

### Focus: the Indo-Pacific Region [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [FR](#) [EN](#)

Since a few months, the Indo-Pacific Region, going from East Africa to the Pacific Island States, has been the centre of a growing attention from the European Union and some of its members. They are intensifying their presence and actions in the region, and identify it as the nest of future challenges for the continent. Two main background causes can be identified: the growing tensions with China, and the importance the region is taking, economically and geopolitically.

The HRVP for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell recently gave details about the EU position. He pointed out that the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a world's centre of gravity for on one hand a strong geo-economic development and increasingly challenged regional stability. Given this, the EU's interest is "that the regional order stays open and rules-based. To that effect, the EU is already participating in some of the regional frameworks, like the ASEAN Regional Forum, and has credentials as "reliable and predictable partner". The recently adopted EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific with the 27 Foreign Ministers last April brings the message that the EU will deepen its engagement and specifically regional integration, for all partners whose interests coincide with the EU's. A EU-ASEAN Strategic partnership has also been launched last year. Concretely, 3 axes are identified: boost trade and investment, economic openness and a sustainable approach to connectivity.

Germany also took position, with a dedicated strategy paper late 2020, and the recent visit from Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer to South Korea where she expressed that her country had interests in the region and would contribute. A German frigate is expected to navigate in those seas from August 2021.

The Netherlands have also adopted a national strategy late 2020, with a similar analysis of the stakes.

France, as a resident power, has a significant and regular presence in the region, but has adapted to its evolutions. A SSN submarine cruised in the China Sea early 2021, and various deployments are planned to reinforce the rule of law in these contested seas.

### European Union military cooperation and external operations [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [FR](#)

#### First combat missions for British F35B from the HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier

The HMS Queen Elizabeth, the new aircraft carrier of the British Royal Navy, has sailed in the Oriental Mediterranean sea to participate in the coalition against Daesh. To that purpose, it has realized its first combat missions. Some of its F35-B have performed actions over Iraq from the aircraft carrier, a premiere for this new ship in its first deployment.

Its presence has raised the interest of Russia, which has deployed one of its frigate and some aircrafts to "monitor" its activities, and the submarine threat is taken quite seriously in its zone.

The HMS Queen Elizabeth has previously participated in the exercises Atlantic Trident 2021 with the French and British Air Forces, and Gallic Strike with the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle.

#### Conference on the spatial and aerial power from the 13 members of the European Intervention Initiative

On June 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, France welcomed the first edition of a E12 Air & Space Power conference. The European Intervention Initiative (E12) is a framework destined to promote a common strategic culture and a better capacity to act jointly among the European armed forces. It was launched by the French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 and now gathers 13 nations.

This conference was organised by the Air Forces at the French Air and Space museum, and was dedicated to the topic "Air power and space control, synchronizing strategic and operational tempos".

An understanding was reached on the need for tighter interoperability and connectivity and a high-level joint training. The stress was also put on leadership and innovation, to answer to very versatile threats. The French Minister of Armed Forces, Florence Parly, called for a new edition of this conference, a "magnifique Air Force Club of able and willing nations".

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## Industries DE FR

### **The Bundestag has validated the FCAS funding, among 27 other projects**

The Budget commission of the German Bundestag has awarded its green light to 27 defence projects, on June, 23<sup>rd</sup>, worth €19 billion.

Among them, the FCAS project German funding is worth €1.5 billion over €3.5 billion. However, it covers only the first phase, 1B, as some strict conditions have been asserted to the vote for the further steps. First, the deputies have criticised that the vote took place without a final industrial agreement between Dassault Aviation and Airbus Defence and Space. The second condition was the respect of the 1A phase requirement formulated in February 2020 to make the FCAS and the MGCS programme move at the same pace. They also ask for the right to use the results of joint activities without the agreement of the other partners, and the transfer to an international organisation, like the OCCAr.

The second phase is estimated to €3 billion for the German share.

The votes were as follows: 5 CDU/CSU, 10 SPD and 5 FDP votes for, 6 AfD, 4 Linke, 4 Grünen against. As die Grünen may have a stronger representation in the new Bundestag, to be elected in September, this could put some political risks on the programme.

This vote could have impacts on another programme, the MAWS, as it authorises the purchase of 5 P8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircrafts to the United States. These new machines, needed to make the junction between the retiring P3C Orion and the MAWS, could cancel any need for the programme.

### **Fincantieri wins a big contract with Indonesia, in a context of Italo French competition**

Fincantieri has won mid-June a €4.1 billion contract in Indonesia for six multi-mission frigates and two Maestrale-class frigates. This has raised tensions with France and Fincantieri's partner, Naval Group, as both are engaged in many joint programmes and share a joint venture, Naviris. However, Fincantieri led closed negotiations with Indonesia and the French side did not expect the announcement.

This has raised some doubts on the level of cooperation between the two companies, and the role of Naviris, as both are also competitors for other prospects like Greece or Egypt.

## International relations EE EN EN EN EN

### **Growing tensions with Russia: Airspace violation and warning shots**

The tension has been heating up between Russia and some European countries in the last two weeks.

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, Estonia and Lithuania reported the brief intrusion of Russian aircrafts in their airspace, one week after the Danish government reported the same incident. Tallin said that the 2 SU35's transponders were off and that the air traffic service could not reach any direct radio contact with them. For Lithuania, the aircrafts were presumed to be 2 SU24 bombers. Both countries have officially protested, but Russia assured them that the aircrafts did not deviate from their legal path.

A few days later, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Russian Navy reported that they fired warning shots at a British frigate, the HMS Defender (Type 45 Daring), after it entered the Crimean territorial waters. After an unanswered radio contact, a patroller fired in its direction as warning, followed by the drop of 4 fragmentation bombs by a Su24 on the ship's course. It eventually made it turn back.

However, the British MoD positively stated that no warning shots had been fired at HMS Defender, and no bombs dropped, but that however they thought the Russians were preparing for a gun exercise. Video footage and accidentally leaked papers tend to support the Russian version, and the fact that the Royal Navy knew the risks they were taking by entering those waters. This was meant to be a diplomatic sign of the British determination to contest the annexation of Crimea by Russia.