

CONFERENCE

Speaking with One Voice? EU Defense Diplomacy and the Indo-Pacific

Event details



Brussels, 23-24 September 2026



Thon Hotel, Rue de La Loi 75,
1040 Brussels, Belgium

The Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS) organizes a closed-door seminar entitled “*Speaking with One Voice? EU Defense Diplomacy and the Indo-Pacific*”, which will take place in Brussels on 23-24 September 2026.

Bringing together approximately 40 experts, practitioners, diplomats, policymakers from EU institutions and Member States, as well as representatives of the research community, the seminar aims to foster a forward-looking discussion on EU’s Security & Defense Partnerships and the future of European strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific. At a time of growing political competition, evolving regional security dynamics, and increasing expectations from Indo-Pacific partners, the European Union faces mounting pressure to enhance the coherence, credibility, and effectiveness of its security partnerships in the region.

The seminar will provide a dedicated space for participants to assess both the strategic foundations and practical implementation of EU Security & Defense Partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries. Discussions will examine how the EU and its Member States can better align their approaches, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and develop more impactful forms of engagement in support of regional stability and security.

Designed as an interactive policy workshop, the seminar will combine plenary discussions with brainstorming exercises and scenario-based reflections. This format will enable participants to exchange perspectives, challenge assumptions, and collectively develop practical policy recommendations.

The seminar seeks not only to deepen collective reflection on the EU's role as a security actor in the Indo-Pacific, but also to generate actionable insights that can contribute to ongoing European policy debates on security cooperation, defense diplomacy, and regional partnerships.

This conference is the seventh in a series organized under the French Network for Indo-Pacific Policy Research, a research initiative launched in 2023 by the French Ministry of the Armed Forces. It is coordinated by FRS in collaboration with Institut Montaigne, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), Sciences Po, the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Inalco) and the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

CONFERENCE AGENDA

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INFORMATION

- 23-24 September 2026
- Thon Hotel, Rue de La Loi 75, 1040 Brussels, Belgium

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

09:00 – 09:30	WELCOME COFFEE
09:30 – 09:40	KEYNOTE SPEECH
09:45 – 11:15	PLENARY 1 – INDO-PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES: EXPECTATIONS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES <i>Guiding question: Which expectations from Indo-Pacific partners should shape the future evolution of EU security and defense partnerships?</i> • <i>How do Asian partners perceive the EU as a security and defense actor in the Indo-Pacific?</i> • <i>What are the key structural gaps, in terms of capabilities, political will, or institutional design, that currently limit the depth and credibility of EU security partnerships with regional actors?</i> • <i>In which areas can the EU provide the greatest added value compared with other security actors and partnerships? To what extent do diverging threat perceptions between the EU and its Asian partners (regarding China, maritime security, or hybrid threats) constrain the scope of viable cooperation?</i>

11:15 – 11:30	COFFEE BREAK
11:30 – 13:00	PLENARY 2 – EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES: COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN AN EVOLVING REGIONAL SECURITY ORDER <i>Guiding question: How should the EU adapt its security and defense engagement to a rapidly evolving Indo-Pacific security environment? What should be the EU’s long-term vision for security and defense engagement in the Indo-Pacific by 2035?</i> • <i>In a context of increased geopolitical competition and shifting US engagement in the region, what comparative advantage can the EU credibly claim as a security partner, and for which types of cooperation?</i> • <i>How can the EU better reconcile the tension between Member State bilateralism and a genuinely European approach to security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific? What institutional or procedural reforms would be needed?</i> • <i>What forms of coordination among EU institutions and Member States are needed to strengthen the coherence and visibility of European action in the region?</i>
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH
14:00 – 15:30	BRAINSTORMING SESSION/SCENARIO WORKSHOP 1 Group 1 – Building Foundations: Designing Effective EU Security & Defense Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific <i>Guiding question: How can the EU better align Member States’ priorities and national initiatives when designing security and defense partnerships with Indo-Pacific partners?</i>

14:00 – 15:30	• <i>What criteria should guide the selection, prioritization and tailoring of partnerships across the region?</i> • <i>How can the EU make its partnership offer more coherent, credible and responsive to partners' needs and expectations?</i> • <i>How do diverging strategic cultures and interests among Member States shape the EU's external credibility as a defense partner? Through what processes can these tensions be managed without reducing the EU's engagement to the lowest common denominator?</i> Group 2 – Delivering Impact: Implementing EU Security & Defense Partnerships with Indo-Pacific Partners <i>Guiding question: How can Member States and EU institutions better coordinate to ensure effective implementation and sustained follow-through?</i> • <i>What are the main obstacles to translating political commitments into tangible security and defense cooperation outcomes?</i> • <i>To what extent do existing EU frameworks (PESCO, EDF, CSDP missions) constrain or enable effective implementation of partnerships with Indo-Pacific partners? What adaptations would be required?</i> • <i>What practical mechanisms can Member States activate to ensure the effectiveness and strategic impact of EU partnerships?</i>
15:30 – 16:00	COFFEE BREAK
16:00 – 17:30	BRAINSTORMING SESSION/SCENARIO WORKSHOP II Group 1 – Building Foundations: Designing Effective EU Security & Defense Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific Drawing on the reflections from Brainstorming Session I, participants will stress-test their ideas and recommendations through a forward-looking partnership scenario.

	Group 2 – Delivering Impact: Implementing EU Security & Defense Partnerships with Indo-Pacific Partners Drawing on the reflections from Brainstorming Session I, participants will stress-test their ideas and recommendations through an existing partnership scenario.
17:30 - 17:40	WRAP-UP SESSION

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DAY 2 - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

09:30 – 10:00	WELCOME COFFEE
10:00 – 10:30	PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS
10:30 – 12:00	PLENARY 3 – OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: IMPLEMENTING EU SECURITY AND DEFENSE PARTNERSHIPS <i>Guiding questions: How can the EU and its Member States translate political commitments into effective, operational security and defense partnerships in the Indo-Pacific? What lessons can be drawn from existing implementations?</i> • <i>From an operational standpoint, what are the most significant friction points encountered when implementing EU security and defense partnerships with Indo-Pacific partners?</i>

	• <i>To what extent do existing EU frameworks and instruments (CSDP, PESCO, EDF etc.) facilitate or constrain operational cooperation with partners in the region? What adaptations would be needed to enhance their effectiveness?</i> • <i>How can the EU ensure sustained operational follow-through beyond initial political agreements, particularly when Member States have diverging levels of engagement and commitment in the Indo-Pacific?</i>
12:00 – 12:15	CONCLUDING REMARKS