



EU & Indo-Pacific

Why in News

Recently, the [European Union \(EU\)](#) approved conclusions on a **European Union strategy for cooperation in the [Indo-Pacific](#)**.

- The renewed EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific will have a **long-term focus** and will be **based on upholding [democracy](#), [human rights](#), the rule of law and respect for international law**.
- Indo-Pacific is a **region spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific island states**.

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Key Points

- **Need:**
 - **Intense geopolitical competition** adding to **increasing tensions on trade and supply chains** as well as in **technological, political and security areas**.
 - Human rights are also being challenged. These developments increasingly threaten the **stability and security of the region** and beyond, **directly impacting on the EU's interests**.
- **Aim:**
 - To **contribute to regional stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development** at a time of rising challenges and tensions in the region.

- Promoting **rules-based multilateralism**, giving centrality to [ASEAN \(Association of SouthEast Asian Nations\)](#), a point also stressed by India.

▪ **Main Features of the Strategy:**

◦ **Covid-19:**

- The EU will work together in order to mitigate the economic and human effects of the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and work towards ensuring an inclusive and sustainable socio-economic recovery.

◦ **Free and Fair Trade:**

- The EU's approach and engagement will look to **foster a "rules-based international order**, a level playing field, as well as an open and fair environment for trade and investment, reciprocity, the strengthening of resilience, tackling [climate change](#) and supporting connectivity with the EU.
- On trade partnerships, the EU will aim to **conclude free trade agreements with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand** and take further steps towards the **Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China**.
- It will also continue to explore **deepening economic relations with India**.

◦ **Security and Defence:**

- It will continue to **develop partnerships in the areas of security and defence**, including to address maritime security, malicious cyber activities, disinformation, emerging technologies, terrorism, and organised crime.
- It has taken the decision to **extend the geographic scope of its CRIMARIO (Critical Maritime Routes) II activities from the Indian Ocean into South and Southeast Asia** with a view to contribute to safer sea lanes of communication with the EU.

• **CRIMARIO:**

- The EU **Critical Maritime Route Wider Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO)** project was **launched in 2015 to improve maritime security and safety** in the Wider Indian Ocean, with a particular focus on selected countries and archipelagos in East Africa, it aims to support countries in the region to enhance their Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA).

▪ **Role for India:**

- Increasing competition, power rivalry, unilateral actions challenging the multilateral order and international laws are some of the **common concerns shared by India and Europe**.
- With an **enhanced focus on their strategic relations and engagement with other like-minded regional players**, India and EU can play a significant role in preserving an open, free, inclusive and rules based order in the Indo-pacific.
- India's recent engagement with European powers in Indo-Pacific:
 - India's **support for France's membership** of the [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#).
 - India's backing for a larger European role in the Indo-Pacific. **India has welcomed the interest of Germany and Netherlands** in building a new geopolitical architecture in the Indo-Pacific.
- Some of the **crucial areas that India and EU can work together include** joint efforts in capacity building against challenges like piracy, counter-terrorism etc and cooperation in enhancing interoperability and domain awareness, [blue economy](#) etc.

Way Forward

- There is a **growing realisation of the need for a larger European role in the region**, as the

European strategic community has begun to acknowledge that strategic and economic interests of Europe are intrinsically linked to the Indo-Pacific region.

- Increasing convergence of interests and shared values offer scope for **deepening India-EU cooperation in the region** to secure global commons, maintain stability and support economic prosperity in a cooperative manner and together shape a stable multipolar order.

Source: TH

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