

PERSPECTIVE

RESEARCHERS AT ISEAS – YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE ANALYSE CURRENT EVENTS

Singapore | 15 February 2022

France’s Third Path” for the Indo-Pacific? Credentials and Challenges

*Eric Frécon**



As the Indo-Pacific rises in strategic importance, France has sought to reassert its identity as an Indo-Pacific power. French President, Emmanuel Macron, gave a series of key speeches in Canberra and Réunion Island as early as 2018 to shed light on the French presence in Indo-Pacific and “to build a new relationship to Asia”. Picture: Thibault Camus/POOL/AFP taken on 8 February 2022.

** Eric Frécon is a visiting academic at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and an adjunct fellow at the French Naval Academy-Sorbonne, the French Research Institute for Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC, Bangkok) and the Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM, Paris). Opinions expressed are solely his own.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Considering itself part of the Indo-Pacific on the grounds of history and overseas territories, France has released its Indo-Pacific strategy to guide its international action in this region.
- France has substantive diplomatic and military presence in the Indo-Pacific, with its active naval diplomacy and about 8,000 French soldiers permanently deployed in five military bases across the region.
- Although France lacks the capacity to provide extensive financial or military assistance to countries in the Indo-Pacific, it can offer knowledge and expertise in environmental and climate security and in the governance of territorial waters.
- The French vision for “an inclusive Indo-Pacific” might resonate with Southeast Asia. It also suggests France’s commitment to multilateralism and offers the possibility of moving beyond the current Sino-US bipolarity.
- Paris should improve inter-agency coordination in implementing its Indo-Pacific strategy, establish a community of knowledge on the Indo-Pacific, and ensure balance between military and non-military engagements, and between multilateral and unilateral arrangements in the region.
- The AUKUS development should motivate France to cooperate more deeply with other Asian and non-aligned countries and to integrate its Indo-Pacific strategy with that of the EU, taking advantage of its presidency of the EU Council in 2022.

INTRODUCTION

As the Indo-Pacific rises in strategic importance, France has sought to reassert its identity as an Indo-Pacific power.¹ French President Emmanuel Macron gave a series of key speeches in Canberra and Réunion Island and to his ambassadors in 2018 to shed light on the French presence in Indo-Pacific and “to build a new relationship to Asia”, with a focus on Australia, China, India and Japan.² In 2019, France’s Ministry of Armed Forces unveiled the country’s defence strategy for the Indo-Pacific which reaffirms the need to protect not only French interests and sovereignty but also the global commons in this region.³ That same year, France dispatched its aircraft carrier strike group (led by the nuclear-powered *Charles de Gaulle*) across the Indo-Pacific. The naval group held numerous international drills during its mission, before the frigate *Vendémiaire* transited the Taiwan Strait in April 2019.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic forced a pause to French Indo-Pacific initiatives, things are now back on track with France’s enhanced presence in the Indo-Pacific. The islands of Réunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean have benefitted from the French Navy’s support during the pandemic through operation “Résilience” which was dedicated to supporting public services and French people in the fields of health, logistics and protection.⁴ In October 2020, the former French envoy to Australia, Christophe Penot, was appointed to the newly established post of Ambassador for the Indo-Pacific Region.⁵ France also released the update of its Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2021 to guide its international action in the region.⁶

This article examines the rationale of France’s Indo-Pacific strategy and the niche areas where France can make meaningful impact in the region. It also argues that post-AUKUS, Paris should continue to expand and deepen its relationships with its Indo-Pacific partners, especially in synergy with the European Union (EU).

FRENCH PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Unlike other major powers, France’s tilt towards the Indo-Pacific is not primarily motivated by trade. France’s most important trading partners are in Europe, Africa and the Americas, and only 8% of French trade in goods crosses the South China Sea.⁷ Instead, the impetus for France to consolidate its footprint in the Indo-Pacific is geographic and geo-strategic. French overseas territories in the Indian and Pacific Oceans generate 93% of its exclusive economic zone, with 1.6 million French people living in the region.⁸ As the Indo-Pacific becomes the world’s centre of gravity, France can leverage this unique geography to stake its position on geopolitical issues of concern, such as multilateralism, protection of the global commons and freedom of navigation.⁹

On the diplomatic front, France has been proactive in terms of ministerial and presidential visits to the region over the past decade. In 2017, François Hollande became the first French President to visit Indonesia since François Mitterrand in 1986; he also headed off to Singapore to mark his first state visit to the city-state. France is also an active participant in regional organisations in the Indo-Pacific. Paris has been chairing the Indian Ocean Commission in 2021 and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2021-2022. It is a member of the West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the South Pacific Defence Ministers’ Meeting (SPDMM). France is also a member of

the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting since December 2021, a Dialogue Partner of the Pacific Islands Forum,¹⁰ and a Development Partner of ASEAN, with 140 diplomatic offices or agencies stationed across the ten ASEAN member states.

On the military front, there are about 8,000 French soldiers permanently deployed in five military bases across the Indo-Pacific,¹¹ and 18 Defence Attachés to represent French security interests in 33 Indo-Pacific countries. France has also deployed assets in the field, including to help enforce the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on North Korea through air patrols and support capability-building programmes in countries such as Cambodia via the Francophonie.¹²

In 2020, to bolster French presence in the Indo-Pacific, there was significant attention and effort given to appointing new Subject Matters Experts (SME) and Liaison Officers (LO) both in Southeast Asia and the United Nations Command in South Korea. The French Liaison Officers are particularly important in advancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) issues in the Indo-Pacific, with their active contributions to the launch and operational efficiency of the Information Fusion Centres in Singapore, Madagascar and New Delhi. These centres facilitate intelligence sharing on maritime security.¹³ France has also extended its support to anti-piracy efforts in the region. In October 2020, the Singapore-based Council of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia-Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP-ISC) indicated that it “supported the intention [of Paris] to join the ReCAAP and expected [a] smooth accession process”.¹⁴

In terms of naval diplomacy, the annual *Jeanne d’Arc* mission has regularly sailed across the Indo-Pacific since 2012 (except in 2014 and 2019) and was back in the area in spring 2021, including crossing the South China Sea twice.¹⁵ The French Navy – known as the *Marine nationale* – flies the country’s flag in various military missions and drills in the region. For instance, the French defence minister revealed in February 2021 details about Mission Marianne, which involved the deployment of the nuclear-powered submarine *SSN Émeraude* to the Indian and Pacific Oceans (including passage through South China Sea) since September 2020. As part of the mission, the French submarine conducted a joint exercise with the Indonesian Navy in the Sunda Strait.

In addition to participating in Indonesia’s Exercise Komodo and the Rim of Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), the French Navy also took the lead in Exercise La Pérouse in the Bay of Bengal in 2019, involving ships from Australia, Japan and the United States. A second edition of La Pérouse was held in March 2021, with the participation of India. It also joined the combined amphibious drills conducted by Japan and the United States in Japanese waters in May 2021.

France’s naval exchanges with the four members of the Quad have prompted questions about French support for the Quad in the context of the United States-China rivalry. The strength of the French-US partnership was affirmed by the White House in January 2021 when it referred to France as the “oldest ally”,¹⁶ following the first call by incoming President Biden to his French counterpart.¹⁷ However, it remains French doctrine to treat Washington as “friends, allied, but not aligned” in order to maintain room for manoeuvre.¹⁸

The French private sector, including the defence industry, has a prominent presence in the Indo-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. France has sold frigates to Singapore, submarines to Malaysia and patrol boats to the Philippines. In fact, France was the third-largest arms supplier to the region during the period between 1999 and 2018, behind only Russia and the United States.¹⁹ The Paris-based Thales (a major defence contractor) has a large corporate footprint in Singapore with 2,100 employees, far outstripping the 1,180 people hired in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates combined.²⁰

NICHE AVENUES FOR FRANCE’S INDO-PACIFIC ENGAGEMENTS

France’s capacity to expand its impact in the Indo-Pacific is limited: Paris cannot offer large-scale infrastructure financing or military equipment donations like China, Japan or the United States. Instead of hardware military assets and economic leverage, France’s niche offerings to its Indo-Pacific partners lie in its expertise in (i) environmental and climate security; and (ii) governance of territorial waters.

France has a strong focus on environmental and climate security in its Indo-Pacific partnerships. One example is the International Solar Alliance, which President François Hollande launched together with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India in 2015. France has encouraged international cooperation on anticipating the impact of climate change on military operations and limiting the environmental footprint of military operations. In 2019, France participated in a joint study for the 4th South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM) which highlighted the consequences of climate change on infrastructure resilience, maritime surveillance and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.²¹ Similarly, France joined Australia to conduct the Indian Ocean climate risk mapping, to “help to understand and anticipate the security consequences of climate phenomena”.²²

Moreover, given the increasing risks of natural disasters as a result of climate change, France has sought to enhance its HADR capacity in the Indo-Pacific. The FRANZ Arrangement between France, Australia and New Zealand facilitates information-sharing for relief operations, which proved useful when Cyclone Harold hit the South Pacific islands in 2019. France has also stationed a Liaison Officer at the Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) in Singapore since its launch in 2014 and, after the tsunami on the 15th of January, a French patrol boat set sail towards Tonga with 40 tons of humanitarian aid.

France’s second offering is its extensive knowledge and expertise in managing and governing territorial waters. Because it controls the world’s second-largest EEZ, France can share expertise on promoting maritime domain awareness, handling Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and fighting maritime drug trafficking. In partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the French Navy patrolled more than 70 days in 2021 to fight IUU fishing in the EEZs of Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu.²³ France can also offer lessons about maritime counterterrorism with its experience in dealing with illegal immigration and maritime terrorism in the Mediterranean Sea.

More specifically, the unique ‘State Action at Sea’ model that France adopts for law enforcement in its territorial waters, EEZ and high seas may be of interest to other Indo-

Pacific nations.²⁴ The model involves the establishment of an administrative and operational organisation for each of its ten maritime zones, including five overseas and two covering high seas in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. In each zone, the State is represented by a single administrative authority that can mobilise maritime assets and resources from different agencies, including the French Navy, customs and national police, for Coast Guard functions.

This model, which is “based on versatility and synergy”, could be a viable arrangement for some archipelagic Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, where administrative rivalries and budgetary constraints often hamper effective law enforcement of their maritime zones.

CHOOSING NEITHER THE UNITED STATES NOR CHINA

From Southeast Asia’s perspective, one advantage of France’s Indo-Pacific strategy is its vision “for an inclusive Indo-Pacific”.²⁵ While there are calls for France to adopt a stronger stance against Beijing or to stand clearly behind Washington, President Macron has made it clear that France’s Indo-Pacific strategy is not meant “to be directed against anyone”.²⁶ The narrative of “don’t make us choose” – the rallying call of many Southeast Asian capitals – appears to have the edge in Paris at the moment.²⁷ France, however, understands the imperative for a clear-headed and disciplined relationship with China that would involve firm and frank dialogue to enable cooperation on global challenges while managing the systemic challenges that Beijing presents in other areas. It will conform to the general direction outlined by the President of the EU Commission von der Leyen: “China is certainly a partner we can negotiate with on climate issues. When it comes to economic issues, it is a tough competitor, and on matters of governance and social order, it is undoubtedly a systemic rival.”²⁸

France’s posture in this regard could be described as a revival of ‘gaullo-miterrandism’, the diplomatic doctrine named after Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand (who ruled in the 1960s and 1980s respectively).²⁹ Its dictum – to prioritise French national interests and values, independent of any great power, in a multilateral framework – makes particular sense in the Indo-Pacific context. The French government’s policy document titled *France’s Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific* states that “Beyond any logic of blocks, we therefore intend to champion a third path in the Indo-Pacific, for responding to today’s upheavals with all well-intentioned powers.”³⁰ This departs from the temptations of the stricter ‘atlanticism’ practised under President Sarkozy in the 2000s, or the ‘neoconservatism’ entertained by some senior officials under President Hollande in the 2010s.³¹ Instead, Paris’s current Indo-Pacific strategy bears some resemblance to the non-alignment principle of the ‘Bandung spirit’ and the *bebas aktif* (free and active) diplomacy of Indonesia.

For France, this brand of non-alignment is manifest in its investment in relationships with other middle powers in the Indo-Pacific, especially India and Japan. Paris maintains regular strategic dialogue with New Delhi, and in 2018, the French and Indian navies gave reciprocal access to each other’s military facilities in the Indian Ocean. In November 2021, the two countries agreed to expand bilateral defence-security partnership through enhancing intelligence and information sharing, bolstering mutual capabilities, expanding military drills and pursuing new initiatives in maritime, space and cyber domains.³² Regarding

Japan, Admiral Pierre Vandier, the current Chief-of-Navy, made his first visit abroad to Tokyo in late 2020, testifying to the ‘Exceptional Partnership’ between the two countries in the wake of the Franco-Japanese Maritime Dialogue in 2019.³³

Working with these middle powers offers an avenue for France to move beyond the narrative of Sino-US bipolarity and serve France’s strategic interest to work towards a post-hegemonic multi-polar global order.³⁴ Here, the hope is for great and middle powers to accompany and support the rise of the Global South, which many Indo-Pacific countries belong to. According to this ideal, the Indo-Pacific thus represents an intermediary step towards genuine pluralism where countries engage one another on a more equal footing.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

Despite its geographic residency and military footprint in the Indo-Pacific and an inclusive vision that resonates with many regional countries, France’s Indo-Pacific strategy has not gained strong visibility. To address this shortcoming, the strategy first of all needs to be coherent and balanced across two dimensions: between military and non-military engagements, and between multilateral and minilateral arrangements.

For non-military engagement, France needs to build strong links with civil society and nurture a community of knowledge about the Indo-Pacific, rather than rely only on the advice of advisors or *éminence grises*. It is unfortunately not yet a French habit to recognise the increasing role that national think-tanks can play in providing inputs and ideas to foreign policy-making through Tracks 1.5 and 2 discussions. Instead of only multiplying the military ports-of-call, more grants should be offered to Indo-Pacific students and thought leaders to network, research, discuss and write about Indo-Pacific-related perspectives.

Historically, France has pursued minilateral opportunities in the region, such as the Australia-France-India Trilateral Dialogue which looked more promising for France than the Quad, given the latter’s not-so-subtle anti-China orientation. Following the announcement of the tripartite security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the US (AUKUS) in September 2021, Paris has stepped up engagements with other middle powers such as Indonesia.³⁵ This, however, may not be enough. Unlike Germany, Paris has rarely bet on broad-based regional institutions in the Indo-Pacific such as the ASEAN multilateral architecture. France’s application for observer status at the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) would not likely change this approach.³⁶ Having said that, it may be worth monitoring recent French moves towards multilateral initiatives such as the Alliance for Multilateralism organised by France and Germany alongside Canada, Mexico, Chile, Singapore and Ghana.³⁷

Secondly, France must pursue consistency in implementing its strategy, including setting relevant goals and ensuring effective inter-ministerial coordination on Indo-Pacific engagements. Every project and policy in the Indo-Pacific requires deep and sustained involvement over the long term to succeed. The office of the French President appears wishing to take the lead to centralise the strategy. However, it is not clear if that will just remain one more voice among those of various ministries, directorates and forces already been involved. And if the Elysée Palace intends to consolidate this strategy, it should better define and sharpen gaullo-mitterandism 2.0, especially vis-à-vis Beijing, given the latter’s

increasingly illiberal trends under President Xi.³⁸ For instance, French diplomacy should make it clearer that its “third path” does not mean “equidistance” along the continuum stretching from Beijing to Washington.

Thirdly, while AUKUS has been a shock to France, it should serve as a catalyst for its Indo-Pacific strategy and push Paris to move closer to its Asian partners (who may be worried by possible new insecurities caused by nuclearisation of the seas).³⁹ Just a couple of days after AUKUS was announced, French and Indian naval chiefs met, and their Ministers for Foreign Affairs held a talk. In October 2021, Indonesian and French presidents met on the side-lines of the G-20 summit, agreeing to work towards “a true strategic partnership”, followed by fruitful discussions by their two foreign ministers.⁴⁰ While it would take a while for France and Australia to mend fences, the dust has somewhat settled between Paris and Washington: US President Biden called Macron and supported the idea of European strategic autonomy, especially in developing European military capabilities.⁴¹ In the same positive way, France worked closely with Washington in 2021, e.g. with its new status as an observer of the US-sponsored Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercises as well as the US-Philippines Maritime Training Activity (MTA) Sama-Sama.

Last but not least, as the European dimension is indispensable to France’s Indo-Pacific strategy, the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2022 provides opportunities for Paris to leverage the EU as a force multiplier to advance its goals and agenda in the Indo-Pacific. It is true that Macron planted seeds of doubt as he did not mention the Indo-Pacific – but Africa – in his two first speeches as the next chair.⁴² Nevertheless, the Indo-Pacific will be “a priority for France’s EU presidency” as declared by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian during his November 2021 visit to Indonesia, and Paris would host an Indo-Pacific Forum on 22 February 2022.⁴³ The stars are aligned for this after the publication in September 2021 of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in Indo-Pacific, which explicitly refers to “ASEAN centrality”⁴⁴ and the new German chancellor has also demonstrated principled firmness vis-à-vis Russia and China on the diplomatic stage.⁴⁵ As for Southeast Asia, France should continue to support EU efforts to embed itself in ASEAN-led multilateral frameworks. Apart from its membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the programme, CRIMARIO (Critical Maritime Roads in Indian Ocean) 2, focusing mainly on Southeast Asia, the EU should proactively support and seek to participate in ASEAN-related security agencies or bodies such as the ASEANAPOL, ASEAN Naval Chiefs meetings, ASEAN Senior Officials Meetings on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) working groups, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), among others.

The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) – with its priority areas in connectivity, sustainable development and maritime cooperation – also provides practical avenues for France and the EU to “boost sustainable links” with the region. The EU’s Global Gateway initiative, which was launched in December 2021 with US\$339 billion for the 2021-2027 period, is a timely vehicle towards achieving this end.⁴⁶

¹ Historically, France always had a presence in the Indo-Pacific. French merchants and scientists have sailed through the Indian and Pacific Oceans since the 17th century. Today, due to its overseas territories, France shares a border with five countries in the Indian Ocean and twelve countries in the Pacific Ocean. There are currently 200,000 French nationals residing in various Indo-Pacific countries and 1.6 million French citizens based in the overseas French territories of Réunion Island, French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF), Mayotte, New Caledonia, Wallis-et-Futuna, French Polynesia and Clipperton Island.

² Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Conference of Ambassadors, Élysée, 27 August 2018, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2018/08/27/speech-by-the-president-of-the-french-republic-at-the-conference-of-ambassadors>.

³ France and Security in the Indo-Pacific, Ministry of Defence of France, May 2019, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/dgris/international-action/regional-issues/la-strategie-de-defense-francaise-en-indopacifique2>.

⁴ Xavier Vavasseur, “French Navy Mistral-class LHDs to Fight COVID-19 in Reunion & Caribbean”, *Naval News*, 26 March 2020, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/03/french-navy-mistral-class-lhds-to-fight-covid-19-in-reunion-caribbean/>.

⁵ The new position complements two existing ambassadorial appointments, namely the Permanent Representative of France to the Pacific Community and the Delegate to Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

⁶ France’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, Government of the French Republic, 2021, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en_a4_indopacifique_v2_rvb_cle432726.pdf.

⁷ Katerina Ang, “Europe pivots to Indo-Pacific with ‘multipolar’ ambitions”, *Nikkei Asia*, 2 February 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/Europe-pivots-to-Indo-Pacific-with-multipolar-ambitions>.

⁸ “The Indo-Pacific region: a priority for France”, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/asia-and-oceania/the-indo-pacific-region-a-priority-for-france/>.

⁹ While France does conduct patrols to “affirm that international law is the only rule that is valid, whatever the sea where we sail”, they are slightly different from the US’ Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) as the latter intrudes within 12 nautical miles of features in the South China Sea. See Sarah Zheng, “2021: South China Sea: challenge to Beijing as French nuclear submarine patrols contested waterway”, *South China Morning Post*, 9 February 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3121125/south-china-sea-challenge-beijing-french-nuclear-submarine>.

¹⁰ The territories of French Polynesia and New Caledonia are full members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

¹¹ The bases are located in Djibouti, Réunion Island, Abu Dhabi, New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

¹² See for example: AFP, “‘The UN’s eyes’: French Navy enforces North Korea sanctions”, *The Straits Times*, 8 November 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/the-uns-eyes-french-navy-enforces-north-korea-sanctions>; and “Reinforcement des capacités des forces armées cambodgiennes pour les opérations de l’ONU” [Capacity building within the Cambodian armed forces dedicated to the UN operations], *Francophonie*, 2019, <https://www.francophonie.org/renforcement-des-capacites-des-forces-armees-cambodgiennes-pour-les-operations-de-lonu-842>.

¹³ About France and maritime domain awareness in Indo-Pacific in general, see: Jérémy Bachelier, Eric Frécon, “France’s Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: MDA”, *The Diplomat*, 21 December 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/frances-defense-strategy-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

¹⁴ “The 14th Governing Council Meeting of the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre”, Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, 15

October 2020, https://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/news/2020/14th_ReCAAAP-ISC_VGC_Meeting_Press_Release_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁵ The *Jeanne d'Arc* mission involves a *Mistral*-class vessel full of cadets undertaking their last training semester at sea and an accompanying frigate.

¹⁶ Laura Auricchio, "The US-France relationship has always had friction", *The Washington Post*, 10 November 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/11/10/us-france-relationship-has-always-had-friction/>.

¹⁷ Extract of the "Joint Statement on the Phone Call between President Biden and President Macron", *Briefing Room*, The White House, 22 September 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/22/joint-statement-on-the-phone-call-between-president-biden-and-president-macron/>.

¹⁸ Eglantine Staunton, "Macron and Biden: 'Friends, allied, but not aligned'", *The Interpreter*, 3 February 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/macron-and-biden-friends-allied-not-aligned>.

¹⁹ Aude Fleurant *et al.*, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2019", *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, March 2020, p. 2.

²⁰ SGP SHD Communications, "Singapore – Overview", *Thales Group*, 2022, <https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/countries/asia-pacific/singapore>.

²¹ Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua-New-Guinea and Tonga attended the meeting.

²² Vision Statement on the Australia-France Relationship by the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and His Excellency Emmanuel Macron, 2 May 2018. As a follow up, the National Security College published a report: Anthony Bergin, David Brewster,

François Gemenne and Paul Barnes, *Environmental security in the eastern Indian Ocean, Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: A risk mapping approach*, Canberra-Paris, ANU-IRIS, May 2019.

²³ "Operation Island Chief continues protection of Pacific from illegal fishing", Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agencies, 5 August 2021, <https://www.ffa.int/node/2605>.

²⁴ Ministry of Armed Forces, National strategy for the security of maritime areas, Government of France, 22 October 2015, https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2016/01/strategie_nationale_de_surete_des_espaces_maritimes_en_national_strategy_for_the_security_of_maritime_areas.pdf.

²⁵ Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France's Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, 2021, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/photos-publications-and-graphics/publications/article/france-s-partnerships-in-the-indo-pacific-apr-2021>.

²⁶ Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Conference of Ambassadors, 27 August 2018, *op. cit.*

²⁷ See the interesting cartoon published by the *Global Times*, inspired by Da Vinci's Last Supper, and how France is portrayed after the 2021 NATO summit (and its declaration about China). The Rooster (France) attends the supper chaired by the US but gives the feeling of keeping its distance from the radical and exclusive position vis-à-vis China. At least, the Rooster does not get up from the table to move away. "The Last G7: Satirical cartoon mocking bloc's attempt to suppress China goes viral", *Global Times*, 13 June 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202106/1226050.shtml>.

²⁸ Statement by President von der Leyen with Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, European Commission, 10 December 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_6770.

²⁹ See Pascal Boniface, "Why the concept of gaullo-mitterrandism is still relevant", *Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*, 29 April 2019, <https://www.iris-france.org/136272-why-the-concept-of-gaullo-mitterrandism-is-still-relevant/>. For other examples of gaullo-mitterrandism,

see de Gaulle's speeches in Mexico (1964), particularly the call to walk "la mano en la mano" or "hand in hand", Phnom Penh (1966), Québec (1967); Mitterrand in Sarajevo (1992); Chirac in Jerusalem (1995) and Johannesburg (2002); and Macron in Beirut (2020).

³⁰ France's Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, op. cit.

³¹ These terms generally refer to the priority given to military options and operations, in tune with American initiatives. Author's interview with French defence journalist Brest (France), in January 2016.

³² "India, France to expand defence, security partnership", *India Today*, 7 November 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-france-expand-defence-security-partnership-1873891-2021-11-07>.

³³ Céline Pajon, "Macron in Japan: Upgrading the Franco-Japanese Strategic Partnership in the Indo-Pacific", *EastWest Institute*, 26 June 2019, <https://www.eastwest.ngo/idea/macron-japan-upgrading-franco-japanese-strategic-partnership-indo-pacific>.

³⁴ See Bertrand Badie, *Quand le Sud réinvente le monde* [How the Global South is reinventing the world], (Paris, La Découverte: 2018) and Bertrand Badie, *L'Hégémonie contestée – Les nouvelles formes de domination internationale* [Hegemony challenged: New Forms of International Domination], (Paris, Odile Jacob: 2019).

³⁵ "France's Macron looks to Indonesia, India for deeper strategic ties", *RFI*, 30 October 2021, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20211030-france-s-macron-looks-to-indonesia-india-for-deeper-strategic-ties>.

³⁶ France should consider the appointment of its dedicated ambassador to ASEAN, along with a full-time Defence Attaché in the Philippines.

³⁷ This Alliance is "an informal network of countries united in their conviction that a rules-based multilateral order is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace and that our common challenges can only be solved through cooperation." See "What is the Alliance for Multilateralism?", <https://multilateralism.org/the-alliance/>.

³⁸ Marc Julienne, "La politique chinoise de la France est devenue illisible et inaudible, parce que dépassée et insuffisamment exigeante" [The French policy on China is now unreadable and inaudible because obsolete and not enough demanding], *Le Monde*, 23 December 2021.

³⁹ Nic MacLellan, "AUKUS disrupts 'a very peaceful part of planet Earth'", *Inside Story*, 14 October 2021, <https://insidestory.org.au/aucus-disrupts-a-very-peaceful-part-of-planet-earth/>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20211030-france-s-macron-looks-to-indonesia-india-for-deeper-strategic-ties>.

⁴¹ "Biden's team wants EU allies to get real on 'strategic autonomy'", *Politico*, 19 November 2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/joe-biden-us-eu-strategic-autonomy-brussels-g20/>.

⁴² Message from the President, website of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 9 December 2021, <https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/message-from-the-president/>; French President Emmanuel Macron's Speech at the European Parliament, 19 January 2022, <https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/french-president-emmanuel-macron-s-speech-at-the-european-parliament-strasbourg-19-january-2022/>.

⁴³ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "France's Ambitious Indo-Pacific Goals for Its EU Presidency", *GMF*, 08 February 2022, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/frances-ambitious-indo-pacific-goals-its-eu-presidency>.

⁴⁴ Joanne Lin, "The EU in the Indo-Pacific: A New Strategy with Implications for ASEAN", *ISEAS Perspective*, 2021/164, 16 December 2021, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-164-the-eu-in-the-indo-pacific-a-new-strategy-with-implications-for-asean-by-joanne-lin/>.

⁴⁵ "The new government promises to be tougher on China and Russia", *The New York Times*, 8 December 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/08/world/europe/germany-russia-china.html>.

⁴⁶ Ana Pisonero-Hernandez et al., “Global Gateway: up to €300 billion for the EU’s strategy to boost sustainable links around the world”, *European Commission*, 1 December 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6433.

<p><i>ISEAS Perspective</i> is published electronically by: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute</p> <p>30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119614 Main Tel: (65) 6778 0955 Main Fax: (65) 6778 1735</p> <p>Get Involved with ISEAS. Please click here: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/support</p>	<p>ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute accepts no responsibility for facts presented and views expressed.</p> <p>Responsibility rests exclusively with the individual author or authors. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission.</p> <p>© Copyright is held by the author or authors of each article.</p>	<p>Editorial Chairman: Choi Shing Kwok</p> <p>Editorial Advisor: Tan Chin Tiong</p> <p>Managing Editor: Ooi Kee Beng</p> <p>Editors: William Choong, Lee Poh Onn, Lee Sue-Ann, and Ng Kah Meng</p> <p>Comments are welcome and may be sent to the author(s).</p>
---	---	--