

EUSAAP Conference 2025 Macau
The EU, its Policies and Relations in Times of Transitions
Sunday and Monday, 8+9 June 2025, Macau
University of Macau

Welcome to the 2025 EUSAAP Conference jointly organised by the European Union Association Asia Pacific (EUSAAP), EUSA Macau, University of Macau (UM) and the Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM).

In the political sphere, the EU and the world are at a crossroads marked by wars in several continents (including in Europe), rising geopolitical tensions, the emergence of strong leaders in authoritarian regimes, an overall decline in democratic governance, and the growth of populist movements marring democratic states. In Europe, a new political cycle also opened with the 2024 elections determining a more fragmented European Parliament elections and a new European Commission at the dawn of 2024, possibly alongside different priorities in EU's policies. 2025 also begins with a new American administration and many questions about the future of the old transatlantic alliances and cooperation, casting doubts on the long-standing relationship between the EU and the United States. Simultaneously, the position of the EU in the world and EU's global influence seems to be less certain as other areas of the world also appear to experience a rebalancing of power, particularly with the consolidation or emergence of rising nations or other regional experiences in the Asia-Pacific area, with ASEAN, BRICS, the Global South, and the increasing prominence of authoritarian regimes.

In the economic domain, uncertainties or need to operate fundamental transitions equally seem to prevail as the world grapples with economic crises, long-unseen inflation, also stagnations or outright recessions accompanied by the ongoing effects of a slowdown of globalisation if not deglobalization as well as the paralysis of the WTO. Sustainable development of states and societies remains a goal in the fast-approaching 2030 horizon, calling for other transitions in the way societies organize themselves. These aspirations are however also marred by the equally fast deepening climate changes, calling for other difficult but necessary transitions like the global decarbonization, the accelerated development of renewable resources, which is altering energy and industrial policies worldwide, and broader societal shifts towards sustainable lifestyles. Increased ecological and environmental awareness is driving policy changes at all levels, yet the struggle against pollution continues to challenge governments and citizens alike.

Technological advancements, including the digital transition and the rise of artificial intelligence, also play a role in such set of uncertainties and transitions, not only revolutionising industries but also challenging the role of humans in the workforce, with some fearing that automation could exacerbate inequality and social unrest.

This multi-disciplinary conference aims at providing an assessment of the current or emerging positions of the EU in regard to these momentous transitions and the relations it nurtures for facing these powerful ongoing global challenges, particularly in the Asia-Pacific area.

Questions and Help

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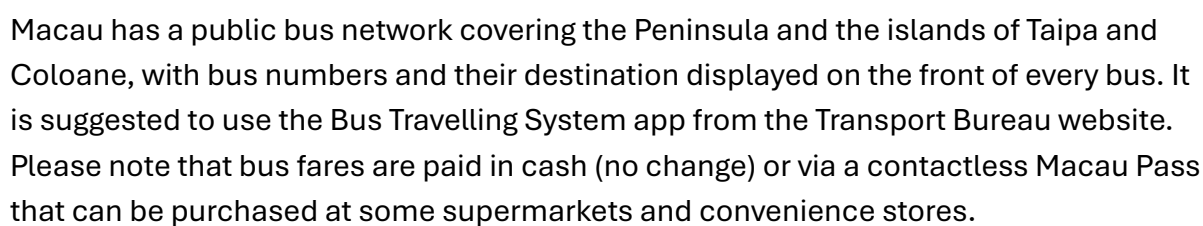
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This programme is funded by Macau Foundation

The University of Macau is located on the Hengqin Island in Guangdong province. The campus is separated from Taipa by a river. Faculty students and Macau residents can enter and exit the campus through an underwater tunnel, with no border controls between the university and Macau.



In addition, you can travel by taxi or uber. Please note that some drivers do not speak English, so be prepared and have your destination address printed out and with you.

Local Transport to the University

Most conference participants will arrive via air at either Hong Kong or Macau airport. Please find directions for both here.

From Hong Kong Airport to UM Guest House

- A) Macau Hong Kong Airport Direct
 - (a) Please keep your luggage tag.
 - (b) Upon arrival at Hong Kong Airport, head to the bus service counter to purchase your ticket (HKD 280, approx. EUR 33).
 - (c) You do not need to pass through customs or collect your luggage.
 - (d) Recommended Minimum Connecting Time (MCT):
 - (i) With checked baggage: 60 minutes before bus departure.
 - (ii) Without checked baggage: 30 minutes before bus departure.
 - (e) It's advisable not to buy tickets in advance to avoid issues with flight delays.

For detailed information and the timetable, visit:

<https://www.macauhkairportbus.com/service.php?lang=en>

- B) Alternative Option
 - a. If you miss the bus, take the Golden Bus from Hong Kong Airport to Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.
 - b. You must collect your luggage and proceed through customs at the airport first.
 - c. Please exchange money into HK dollars at the airport.
 - d. Then, take a taxi to the Hong Kong Border Gate (HZMB).
 - e. At the border, buy a ticket (HKD 70) for the Golden Bus to Macau. The bus ride takes approximately 45 minutes. After arriving in Macau, proceed through customs and take a taxi to UM Guest House, University of Macau.

From Macau Airport to UM Guest House

The easiest option is to take a taxi and provide the address of UM Guest House, University of Macau.

From Ferry Terminals or Border Gate to UM Guest House

From the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal or Macau Taipa Ferry Terminal, you can also take a taxi to UM Guest House, University of Macau.

Useful Links for Ferry Schedules:

Turbojet – Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal

<https://www.turbojet.com.hk/en/routing-sailing-schedule/hong-kong-macau/sailing-schedule-fares.aspx>

Cotai Water Jet – Macau Taipa Ferry Terminal

<https://www.cotaiwaterjet.com/ferry-schedule/hongkong-macau-taipa.html>

Currency & Power Plugs

The official currency is Macau Patacas (MOP), however often Hong Kong Dollars (HKD) are also accepted, with any change given in MOP. Most retailers also accept credit cards. Currency exchange services are available at the airport, docks and most hotels.

Type G Power Sockets: Macau uses Type G sockets with three rectangular pins in a triangular layout.

Voltage: The standard voltage is 220V at 50Hz. Ensure you have a plug adapter if your devices use a different type.



Accommodation

UM GUEST HOUSE

Address: Address: 2/F, N1, Avenida da Universidade, Taipa, Macau, China

Website: <https://srs.sao.um.edu.mo/um-guest-house/>

The UM University Hostel is on campus and thus within easy walking distance of the conference venue. No transportation will be offered for participants choosing to stay further afield.

Accepted payment method include: Cash / Credit Card / WeChat Pay / Alipay/ BOC Pay (non-refundable)

Please note the following Guest House Policies:

1. Any cancellation or amendment must be made to PGH Student Housing at least 3 working days prior to the guest's check-in day. Otherwise, a special charge of 1 night room rate will be applied.
2. Any payment that has been made for the accommodation fees is non-refundable.
3. Upon guest(s)' check-in:
 - 3.1. Kindly approach the UM Guest house reception at 2/F of N1 for checking in/out (phone no.: +853 8822 3000). It is open in 24-hour and 7-day operation.
 - 3.2. Check-in must be completed at the UM Guest House reception by the guest in person with proper identification documents (passport). During check-in, the identification document will be recorded. Guest rooms are solely for the use by the guests registered and cannot be transferred to any other party.
 - 3.3. In case of any damage charges, PGH Student Housing will directly impose the charges to the guest(s) during the stay period or contact the hosting academic/administrative unit if the guest(s) have completed the check-out procedure.
4. Upon guest(s)' departure, please return the room cards / keys to the UM Guest house reception and complete the check-out procedure.
5. Payment can be made at UM Guest House reception upon check-in.
6. In accordance with Law no. 5/2011 Regime of Tobacco Prevention and Control, smoking is prohibited in entire UM Guest House. All guests should observe the University's No Smoking Policy and should only smoke at designated smoking areas.

Conference Information

Conference Venue

The conference will be held in two different university buildings, the N6 Administrative Building and E32, the Law Faculty. Lunch will be offered in the University N1 Grand Plaza Cantonese Restaurant.



Programme

The academic conference will be held over two days (Sunday and Monday) and participants are expected to attend both days. The organisers reserve the right to re-arrange panels and presentations at short notice to accommodate operational requirements.

Presentations are expected to be 10 minutes in length, allowing for Q&A as time is available at the discretion of the session chair who will facilitate the discussion.

The two conference dinners are on Sunday and Monday evening and bus transfers from the conference venue to the restaurants and back has been arranged.

Paper Upload

Conference papers will be collected via the conference Google drive. Please check the programme to find your session. Then go into the Google drive and navigate to the respective session under Final Papers and upload your final paper there.

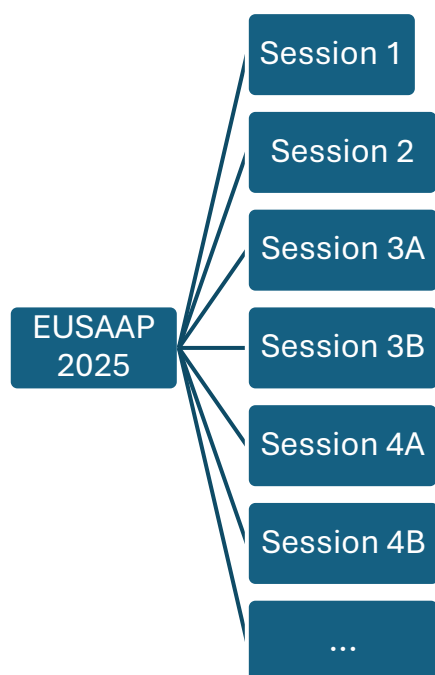
Please only upload word (.docx) or pdf documents. Please check that you are uploading the correct file. Whilst every effort is made, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to switch an incorrectly uploaded file with a revised version.

Please name the file as follows: LastName_FirstName_Title of paper.docx

In addition, conference presentations can be uploaded to the Google drive to prevent and minimise potential technical issues with screensharing, presentations disappearing, etc.

GoogleDrive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wa8UeciraHsMK9tdArMcXtvfj_R4U0sE?usp=share_link



Paper Publication

Conference participants will receive access to all full papers submitted to the conference. You are also encouraged to submit your paper for publication to the Asia Europe Journal of European Studies or the Australia and New Zealand Journal of European Studies. EUSAAP is working with both these journals and you are invited to submit your paper to either of these for publication.



AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND
JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN
STUDIES

Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies (ANZJES)

Scopus and DOAJ indexed

All participants of the 2025 EUSAAP conference are warmly invited to submit their papers to the Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies (ANZJES). ANZJES welcomes original empirical, theoretical and methodological research examining post-war Europe and European issues particularly from the social sciences, history, law, cultural studies and the humanities.

For full details on the submission process, please consult the ANZJES website (<https://tinyurl.com/ANZJES>). Submissions must be made via the ANZJES submissions portal. Please follow the submission guidelines carefully.

About the Journal

Launched in 2008, ANZJES is a scholarly, open access, double-blind peer-refereed journal published three times per year by the European Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand (ESAANZ). ANZJES does not utilise Article Processing Charges (APCs) or other fees of any kind for publication.



PROGRAMME

SUNDAY, 08 JUNE 2025

0830 – 0900	Registration Venue: N6 Ho Yin Conference Hall
0900 – 1000	Opening Ceremony Venue: Senate Room N6 Ho Yin Conference Hall
	Prof. Rui Martins, Vice-Rector (Global Affairs), University of Macau Prof. Tong Io Cheng, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Macau Prof. Paulo Canelas de Castro, EUSA-Macau and IEEM Prof. Martin Holland, EUSAAP
1000 – 1015	Cultural Welcome
1015 – 1030	Photo Session
1030 – 1130	Session 1 – Identity, Values, Goals Venue: Senate Room Chair: Prof. Dai Bingran
Ludovica Marchi	The European Union's wider governance between war and peace. Historical institutionalism meets practice
Chris Li Man Kong	The Authority of European Union Judicial Pluralism: From Post-sovereignty to Value-based Reasons
Andrés De Castro	European Union: A trip to nowhere as per the <i>Draghi's Report</i>
1130 – 1145	Morning Tea
1145 – 1245	Session 2 – Representations of International Legal Orders Venue: Senate Room Chair: Prof. Paulo Canelas de Castro
Anne McNaughton	(New) Legal Orders of international Law: an evolving concept in the Rules-based International Order
Paulo Cardinal	International Humanitarian Law - some historical notes and contemporary challenges and provocations: in particular perspectives of evolution and the EU role and contributions
Miguel Lemos	The European Union and the International Criminal Court
1245 – 1415	Lunch Venue: University N1 Grand Plaza Cantonese Restaurant <i>Please note that we will be moving by shuttle bus at 14:10 to a different building E32, Faculty of Law (FLL), after lunch. Please take all your belongings with you.</i>

1415 – 1530	Session 3 A – International Relations I - Theory Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Ding Chun
Maria Yolanda Valverde Ruiz	The European Dilemma in International Politics: Between Aspiration and Action. Is the European Union a Strategic Actor?
Bin Liu	The evolution of European Strategic Autonomy
Adam Mayer	Contemporary West Africa after the Dissolution of the French Sphere of Influence
	Session 3B – Socio-Political: Trust in the post-COVID 19 pandemic Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Martin Holland
Alistair Cole Dionysios Stivas	The importance of trust and transparency in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from EU member states
Nicole Scicluna Éric Sautédé	Trust and transparency in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic: A case comparison of Hong Kong and Singapore
Martin Sebená Stefan Auer	Robert Fico, Donald Trump and the erosion of trust in post-Covid Slovakia
1530 – 1545	Short break
1545 – 1645	Session 4 A – International Relations II – Geopolitical Shifts Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Yumiko Nakanishi
Sonny Shiu Hing Lo	Will there be a Settlement over the Russo-Ukrainian war?
Laura Gogny	China and Russia in the Sahel: Rising Influence and the Limits of the EU's Response
Dionysios Stivas	From Distant Ally to Perceived Threat: The Collective Securitization of China in NATO
	Session 4 B – Economy I Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Se-Eun Jeong
Sandra Marco Colino	Boosting Sustainable Technology through the New EU Competition Policy
Simiao Yang	Rising costs of border control and the Single market: the impact of refugee policy on free trade in the EU
Ilda Cristina Ferreira	The New EU AML/CFT watchdog: leading the way or trying to catch up?
1645 – 1715	Afternoon Tea

1715 – 1815	Session 5 A - International Relations III – Asia-Regional Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Gosia Klatt
Kumiko Haba	East Asian Regional Collaboration under the Trump Government – Peace-making and Economic prosperity
Hideki Hayashi	EU and ASEAN: From International Regime to Regional Cooperation — From the Japanese Point of View
Julie Damoiseau	An Overview of the EU's Tech Diplomacy Strategy with Asia
	Session 5 B – Economy II Venue:G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Chris Li Man Kong
Chun Ding	The European economy under the era of <i>Zeitenwende</i> : performance, causes and prospects
Wang Wang Zhou	The Low-Altitude Economy: Germany's Current Landscape and International Perspectives
Agata Wierzbowska	Does Economic Growth Undermine Democracy? Economic Factors behind the De-Democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe
1830	Shuttle bus from E32, FLL to Litoral Macau (Bus stop across E32)
1900	Dinner: Litoral Macau
2130	Shuttle bus from Litoral Macau to UM Guest House, N1

MONDAY, 09 JUNE 2025

0900 – 0915	Walk from UM Guest House to E32, FLL
0915 – 1100	Session 6 A - International Relations IV - Asia and Global South Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Martin Holland
Shreya Pandey	EU-India Bilateral Construction 2025: Time for a Rethink and a Rejig in Troubled Waters
Sae Won Chung Sung-Hoon Park	The Global Actorness of the EU Seen from the Korean Media and Elites: A Capability-Expectations Gap or a Capability-Expectation Deficit?
Manuel Enverga III	Supporting on their own Terms: A Discourse-Historical Analysis of EU Engagement in the BARMM
Italo Barreto Poty Ana Luiza Bravo e Paiva	European Union, South America and the Asia-Pacific Region: strengthening European cooperation with the Global South
	Session 6 B - Culture Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Sung-Hoon Park
Gosia Klatt	Normative influence of the European Union– an example of Jean Monnet Module and study tour for teachers from Australia
Iryna Sikorska	Educational reforms, crises and resilience: how the EU educational policies shape societal responses in the Eastern Partnership region
Shuji Koba	Language Policy in Regional Integration: A Comparative Study of the EU's Multilingualism and ASEAN's English-Centric Approach in Times of Transition
Ann-Sophie Van Baegvehem	The Tenacity of Coloniality of Memory and Perception - An Analysis of the House of European History Using Critical Museology
Yuan Yuan Liu	European Integration and Gender-Based Violence: Exploring the Role of EU Policies in Addressing GBV Across Member States
1100 – 1130	Morning Tea

1130 – 1245	Session 7 A - International Relations V - Indo - Pacific Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Natthanan Kunnamas
César de Prado	Europe's strategic turn towards the Indo-Pacific
Weiqing Song	Understanding the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy: a Geopolitical Analysis
Nicholas Smith	The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy three years on: Reflections from across the Indo-Pacific
Sung-Won Yoon	Message Transmitted?: Korean Perceptions of the EU's Roles and Importance in the Indo-Pacific Region
	Session 7 B - Green Transitions I - Environment Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Kasira Cheeppensook
Yumiko Nakanishi	Nature Restoration law in the EU and Japan
Kunjie Wang	Legal Convergence in Environmental and Energy Law: A Comparative Analysis of Dynamic and Static Interactions in the EU and Asia-Pacific
Paulo Canelas de Castro	Developments of EU Water Law and Policy
Ziqing Yan	Water Governance in the EU during the Transition: An Assessment of Climate Goals Compatibility and Implications for Transboundary Rivers in the Asia-Pacific Region – A Case Study of the Danube River
1245 – 1415	Lunch Venue: University N1 Grand Plaza Cantonese Restaurant <u>Lunch:Board Meeting for Presidents</u> Shuttle bus from E32, FLL to N1
1410	Shuttle bus from N1 to E32, FLL

1415 – 1530	Session 8 A –International Relations VI – China-EU Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Dr. José Luis de Sales Marques
Eva Hanada	Hungary-China Economic Relations: A Stocktaking of the Last 15 Years
Bin Ma	Geopolitical Imagination and Geo-economic Reality of Middle Corridor and Its Influence on Sino-EU Relations
Suet Yi (Cher) Lai	Perception and Misperception between China and EU amid a Return of Geopolitics
Xing Li Jian Zhang	China-EU Arctic Cooperation Under the Impact of Trumpism
	Session 8 B – Green Transitions II – Climate Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Iryna Sikorska
Weijia Zhang	Climate Goals and Unexpected Events – The Importance of Adaptive Governance: European Union Energy-Climate Policies as Examples
Pok Hang Tai	Guardian of the Green Rule of Law? The ECJ's Expanding Role in Enforcing Climate Commitments
Hang Li	Ensuring a Fair Development? The Role of Cohesion Policy and Just Transition Mechanism and their Relation in the EU Green Initiative
1530 – 1545	Short Break

1545 – 1645	Session 9 A –International Relations VII – China-EU Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Li Xing
Carlos M. Martin	EU members industrial policies over China in changing international and bounded orders
José Luis de Sales Marques	EU's China Policy in Trump 2.0. era- What does the EU want from China?
Paulo Canelas de Castro	Green Transitions: The Catalyst for the Reset and Deepening of China-EU Partnership?
	Session 9 B –Digital Transitions Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Ma Bin
Lixue Shang	Research on EU Artificial Intelligence Governance from a Liberal Intergovernmentalism Perspective: A Case Study of the AI Act
Rostam Neuwirth	The European Union and the Law of Missed (Future) Opportunities Exemplified by the Artificial Intelligence Act
Célia Matias	EU Law's Approach to AI and Copyright: A Model to Export or a System to Revise?
1645 – 1715	Afternoon Tea
1715 – 1815	Session 10 A – Security-Defense Venue: G020, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Andrés De Castro
Sheng Xue	European Defense Autonomy, a path to strategic autonomy or a source of internal quarrel?
Tianyu Luo Guowen Zhu	Structural Dilemmas and Future Pathways of European Defense Integration: A Multidimensional Analysis Based on the PESCO Project
Megi Fino	Albania and EU CFSP: Strengthening Integration
	Session 10 B – Social Transition Venue: G003, E32, FLL Chair: Prof. Yasuyuki Kokubo
José Ferreira Pinto	Europe's Normative Power: Advancing Global Sustainability Standards Through SMEs
Yujie Cai	MNEs and Sustainable Development: The EU Approach
Heping Dang	Extraterritoriality in the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive
1815	Closing Session
1840	Shuttle bus from E32, FLL to La Cucina Italiana (Bus stop across E32)
1900	Dinner: La Cucina Italiana
2130	Shuttle bus from La Cucina Italiana to UM Guest House, N1

Abstracts

A-D

BARRETO POTY, ITALO

BRAVO E PAIVA, ANA LUIZA

European Union, South America and the Asia-Pacific Region: strengthening European cooperation with the Global South

The current crisis of the global order—marked by US-China rivalry, trade conflicts, the war in Ukraine, and post-pandemic disruptions—has exposed the risks for the European Union of overreliance on traditional alliances. With the US adopting unpredictable protectionist policies that challenge WTO rules and NATO commitments, it is important for the EU to diversify its partnerships, particularly with the Global South. This paper claims that South America, with its market of 440 million people and a combined GDP of \$3.5 trillion, presents a strategic opportunity in this context. The region's growing economic integration with the Asia-Pacific region—driven by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—further enhances its geopolitical relevance. Key infrastructure projects, such as Peru's Port of Chancay, and Brazil's 37 BRI agreements signed in 2024 demonstrate deepening ties between South America and the Asia-Pacific region, the world's most dynamic economic hub. For the EU, strengthening cooperation with South America offers a pathway to reduce dependency on US-EU relations while fostering a more balanced, multipolar engagement strategy. By leveraging these emerging connections, the EU can potentially position itself as a key player in shaping a more resilient and interconnected global economy.

Italo Barreto Poty is a Visiting Professor at Guangdong Institute for International Strategies (GIIS), affiliated with Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) and Lecturer at Fluminense Federal University's Institute for Strategic Studies (INEST/UFF), where he also serves as a senior researcher at the Centre for Contemporary China and Asia Studies (CEA/UFF). From 2019 to 2022, he was a researcher at the Brazilian Naval War College. He holds a Ph.D. in International Political Economy from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is a member of the Brazilian Association of International Relations (ABRI).

Ana Luiza Bravo e Paiva is a Visiting Professor at Guangdong Institute for International Strategies (GIIS), affiliated with Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS). She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative History from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. As faculty member, she has served as an Assistant Professor at the Meira Mattos Institute since 2018, where she researches and teaches topics related to Scientific Methodology; Brazilian Foreign Policy; Public Policy and Governance.

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MNE sustainable development: the EU approach

Sustainable development has become a global priority, especially since the adoption of the UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement in 2015. While MNEs may contribute to challenges like climate change and human rights violations, they can be part of the solution to drive sustainable development through responsible business practices. To promote corporate accountability, the EU started the efforts early in 2001 and issued Green Paper which encourages businesses to take on greater accountability for their social and environmental impacts. During recent years, under the guidance of the EU Green Deal which proposed in 2019 and aims for Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, more binding regulations have been adopted to strictly enforce corporate sustainable practices.

This paper analyses the EU's approach in promoting MNE sustainable development with the focus on key regulations in the EU. The findings show that first, unlike international frameworks which are mostly soft laws, the European Union has taken steps toward legally binding sustainability regulations and impose stronger enforcement mechanisms. Second, regulations like SFDR, EU Taxonomy and CSRD have played a critical role in addressing greenwashing by establishing clear classifications for sustainable activities and incorporating third-party assurance to enhance the credibility of corporate sustainability claims. Third, ESG reporting in the EU has seen significant improvements, with uniform reporting standards replacing previous voluntary frameworks and double materiality been introduced to further strengthen the comprehensiveness of reporting. However, despite the EU's leadership in driving MNE sustainable development, there still exist limitations including challenges in reliable data collection and the lack of alignment with international sustainability standards.

Key words: corporate sustainable responsibility, the European Union, MNE, binding efforts, green transition

My name is Cai Yujie, Ph.D student in the Faculty of Law at the University of Macau. My research interests are International Law and International commercial law. As for my academic background, I got my bachelor's degree from Shanghai International Studies University and got my master's degree from the University of Bristol, UK. I participated in a conference on sustainable regional integration in ASEAN at the end of last year, which inspired me to explore MNE sustainable development within the EU context.

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Developments of EU Water Policy and Law

After several decades of a piecemeal construction, EU's water policy and legislation gained coherence, clarity and purpose with the adoption of the Water Framework Directive at the turn of the millennia. In particular, this newer EU water policy and law prescribed the goal that EU water bodies be resolutely improved to obtain overall good water status by 2015 or, ultimately, by 2027. In view of the proximity of this final date, the Europe saw itself compelled to gauge the progress done, assess whether the ambition had been met. This recent survey rather demonstrates that there is more work ahead. Europe's water is under significant pressure, presenting serious challenges to water security. Water stress is already occurring in Europe. It affects 20% of Europe's territory and 30% of the population every year. As such, Europe urgently needs to improve its resilience and ensure sustainable freshwater supplies for people and the environment.

This urgent action required to improve Europe's water resilience is further compelled by climate change which is disrupting weather patterns and increasing the pressures on water resources and ecosystems. Current European water management practices are poorly adapted to cope with such rapid and large-scale change. Improved water management is needed to strengthen Europe's water resilience and reduce pollution. Amongst such improvements, reducing water use and improving water efficiency are key to tackling water stress. Reducing leakage, using water-efficient devices and processes and increasing water reuse would improve efficiency. Water pricing can also be an important driver for reducing water use and improving efficiency, while also providing a mechanism to fund water investments. Target setting, focused on saving water or reducing demand, could drive action and facilitate the monitoring of progress towards greater water resilience. Up-to-date and timely information on water quantity and quality are also critical to Europe's ability to better manage its waters. A more robust knowledge base also plays a role to enable more equitable and sustainable water allocation between competing uses, including the environment. Finally, another dimension of this new water management needed pertains to managing flood risk which affects human well-being and ecosystems, with potential loss of life and significant economic losses.

Paulo Canelas de Castro conducts a Jean Monnet Action in European Union Law at the University of Macau (Macau, SAR; China), where he is also the Coordinator of the Master's Program in European Union Law, International Law and Comparative Law. He is a Fellow of the University of Cambridge and Life Member of its Clare Hall College. Currently, he serves as President of the Institute of European Studies of Macau, President of EUSA-Asia Pacific and of EUSA-Macau. He has lectured for the Academy of International Trade and Investment Law (PRAIA) and the Xiamen Academy of International Law. Prior to his time in Macau, he taught International Law and European Union Law in the University of Coimbra (Portugal). He held Visiting Professorships in Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Malaysia and Slovakia and was Legal Counsel before the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Justice. He was a legal consultant to states (China, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal) and International Organisations alike (EU, UN, UNESCO, SADC). Over the years he has had a consistent research interest in the International law and EU law disciplines, with a more recent focus on environmental, climate, energy and water law issues. He has written several books, book chapters, journal articles, and reports on these legal areas. His publications include *Recent Developments in Water Law. Principles and Comparative Cases* (Luso-American Foundation, 2006), *The European Union at 50:*

Assessing the Past, Looking Ahead (University of Macau Press, 2010), *Mutações e Constâncias do Direito Internacional da Água* (Universidade de Coimbra, 2018). He is a member of several editorial and scientific boards of several academic journals in the International law and EU law areas in different countries and jurisdictions. He equally is a member of several academic law associations in Portugal, Macau, Germany, and the International Law Association (Headquarter's member).

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Green Transitions: The Catalyst for the Reset and Deepening of China-EU Partnership?

The relationship between China and the European Union (EU) commemorates in 2025 half a century of existence. Over these 5 decades China-EU relations were upscaled to a partnership and even a strategic partnership. More recently, they have been somewhat less lustrous, no doubt reflecting different views on their nature and goals pursued.

Overall, however, the specific layer of relations entertained in the environmental protection, climate, and energy areas do not seem to have been affected and instead kept been gauged as mutually advantageous. They may even be seen as providing valuable lessons for other areas of engagement.

In particular, in addressing the climate and energy transitions, China and EU relations generally reflect the understanding that they are premised on a shared global concern, determining the inevitability of pursuing a cooperative pathway which corresponds to the assumption of a genuine responsibility for implementing the global climate governance framework (gradually established from the 1992 UNFCCC to the 2015 Paris Agreement). All these factors work as powerful incentives for the two partners to pursue constructive dialogues and bridge occasional, circumstantial differences. And indeed, anchored on high-level diplomacy as well as economic interdependencies, this relationship has thus materialised institutionally into over two decades of China-EU Dialogues such as the Ministerial Dialogue on Environmental Policy (2003) and the Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Change (2010), which laid the groundwork for landmark substantive agreements like the 2015 Joint Statement on Climate Change and the 2018 Joint Statement on Climate Change and Clean Energy.

At the heart of this specific partnership in the climate and energy areas lie ambitious decarbonization goals, which determine both individual actions and trajectories characterized by parallels and divergences. China's dual targets translate into pledges for peaking emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 and materialize into determined actions supported by massive investments in renewable energy. In the EU's case, the approach followed is typically of a strongly regulatory nature: its climate policy, which had been independently equated by the Lisbon Treaty, gained momentum with the adoption of the legally binding European Green Deal framework (2019), and then was further pursued by individual laws like the Climate Law (2021), the Fit for 55 (2021) and the Repower EU (2022) in response to the energy crisis ensuing from the war in Ukraine. Together, they mandated the EU to pursue a very pronounced emissions reduction target (55% by 2030, more recently proposed to be revised to 90%) and reach net carbon neutrality by 2050. Differently, whereas EU's trajectory seems more enthusiastically committed to the phase-out of fossil fuels pronged by COP28 in Dubai, China, where coal still plays a big role in its primary energy mix, adopts a more gradual transition strategy.

They moreover gave rise secondly to palpable joint cooperative projects and mutually beneficial experiences sometimes of a learning or emulation exercises. One of the best recent examples is the dialogue on the Emissions Trade System and, more generally, the resort to market mechanisms for pursuing such ambitious decarbonization goals. They have moreover provided the opportunity for non-state actors (provinces, municipalities), and non-State actors (economic, civil society associations) to equally experience the palpable shared benefits.

Of course, these cooperative beneficial experiences in the climate, energy areas do not occur in a vacuum. They are instead sometimes impacted by other friction points, both endogenous to the area (for instance the recent EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) implemented by the EU since 2023) or generated in other policy-areas, like the trade one (where clean green tech can, somewhat paradoxically, be rather seen as a matter of fierce competition) as well as the overall geopolitical environment.

Looking ahead however, it appears that the capital of rewarding experiences and of understanding and confidence accumulated in the area, together with recent success stories like the decisive common action in COP-29 in Baku, and the overall underlying notion that the climate and energy transitions are momentous, rather provide the opportunity for resetting China-EU relations to new heights and ambitions, for resolutely deepening them. This seems to be the more sensible as both partners acutely realise that in the context of a world in turmoil and which is afflicted by big uncertainties, but also for the need to address their own reciprocal needs for standards, both China and the EU have a keen greater interest in preserving and using the multilateral institutions and laws that are the backbone of the international system.

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CARDINAL, PAULO

International Humanitarian Law - some historical notes and contemporary challenges and provocations: in particular perspectives of evolution and the EU role and contributions

International Humanitarian Law, otherwise known by its less palatable label as the law of war, regulates conduct in wars and tries to avoid the descent into utter dehumanization. Although relatively recent and anchored in the Solferino effect, history provides much earlier examples of humanitarian condiments in the *jus in bello*.

It is a difficult time to write about International Humanitarian Law. The times and threats we are witnessing almost daily are bringing darkness, uncertainties, demotions, metamorphosis, and are destroying beliefs in Law. Technological advances, e.g. AI, evolution and sedimentation of the individual in international law, televised wars as catalyst of global awareness, a permanent member of the UNSC waging war with disregard of international law, including IHL: A «perfect storm» for security and international law issues. However, in more recent and contemporary times we are facing and witnessing «live» even more serious provocations. Existential threats to IHL and to International Law at large. At the very minimum an attempt to transmutation of IHL, IHRL and other branches into a mere transactional set of (potential) rules. The recent political nature issues such as the ones involving permanent members of the UNSC. In Ukraine. In Palestine. In these factors, rest the main challenges, better said, the main provocations and threats to IHL (and *jus ad bellum*, and IHRL) and its eventual downgrading, losing the Law component in it and becoming something like International Humanitarian Morality or International Humanitarian Courtesy, or thrown into a minor and subjugated section of a new Mercantile International Law.

At this time, IHL is in crisis. Perhaps even an existential one. Some of the challenges can be seen as old wine in new bottles, even if with naturally more technological complexity, whereas other challenges and provocations can really be seen as a bullet, or missile, to the core proper of Law. However, as long as one has Law in the international community, as long as we have Geneva, Hague and New York, and Rome (and maybe even others more in an ad-hoc manner), as long we have the ICJ, the ICC, the Human Rights courts and UN committees, as long as we have humanity in humanity. And as long as we have entities in the international community such as the EU, IHL can still be Law, can still survive, with more or less problems, difficulties, and disrespect. Not that EU has a monopoly of a high ground morality, unfortunately not, but in these sad times, it is one of the few beacons of hope, of international rule of law, of justice - which one clearly hopes it will totally extend to help curtail the provocations, the utter disregard, and threats to International Law, of an once victim at the hands of Nazis.

International law indeed carries in itself an empathy to perceived justice. If, however, none of those will be able to safeguard IHL future, then we would really be living in a new, ugly, unfair, lawless, world and world order. IHL is facing its *regina viarum* and thus *Quo Vadis?* From *Silent enim lēgēs inter arma* to *Inter Arma Caritas*, to what? A comprehensive system inspired by ECHR-ECtHR? Or, back to Cicero locution, when the perpetrator is powerful and boastful and international security on the eye of the (each) beholder, speaks louder than the humanitarian reasons? Louder than Law, louder than humanistic perspectives and axiology?

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CHUNG, SAE-WON
PARK, SUNG-HOON

The Global Actorness of the EU Seen from the Korean Media and Elites: A Capability-Expectations Gap or a Capability-Expectation Deficit?*

This paper examines how the EU's capability stood in relation to the expectations held by Korean society based on the results of newly conducted media analysis and elite interviews from 2020 to 2022. The paper focuses on the EU's global actorness and argues that not only was there a capability-expectations gap (CEG) and/or an expectations deficit, as was typically found in many other similar studies done for other countries, but also there was a third phenomenon in the Korean case study: capability-expectations matching (CEM). The CEM was discovered in one aspect of the EU's global actorness, namely the EU as an economic and trade actor. An additional new finding was that another feature of the EU's global actorness – the EU as a norm promoter – started to become more popular in the eyes of Korean society.

This paper is co-authored Paper with Prof. Sunghoon Park, Published in Journal of Contemporary European Studies.

Dr. Sung-Hoon Park is Jean Monnet Chair and Professor Emeritus of Korea University. He currently is the Key Expert 1 and Team Leader for the newly launched EU-funded project "EU Public and Cultural Diplomacy in the Republic of Korea". He was one of founding members and President of both the EUSA-Korea and EUSA-AP and has been involved in a series of EU perception studies and numerous Jean Monnet projects, including two Jean Monnet Network projects on Asia-Europe strategic partnership and connectivity. Recently, his academic and policy-oriented interest spans to economic security, global supply chains and future industrial cooperation between the EU and Korea.

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STIVAS, DIONYSIOS

The importance of trust and transparency in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from EU member states

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union's (EU) member states operationalized different methods to control the virus. By April 2022, the EU countries recorded considerably different COVID-19 related deaths. In this study, we investigate whether trust in government and in the medical staff, COVID-19 related transparency, and different mixes of these two, influenced the capacity of sixteen EU countries to manage the pandemic. We draw on published surveys, extensive secondary literature and first-hand interviews in two member-states in particular: Greece and France. To substantiate our inquiry, we utilize a modified version of the Trust-Transparency Matrix. Our study suggests that trust and transparency, in the context of the pandemic, operate as contextual variables of effective public management. The value of the trust-transparency framework is to elucidate general governance dynamics and to identify those that are the most pertinent in terms of the response to the pandemic.

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Professor Alistair Cole is Professor of Political Science at Sciences Po, Lyon, France. He was previously Head of the Government and International Studies department at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), with which he remains closely associated. He has published extensively, mainly in the field of French and European politics, more recently in terms of Asia-Europe linkages. He has been associated from the origins with the Jean Monnet Centre Improving Institutional trust during Pandemics, based at HKBU and is attending the conference in this capacity.

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DAMOISEAU, JULIE

An Overview of the EU's Tech Diplomacy Strategy with Asia

This paper offers an overview of the European Union's evolving tech diplomacy strategy with Asia, exploring how the EU defines and applies this broad concept. Positioned within the Global Gateway strategy, EU tech diplomacy reflects both geopolitical ambition and regulatory influence—through tools such as tech ambassadors, standards, summits and digital partnerships.

Asia is a key focus due to shared interests in areas like AI, 5G, semiconductors, and data governance, as well as mutual priorities around cybersecurity, ethical innovation, fair competition and connectivity. The paper highlights case studies with partners such as China, Japan, India, South Korea, ASEAN, and Taiwan, while noting the role of tech giants.

The study argues that tech diplomacy is central to the EU's pursuit of digital sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and influence in shaping global tech norms, especially in response to rising global tech competition.

Julie is a third-year French political science student who studies at Science Po Lille for two years and is currently completing an exchange program at Taylor's University in Malaysia. With a growing interest in research, she aims to specialize in Asian geopolitics while maintaining a strong connection to European affairs through initiatives like Newrope and the Hong Kong Model European Union.

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DANG, HEPING

Extraterritoriality in the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has enacted a series of significant extraterritorial legislative measures aimed at extending its values and regulatory frameworks globally. This paper focuses on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which came into effect on July 25, 2024. The directive requires companies to implement a range of measures to prevent, mitigate, or terminate adverse impacts on the environment and human rights. It marks a significant advancement in the EU's corporate responsibility domain by expanding the regulatory scope from traditional "supply chain management" to broader "value chain management." This paper aims to unpack the evolution and nature of the directive and its impact on the EU's engagement in global governance.

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DE CASTRO, ANDRES

European Union: A trip to nowhere as per the Draghis' Report

This academic contribution analyzes Draghis' report prologue with the intention of determining what problems are observed and what strategies are intended to be used to address them. After, the main arguments are outlined, and are analyzed based on the available data, reaching the conclusion that there is a distortion between the analysis, the proposed routes and reality. In accordance with the implementation of a liberal agenda, contrary to the national interests of the Member States, we observe a decaying level of economic growth, and increasing political and social problems, some of which are described in this paper. To conduct this research, quantitative and qualitative data from European, governmental and non-governmental sources has been analyzed and a focus group with semi-structured questions has been carried out. In the final part of the paper, research questions are formed about the "future" of the European Union and the situation of Spain in the context of the EU is analyzed.

Dr. Andrés De Castro is an Associate Professor of International Relations at UNED University. He is the Principal Investigator of the project "Great Power politics: multipolarity reflected in regional scenarios" at UNED. He has successfully supervised 12 PhD thesis and has produced 75 academic contributions, many of them indexed in JCR/Clarivate and/or SCOPUS.

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Europe's strategic turn towards the Indo-Pacific

Peaceful, liberal and democratic Europe has finally woken up to geopolitical realities mainly due to protracted conflicts in Europe and its neighbourhood, but also because of global great power dynamics. Although the European theatre remains paramount to European countries and international organisations concerned with security, and the Middle East theatre is second in importance, the very broad Indo-Pacific theatre – with a large variety of stressful power dynamics and stressed multilateral processes – is since recent years increasing in importance, as seen in various strategies culminating with the EU's strategic compass of 2022. The paper will recall the various early strategies (written or applied) towards – or with implications to – the Indo-Pacific, of the European Union (EU), its main member states (France, Germany...) and the UK, as well as the strategic concepts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). It will then analyse the ongoing top-level strategic statements of the European actors, sometimes meeting in novel configurations with key patterns in the Indo-Pacific, and often with the wish of reaching out to other like-minded partners there. It will investigate the 2025 EU's ReArm Europe strategic defence initiative and the subsequent EC-EEAS White Paper on defence. It will see if developments to rearm in Germany and other countries have any direct first implications to the Indo-Pacific. And it will comment on the mounting pressures for NATO to adjust to a great power rivalry critically unfolding around China. Overall, the significance of this paper is to highlight the reconfiguration of European actors when addressing the challenges of great power politics in the reconfiguration of the Indo-Pacific.

Dr. César de Prado is since 2024 an Associate Professor and Research Coordinator at the main interdisciplinary center of European studies in India, the Manipal Center for European Studies at Manipal Academy of Higher Education. He holds a master's degree in economics and business from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and a PhD from the European University Institute (Florence) with a thesis on technological standards. He later researched and/or taught at universities in Sweden, Japan, Spain, Macau, P.R. of China and Taiwan. He is the author of three books and over sixty academic articles, book chapters and policy papers. He is researching on the governance of various sectors promoted by middle powers, especially European ones and India. He also studies the role of some sub-national entities in Europe-India and multi-level world politics.

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DING, CHUN

The European economy under the era of Zeitenwende: performance, causes and prospects

The European economy has been greatly impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the consequential energy crisis. The EU economy has fallen into recession, with high inflation, shrinking imports and exports, prominent government deficits, weak economic performance in member states. During the conflict, the European economy showed periodical characteristics of recession, stagnation and slow recovery, and a certain degree of differentiation, which was related to structural causes such as the EU's energy dependence on Russia. In response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the European Central Bank has cut interest rates for several rounds, the EU and its member states have implemented short-term measures to seek energy alternatives and ensure people's livelihood, and the EU has also introduced long-term measures to accelerate energy transformation and strengthen economic security. These efforts have achieved certain results. Looking into the future, the EU economy is likely to recover slowly with serious geopolitical risks. The prospect of the EU economy remains uncertain under the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with both risk and opportunity coexisting.

Professor, Dr. of Economics at the School of Economics, Jean Monnet Chair, director of Centre for European Studies, Centre for China-EU People-to-People Exchange Studies, deputy Dean of Fudan Institute of Belt and Road & Global Governance, Fudan University. he holds positions including the Vice President of the Chinese Association of European Studies, Secretary-General of the Chinese Society for EU Studies, President of the Shanghai Institute for European Studies, Routine Councilor of the Chinese Society of World Economics, he is mainly engaged in research and teaching activities on World economy, EU economy, politics and European integration, social security as well as China-EU relations.

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Supporting on their own Terms: A Discourse-Historical Analysis of EU Engagement in the BARMM

This paper critically examines the nature and dynamics of European Union (EU) development assistance to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), formerly known as the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The region is the only place in the Philippines where Muslims compose the majority of the population. Muslim Mindanao gained greater autonomy in 2019 after decades of violent conflict and the persistence of weak democratic institutions. Since the 1970s, Muslim secessionist movements have been fighting against government troops to gain independence from the predominantly Christian country. The instability engendered by the clashes has contributed to poor human development indicators in the region, which persist to the present day. Vis-à-vis other Philippine regions, BARMM has lower levels of life expectancy, educational attainment, while having higher levels of poverty as well as infant and maternal mortality.

The EU, previously the European Community, has involved itself with various projects in Muslim Mindanao since the 1970s. However, it may be argued that the nature of its engagement has shifted depending on the context of the regional bloc's foreign policy priorities. For example, when the European organization was focused on reducing poverty in marginalized areas, it implemented small-scale assistance projects in Muslim Mindanao. When European states had agreed to follow the Millennium Development Goals in the early 2000s, EU engagement in the Philippine territory expanded to include health sector support, and the development of a Peace Process to reconcile Muslim secessionists and the Philippine government. At present, EU activities in the BARMM appear to be guided by the imperatives of the Indo-Pacific Strategy and Global Gateway project, with projects being focused on infrastructure development and the circular economy.

Despite the EU's lengthy engagement in Muslim Mindanao, there is remarkably little academic literature about it, hence this paper hopes to build upon that space. Applying a Discourse-Historical Approach emphasizing the dialectical relationship of discourse and context, this paper argues that the EU's engagement in Muslim Mindanao has emphasized its foreign policy objectives, rather than the region's immediate needs.

Dr Manuel R Enverga III is Jean Monnet Chair and the Director of Ateneo de Manila University's European Studies Program. His teaching and research includes topics on EU-Philippine relations, digital diplomacy, and global flows. He is the authored three books, and his academic research has appeared in the International Journal of Cultural Policy, Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, and the Journal of Contemporary European Studies. Dr. Enverga also shares his perspectives through appearances on television news and newspaper articles. Outside of his academic work, he hosts The Eurospeak Podcast, where he and his guests to talk about European influences on contemporary popular culture.

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The New EU AML / CFT watchdog: leading the way or trying to catch up?

This paper examines the establishment and potential impact of the newly created EU Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AMLA), established by EU Regulation 2024/1620 on 31 May 2024. AMLA aims to enhance coordination, supervision, and legal harmonization across Member States to effectively combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

This institution is part of a strategic reform of the EU in the fight against money laundering, terrorist financing and other financial crime, combining a central regulatory and supervisory body and new EU legislation. The tasks of AMLA include providing guidance, assessing risks to the EU financial market, and directly supervising certain financial institutions at the national level. This integrated approach seeks to foster a more coherent and harmonized legal framework within the EU, facilitating better cooperation among Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and other relevant bodies. The AMLA has legal personality and will take up most of its functions and powers by 1 July 2025.

This paper will analyze whether AMLA places the EU at the forefront of the international fight against money laundering and terrorist financing or whether it is merely attempting to catch up. It will assess its role from a political and institutional perspective, including its relationship with other EU institutions, Member States and, notably, with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global standard-setter to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

A central question is whether AMLA offers genuine added value and what challenges it faces, whether it is a step towards greater EU integration in financial supervision or a case of 'comitology' syndrome. The paper also looks at the main institutional challenges that the AMLA poses for EU Member States and, finally, whether the AMLA's activities are complementary to those of the FATF or whether there is potential for overlap and competition.

Ilda Cristina Ferreira is a senior legal consultant at Legal Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR and a part-time invited Lecturer (PhD) at University of Macau, Faculty of Law. Her research focuses on the law of international organisations, public international law and transnational criminal law. Her experience as a trainer-instructor, speaker and publications also includes legal co-operation in criminal matters, international criminal law and human rights. She was Head of the International and Interregional Law Department of the Legal Affairs Bureau (2016-2020) and member of several drafting Committees, of the Anti-Human Trafficking Committee and the AML/CFT Committee of the Macao SAR. She has been following the work of the FATF and the APG for over 20 years, including as a qualified assessor.

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Europe's Normative Power: Advancing Global Sustainability Standards Through SMEs

This paper examines the European Union's evolving role as a normative power in advancing global sustainability standards through Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). As the EU navigates multiple transitions—geopolitical realignments, economic uncertainties, and climate imperatives—its ability to shape international sustainability norms faces unprecedented challenges yet reveals distinctive mechanisms of influence. Drawing on empirical evidence from restaurants across 42 countries, this study identifies how European regulatory frameworks, sustainability initiatives, and cultural approaches position European SMEs as vehicles for norm diffusion beyond territorial boundaries.

The research addresses a critical question: How does Europe exercise normative power in an era of contested multilateralism, particularly in Asia-Pacific contexts where alternative sustainability models are emerging? Our analysis reveals that European SMEs demonstrate broader SDG coverage and stronger policy-practice alignment than North American counterparts, though interestingly lag behind Middle Eastern and Asian establishments in comprehensive sustainability integration. This geographical variation suggests a more complex normative landscape than previously theorized.

The study identifies three primary mechanisms through which European sustainability norms transfer globally: regulatory diffusion (via instruments like the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive), market incentives (through supply chain requirements), and knowledge transfer (via SME networks and industry associations). The restaurant sector provides a particularly revealing case study, with European establishments pioneering waste reduction systems and demonstrating sophisticated understanding of SDG interconnections, particularly between responsible consumption (SDG12) and biodiversity protection (SDG15).

However, our findings also highlight significant limitations to Europe's normative influence, including regional adaptation challenges, resource disparities, and emerging alternative sustainability frameworks from the Global South. The paper concludes by proposing a renewed approach to Europe's normative power—one that balances leadership with partnership, maintains high standards while accommodating diverse implementation pathways, and leverages SMEs as crucial intermediaries in fostering sustainability transitions that reflect both European values and local realities in the Asia-Pacific region.

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FINO, MEGI

Albania and EU CFSP: Strengthening Integration

Albania, an EU candidate country since 2014, is often described as already a member of Europe, only missing the 'U' of Union, owing not only to its geographic position, but also to its deep-rooted European sentiment. Albania's foreign policy is, in no small degree, testimony to this. The article at hand examines Albania's alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Specifically, it assesses the degree of Albania's alignment with EU CFSP and its implications for the country's EU integration process, particularly in the context of the evolving geopolitical landscape. The analysis draws on Albania's efforts regarding regional and international cooperation, international restrictive measures alignment, hybrid threats and Foreign Information Manipulation Interference (FIMI), and the latest 2024 European Commission Communication on EU enlargement policy. These efforts bear high significance for Albania's EU integration process and underscore the increasing importance of CFSP alignment in the current geopolitical landscape. Albania's case also offers critical insights into broader dynamics of EU enlargement and confirms that effective CFSP implementation is characterized by a varying degree of flexibility and autonomy.

This paper is co-authored with Álvaro Renedo Zelba.

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GOGNY, LAURA

China and Russia in the Sahel: Rising Influence and the Limits of the EU's Response

The geopolitical landscape of the Sahel has undergone profound transformations over the past decade, shaped by the interplay of great power politics and regional instability. This research examines the period from 2012 to 2024 through the lens of offensive realism, analyzing the growing influence of China and Russia in the region and the European Union's (EU) limited response. By focusing on the cases of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, this study highlights the shifting power dynamics in the Sahel as a reflection of the global order's balance of power.

China and Russia capitalized on the West's diminishing credibility by presenting themselves as reliable partners for the region's military and political elites. The win-win rhetoric employed by both powers resonated with local actors, who viewed the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation as preferable alternatives to the conditionality assistance of the EU and its Member States.

As China and Russia continue to reshape regional dynamics, the EU faces mounting challenges in responding effectively within the limits of its institutional constraints. The findings of this research underscore that the EU is not an actor of the international stage, remains dependent on its Member States' national interests, and therefore does not play the role of an international security actor. In the Sahel, the EU's missions reflected France's priorities. The European failure contrasts with the more assertive roles played by China and Russia, which have adopted a pragmatic approach portraying themselves as reliable partners. Their ability to offer an alternative to Western conditionalities has resonated with Sahelian governments, ultimately leading to the withdrawal of France and its EU allies from the region.

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HABA, KUMIKO

East Asian Regional Collaboration under the Trump Government--Peace making and Economic prosperity

Since Trump won the US presidential election last November, the world situation has been changing drastically in line with Trump's MAGA policy. Furthermore, since his inauguration on January 20th this year, the Trump government of the US has arrested and deported illegal immigrants, imposed 25% tariffs on friendly countries such as Canada, Mexico, and Japan, and, while withdrawing from regional conflicts and wars, has implicitly requested the EU to spend 5% of its GDP on military spending and Japan to spend 3% on military spending, and regional militarization is progressing in each region. For Japan, the 25% tariffs on steel, aluminium, and automobiles are a major blow to trade with the US, and in an attempt to ease these, militarization is progressing despite Article 9 of the Constitution, such as the integration of the Japan-US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In Europe, discussions on a European army have begun, and the demands of the US, EU, Asia, and the world to end the war are being forced to change. In this context, while we cannot yet predict the future, the research subject of EU researchers suggests how will regional cooperation and economic stability between the EU and East Asia bring about peacebuilding in the world. While this may be a small influence, I believe that this is an issue that we should investigate and analyze now.

In this study, I would like to consider what conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the 21st century should be, while drawing on examples of peace requests from local governments such as Okinawa in Japan, and the Union of Eight Northeast Asian Local Governments with its secretariat in Korea, as well as models of peacebuilding from local governments and NGOs learned from the CSCE/OSCE and ASEAN and learning from peacebuilding efforts in various regions.

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HANADA, EVA

Hungary-China Economic Relations: A Stocktaking of the Last 15 Years

Since Hungary launched its Eastern Opening policy in 2010, Hungary-China relations in particular have remarkably intensified. Not only is Hungary the largest recipient of the Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Central and Eastern Europe, the country's share in the Chinese FDI in Europe for 2023 even exceeded the combined share of France, Germany and the UK. Hungary has thus clearly become a bridgehead for China's economic presence in Europe. This paper focuses on the economic dimension of Hungary's relations with China and in particular on the impact of Chinese investments on the Hungarian economy.

In order to understand the dynamic that characterizes Hungary- China economic relations, the paper first outlines the rationale and considerations behind Hungary's Eastern Opening policy before documenting how these relations managed to deepen and widen. The paper then analyzes the pattern of Hungary-China economic relations in terms of trade, FDI and financial sector cooperation and examines tangible effects of this strengthened economic cooperation on Hungary's economy. In the last part the paper looks at Hungary-China economic relations from a wider perspective- What learnings can be drawn for other member states in the region and most importantly, what are the implications for the EU?

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HAYASHI, HIDEKI

EU and ASEAN: From International Regime to Regional Cooperation — From the Japanese Point of View

This research analyzes the processes of economic integration in the times of transition, using an interdisciplinary approach, specifically, International Political Economy (IPE). First, it examines the evolution of global economic integration through the frameworks of International Regime and Regional Cooperation. The period from the end of World War II until late 1970s is better explained by the former, characterized by US hegemony (Keohane, 1984). Then the period since the 1980s, particularly in Europe and Asia, is better explained by the latter (Yamamoto, 2008).

Second, it investigates the institutional conditions necessary for effective policy implementation, focusing on agenda setting (presidency power), and consensus building (voting systems) in the EU and ASEAN, in comparison with international regimes like the WTO (Baldwin, 2011, Suzuki, 2014).

Third, it analyzes the impact of global economic trends, such as rising energy and food prices, ongoing urbanization and worsening climate change, on respective regional economies. Both the EU and ASEAN must cope with these regional economic challenges and promote stability by balancing between mature core countries and highly developing peripheral countries through measures such as the economic and financial policy coordination with the region and the enlargement process with the neighbouring countries (Krugman and Fujita, 2014, Oizumi and Goto, 2020).

In conclusion, it argues that regional cooperation allows for more effective measures than international regimes, as member countries tend to be more motivated in one region and to avoid the divisions between developed and developing countries. Such process of regional cooperation can contribute to unified international cooperation if such regional cooperation is developed based on the shared common value (European Commission, 2024, ASEAN, 2024).

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KLATT, GOSIA

Normative influence of the European Union– an example of Jean Monnet Module and study tour for teachers from Australia

The Jean Monnet actions can be seen as ‘normative’ policy instruments which influence the perceptions of Europe around the world. Jean Monnet actions offer opportunities in the field of higher education in Australia which is not an associated country with the EU and has limited access to EU funding. However, the Jean Monnet actions are powerful instruments in contribute to spreading knowledge about the European Union integration matters, European values and European innovations.

On the example of the JM Module delivered at the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne in 2023 and 2024, we explain the design, delivered program and its outcomes to showcase the normative influence of the EU on Australian and international students who participated in this module.

While the current focus of the world leaders is on hard instruments of actions, including diplomatic negotiations, security alliances, and skyrocketing investment in defence, it is important to keep in mind the significant influence of the EU as a normative actor.

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KOBA, SHUJI

Language Policy in Regional Integration: A Comparative Study of the EU's Multilingualism and ASEAN's English-Centric Approach in Times of Transition

Language policy is a crucial yet often underestimated component of regional integration. The European Union (EU) promotes institutionalized multilingualism, reflecting its commitment to democratic participation, cultural diversity, and symbolic equality. In contrast, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopts English as its sole working language, prioritizing functional efficiency over linguistic plurality.

This paper offers a comparative analysis of these two models, drawing on foundational legal documents and concrete case studies. It examines how the EU's multilingual policy, while normatively ambitious, faces tensions between inclusivity and efficiency—especially amid rising populism, digital transformation, and economic pressures. ASEAN's English-centric approach, illustrated through case studies of Indonesia and Singapore, enables pragmatic communication but often sidelines local languages and communities.

To contextualize this contrast further, the paper also examines the language regimes of Macau and Hong Kong—regions that maintain bilingual official language systems shaped by colonial legacies. These examples demonstrate how the legal designation of multiple official languages does not always align with everyday linguistic practices.

The paper concludes by reflecting on these models from an East Asian perspective, noting that countries like Japan, South Korea, and China typically rely on single-language frameworks. From this vantage point, both the EU and ASEAN offer distinct visions of governance, inclusion, and identity through language, providing valuable insights for regional integration in times of transition.

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LAI, SUET YI (CHER)

Perception and Misperception between China and EU amid a Return of Geopolitics

China and the EU celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relation in 2025. In this five decades from 1975, the world has developed and differed greatly, while China has transformed itself from under-development to the world's current second largest economy, the EU has enlarged from a 9-country custom union to a 27-country trade bloc and global regulatory power. The breakout of a hot war in Europe in 2022, between Russia and Ukraine, further changed the world politics. This research, hence, serves as a timely review of how China and the EU currently perceive each other. It is an empirical study combining social media analysis (primary data) and statistical analysis of secondary public opinion dataset from database namely Eurobarometer and Pew Research Centre. It gauges the degree and juncture of the geopoliticalisation of how the China and the EU mutually perceive each other and China-EU relations, and subsequently identifies the implication on the relationship.

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LI, CHRIS

The Authority of European Union Judicial Pluralism: From Post-sovereignty to Value-based Reasons

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) held that the body of European Union (EU) law constitutes a 'new legal order', and is directly effective and has supremacy or primacy over national laws of the Member States. Member States' peak constitutional courts typically assert that they retain their judicial sovereignty. Yet EU law's authority to set aside or dis-apply incompatible national law of Member States is generally recognized and complied with. How should EU law's authority over the national law of Member States be accounted for? This paper provides a novel theoretical account to the authority of EU law. It argues that the ECJ's jurisprudence and the structural features of the EU legal system could be better accounted for by making use of Joseph Raz's service conception of authority: a legal rule has legitimate authority if conformity to it improves one's conformity with reason one already has for actions. The paper argues that the debate about whether the EU legal order has democratic deficit is fruitless, because different reasonable 'ontological' accounts of democracy would provide different assessments, with the levels of political participation and civic integration changing over time. The sovereignist court account, it is then argued, wrongly attributes to the ECJ a sovereignty frame that sought to unify a determined population and territory under a uniform and general system of law, which the ECJ explicitly denied. The paper then demonstrates that, Raz's service conception fits with the ECJ's jurisprudence in the case-laws on the loss and acquisition of citizenship and the rule of law, while the democratic deficit and sovereignist court accounts would have difficulties to explain it. It is concluded, therefore, that Raz's service conception of authority provides a better theoretical account to the authority of EU law because it could avoid difficulties of other prevailing theoretical accounts.

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LI, HANG

Ensuring a Fair Development? The Role of Cohesion Policy and Just Transition Mechanism and their Relations in the EU Green Initiative

The dual imperatives of environmental sustainability and equitable development occupy a central position in the EU's strategic vision, yet their concurrent pursuit engenders inherent tensions. The EU has noted that some regions and people are more vulnerable in the process of realizing green ambitions and that the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) and Cohesion Policy (CP) are two of the most crucial concepts and tools for the EU to mitigate this friction in order to reconcile socio-economic equity and the realization of green ambitions. This article examines how the EU's CP and JTM reconcile environmental climate goals with social fairness, especially the potential challenges and interactions in this process. Combining legal analysis of EU treaties and funding regulations with policy evaluations of subsidy implementation, it identifies tensions between CP's regional balanced development goals and JTM's urgent decarbonization mandate. The study argues that achieving a fair green transition requires a wider interpretation of "just transition" under EU climate law. It proposes harmonizing the CP and JTM, and sets the functionalism as the core to determine the integrative relationship between CP and JTM. Furthermore, enforceable and convenient procedural rights for affected populations is a feasible way to improve the supporting effect of related structural funds. By addressing normative gaps in participatory equity, this analysis advances institutional pathways to align environmental urgency with just development in supranational policymaking and implementation.

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LI, XING
ZHANG JIAN

China-EU Arctic Cooperation Under the Impact of Trumpism

Amid the impact of Trumpism, China and the EU face shared Arctic challenges, including intensified geopolitical competition, conflicts between resource development and environmental protection, disputes over shipping route security and rule-making authority, and pressures to address climate change impacts. In confronting these issues, the two sides exhibit both consensus and divergences. Consensus is reflected in their support for multilateralism and international legal frameworks, as well as their emphasis on climate governance and sustainable development. Divergences emerge in strategic positioning, stances toward Russia, and the balance between economic cooperation and security concerns. To address their shared Arctic challenges, China and the EU should strengthen consensus, mitigate differences, and advance cooperation through measures such as promoting multilateral governance mechanisms, deepening climate and scientific research collaboration, coordinating responses to U.S.-Russia alliances, exploring third-party market cooperation, and enhancing crisis prevention and communication mechanisms.

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LIU, BIN
ZHOU, YUWEN

The evolution of European Strategic Autonomy

As major powers are the main actors in international politics, they are important agents in shaping the structure, while also being constrained by it. This article explores the evolution of the EU's strategic autonomy in the post-World War II integration process by applying the structure-agent theory and assesses European strategic autonomy through three dimensions: defense, production, and knowledge. We argue that after World War II, the EU formed a strong agent through a supranational form, attempting to enhance its ability to shape the structure. However, with the expansion and increasing heterogeneity of the EU, its ability to shape the structure has been weakened. This approach carries certain risks, and the internal integration capacity of the agent has a significant impact on its ability to influence the structure: increased internal divisions may weaken the agent's ability, or even lead it to become dependent on the structure. Especially in recent years, Europe's excessive reliance on the United States for defense has led to a trend where NATO is replacing the EU's voice, further eroding European strategic autonomy.

Liu Bin, Associate Professor, currently teaching at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, engages in international politics research, has published over ten articles in CSSCI journals. Main research directions: International Politics, International Political Economy, Global Governance.

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LIU, YUAN YUAN

European Integration and Gender-Based Violence: Exploring the Role of EU Policies in Addressing GBV Across Member States

Focusing on the relationship between gender-based violence (GBV) and media coverage in the context of European integration, the study aims to explore how EU gender equality policies affect member states' responses to GBV and media presentation. Through a comparative analysis of countries such as Spain, Poland and Sweden, the study examines differences in the implementation of EU policies at the national level and their impact on public opinion and gender equality processes, with a particular focus on the situation of vulnerable groups such as migrant women. Using mainly quantitative research methods, the study aims to shed light on the potential and limitations of European integration in promoting gender equality and responding to gender-based violence.

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LO, SONNY SHIU HING

Will there be a Settlement over the Russo-Ukrainian War

Since the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, some countries including China and Brazil have proposed ceasefire agreement and solutions without concrete responses from the Russian and Ukrainian sides. The return of Donald Trump to the US administration in early 2025 has led to the direct negotiations between Washington and Moscow over the fate of Ukraine. Viewed from the perspective of realism, the US-Russian negotiations are characterized by (1) a secret deal bypassing Ukraine and its European supportive states, (2) an attempt at carving out the Eastern territories of Ukraine in exchange for US exploration and squeeze of Ukrainian mineral resources, and (3) a presidential election in Ukraine that seeks to change the presidency of Zelensky. These three agenda items that can be deduced now will likely undermine the national sovereignty of Ukraine and expose other small European states to the nationalism and territorial ambitions of the Greater Russia. As such, the ongoing negotiations between the US and Russia are bound to be difficult, unless Ukraine and at least some core European states, like UK, France and Germany are consulted along the way. Because of conflicting interests between the US, Russia, Ukraine and the core European states (France, UK, Germany), a common solution to solve the Ukrainian crisis is bound to be difficult.

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LOPO MARTINEZ, ANTONIO

Sudden Tariff Increases and the Fair and Equitable Treatment Standard: Jurisprudential Insights from EU–Asia Pacific Investment Disputes

In an era of trade realignment, supply chain restructuring, and heightened geopolitical tensions, this paper investigates how abrupt import tariff hikes by host states are evaluated under the Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET) standard in EU–Asia Pacific investment treaties. It identifies circumstances where sudden tariff measures breach investors' legitimate expectations and erode regulatory predictability, and examines how arbitral tribunals balance states' fiscal policy discretion with their FET obligations to protect foreign investment.

Using a jurisprudential comparative approach, the study conducts a doctrinal analysis of three pivotal arbitral awards: *Hulley Enterprises Ltd. v. Russian Federation* (aggressive tax reassessments deemed arbitrary), *Khan Resources Inc. v. Mongolia* (windfall tax upheld absent a stabilization clause), and *Vodafone Int'l Holdings v. India* (retroactive tariff invalidated for violating investor expectations without notice). Each case is coded for references to arbitrariness, transparency requirements, stabilization clauses, and investor expectations, and examined within its domestic policy context.

The analysis reveals two treaty practice models: an open-ended FET clause granting tribunals broad interpretive discretion and a qualified FET clause tied to the customary international law minimum standard of treatment. All three tribunals applied common arbitrariness tests (lack of due notice, no objective justification, deviation from established policy), but diverged on the role and effect of stabilization clauses. These findings underscore the importance of precise treaty drafting in tariff-related disputes.

The paper concludes with recommendations for future investment treaties: clearly articulating FET's substantive elements (procedural transparency, non-arbitrariness, and advance consultation with investors on tariff changes), defining FET's relationship with the customary international law minimum standard of treatment to limit interpretive latitude, and including explicit stabilization clauses where warranted. Adopting these measures would better balance regulatory autonomy with investors' legitimate expectations and enhance legal certainty in the EU–Asia Pacific investment landscape.

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LUO, TIANYU
ZHU, GUOWEN

Structural Dilemmas and Future Pathways of European Defense Integration: A Multidimensional Analysis Based on the PESCO Project

Under the dual impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict reshaping the geopolitical landscape and fluctuating U.S. strategic commitments to Europe, the EU has accelerated its transformation from a "normative power" to a "geopolitical entity," marked by its "Rearming Europe" initiative. This article takes the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) mechanism under the Lisbon Treaty framework as an analytical entry point, deconstructing project architectures and member-state behaviors to reveal the inherent contradictions and divergent pathways in EU defense integration. The study demonstrates that while PESCO's 72 projects have established a multidimensional capability matrix spanning land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains, differentiated participation driven by member states' industrial strengths and geopolitical priorities has fostered a fragmented landscape characterized by coexisting "technological hierarchy" and "opportunistic breakthroughs," collectively shaping an asymmetric power dynamic in European defense integration. Empirical analysis identifies four structural dilemmas: 1) Industrial and geopolitically driven fragmentation undermines cross-domain synergy; 2) Franco-German core tensions and strategic divergence among smaller states exacerbate consensus-building crises; 3) Cluster-based cooperation intensifies the paradox of "localized deepening versus systemic disintegration"; 4) NATO-standard dependency conflicts fundamentally with EU technological sovereignty aspirations. Future pathways reveal three diverging trajectories: 1) High-integration potential type, relying on Franco-German compromises and external crises to break sovereignty barriers through supranational mechanisms; 2) Balanced development type, continuing flexible multilateralism to advance standards compatibility in limited domains; 3) Systemic disintegration type, sliding toward technological sovereignty collapse and geopolitical bloc fragmentation under Franco-German rivalry, U.S. pressure, and economic recession. The ultimate limit of European defense integration lies not in pursuing absolute autonomy, but in maintaining "resilient autonomy" amid turbulent environments.

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M - R

MA, BIN

Geopolitical Imagination and Geo-economic Reality of Middle Corridor and It's Influence on Sino-EU Relations

With the recent development of transport infrastructure connectivity across the Eurasia region, the Middle Corridor has once again become a focal topic of academic and public debate. Geopolitical discussions about the Middle Corridor suggest that great power competition and the Russia-Ukraine war have accelerated its development. Geoeconomic discussions argue that the corridor will serve as a significant driver for regional economic integration and international economic cooperation. While such perspectives hold some validity, they are also often infused with wishful thinking, hindering an objective assessment of the Middle Corridor's impact on China-EU relations. As a key component of Eurasian transport infrastructure connectivity, any major progress in the Middle Corridor results from the combined effects of geopolitical and geoeconomic factors. While it may enhance overall economic efficiency and help alleviate certain geopolitical challenges, it will also inevitably generate new geopolitical and geoeconomic issues. Therefore, its impact on China-EU relations is inherently dual in nature. This paper will first summarize the development of the Middle Corridor, then analyze the evolving interests and policy shifts of China and the EU in its construction process, in order to assess its actual impact on China-EU relations.

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The European Union and the International Criminal Court

The European Union and its member states are supposedly the staunchest supporters of the International Criminal Court. Indeed, the Agreement between the EU and the International Criminal Court is based on the notion that the European Union and its member states are to contribute “to the objective of the widest possible participation in the Rome Statute by raising the issue in negotiations and political dialogues with non-EU countries (third States) or regional organisations; and/or through adopting initiatives that promote the values, principles and rules of the Rome Statute”. The European Union and its member states are also supposed to “cooperate with interested States, international institutions and non-governmental organisations in order to advance universal support” for the International Criminal Court, and member states are also supposed to “share their experience regarding the implementation of the statute with interested States”. Moreover, the EU and the EU countries “contribute to the legislative work needed for the participation in and implementation of the Rome Statute by non-EU countries”. Finally, the European Union and its member states are also supposed to support the effective operation of the International Criminal Court, namely, they “take action to ensure full cooperation of non-EU countries with the ICC, including the prompt execution of arrest warrants”. This paper discusses whether this framework is in crisis and whether the European Union and its member states are distancing themselves from the court. In fact, recent developments, like Hungary’s refusal to arrest and surrender Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu, show that EU countries themselves do not ensure effective cooperation with the court. Rather than comply with the order for his arrest and surrender, Hungary’s government initiated proceedings to withdraw from the International Criminal Court. The paper highlights that this, and other developments, might be a sign that the relationship between the EU, its member states and the International Criminal Court is undergoing a profound change.

The author currently teaches at Faculty of Law, University of Coimbra, Portugal. His 2017 doctoral thesis in the same university is an analysis of the principle *nullum crimen sine lege* in international law with a specific focus on the work of the war tribunals of the 20th Century. As of lately, his research has mainly been focused on international criminal law, the law of war and peace, and the constitutional law of the People’s Republic of China, with a specific focus on the constitutional systems of Hong Kong and Macau.

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MARCHI, LUDOVICA

The European Union's wider governance between war and peace. Historical institutionalism meets practice

The EU shows to be willing to be in charge of geopolitics and of wider governance, and is incapable of transforming its structures to that aim. There was a case in point in 2011, during the Libyan crisis, when a coalition of the willing to intervene would have demonstrated the EU taking on the course of a responsible geopolitical agent. The European Defence Industrial Strategy of March 2024 accounts for a change. It takes the form of a joint communication aiming at 'EU readiness through a responsive and resilient European Defence Industry'. This paper asks how to explain this structural change within the EU. Exploring social scientist Pouliot's concepts on institutional change, this paper draws on historical institutionalism and practice approach, and resorts to a practice-based pulling theory of agency. It infers three mechanisms of interest shaping (relational crossover, competence transfer, and pushback), and shows how a set of practices available at the EU in 2024, but not earlier, account for the specifics of the European Defence Industrial Strategy process. It argues that an account of the structural change that overlooks the practices interacting with the social sphere would be incomplete, because it would neglect the representation of processes that configure the outcome.

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MARCO COLINO, SANDRA

Boosting Sustainable Technology through the New EU Competition Policy

EU antitrust is at the crossroads. It faces calls to be more supportive of corporate sustainability initiatives and increased pressure not to stand in the way of the global competitiveness of Europe's industries, particularly in view of China's 'state-sponsored' competition. In this context, this article develops a pragmatic plan to reap the full environmental potential of EU competition policy. The analysis draws attention to the instrumental and institutional constraints encountered when actively pursuing sustainability through antitrust. Relying on theory of economic policy and from a pro-enforcement standpoint, the article ponders how the instruments and principles devised in the ongoing antitrust reform may be used to encourage and sustainable technology and, in turn, boost growth. Specifically, the article considers three avenues for an eco-friendly, effective policy: the use of antitrust to punish the delay in the adoption of green technology; the ways in which tackling abusive practices may curtail unsustainable business conduct; and the impact of recent merger control reforms on the potential to remedy or prevent mergers with detrimental environmental consequences.

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MATIAS, CÉLIA

EU Law's Approach to AI and Copyright: A Model to Export or System to Revise?

The rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in the early 2020s, marked by the success of large language models (LLMs) and text-to-image generators, coincided with the European Union's implementation of Directive 2019/790 (Copyright in the Digital Single Market, or CDSM Directive). The Directive introduced a text and data mining (TDM) exception, which, while not originally designed for AI training, has been considered applicable due to similarities in the underlying situations it addresses. This was later supported by the AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2023/2088), which references TDM in its recitals and enforces related obligations. However, the TDM exception has faced significant criticism. Key issues include the ambiguous interpretation of "lawful access" to mined data and the scope of the rights reservation mechanism for rightsholder outside TDM for scientific purposes.

The third draft of the General-Purpose AI Code of Practice's Copyright Section attempts to address some of these challenges. It sets measures for AI providers under Article 53(1)(c) of the AI Act, focusing on lawful data collection via web crawling (Measures I.2.2, I.2.3), obtaining information on non-crawled protected content (I.2.4), and mitigating the risk of infringing outputs (I.2.5). While these measures aim to clarify compliance requirements, the resulting framework remains complex, raising concerns about its practicality and adaptability beyond the EU.

This paper examines the EU's approach to copyright and AI, assessing its effectiveness and whether it provides a suitable model for global adoption or requires significant revision.

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EU members industrial policies over China in changing international and bounded orders

The liberal international order within which the European Union members' industries grew over the years, expanding their economic interests in China, is already gone. The gradual process in which the unipolar moment led by the US has been disappearing since 1990 date back to the first years of 2010's decade. At this stage, we are in the presence of a multipolar system composed of an array of players searching for their own wealth, being wealth a key factor for power in the international domain.

The origins of the current EU were to avoid a new war between the two mayor continental powers: France and Germany. But most important, to create a powerful West that could contain and ultimately defeat the Soviet. That happened within a bounded order led by the US. Once we are back to a non-unipolar moment, bounded orders are crucial supporting, essentially, security but also economic wealth for the main superpowers. So, the industrial policies can be seeing affected.

The two mayor European players, France and Germany, had a different approach to its industrial engagement with China. Their current presence and the future policies will be dependent externally on the two global powers' interests and, internally, on the demands and needs of their own societies.

In this research we focus on the external influences and the possibilities that can be foreseen. Not discussing the substantial interest of EU member's in using its existing industrial power in its own favour, the constraints of a new international order and the effect of bounded orders led by the two superpowers will be of great influence.

Considering the balance of power, transferring to China sophisticated dual-use technologies will be part of the debate added to the existence of institutions that aim to foster economic cooperation among their members, while seeking to gain economic advantage over the rival order.

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MAYER, ADAM

Contemporary West Africa after the Dissolution of the French Sphere of Influence

The French sphere of influence has contracted since 2014 in West Africa. The military leaderships of the Alliance of Sahel States (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) as well as 'liberal democratic' Senegal and Chad have opted for the removal of French troops, signaling a major regional shift. Some analysts allege destabilization campaigns by non-Western powers as the reason behind this phenomenon. I argue instead that structural political economy causes, along with the genuinely African intellectual heritage of Military Marxism, are much more important reasons behind the shift than any foreign meddling. Secular radicalism on the African continent in general and West Africa in particular, is reappearing due to the 'real economy' consequences of neoliberalism and austerity, augmented mostly by donor rule and ineffectual Western aid structures. Public history and memorialization of the era of Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Amílcar Cabral and Thomas Sankara aid ongoing political shifts in the geopolitical sense.

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MCNAUGHTON, ANNE

(New) Legal Orders of international Law: an evolving concept in the Rules-based International Order

ASEAN may have commenced its operation as a flexible arrangement with loose institutions and it has certainly retained its distinctive style of cooperation, 'the ASEAN way' but it has morphed into a structure with more established and fixed institutions. This more recent evolution is a consequence of the introduction of the ASEAN Charter in 2007, embodying the ambition to create a politico-security community, an economic community, and a socio-cultural community by 2025. ASEAN has moved along the 'legalisation spectrum' from a loosely structured political organization to a supranational entity within the rules-based international order. In considering the specific case of ASEAN of particular relevance is the working concept of 'legalization' developed in 2000 by Abbott et al to describe 'a particular form of institutionalization characterized by three components: obligation, precision and delegation.' Also pertinent here is the definition of law developed by Valcke in theorizing comparative law as a separate discipline. According to the latter, law is 'collective commitment' encompassing the following six core features: effectiveness; argumentativeness; coherence; publicness; formality; and normativity. Drawing on these two lines of scholarship ASEAN can be understood as more than a regional political grouping or a "pluralist, transnational 'space' distinct from national legal systems.' It can be identified and defined as a legal system.

This paper develops the argument that, like the EU, ASEAN is a (new) legal order of international law (NLO'). The paper maps this evolution, explaining the concept of an NLO and drawing distinctions between the EU and ASEAN as exemplars of NLOs. The paper also highlights the potential for comparative lawyers to join with international lawyers, political scientists and economists in examining and explaining the nature of these NLOs in the rules-based international order.

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NAKANISHI, YUMIKO HARA

Nature Restoration law in the EU and Japan

Modernization means the development of scientific technologies and, at the same time, has caused damage to nature. There were and are still differences among European and Japan's attitudes towards nature. In Europe, the idea exists that nature can be controlled. Japanese people have feared and worshipped nature. Japan has industrialized and developed economically in particular after the Meiji restoration in 1868. Shimenawa (sacred straw ropes) are still placed on trees and stones at shrines, and there is a long-standing culture of deifying nature, forests, and mountains themselves.

In the face of biodiversity loss across the world, restoration of nature is finally being legally defined in the framework of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In December 2022, the international community adopted the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework, declaring that by 2030 "urgent action must be taken to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity." This 2030 Mission (i.e., the goal to be achieved by the same year) is generally referred to as Nature Positive. In response, the EU adopted the Nature Restoration Regulation on June 24, 2024. On the other hand, Japan formulated a new national strategy in March 2023. The new national strategy clearly stated that the short-term goal to be achieved by 2030 is the "realization of nature positivity (nature restoration). Furthermore, in April 2024, the Law for the Promotion of Activities to Enhance Biodiversity was enacted.

In my presentation I compare the responses of the EU and Japan to tackle the loss of biodiversity, and examine how they think about nature and have taken measures to restore nature.

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The European Union and the Law of Missed (Future) Opportunities Exemplified by the Artificial Intelligence Act

Since its inception, the project of European integration has provided a worldwide innovative example of a novel supranational governance model for the future. It was built upon small but constant achievements of its predecessors, the Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Communities until the establishment of the EU itself, which recalled ‘the historic importance of the ending of the division of the European continent and the need to create firm bases for the construction of the future Europe’. Since then, however, the engine of integration, largely relying on legal innovation, appears to have come to a halt. There was a last notable push for innovation within the EU with the proposed Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, but which ended in failure in 2005 and led to the adoption of a far less ambitious and symbolically irrelevant project of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. The most significant failure so far was likely the rupture with the spirit of the founding treaties that occurred with BREXIT, that is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU in 2020.

Overall, the paper argues that – combined with significant changes in the geopolitical landscape – the global persuasive authority of EU law, sometimes lauded as the ‘Brussels effect’, appears to have turned into a ‘law of missed opportunities’. It seems that the former strength of the EU mode to reinvent itself in crisis has led to a mode of inventing and reinforcing crises. To support this argument, the paper briefly revisits the founding principles of European integration, its main stages and some of the most important failures. Using the EU AI Act as an example, it then aims to show how these failures are contributing not only to a failure to regulate AI but also to a continuing loss of persuasive authority in Europe and in the world.

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EU-India Bilateral Construction 2025: Time for a Rethink and a Rejig in Troubled Waters

India and EU find themselves at a juncture where they are compelled to indulge in stock-taking. The profile of the global landscape is no longer stable and predictable and options like bandwagoning are no longer available for a country like India. EU is similarly finding itself at the cross-roads because the reluctant but essential cushioning provided by its long-standing ally is conspicuous by its absence. The barrage, volume, tone and tenor of castigating the EU by the US for not having assumed responsibility for itself has become much more louder and sharper. In the wake of the unfolding scenario, both the EU and India are largely expected to shed their customary reluctance to get embroiled in matters that do not normally appeal to them. Thus, EU and India have no option but to change tack and reformulate their strategies pertaining to the rest of the world. Both powers seem to have been cornered and they will have to indulge in very clear articulation of goals and standpoint on various issues. The dynamics of the EU-India relationship is also bound to feel the heat of the ongoing global fist-fights. The proposed study shall seek to look at possible crests and troughs of the EU-India partnership created by the waves of uncertainty such as the sudden slapping of tariffs and unprecedented modus operandi adopted for the sake of resolution of conflicts. The paper shall examine the probability of whether this spell of aberrations provides the much-needed thrust to the bland relations between EU and India conspicuous by its absence for decades together. The paper shall look into the ways and means by which EU-India can come together and solidify their bilateral alliance and assert themselves in unison and be recognized as salient, assertive and responsible global actors.

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This paper is co-authored by Ass Prof Dhiraj Mani Pathak.

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SALES MARQUES, JOSÉ LUÍS

EU's China Policy in Trump 2.0 era – What does the EU want from China?

EU's policy on China still relies on the tripartite formula defined at the EU's China Strategic Outlook of 2019, where China is simultaneously taken as a partners, competitor and systemic rival. Subsequently, policy decisions by the EU institutions, including the freezing of the discussion process of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) as well as narratives and policies, such as recent tariff targeting Chinese EV, have underlined the aspects of rivalry rather than partnership it has with the nation that is also, still, officially a "comprehensive strategic partner".

This paper argues that EU's position is self-confusing and also confuses third parties. If EU wants to rebuild and rebalance its relations with China, it might also need policy changes and assert the question "What does it wants from China? "

Key words: EU's China policy, partnership, competition and systemic rivalry.

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Trust and transparency in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic: A case comparison of Hong Kong and Singapore

The Covid-19 pandemic posed a multifaceted governance challenge for all polities. Our study compares two East Asian cases; the independent city state of Singapore and semi-autonomous Hong Kong. The two cities are similar in size, level of economic development and quality of medical care. Both were affected by the SARS pandemic and both recorded their first Covid cases in late January 2020. In the early stages of the pandemic, both were regarded as success stories; Hong Kong even more than Singapore, given the latter's serious outbreak amongst migrant workers. However, in this respect, they had diverged significantly by the time the WHO declared Covid no longer to constitute a public health emergency in May 2023.

Our study focuses on two factors that both conditioned and were conditioned by the effectiveness of pandemic management: (1) trust in government authorities and medical professionals and (2) transparency. Drawing on publicly available data as well as interviews, we find a complex relationship between these factors and pandemic management success, measured primarily in terms of vaccination coverage and death rates. Thus, Singapore's high levels of societal trust facilitated the implementation of Covid management policies that were flexible enough to respond to changing conditions. By contrast, in Hong Kong an arguably misplaced trust in the government's ability to keep the virus out combined with mistrust of official vaccine messaging to hamper the inoculation campaign, exacerbating the impact of the Omicron variant. Moreover, while both governments were transparent in sharing pandemic data with the public, Hong Kong authorities were much less forthcoming when it came to communicating the reasons behind policy decisions. This, coupled with the rigidity of the 'Zero covid' approach itself, suggests a level of distrust on the part of the government towards the public, which also negatively impacted pandemic management.

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SEBENA, MARTIN
AUER, STEFAN

Robert Fico, Donald Trump and the erosion of trust in post-Covid Slovakia

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly eroded public trust in government institutions in Slovakia, leading to widespread disillusionment among citizens due to perceived governance paralysis. This decline can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including political polarisation, misinformation, and the mishandling of health crises. In this context of uncertainty, populist authoritarianism has gained traction, as authoritarian rhetoric resonates with individuals who feel vulnerable and anxious. Robert Fico exemplifies this shift, embodying a distinctive form of left-wing populist nationalism that combines nationalist rhetoric with the pursuit of socio-economic equality. By positioning himself as a champion of the common people, Fico has effectively channeled the frustrations of those neglected by the traditional political elite. His political strategies have included attacks on the press, undermining expert authority, discrediting law enforcement, promoting conspiracy theories, and fostering policy instability.

The proposed article will examine Fico's resurgence in the post-COVID era, which is characterized by a deliberate assault on public trust. It will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, analyze its consequences, and, where applicable, draw comparisons to other global leaders, most notably Donald Trump. One of the questions animating the paper is the impact that the second Trump's administration is going to have on populist leaders in Europe.

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SHANG, LIXUE

Research on EU Artificial Intelligence Governance from a Liberal Intergovernmentalism Perspective: A Case Study of the AI Act

In April 2021, the European Union (EU) introduced the draft Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act), which was formally adopted in March 2024 and came into effect in August. This study applies the “three-level rationality analysis framework” of Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI) to examine the national preferences and their influence in the negotiations of the AI Act, focusing on France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

Taking an intergovernmental negotiation perspective, the study investigates member state strategies and the formation of institutional outcomes. It shifts from macro-level policy analysis to emphasize the internal drivers of European integration, aiming to uncover the underlying logic of the AI Act’s development and offer insights into EU AI governance.

The first section introduces Moravcsik’s LI theory and assesses its relevance to the AI Act. It argues that LI’s focus on state-driven economic interests aligns closely with member state behavior in the negotiations.

The second section examines national preference formation, analyzing how economic conditions, geopolitical considerations, and domestic interest groups shaped the preferences of the four member states.

The third section explores intergovernmental bargaining, focusing on four contentious issues: regulation of general AI models, biometric technologies, AI risk classification, and data transparency. It assesses each country’s core demands and compromise positions.

The final section addresses institutional choice, highlighting the limited influence of the European Commission and the dominant roles of the four major states. It attributes this to the EU’s tradition of major-power dominance and the decisive authority of the European Council. The section concludes with a review of negotiation outcomes and proposes strategies for China-EU cooperation on AI governance.

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Educational reforms, crises and resilience: how the EU educational policies shape societal responses in the Eastern Partnership region

In recent decades, the European Union has increasingly positioned education as one of the central instruments of its neighborhood policy, especially towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Through mechanisms like Bologna Process, Erasmus+ programmes, and targeted technical and financial support, the EU has actively promoted Europeanization of education systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, the six EaP countries. The higher education reformation was marked by the European vector and recognized by scholarship and policymakers as ‘Europeanization of higher education’ (Dakowska 2015, Gornitzka 2006, Maassen and Musselin, 2009, Scott 2012, Vukasovic, 2013). In present research I explore how these processes have contributed to a broader societal and institutional transformation in the EaP region, especially in the context of growing geopolitical crises, including political turbulence, democratic backsliding, and the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. I argue that Europeanization of higher education in the EaP context functions not only as a structural reform, but as a strategic and normative ‘soft power’ tool, which shapes governance practices, increase civic identity, and strengthen social cohesion. In the study I analyze how alignment with the European standards has enhanced the modernization of higher education institutions, and creation of new forms of civil society engagement. At the same time, it was taken into account the asymmetrical capacities of the EaP countries’ academic sectors to internalize and implement these reforms due to the differences in political will, academia’s readiness for change.

The paper highlights Ukraine as a particular case where Europeanization processes in higher education have accelerated since 2014 and became stronger during the ongoing war. The example of Ukraine underlines the role of education not only in maintaining institutional functioning during crisis but also in consolidating the country’s strategic European orientation. The research is based on the policy analysis, regional thematic studies, and empirical data from the EU-supported initiatives. Finally, the paper discusses the transformational potential of the EU educational policy in the contested geopolitical spaces and proposes a view how educational reforms can support institutional resilience and societal renewal.

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SMITH, NICHOLAS

The EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy three years on: Reflections from across the Indo-Pacific

In April 2021, the Council of the European Union released the 'EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' which focused deepening EU engagement in the Indo-Pacific in seven priority areas: (1) Sustainable and inclusive prosperity; (2) Green transition; (3) Ocean governance; (4) Digital governance and partnerships; (5) Connectivity; (6) Security and defence; and (7) Human security. This presentation will overview the impact of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy so far by examining primary data collected in eight Indo-Pacific locations: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.

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SONG, WEIQING

Understanding the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy: a Geopolitical Analysis

The emergence of a 'Geopolitical Europe' represents a recent development for the European Union, despite internal and external challenges to its realization. This study argues that the current discourse of 'Geopolitical Europe' builds upon the earlier construction of 'Global Europa,' reflecting a long-standing ambition to assert the EU's role on the world stage, beginning in the late 1990s. The shift towards a more explicitly geopolitical stance is largely driven by increasing external pressures. Utilizing a critical geopolitics framework, this study analyzes the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy as a case study to understand how the EU discursively engages with a particularly volatile region. The EU is conceptualized as a complex geopolitical actor, shaped by the interplay of member state geopolitical perspectives and the resulting coalesced vision. While the EU attempts to spatially define and influence the Indo-Pacific region, the ultimate impact of these efforts remains to be seen.

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STIVAS, DIONYSIOS

From Distant Ally to Perceived Threat: The Collective Securitization of China in NATO

This article examines the intricate and changing relationship between China and NATO, detailing how perceptions have evolved from viewing China as an adversary during the Cold War to addressing current security issues. Initially seen as a subordinate member of the Soviet Bloc, China's position has transformed significantly due to geopolitical shifts and its increasingly assertive foreign policy. Recent events, especially the rising tensions between the U.S. and China, have led NATO to reevaluate its approach to China, now viewing it as a major security concern. Employing the Collective Securitization framework, this article analyzes NATO's strategic discussions regarding China, emphasizing the shift from being a distant ally to being perceived as a threat. The article also explores the implications of this changing relationship, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the dynamics between China and Russia. Through this analysis, the article seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the strategic considerations that shape NATO's response to China's expanding influence in the realm of international security.

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TAI, POK HANG

Guardian of the Green Rule of Law? The ECJ's Expanding Role in Enforcing Climate Commitments

Climate change represents one of the most pressing challenges of our time, demanding urgent and coordinated action from states, international organizations, and civil society. However, the effectiveness of international environmental law in addressing this crisis hinges on the clarity and enforceability of state obligations to mitigate climate change, protect human rights, and safeguard the environment for future generations. Within the European Union (EU), the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has emerged as a pivotal actor in translating climate ambitions into enforceable legal obligations, redefining the interplay between environmental governance, human rights, and the rule of law. This paper intends to examine the ECJ's evolving jurisprudence on climate litigation. At the heart of this study is the question: How has the Court shifted from procedural restraint to substantive scrutiny of EU and member state climate actions, and what implications does this hold for the EU's 'Green Rule of Law'? This question underscores the central thread of the paper, which seeks to understand how judicial interpretations are transforming the legal landscape of climate governance at the EU level.

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VALVERDE RUIZ, MARIA YOLANDA

The European Dilemma in International Politics: Between Aspiration and Action. Is the European Union a Strategic Actor?

In an international context marked by the reconfiguration of global power and the return of strategic competition among great powers, the European Union (EU) has taken steps to reinforce its role in international security. The adoption of the Strategic Compass in March 2022 reflects the EU's ambition to achieve long-term strategic autonomy. However, this goal is challenged by structural and political limitations inherent to its supranational nature.

Foreign, security, and defence policy remain areas where the EU lacks sovereignty and autonomy in decision-making. Internal divisions, the absence of integrated military capabilities, and dependence on the United States—particularly through NATO—further complicate its ability to act strategically. These constraints raise a fundamental question: can the EU truly function as a strategic actor?

This study investigates the extent to which the EU's supranational structure limits its strategic capacity, especially when compared to sovereign states. Grounded realism, the analysis assumes that strategic actors must enjoy sovereignty, decision-making autonomy, and material capabilities to influence the international system.

This research aims to contribute to the theoretical debate on the role of supranational organisations in a system dominated by sovereign states.

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VAN BAEVEGHEM, ANN-SOPHIE

The Tenacity Of Coloniality Of Memory And Perception - An Analysis Of The House Of European History Using Critical Museology

The apparent proliferation of different terminology, perspectives and approaches (decoloniality, decentring theory, the decolonial agenda, postcolonial theory, the anticolonial movement), has over the years resulted in the reduction of decolonial thinking, originally shaped as a contextually specific discourse, to mainstream critical theory. Unfortunately, this bias has contributed to the dismissal of decoloniality as an anything-goes discourse with the term decolonial even being discarded as a buzzword, a mere academic whim that occupies a pool of social science researchers just until the next trend emerges.

There has indeed been an intensification of decolonizing efforts in the past decade, ranging from universities, curricula, the canon, and museums. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that this is not a new phenomenon, but an acceleration of a long-standing debate that has recently been conducted more widely and with increasing social pressure. Whether the use of decoloniality is justified in every one of those efforts remains the subject of debate. However, the increased interest in decoloniality does not detract from the legitimacy of these decolonizing initiatives. On the contrary, they are crucial building blocks for a more pluralistic context and museums that break with the tenacious remnants of coloniality that influence memory and perception to this day, which is the central theme of this chapter.

A decade after Hansen & Jonsson's publication of *Eurafrica*, in which the Myth of Immaculate Conception is used to refer to the mainstream perception of the EEC as a non-colonial construct, valuable academic contributions are being made regarding perception building, the way collective memories are established and remain viable over the years. Inevitably, the practice of silencing Europe's colonial entanglements as a result of ongoing coloniality and selective historical amnesia, plays a big part in this dynamic. This silencing and non-recognition is not some nebulous concept that is the mere subject of political-historical academic research. It is a conscious, coordinated, and strategic choice with tangible consequences that perpetuate inequality, including in the EU's OCTs, sometimes referred to as 'Forgotten Europe'. Inspired by the aforementioned scholarly work, this chapter aims to analyse the tenacity of the coloniality of memory and perception within projects funded by European institutions, more specifically the House of European History.

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WANG, KUNJIE

Legal Convergence in Environmental and Energy Law: A Comparative Analysis of Dynamic and Static Interactions in the EU and Asia-Pacific

As a pioneer in environmental law, the European Union (EU) has developed a structured legal framework where environmental, climate, and energy law function as distinct yet interrelated disciplines, shaping its governance and regulatory strategies. In contrast, the Asia-Pacific region follows a different trajectory, where environmental and energy law are often embedded within broader regulatory frameworks, leading to varying degrees of legal convergence. This paper offers a comparative legal analysis of the EU and Asia-Pacific, examining whether the dynamic and static legal interactions observed in the EU's environmental and energy law also manifest in Asia-Pacific jurisdictions and to what extent international legal frameworks influence their regulatory developments. From a dynamic perspective, this study investigates how the EU's supranational legal instruments promote legal harmonization and whether similar patterns emerge in Asia-Pacific, where legal integration is largely policy-driven and nationally enforced. It further explores how interdisciplinarity—encompassing environmental, economic, and trade considerations—affects environmental and energy regulations in both regions. From a static perspective, the research questions how international legal commitments and national sovereignty concerns shape environmental and energy law, whether Asia-Pacific nations exhibit a gradual or structural convergence process, and how both regions balance competing objectives such as energy security, economic growth, and sustainability. This paper seeks to provide insights into how the EU and Asia-Pacific navigate environmental and energy governance challenges amid geopolitical realignments, economic uncertainties, and the global push for decarbonization. By contrasting the EU's institutionalized integration with the Asia-Pacific's policy-driven approach, this research highlights opportunities for enhanced EU-Asia cooperation in legal standard-setting, international trade, and regional energy security governance, offering a broader perspective on the evolving role of law in shaping international cooperation.

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Does Economic Growth Undermine Democracy? Economic Factors behind the De-Democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe

Anti-liberal and anti-democratic political (mostly populist) processes in developed countries are seemingly related to the disillusion with liberal democracy. Political analysts cite a weak civil society, growing influence of unelected bureaucracy and judiciary among factors that underlie seemingly irrational voting decisions. We investigate the impact of economic factors on de-democratisation processes in Central and Eastern Europe. There is a general consensus that the unhappiness about growing income disparities often results in voting for anti-democratic parties. Contrary to a common view, we argue that anti-democratic (anti-establishment) voting waves can come at times of robust economic growth (Fidesz 2010, Law & Justice 2015, Trump 2016). That happens because most of developed countries have adopted a specific growth model that intensifies income disparities during high economic growth. On the contrary, during economic crises voters would rather choose established political parties. We try to verify our hypothesis by juxtaposing data on inequalities and living conditions with election voting patterns in our sample countries (to date Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, possibly later extending to other countries). Our preliminary findings seem to confirm that high economic growth rates did not prevent voting for anti-democratic parties. On the other hand, income inequalities do seem to matter. Populist parties' election gains usually followed prolonged period of inequality growth. The results for Hungary are most robust. Weaker correlation results for Poland may indicate stronger influence of other than economic factors specific for the country like the common attitude to the rule of law, an inefficient education system and (or) the relations between the state and the country's Catholic Church. The other possibility is that the Gini coefficient does not grasp the entire scope of inequalities and there is a need to use other measures such as differences between various income groups, unemployment and labour rights protection, housing availability etc.

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XUE, SHENG

European Defense Autonomy, a path to strategic autonomy or a source of internal quarrel?

Rethinking the "trans-Atlantic relationship" has been a key word for European leaders because of the change brought by the Trump administration including his general trade war towards the world, the ceasefire negotiation with Vladimir Putin on Ukrainian conflict with Europe apart, the withdrawal from major international organizations and agreements such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and the Paris Climate Agreement. The collapsing EU-US alliance, brought the renaissance of the "Strategic Autonomy", proposed by Emmanuel Macron of which the base and the key is "Defense Autonomy". The two project by Emmanuel Macron and Ursula von der Leyen seems to supplement each other. Meanwhile the funding problem forces the EU members to select one of them: the inflation, the poor economic growth and the EU new economic governance rules limited the EU members' investments on national defense. So the new German parliament has passed historic debt reform to lifting the "debt brake". But the dependence of EU on NATO cannot simply reduced by raise the investment. The internal coordination mechanism and the feasibility of the project still brought the uncertainty of the future "Defense Autonomy" and the "Strategic Autonomy". By analyzing the conflict between the will of European leaders (intermediary variables), the disputes among the EU members due to the different demands (dependent variables) and the geopolitical environmental uncertainties (independent variables), the article tries to make a preview of the result of European "Defense Autonomy", will it led to the "Strategic Autonomy" or end with a new round of internal quarrel like the policies in the past.

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YAN, ZIQING

Water Governance in the EU during the Transition: An Assessment of Climate Goals
Compatibility and Implications for Transboundary Rivers in the Asia-Pacific Region-A Case Study
of the Danube River

Global climate change and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events are exerting growing pressure on the sustainable management and transboundary governance of freshwater resources. The European Union (EU) has long been at the forefront of the international environmental and climate governance agenda, having established a transboundary water resource management system centered on the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Floods Directive (FD). Additionally, it emphasizes climate adaptation measures for water resources through the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change and the European Green Deal. Despite this, the effectiveness of the EU's governance framework under accelerated climate transitions has been limited. In particular, the integration of water resource management and climate adaptation policies remains insufficient, and alignment with global climate goals, including the Paris Agreement, faces notable challenges. The Danube River Basin stands as a model of transboundary water cooperation within the EU. Through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the region has made significant progress in cross-border collaboration, water quality improvement, ecological protection, and flood risk management. However, new challenges such as extreme flooding and drought events, rising water temperatures, and ecosystem pressures triggered by climate change are becoming increasingly prominent. The existing governance framework still has shortcomings in transboundary coordination, financial support, and the implementation of adaptation measures, with a notable issue of policy fragmentation. The Danube experience underscores the importance of robust legal frameworks, unified governance structures, science-based decision-making, and effective data sharing in managing transboundary water resources. While the distinct political, legal, and socio-economic contexts of the Asia-Pacific region may preclude direct replication of the EU model, the institutional and procedural insights from the Danube Basin offer valuable lessons. Adapted to local conditions, these approaches can support enhanced transboundary water governance, regional cooperation, and climate resilience across the Asia-Pacific.

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YANG, SIMIAO

Rising costs of border control and the Single market: the impact of refugee policy on free trade in the EU

Since the European refugee crisis in 2015, EU member states have strengthened border controls in response to the influx of refugees, posing a challenge to the single market with free trade as its core. This paper examines how the rising cost of border control affects the EU's free trade system and its long-term threat to economic integration.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper selects Austria and Hungary and the Netherlands and Belgium as comparative cases to assess the impact of border delays on cross-border logistics, supply chain efficiency and SME operating costs, quantifies the relationship between the decline in trade volume and the intensity of border inspection through regression analysis, and discusses the game between refugee reception and trade interests by combining policies. The results show that border controls significantly increase trade costs. In the single market, restrictions on the free movement of goods have reduced trade in some regions, while restrictions on the movement of labour mobility have reduced the employment flexibility of multinational firms. If border controls are normalized, the Schengen Agreement could be undermined, and the single market's efficiency will continue to decline. More deeply, policy differences could create "economic silos" that shake investor confidence in integration. Based on this, this paper suggests the establishment of a unified refugee reception fund to balance the financial burden of member states; promote smart border management technology to reduce trade disruption.

Research has shown that there are complex interactions between refugee policy and economic integration. Due to data limitations, not all member states are included, and the potential of technological advances in improving the efficiency of border management can be focused in the future. By revealing the impact of refugee policy on free trade, this paper provides reference for the EU's balance between crisis response and economic integration.

Yang Simiao is currently a first-year Master's student in European Studies at the University of Macau, holding dual Bachelor's degrees in Public Administration and Economics from Jilin University. Her research focuses on the intersection of EU economic integration and refugee policy, exploring the impact of border control costs on free trade and single market efficiency. Yang is working on a paper to analyze the effects of the refugee crisis on trade systems using quantitative and qualitative methods. Yang has shared preliminary findings at university seminars and aims to join international projects to support EU policymaking and regional economic coordination.

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YOON, SUNG-WON

Message Transmitted?: Korean Perceptions of the EU's Roles and Importance in the Indo-Pacific Region

This study examines South Korean perceptions of the European Union's (EU) roles and importance in the Indo-Pacific region, drawing on interviews with 14 policy influencers and government officials. The findings reveal that the EU is widely seen as a normative and economic power that promotes democracy, sustainability, and multilateral governance. However, its limited strategic and military capacity constrains its perceived influence in the region. While both influencers and officials acknowledge the EU's relevance, officials tend to emphasize its practical contributions—particularly in trade and digital governance—whereas influencers focus more on its value-based leadership and symbolic role.

Digital governance and green transition emerged as the most promising areas for EU–South Korea cooperation. The publication of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) is generally viewed positively, with many respondents seeing it as a potential catalyst for deeper bilateral engagement. Additionally, the war in Ukraine has reshaped strategic perceptions, creating new opportunities for cooperation in defense, economic resilience, and regional security. Influencers see this as a chance for South Korea to enhance its global profile, while officials express more cautious optimism, noting economic and geopolitical risks.

To advance mutual interests, the study recommends six action areas: security and defense technology collaboration, green innovation partnerships, digital governance initiatives, supply chain resilience mechanisms, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and enhanced multilateral cooperation, particularly with ASEAN. These steps aim to build a more strategic and resilient EU–South Korea partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

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ZHANG, WEIJIA

Climate Goals and Unexpected Events – The Importance of Adaptive Governance: European Union Energy-Climate Policies as Examples

While an ambitious objective is desired during the process of fighting against climate change, it is worth noting that there are always some unexpected events hindering the carrying out of plans, in particular in times of transition. For example, the unexpected Russia – Ukraine war has significantly affected the energy supply in the European Union, and thereby posed challenges to the achievement of its climate goals. Facing such a situation, an adaptive governance, which is non-linear and resilient, is more desired than a rigid legal system. Nonetheless, things in the world are always double-edged swords. Adaptive governance is no exception. This paper examines the adaptability of the European Union's energy-climate policies, and finds that most of them have a certain degree of adaptabilities. However, these policies have not left the Union and the Member States much room for unexpected events other than technical progress, especially those socially disruptive events. In the end, this paper advocates for adaptive governance after the analysis of its merits and shortcomings.

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ZHOU, WANG WANG

The Low-Altitude Economy: Germany's Current Landscape and International Perspectives

The low-altitude economy, encompassing drone logistics, urban air mobility, and related technologies, remains underdeveloped in Germany compared to global leaders like China. Despite its strong industrial base, Germany lacks proactive government support or a clear strategic focus in this sector, resulting in limited progress. In contrast, China has prioritized low-altitude economy as a strategic emerging industry, driving rapid advancements through policy incentives and infrastructure investment. Germany's cautious regulatory approach and fragmented initiatives hinder its competitiveness, while China's centralized strategy positions it as a frontrunner in this emerging field.

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