

Jean Monnet Lecture Series on EU-Asia Connectivity

EU-Asia: Shaping a new world order through connectivity?

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The world order is changing and is shifting east

- “The 20th century concentration of international politics on the transatlantic area is now shifting towards the Asia-Pacific region.”
- “Crises in the Western Hemisphere and internal threats to democracy in Europe and in the US are seen as a weakening of democracy as a model and giving impetus to those states that have a different view of how countries should be run.”



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A geopolitical European Commission

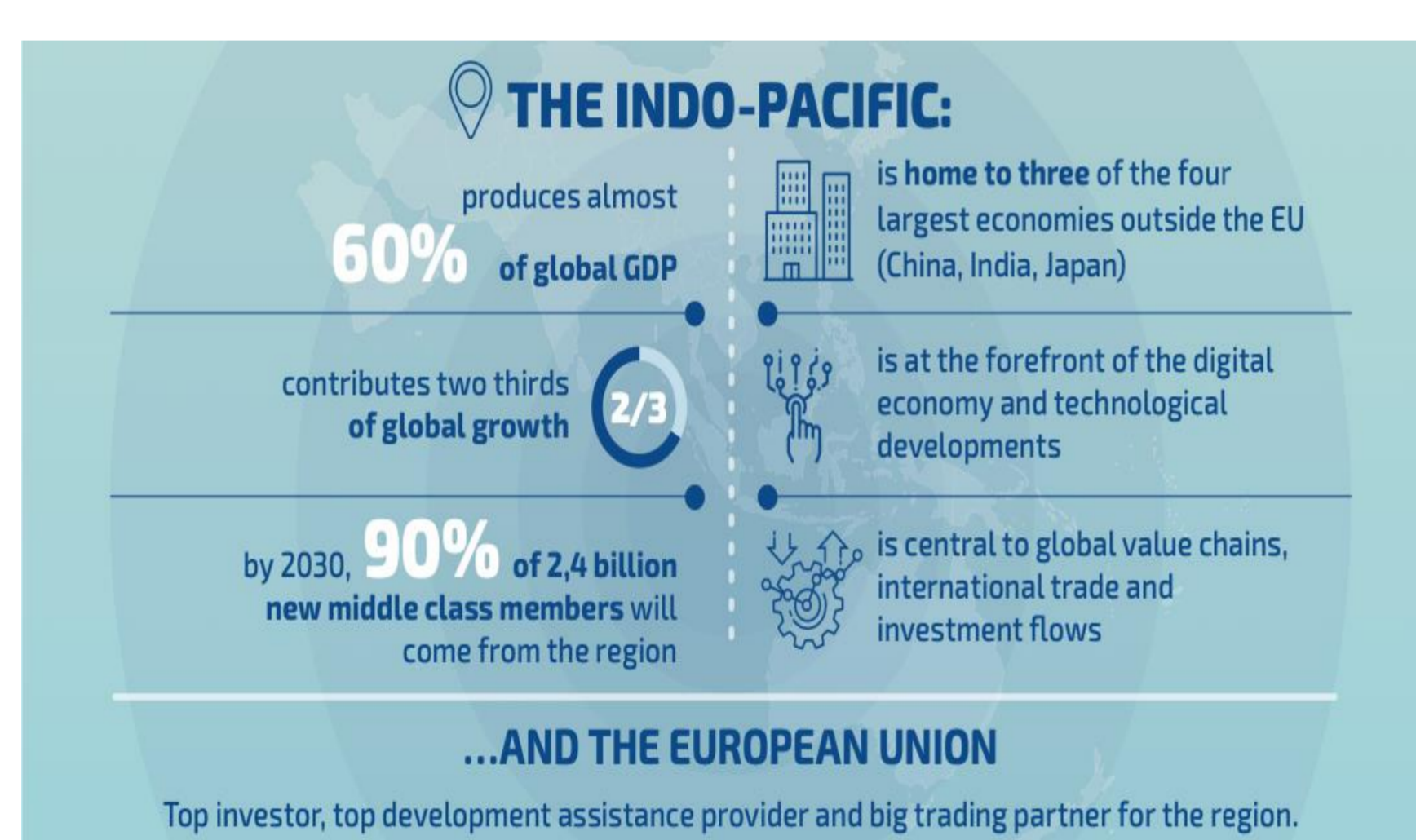
- “The changing global context has forced the EU to take a more strategic outlook on the world. We saw that already in the Global Strategy in 2016 and this is now being played out in a more concrete way. It has to do with a realisation in Europe that the interests of China and the US have changed quite a lot and that that change is not always to Europe's advantage.”



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The Indo-Pacific Strategy: Strategic autonomy and geopolitics

- “The Indo-Pacific Strategy is a way for the EU to say that we want to be present in this region, we have understood the strategic importance of this region and we have to be there.”



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- “Ultimate aims in the Indo-Pacific Strategy are material, so access to strategic goods like microchips, securing economic competitiveness by securing global value chains and enforcing and maybe spreading EU regulatory frameworks.”

- “It is an uneasy balance between what I call the usual EU that we know from maybe 20 years back and a new more strategic EU.”

What role does connectivity play?

- “When [the 2018 EU-Asia connectivity strategy] was launched, it came across as a rather bland, quite unspecific strategy, sort of the EU feeling its way through these more geopolitical dimensions, and it left a lot to read between the lines.”

- “The Global Gateway Initiative builds on the connectivity strategy, but it has become much more strategic and much more assertive.”

- “It wants to offer something concrete to partners in Asia and in the Indo-Pacific, and very clearly says that we are offering another governance model.”



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Is the EU becoming a strategic global actor?

- “[The EU] very clearly seeks presence in [the Indo-Pacific] region and it very clearly says that it is ready to compete on the material, ideational level... that it is necessary for its own interests and also its milieu-shaping goals in the world.”
- “[The EU] is still quite strong on carrots but not so strong on sticks. I think here we cannot expect the EU to become a military power, but it could, for instance, make use of its coercive economic tools so its tools of economic statecraft.”

Can the EU shape the emerging international order?

- “It is trying in its own way, [but] even if it has become more geopolitical more strategically minded it's still the EU and not a sovereign country.”
- “Especially [through] the Indo-Pacific Strategy we can see a little bit more of a role of strategic autonomy for the EU, with a hint of geopolitics.”