



Report

EU-PACIFIC TALKS | UNVEILING GLOBAL SOUTH DYNAMICS: EU AND INDO- PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES

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About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.



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Introduction

In this EU-Pacific Talks debate, our guests discussed the current situation, prospects, and the EU's approach to the Global South. One of the key points emphasised was the significance of the Global South and events in the region that require attention. The discussion emphasised the importance of acknowledging regional differences, particularly in the areas we are dealing with, respecting the states in that region, and actively listening to them.

The situation in the region was first outlined by **Mitsugi Endo**, a Professor at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo, who stressed the area's importance, especially in the context of world trade. The Red Sea routes account for around 12% of global trade, and ships transport oil and gas. He did not forget to mention that it is a frequent battleground, citing the proxy war between the US and Iran and the attacks in the Horn of Africa as examples. In addition, he drew attention to pirate attacks on commercial ships. He explained that traffic disruption in the area could threaten European strategic interests precisely because of the importance of these shipping routes.

Michal Kolmaš, an Associate Professor and Chair of Asian Studies at Metropolitan University Prague, agreed with Mr. Endo's comments on the area's economic and geopolitical significance. Additionally, he emphasised the environmental importance of the region within the context of global justice. Regarding the issue of influence, using data on the perception of superpowers, he stated that the US and the EU are preferred over China or Russia in many countries of the Global South. He then highlighted this as a significant opportunity to connect with these nations. Additionally, Mr. Kolmaš outlined how the EU should do better towards the Global South. Among these issues are that the EU doesn't show enough solidarity, aid is limited by conditionality, politicisation, preferentialism of foreign

assistance, falling GDP/ODA percentage in most Global North countries and insufficient and outdated institutional design.

Gesine Weber, a Visiting Scholar at Arnold A. Saltzman Institute for War and Peace Studies, Columbia University, pointed out the problematic nature of the term Global South when referring to non-European partners that are not traditional allies. Additionally, she emphasised European countries' involvement in the region. According to Ms. Weber, Europe's approach to the Global South has been influenced by two key moments: the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These events made the EU realise its dependency and the need to diversify, not only economically. At the same time, the EU is relearning geopolitics, the politics of alliance and geoeconomics. Ms. Weber believes the European Union should recognise that it doesn't necessarily have all its objectives and interests in common with its traditional allies like the US, Japan, or Australia. Moreover, EU concerns are not necessarily global, so it is crucial to listen more carefully to others and understand their perspective if the EU wants to build partnerships or maintain their support. As an example of the topics the EU could address in talks with Global South, she mentioned poverty reduction, women's rights, and climate change.

After the opening remarks of each of the guests, the debate turned to the war in Ukraine and how it affects the relations between the EU and the Global South region. Ms. Weber reiterated that the war in Ukraine was one of the critical moments that opened the eyes of the EU. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the geopolitical aspect of the relationship between the EU and the Global South was evident. It was clear from the votes at the UN assembly that there was no unanimous condemnation of the Russian attack on Ukraine. According to Ms. Weber, this was the moment when the EU realised that not all participants shared its views, and there was no consensus on the European narrative. From that point onwards, the EU started thinking more strategically about its partners. Mr. Kolmaš supported this statement and highlighted the importance of understanding that

what the EU wants may not align with what others want. He provided several examples to illustrate that for the EU to engage with the global south, it must improve its approach.

The discussion further focused on Africa's importance to the EU and how the EU should engage with Africa differently and more productively. Mr. Endo attempted to explain the situation using the example of Japan and its engagement with the Global South. During his speech, he said Japan is pursuing two approaches to building partnerships. The first approach is based on idealism, emphasising values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The second approach is based on realism, where Japanese interests are the primary concern and other considerations are put aside. Furthermore, Ms. Weber pointed out the need to distinguish between the different countries on the African continent, as they are highly diverse. She agreed with Mr. Endo that there is a sense of anti-colonialism in some African countries and that it may take decades to change this mindset. She complemented Professor Endo's example with Mali, where he mentioned strong anti-colonialism or unfavourable perceptions of France. In situations with a strained relationship between African countries, such as Mali, and some member states, other EU nations can work towards building better relations. Lastly, Ms. Weber stressed the need to understand and respect the countries of the Global South to build good relations. Mr. Kolmaš concurred with this statement and added that although respecting these nations is essential, we should not abandon our values and overlook human rights violations.

Furthermore, the discussion revolved around the competition between China and India for leadership in the Global South and how it influences the strategic calculations of other major powers such as the EU, the US, or Japan. During the discussion, Mr. Kolmaš highlighted the recent advancements made by both countries and their efforts to attain more power in the region. He suggested that India would make a valuable ally, not just because of the shared history, and that

we should try to strengthen our mutual relationship. Mr. Endo referred to India as a complex country to cope with and suggested vigilance. Moreover, he outlined China's different approach to the world and its collaboration with other countries. He also emphasised the importance of being cautious in our cooperation with China. Ms. Weber commented on the situation, stating that we should not view India as an alternative to China. She believes this perspective is short-sighted and assumes that India will be willing to cooperate with the EU in the same way and on the same issues.

The last point of focus was the upcoming elections in 2024 in the Global South and their impact on the future development of EU/US foreign policy. Mr. Endo stressed that this is a complex issue and that elections may not always guarantee a democratic form of government in the region. Ms. Weber initially focused on the media portrayal of the elections in the Global South and was happy to see these elections being talked about and written about. She explained that the election could be an opportunity to improve relations between the EU and the Global South regardless of its outcome. Mr. Kolmaš stressed the importance of the elections and outlined the impact they could have. He used Argentina as an example to illustrate Javier Milei's impact after coming to power. Additionally, Mr. Kolmaš suggested that the US elections may have a more significant impact on our region and the Global South than the Global South elections themselves. According to him, Donald Trump has a fair chance to win, which could result in US isolation. However, he also mentioned that Trump has the ability to get along with states that do not share the same norms as we do.