where ASEAN, ARF and to a limited extent the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation also cover the issue from the point of view of security.

4.3. The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the European Union

This multilateralism could be applied to the EU-Indo-Pacific Strategy[94] in pursuing cybersecurity. While the Indo-Pacific Strategy is not meant to replace bilateral strategies, it aims at drawing the European public's interest to the region which is not only the theatre for great power rivalry between the US and China, but also the economic and technological hub for some time to come. Thus, cybersecurity is a key component for traditional security, as well as safeguarding production lines, fostering technological and scientific cooperation.

The April version of the strategy refers to cyber in the following contexts:

- working with partners in the Indo-Pacific region to fight cybercrime (6.2);
- strengthening cooperation with like-minded partners in the areas of security and defence to respond to malicious cyber activities (6.4);

HIz-7_UPvMuI4AQ&q=south%20korea%20defense%20white%20paper%202019%20pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiZtqrfmefxAhUM_7sIHbxlCUwQsKwBKAB6BAgqEAE.

91 Ministry of National Defense, p. 70.

92 Ibid., pp. 82-83.

93 Ibid., p. 139.

94 Council of the European Union, 'EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific – Council conclusions', 16 April 2021, available at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7914-2021-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed 7 July 2021).

- advancing cooperation in research, innovation and digitalisation with like-minded partners to promote digital governance through more ambitious global standards and regulatory approaches, including on artificial intelligence, in line with international law, including EU values and principles on privacy, data protection and security, while supporting open trade and cross border data flows (6.6.b);
- recognising the importance of a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace for the continued prosperity, growth, security, connectivity and integrity of our free and democratic societies and stressing the importance of protecting the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms in cyberspace (6.6.b).

The September 2021 version of the Indo-Pacific Strategy builds on these findings. It categorises cybersecurity as one of the new security challenges, puts it in the context of the increasing tensions and military build-up and regards it as a hybrid threat. Therefore, cybersecurity will be part of intensified dialogues with partners on security and defence. Activities in the already ongoing ESIWA project which includes cybersecurity cooperation with South Korea, shall be stepped up.

Concretely, a "EU Cyber Diplomacy Network, working with the EU Delegations, as well as with relevant Member States' embassies around the world". This network can also be used to "strengthen capacity-building for partners to tackle cybercrime, making use of existing standards and cooperation mechanisms (namely the Council of Europe "Budapest Convention" on cybercrime), and to increase cyber-resilience".[95]

While cybersecurity is an essential part of meeting the overarching challenge of increasing security in the Indo-Pacific region and therefore is one of the best examples for the need for an open concept of Indo-Pacific connectivity, it needs implementation on the bilateral and regional levels. South Korea shares the goals and as a strategic partner of choice of the EU certainly meets the criteria of a like-minded partner.

95 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 14.

4.4. A chance for intensification of the EU-South Korea cooperation

Cybercrime including harassment and bullying has become a recognised problem in South Korea, like in other countries. Strengthening laws and joining the Budapest Convention could help to create a pull factor for other Asian partners. Fighting cybercrime is closely linked with rule of law and values. The same applies to fighting disinformation and fake news – discrediting democratic elections goes to the heart of rule of law and values, and thus is an area suitable for EU-South Korea cooperation.

Malicious cyberattacks occur regularly, while the neighbourhood of North Korea explains the tensions but is not a condition in the cyber world. Safeguarding critical infrastructure through countermeasures is essential for security and an in-depth exchange of experience and best practices as well as information sharing enhances effectiveness of measures. The previously mentioned 2020 Defense White Paper opens a venue for cooperation.

Joint research in view of the rapid development of cyber-related technologies in order to stay at the edge of digitalisation is an essential part of power competition, where the networks will play a crucial role. This is another area where combined efforts by the EU and South Korea could create a wider momentum for cooperation and thereby foster a multilateral and open approach.

In terms of foreign policy diversification, South Korea should conclude with the EU a connectivity partnership. This agreement together with the two already agreed with Japan and India could become the nucleus for a larger Indo-Pacific network of connectivity partnerships.

In the agreement with India, assuring digital connectivity includes supporting "resilient, secure and standards-compliant networks, step up collaboration on mitigating network risks, and increase joint efforts to promote an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace".[96]

96 Council of the European Union, 'EU-India Connectivity Partnership', 8 May 2021, p. 2, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49508/eu-india-connectivity-partnership-8-may-2.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2021).

The equivalent Japanese text is very similar but adds reference to the G20 meeting: "The EU and Japan emphasise that development of a digital economy depends on an open, free, stable, accessible, interoperable, reliable and secure cyberspace, and on data free flow with trust (DFFT – as declared by the G20 leaders in Osaka)".[97]

While this would add the wider Indo-Pacific dimension, it fits with South Korea´s policy to reach out to India and would add another layer of functional cooperation with Japan, which should contribute to improving bilateral relations, essential to strengthen the cohesion of like-minded and alliance partners.

5. MARITIME SECURITY: STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE IN THE MARITIME DOMAINS OF SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The maritime domain represents the physical space that connects the target countries of both the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy as well as South Korea's NSP and subsequent NSP Plus. Maintaining security in the maritime domain is hence the necessary condition for the successful implementation of the EU's and South Korea's ambitious policies for cooperation across issue areas such as connectivity, cybersecurity, health, climate, environment, human rights, or economic development in the region. EU and South Korean objectives provide ample opportunity for cooperation against piracy, human- and drug trafficking, illegal- and overfishing, pollution and threats to marine biodiversity.

The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy is an inherently maritime strategy; it designates the Indian and Pacific Oceans as strategic and economic hubs for European interests.[98] The EU recognises that the "Indo-Pacific region represents the

97 Council of the European Union, 'The Partnership on sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure between the European Union and Japan', 27 September 2019, p. 2, available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_partnership_on_sustainable_connectivity_and_quality_infrastructure_between_the_european_union_and_japan.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2021).

98 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 2.

world's economic and strategic centre of gravity", comprising 60% of the world's population, producing 60% of global GDP and carrying 60% of global maritime trade.[99] From the EU's perspective, it is paramount that the Indo-Pacific remains open and rules-based, and the EU commits itself to contribute, in cooperation with regional partners, to enhanced ocean governance and to play a role as global maritime security provider.[100] Although the Indo-Pacific is politically and culturally diverse, it is connected by a cohesive body of water which carries the shipping lanes of many of the largest economic powerhouses of the world, including the European common market and the vibrant economies of the Pacific Rim.

The maritime domain is equally as crucial in South Korea's NSP. Seoul has iterated its ambition to "reinforce cooperation with ASEAN and India in a whole range of fields spanning the diplomatic, economic, and cultural realms".[101] Like the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, the NSP emphasises the importance of shipping routes that run through the seas of South and Southeast Asia "connecting the ROK and Eurasia, imbuing it with even greater geopolitical significance".[102]

The EU conceptualises the Indo-Pacific region as stretching from East Africa to the Pacific Islands.[103] This comprises the entire Indian Ocean, including the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Western Pacific with all its side seas. South Korea's NSP, on the other hand, has a regional focus on India and ASEAN,[104] designating the Bay of Bengal and the southern portion of the Western Pacific, including the Andaman, South China, Java and Celebes Seas as its maritime space of interest. The two strategies hence overlap in what could be called maritime South and Southeast Asia, which is essentially the eastern portion of the Indian Ocean and the southern portion of the Western Pacific.

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99 EEAS, *EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* (Brussels: European External Action Service, 19 April 2021), available at <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/96741/eu-strategy-cooperation-indo-pacific_en> (accessed 21 July 2021).
100 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', pp. 9-10.
101 Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, *New Southern Policy Plus* (Seoul: Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, 2021), p. 8.
102 Ibid, p. 8.
103 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', 16 April 2021, p. 3.
104 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', p. 8.

Both strategies allow us to infer how the EU and South Korea position themselves towards China and the larger US-China great power competition. The EU and South Korea emphasise freedom of navigation and adherence to international legal maritime regimes, specifically the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This policy hints at opposition to China's illegal claims in the South China Sea, its aggressive employment of maritime militia against neighbours in its littorals, and its unlawful building of artificial islands – which also presents a threat to marine biodiversity. The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy specifically mentions the emerging great power competition in the Indo-Pacific, including China's military build-up,[105] and the risks this poses to maritime trade and supply chains and notes EU member states' ongoing efforts to contribute to freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific, including in the South China Sea.[106] The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy explicitly states that "[c]ooperation to maintain and ensure *maritime security and freedom of navigation,* in accordance with international law and in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), will be essential". [107] The Indo-Pacific Strategy further reiterates the EU Maritime Security Strategy's (EUMSS) emphasis on compliance with relevant international law to secure free and open maritime supply routes.[108] In the maritime domain, as in the overall EU-China relationship, the EU will find in China a partner in combatting international crime at sea, a competitor in ocean governance and the protection of the maritime domain as global common, and a systemic rival in the application of international legal conventions relating to the freedom of navigation and the preservation of marine ecosystems.

South Korea's NSP avoids an explicit reference to great power competition, freedom of navigation or UNCLOS. However, South Korea acknowledges the importance of its sea routes through the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean for its economic security.[109] The NSP also supports the peaceful resolution of

105 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p .2.
106 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 2.
107 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p.6.
108 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 3.
109 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', p. 8.

maritime disputes, the sustainable management of marine resources and the protection of the ocean environment,[110] which are all principles that implicitly display South Korea's allegiance to the international legal maritime regime.

5.1. Bilateral cooperation

Through the EU-South Korea Crisis Management Participation Agreement, the third pillar of the EU-South Korea strategic partnership, the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) already contributes to maritime security in the Indian Ocean in cooperation with the EU. Since 2017, ROKN has repeatedly supported the European Union Naval Force Somalia anti-piracy operation, or Operation Atalanta, in the Gulf of Aden.[111] The scope of Operation Atalanta is combatting piracy and supporting ocean governance. Operation Atalanta fits well in Brussels' and Seoul's respective strategies and will likely be continued, plausibly beyond the Gulf of Aden. Furthermore, this successful and unique example of EU security cooperation with a third country may serve as a blueprint for further EU-South Korean joint naval operations elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific.

Both the EU and South Korea praise the success of Operation Atalanta in their strategy documents and advise to continue and possibly expand it. Brussels' Indo-Pacific Strategy calls for an increase of joint exercises and port calls "to fight piracy and protect freedom of navigation while reinforcing EU naval diplomacy in the region".[112] The South Korean 2018 Defense White Paper acknowledges that "acts of piracy in the Gulf of Aden have gradually declined" but warns that "it remains crucial to secure the safety of the area [since] about 29% of the total maritime cargo volume of South Korea passes through the area".[113] The 2020 Defense White Paper further points to the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, as it carries about 70% of South Korea's crude oil imports.[114]

110 Ibid, p. 19.
111 Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Linde Desmaele and Maximilian Ernst, *EU-ROK Relations: Putting the Strategic Partnership to Work* (Brussels: Institute for European Studies and KF-VUB Korea Chair, 2018), pp. 26-29.
112 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 13.
113 MND, *2018 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, December 2018), p. 217.
114 MND, *2020 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea,

South Korea's light aircraft carrier, expected to enter service in 2033, will enable ROKN to safeguard sealines of communications in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean.[115] With a displacement of around 40,000 tons and a length of 260 metres, the light aircraft carrier *CV-X* will be able to carry 16 F-35B fighter aircraft and eight helicopters.[116] The fact that ROKN develops capabilities to project air power far from Korean shores is seen as a sign that South Korea will increasingly contribute to maritime security beyond Northeast Asia alongside like-minded partners. Expert opinion concurs that the *CV-X* "would be especially useful if it were integrated into collation efforts, working alongside other capable fleets to maintain free and open maritime commons".[117]

The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy mentions the possibility of establishing "maritime areas of interest in the Indo-Pacific" and to deploy naval forces under the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept.[118] These CMPs are in line with the EUMSS and its action plan "based on voluntary contributions from member states [and] partners' navies".[119] The EU's objective would be to monitor maritime security and freedom of navigation in line with UNCLOS, and to protect the local environment. This initiative would be operationally distinct from CSDP missions and may include non-EU partners.[120] The 'Maritime Areas of Interest in the Indo-Pacific' could serve as a framework to facilitate bilateral cooperation between EU and South Korean navies in the future. They could also form the basis for multilateral cooperation between EU, South Korean and additional navies and coastguards from India and ASEAN members.

December 2020), p. 249.
115 Editorial Staff, 'South Korea Launches Its First Aircraft Carrier', *Air & Cosmos International*, 4 March 2021.
116 Juho Lee, 'South Korea's New CVX Aircraft Carrier Project: An Overview', *Naval News*, 27 May 2021.
117 Jihoon Yu and Erik French, 'Why South Korea's Aircraft Carrier Makes Sense', *The Diplomat*, 27 March 2021.
118 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p.13.
119 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 8.
120 Ibid, p. 8.

5.2. Multilateral Cooperation

Together with ASEAN, NATO and the UN are the most important multilateral partners for the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy in the maritime domain.[121] The EU Council's 2018 EUMSS action plan further identifies the International Maritime Organisation, and the African Union as partners in Europe's maritime interests.[122] The document advises coordination with additional institutions such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) or the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and further entities under the UN such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).[123] Seoul may choose to participate in EU efforts through these multilateral international organisations, as the NSP also explicitly seeks to fight ocean pollution and transnational crime through enhanced international cooperation.[124]

The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy advises to develop a coherent approach to the Indian Ocean built around a concept of cooperation with key partners in both Africa and Asia.[125] The EU will support regional partner countries and organisations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association in "ensuring safety and security of maritime and aviation routes, preventing trafficking, tackling migration and managing mobility as well as ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, including maritime resources".[126] Participation in regional fisheries management organisations and the creation of sustainable fishery partnerships are mentioned as avenues for multilateral cooperation to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.[127] The NSP seeks to sustainably manage marine resources, including fish,[128] and the 2020 Korean Defense White Paper references the importance of ensuring safe fishing activities in

121 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 5.
122 General Secretariat of the Council, *Council Conclusions on the Revision of the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) Action Plan* (Brussels: Council of the European Union, 26 June 2018), p. 3.
123 Ibid, p. 10.
124 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', p. 19.
125 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 4.
126 Ibid, p. 4.
127 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 4.
128 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', p. 19.

parts of the Western Pacific.[129] South Korea already cooperates with ASEAN in marine industry development, responsible fishing practices and combating IUU fishing in the Western Pacific.[130] The 2018 EUMSS Action Plan proposes to explore the linkages between the environment and maritime security to address major sources of marine pollution that affect trading routes and choke points in the region. [131] The NSP likewise identifies climate change, natural disasters and marine pollution as emerging non-traditional security threats in South and Southeast Asia.[132] Already in October 2018, the EU and South Korea signed an agreement on combatting IUU fishing, and this dimension of maritime cooperation will likely be continued and strengthened in the foreseeable future, both bi- and multilaterally.[133]

ASEAN is an especially promising link and multiplier for the EU's and South Korea's respective strategies to enhance security in maritime Southeast Asia. The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy commits to play a stronger role in the ASEAN security architecture and to participate in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) as well as in the East Asia Summit. To achieve this objective, the EU will deploy military advisors to EU Delegations in the region (to date present in China and Indonesia) and intensify dialogues on maritime- and other security areas.[134] Explicitly acknowledging "The Centrality of ASEAN", the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy "supports the ASEAN-led process towards an effective, substantive and legally binding Code of Conduct in the South China Sea".[135] Also the EUMSS identifies ASEAN as a key partner that leads important processes such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia.[136] The NSP declares South Korea's support for

129 MND, *2020 Defense White Paper,* p. 376.
130 ASEAN, *ASEAN-Republic of Korea Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2016–2020)*, 2020, available at <https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASEAN-ROK-POA-2016-2020-FINAL.pdf>, p. 11 (accessed 20 July 2021).
131 Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on an EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 29.
132 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', pp. 12, 19.
133 European Commission, *EU and the Republic of Korea Join Forces in Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing* (Brussels, 18 October 2020).
134 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p. 14.
135 Ibid, p. 5.
136 General Secretariat of the Council, *Council Conclusions on the Revision of the EUMSS*, pp. 3, 29.

ASEAN and India in their efforts towards "the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, the sustainable management of marine resources, and the protection of the ocean environment, based on the shared interests in the health of the oceans".[137] Within *the ADMM+ Working Group*, Seoul has convened meetings on maritime security since 2017 to discuss with its ASEAN partners confidence-building measures in the maritime domain.[138]

Another promising multilateral mechanism for the EU to cooperate on maritime security with South Korea is the Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO) project, which was initiated in 2015 and is currently in its second iteration. The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy explicitly mentions CRIMARIO's capacity to "increase synergies with likeminded partners".[139] The objective of CRIMARIO is to improve information sharing capabilities among stakeholders as well as to provide a stable maritime environment by combating piracy, drug and human trafficking and other criminal activity. CRIMARIO I was implemented in part to support the Djibouti Code of Conduct – a multilateral agreement between East African Nations and the Gulf States to combat piracy.[140] CRIMARIO II builds on the EU's ambition to improve maritime awareness among regional stakeholders and expands the geographical scope to move beyond East Africa and the Gulf States to encompass South and Southeast Asia, thus overlapping with South Korea's NSP. The objectives of CRIMARIO II are to enhance information sharing and analysis, as well as crisis management in maritime South and Southeast Asia. CRIMARIO II aims to improve compliance with international legal instruments and regional arrangements and to coordinate on maritime surveillance, policing, investigations and judiciary.[141] With its increased geographical scope, CRIMARIO II is a promising framework for the EU and South Korea to cooperate multilaterally on maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

137 Presidential Committee, 'New Southern Policy Plus', p. 19.
138 MND, *2018 Defense White Paper,* p. 224.
139 European Commission, 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', p.13.
140 EU CRIMARIO, *Crimario I – Background* (EU Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean, 2017), available at <https://www.crimario.eu/en/legal-information/> (accessed July 16, 2021).
141 EU CRIMARIO, *Maritime Security: The EU Crimario II Initiative Is Starting* (EU Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean, June 2020), available at <https://www.crimario.eu/en/2020/06/11/maritime-security-eu-crimario-initiative-starting/> (accessed July 16, 2021).

The ROKN and European navies were already able to demonstrate their preparedness to cooperate with likeminded partner countries to enhance maritime security in the Indo-Pacific earlier in 2021. In July and August, ROKN participated in the Talisman Sabre 21 US-Australia naval exercise, in which UK, Japan, Canada and New Zealand forces were also involved and Germany and France attended as observers.[142] Furthermore, South Korea participated alongside Germany, France and 16 additional partner nations in the US-led Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercise in Singapore in August 2021 where they practiced standardised training, tactics and procedures to respond to potential contingencies and improve ocean governance. A novel addition to this year's SEACAT was the incorporation of international and nongovernmental organisations, which will "enhance understanding and adherence to accepted rules, laws, and norms".[143] EU navies' and ROKN's participation in multilateral naval exercises in maritime Southeast Asia in summer 2021 foreshadows the scope and level of future EU-South Korea maritime security cooperation.

5.3. Conclusion

The EU and South Korea share a range of common interests in the maritime domains of South and Southeast Asia. Such strategic convergence can be found in their objectives to guarantee the freedom of navigation, protect shipping routes, combat human- and drug trafficking as well as piracy and to preserve marine biodiversity.

The EU Indo-Pacific Strategy explicitly acknowledges the Sino-American great power competition and formulates its security interests towards the maritime domain with reference to principles that China contests, e.g. freedom of navigation or the protection of the marine environment as stipulated under UNCLOS. The NSP formulates South Korea's interests along these same principles but refrains from mentioning great power competition and does not

142 Australian Department of Defence, *Talisman Sabre 21* (Canberra, 2021), available at <https://www1.defence.gov.au/exercises/talisman-sabre-21>.
143 Diana Stancy Correll, 'Navy, Partner Nations Launch SEACAT Exercise in Singapore', *Defense News,* 10 August 2021, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/news/your-navy/2021/08/10/navy-partner-nations-launch-seacat-exercise-in-singapore/> (accessed 16 July 2021).

use the term 'freedom of navigation' to distance itself from US and allied FOIP strategies. While Seoul's conscious avoidance of the FOIP concept may implicate its relations with the United States and other Indo-Pacific allies, this will not be a hindrance for maritime security cooperation with the EU, as Brussels itself pursues a balanced China policy.

The Crisis Management Participation Agreement may serve as a framework for future bilateral cooperation between European navies and ROKN in the Western Pacific, based on the blueprint of the successful Operation Atalanta. The EU's new concept of joining with friendly navies in Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMPs) and to establish Maritime Areas of Interest in the Indo-Pacific could pose another opportunity to cooperate with regional partners like South Korea in the Indo-Pacific. Any participation of ROKN and European navies in potential Quad+ operations could plausibly take place in this framework.

Overall, EU and South Korean objectives towards the maritime domains of the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific largely converge. There are numerous bilateral frameworks and multilateral organisations through which they may cooperate. Brussels and Seoul already maintain close ties with ASEAN, which will be an important organisation for multilateral cooperation. INTERPOL, OPCW and UNODC are organisations through which EU members and South Korea may cooperate to realise their maritime security objectives. With its increased geographical scope, CRIMARIO II could form an avenue for South Korea to join the EU in maritime surveillance and naval law enforcement operations in maritime South and Southeast Asia.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has looked at the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and South Korea's NSP to identify four areas for increased cooperation between the EU and South Korea in the Indo-Pacific: health, physical connectivity, digital connectivity and maritime security. Building upon the analysis presented in the previous chapters, the authors offer seven recommendations that will serve to help implement the EU's

Indo-Pacific Strategy and further consolidate the EU-South Korea partnership in doing so.

- *Conclude a bilateral EU-South Korea connectivity partnership:* The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy is clearly inclusive and open, which is an important bridge for South Korea to join. Therefore, the EU and South Korea should follow previous examples (Japan, India) and conclude a connectivity partnership, which could become part of a network of partnerships in the larger Indo-Pacific context. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation and openness could help to ease the geopolitical competition between China and the United States.

- *Set up a regular EU-South Korea health cooperation dialogue:* Even though the relevance of cooperation in the field of health was recognised in the 2010 Framework Agreement, EU-South Korea cooperation has so far been almost non-existent. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has slowly started to change. As both parties continue to grapple with the ongoing pandemic and seek to prepare for a world post-COVID-19, it would be helpful to establish a bilateral health cooperation dialogue. Such dialogue would allow them to share knowledge and best practices, help develop people-to-people links and create the foundations of a framework to be called upon in case of emergency.

- *Strengthen cooperation in health-related R&D:* Both Brussels and Seoul view health-related R&D (development of pharmaceutical projects and research on diseases) as a priority. The 2006 EU-South Korea Science and Technology Agreement provides a framework for increased cooperation in this regard. Funding mechanisms such as Horizon Europe moreover provide financial resources accordingly. The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy now has created an additional window of opportunity for the EU to boost cooperation with a technologically advanced like-minded partner such as South Korea.

- *Strengthen cooperation in the field of cybersecurity and cyber resilience:* The EU and South Korea have over the past years repeatedly stressed the

need to increase cooperation in this field. Their bilateral cyber dialogue should be used as a springboard for deepening cooperation on good internet governance in an open and safe cyberspace, combatting cybercrime, increasing confidence-building measures and capacity-building in cybersecurity and fighting disinformation and misinformation. Any efforts to increase cybersecurity should be accompanied with a discussion on potential implications for the rule of law, human rights and privacy.

- *Increase joint research on cyber-related technologies:* The EU and South Korea both have an interest in staying at the edge of digitalisation. This is especially the case in a context of increasing great power rivalry in this field. Combined efforts by the EU and South Korea could also create wider momentum for cooperation and serve to foster an open, multilateral approach to research on cyber-related technologies.

- *Set up an EU-South Korea bilateral dialogue on ASEAN:* Deepening relations with ASEAN is central to both the EU's and South Korea's vision for the Indo-Pacific. The EU announced its plan to step up connectivity cooperation with ASEAN in the 2020 EU-ASEAN Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity. Enhancing connectivity among ASEAN countries is also a major element of Seoul's NSP (Plus). The EU and South Korea should therefore seek to coordinate their projects in this regard, and they can harness their expertise and combined financial resources to support sustainable connectivity projects involving ASEAN countries. Infrastructure development is much needed in the region. In addition, it will enable the EU and South Korea to forestall excessive Chinese influence within ASEAN. In the field of maritime security, ASEAN countries can serve as multipliers for the EU's and South Korea's strategies to enhance security in maritime Southeast Asia. Finally, effective vaccine distribution to ASEAN countries is deemed indispensable by both Brussels and Seoul to end the ongoing pandemic. All of the above underline the relevance of setting up an EU-South Korea dialogue on ASEAN to facilitate cooperation and coordination in this context.

- *Strengthen EU-South Korea cooperation in the maritime domain through the CRIMARIO II project:* Maritime security is a necessary precondition for the successful implementation of both the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy and South Korea's NSP (Plus). After all, the maritime domain represents the physical space that connects the target countries of both visions. The EU and South Korea should cooperate within the framework of the EU's CRIMARIO II project which seeks to enhance information sharing and analysis, as well as crisis management in maritime South and Southeast Asia. CRIMARIO II also aims to improve compliance with international legal instruments and regional arrangements and to coordinate on maritime surveillance, policing, investigations and judiciary. As such, it would make sense for the EU and South Korea to cooperate multilaterally within this framework on maritime security in the Western Pacific.

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THE EU'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY:
PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION WITH SOUTH KOREA

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