



Video Event | Partnering in the Indo Pacific

TRANSCRIPT

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Aparna Pande:

Good morning and welcome to all who have tuned in to watch us today. We are slightly less than five weeks from the next US administration led by President-elect Joe Biden. Capitals all around the world are looking forward to policies and programs of the new administration. Over the last few years, four years, there has been a strong investment in the Indo-Pacific. From infrastructure and developmental assistance to military exercises, sharing of technology. India occupies a central position both geographically and strategically within the Indo-Pacific. India and the United States share a similar vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific respecting the centrality of ASEAN, building regional connectivity and strengthening strategic relations.

In recent years, many countries across Europe, primarily Germany and France, but many others as well, have also deepened their engagement with the Indo-Pacific. To discuss this and more, we have with us today an excellent panel. I would like to add that we had Hudson's India program are especially thrilled that we are hosting an all-women panel today. Our panelists are my Hudson colleague now based in Denmark, Dr. Liselotte Odgaard. Lise is a senior fellow at Hudson and has been a visiting fellow at institutions such as Harvard University, Woodrow Wilson Center, Norwegian Nobel Institute. She's the author of numerous monographs, books, articles and research on Chinese-European Indo-Pacific security.

Dr. Rani Mullen is associate professor of government at William & Mary and visiting senior research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. Dr. Mullen's research and teaching focuses on South Asian politics, particularly state building and democracy. Dr. Rajaswari Rajagopalan is a distinguished fellow and heads the Nuclear and Space Policy Initiative at the Observer Research Foundation in Delhi. She's also a non-resident Indo-Pacific fellow at the Perth US-Asia Center. She has authored or edited books on nuclear security, space policy, and military strategy. Welcome to all of you. I would like to start by asking each of my panelists to offer some opening remarks, or maybe five to seven minutes. Dr. Rajagopalan, could I request you to start off by informing people about the broad contours of India's Indo-Pacific strategy?

Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan:

Thank you. Thank you Aparna, thanks so much for having me and this is a terrific panel that you have put together. So, to jump into the subject, the Indo-Pacific is an increasingly geopolitically turbulent region. There's a lot that brings major Indo-Pacific powers to the India, US, Australia, Japan, and so on and so forth. While the Indo-Pacific region is one of the most economically prosperous region, it is increasingly seeing its fair share of mistress, rivalry and insecurities. And I believe this is a demonstration of the changing balance of power dynamics in the region and beyond. And of course, this is marked by the spectacular rise of China.

And when you look at, there is a lot of military and power tussle issues. Indo-Pacific, the concept itself came about, I believe, because of the power centric competition that is picked up in the region. But there is also a military component to it, it's growing military power in the region, especially China's military power in the region. It's expanding military footprint in South China Sea, of course, over the last decade or more and of course, growing our footprint in the Indian Ocean region. There is that variance among all the major Indo-Pacific powers, but to India, this has been particularly loud and clear. There

has been an increasing number of Chinese vessels, Chinese nuclear submarine sparking itself in the immediate neighborhood. So, there has been that concern, growing sets of concerns in New Delhi.

But the fear is also more about China. The fact that China is not fearful about using power. There is that fear and weightiness because China is capable of using this power, the threat of use of power and force in dealing with territorial issues as well as sovereignty related issues. I think that's become a major driver for a lot of the major Indo-Pacific powers to come together to think about how to strategize in dealing with this particular problem. And of course, China has become the second largest economy, but essentially the large economic entity that is available, that he's pushing itself to develop and invest a lot more in military. And I think as Chinese economy continues to grow, I think you will see a bigger play in that.

And this is in some sense driving Indian activism as well because India has had to respond primarily on the land border, dealing with the land border problems with China but India is also conscious of the fact that China's footprint in the Indian Ocean is going to be a bigger problem in the coming years. So, India's activism includes the development and partnership with the Quad countries. Quad is one reflection of how China has pushed India to take some of these balance of power dynamics very seriously. And of course, the Indo-Pacific concept, endorsing that concept and strategizing around that concept, again, is the second response.

But there is one key problem. Even as there is a lot of convergence among these powers, there is a problem in terms of how do we go about addressing this particular problem in a concrete manner. The major Indo-Pacific powers have been doing a lot of joint exercises in bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral sense. Especially this year, we've seen Australia joining the Malabar exercises. So, you have seen these countries coming together even to do military exercises. But what beyond the military exercises can happen? And that is something that we need to think about, what is the next step in that regard?

I also wanted to quickly touch upon some of the technological developments because technology, US-China technology competition has had its dynamics, has its impact felt in the Indo-Pacific region. Even countries like India that might not want to get into the middle of it are impacted by it. There are two interrelated issues that I would look at it. One is, of course, the cooperation in the development of technology, so that powers inimical to free societies do not gain an undue advantage in developing such technologies. For instance, technologies like advanced computing, telecommunications technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence are some of the examples in a sense.

The second when it comes to technology is where I look at the issue governance in a sense. With the global governance of certain critical technologies and the implementation or the use of these technologies do not hinder the rights of all states, and their developmental opportunities. So, if I were to give an example, for instance, outer space. Outer space has had a number of treaties and mechanisms in place, but they also are lagging behind in terms of its ability, their ability to deal with contemporary challenges. So, we need new norms, we need new rules and regulations. But the great power competition has become so much that it is so become so challenging, so difficult to build consensus, build agreement among the major powers to develop rules of the road. So, those are some of the problems that we are seeing, in that sense broadly within the Indo-Pacific sphere sort of, when you look at some of these problems in the Indo-Pacific area wise in a sense, I hope that makes sense to you.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you Dr. Rajagopalan, I'll come back to you. Dr. Odgaard, if you could provide us with an overview of how Europe looks at Indo-Pacific and maybe touch on how it sees us relations with India.

Liselotte Odgaard:

Sure, thank you. And I would say that Europe has been fairly slow to take on board the Indo-Pacific concept, even though of course, they have long standing interest in Asia and most of the countries there. But it took them a while to accept that term, probably because of the strategic military security implications of the concept. And France has been a first mover I would say, in the Indo-Pacific and in recognizing the importance of also having a military presence there. France published its Indo-Pacific strategy in 2018 but it was followed this year by countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, who also now have Indo-Pacific strategies.

And I would argue the fact that the main drivers of Europe's development which is Paris and Berlin, the fact that they both have Indo-Pacific strategies but now signals that Europe as a whole, will develop an Indo-Pacific strategy in coming years that will support existing efforts to give Europe and Indo-Pacific footprint. As mentioned, France has very much been a first mover and since 2016, it has tried to mobilize support for an annual European deployment in the Indo-Pacific because as the previous speaker mentioned, Indo-Pacific has been very much about military deployments and security. France has had to walk a tightrope between working with the US and its partners to give Europe a defense footprint that is taken seriously, while also at the same time sticking to a European policy of maintaining cordial relations with China.

But nevertheless, the German and Dutch publication of Indo-Pacific strategy signals that France is succeeding in this difficult effort. I would argue that economic and security development drive this development because it makes the Indo-Pacific the center of gravity for Europe as for everyone else. And both the German and the Dutch strategy emphasize that their prosperity and security very much depend on working together with countries in the Indo-Pacific. And also with an increasingly skeptical approach to China, there is also agreement in Europe that it is necessary to diversify trade and supply ties to countries in Asia, so that Europe will become less dependent on China.

In line with the EU's policy to negotiate free trade agreements and enter into strategic partnerships with a wide range of countries in the Indo-Pacific, the German and Dutch strategy papers also mentioned countries such as South Korea, New Zealand, India and Australia as alternative trading partners to China. And like France, Germany and the Netherlands also do not want to be too dependent on the United States anymore. Because they realize that being caught up in US Chinese strategic battles have high costs for Europe and it also undermines European interests. So, that's another factor that pushes Europe to have a wider network in the Indo-Pacific.

The German strategy, interestingly, also includes a military element. It states that the intention is to expand its security and defense cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and participate in maritime exercises. And as a result, the German frigate Hamburg is to be sent to the Indo-Pacific in 2021. And that's quite a big development for a country that has been fairly reluctant to deploy military forces for purposes that are not purely defensive and who's also been quite reluctant to overtly oppose China.

So of course, Europe is not going to be trying to replace the US as a main security provider, Europe is going to continue to try to work with the US in the Indo-Pacific. It will also continue to emphasize

economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific over more military engagement. But nevertheless, Europe looks like it's going to have an independent footprint in the Indo-Pacific that's not just like the tail end of the US or a copy of what the US is doing, but an independent footprint that covers economic as well as security interests in developing and protecting their interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you, Dr. Odgaard. Dr. Mullen, if I could now turn to you and ask you to share your thoughts on how you from the United States view the Indo-Pacific, India's role, thank you.

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

First of all, I wanted to thank you, Aparna, and the Hudson Institute for organizing this really timely event and also thank you to my fellow panelists who have laid out the issue quite succinctly. I think we've all been so caught up in COVID and the American elections that we forget there are some really important policy issues that we need to be on top of. So, thank you very much for organizing this. On the US and the Indo-Pacific, while a recognition of the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region can, of course be traced back to the Obama administration, it was the Trump administration which came up with a rebranded free and open Indo-Pacific concept in late 2017. And of course, with that also, they expanded the geographic definition of what this region encompassed which was from the coast of California to the eastern shores of Africa.

While this aspirational goal was to be pursued by working with regional allies, and the Trump administration did create several initiatives to work with partners to counter China's forceful behavior in the region, the actual implementation of the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy was, as we know, held back by President Trump who often preferred to go it alone with his America First idea. And he had no qualms about alienating some of America's oldest allies in the region. It's also important to keep in mind that Trump's periodic cozying up to authoritarian leaders in the region, like North Korea's Kim Jong-un, after all, who can forget Trump gushing with praise for him during the 2018 Singapore Summit while ignoring his human rights record. These kind of episodes have severely undermined American soft power globally, but of course, also in the Indo-Pacific region.

So, what can we expect then in terms of the incoming administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific? I think there'll be much continuity of the strategy, but in terms of how they will approach it, I think there will be a change. And let me be a little bit more specific about that. US President-elect Biden is likely to change or even reverse some of President Trump's policies, but the core of the Indo-Pacific strategy, which is to counter China's strong arm tactics in the region, is likely to be one of the few Trump administration's policies which will likely remain the same. What is very likely to change with the incoming Biden administration is how that policy is pursued. President Trump and his administration talked about strengthening partnerships but we know that he too often went solo and thought little of alliances such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

So, President-elect Biden, we know from his previous work and his previous offices that he has occupied, that he's a great believer in multilateralism and alliances and partnerships. So, I would say that we are much more likely to see a strengthening of alliances to push back against China's tactics in the Indo-Pacific. Some of these tactics, of course, are quite coercive. And but I think we will see that President-elect Biden will continue the hard line be savvy China, and put greater emphasis on building

partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. I think we can see that through some of his nomination. Of course, he's, not an office yet, so we can only predict but I think there's some clues.

For example, Anthony Blinken, who is the designated Secretary of State and Jake Sullivan, who is the National Security Advisor designate. Two people who of course served in senior positions in the Obama administration, have indicated in recent writings that the US can and should occupy global leadership positions. Moreover, Linda Thomas Greenfield, who is the designate for the US ambassador to the UN. She is a career Foreign Service officer and the choice of a veteran diplomat like that to represent the US at the UN, clearly signals that the incoming Biden administration intends to reengage on the global stage.

There are also a couple other designated individuals in the incoming administration such as Adewale Adeyemo who is slated to be Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen deputy. Adeyemo was the international economic advisor to Obama, who helped negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership. So, who are some of the deputies? Katherine Tai who's the designate, US Trade Representative. She's Mandarin speaking, nominating her peers to signal a tougher approach to negotiating new deals with Beijing. But that's in line also with what Biden has pledged to show China that the US won't back. That this is a continuation of a tough policy.

And then, of course, we know that China's increasingly building approach in the Indo-Pacific region, and rising us sentiment against China, including within the Democratic Party, particularly after China's mishandling of the COVID pandemic, means that the incoming Biden administration will continue to be tough on China. There was a recent Pew survey which said four out of five Americans thought that China had mishandled the crisis. Our fellow panelists have also talked about China's aggressive incursions into India along the border in the Himalayas, there's been ramping up of aggression against Taiwan and Hong Kong. And of course, we know about the important incursions and aggression in the south and increasingly East China Seas. So, given what has happened and given some of the nominations, I would say we'd see much of continuity but the approach will be different. It will be much more about working together with our partners in the region.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you so much, Dr. Mullen. Thank you to all of you, you've actually sort of covered the question I want to also ask on China. So, what I will now do is, I will try and ask each of you to elaborate further on a few issues. First, Dr. Rajagopalan, I was hoping that you could... In your opening remarks, you talked a lot about the cooperation on the military and the technological front and you spoke about both the digital and, let's say, the bilateral technology part, information technology, but also the global goods, cyber, space. I mean in the last four years, or let's say last eight years, has there been an increase in collaboration within the Indo-Pacific countries on this front? And do you think there are areas it can continue or do you see challenges coming unless there's sustained endeavor or specific policies implemented?

Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan:

Thank you for that terrific question. I think, essentially, China's rise and the strategic uncertainties associated with [inaudible 00:23:47] of course, created the imperative for a number of countries to come together. And some of the technologically capable powers such as Australia, Japan, US, India, to

come together to shape a more stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. But I think that in terms of technology collaboration, it's been mostly bilateral in some sense. When you look at it whether it is India-US space cooperation, India-US collaboration conversations on cyber issues and so on and so forth. AI and other things are picking up but it's still going very slow. And much of the problem is on the Indian side and at least on the technology front.

Certain amount of inhibition about working with the US, part of the sort of leftover from the Cold War days onwards. But even though we traveled a long way, there are still a certain amount of weariness that persists in the Indian establishment when it comes to working on some of the high technology strategic areas with the US and so on and so forth. On the space front, look at the, for instance where now that India is planning on a human space mission, Gaganyaan in 2022. The US had pitched itself to train the Indian astronauts in its facilities. Of course France and Russia also offered and finally India went ahead with the Russian option to train its astronauts.

So, it does show that there is still certain amount of variance. But this is not to suggest that the two don't cooperate. In fact, one of the first major sort of area in the post-Cold War in the most recent times the cooperation has been in the area of moon mission. When India undertook the first Chandrayaan mission, the moon mission in 2008, October, India partnered with NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in sending one particular instrument that was critical for identifying the water presence on the moon, on the surface of the moon. So, that was that.

Second, when India undertook its mass mission in 2014, again, the India, ISRO, the Indian Space Research Organization and NASA came together to collaborate in deep space communication, and so on and so forth. So there are some very, very interesting collaboration that are taking place. And of course, to look at the entire array of environmental issues and so on and so forth, natural disasters, NASA and ISRO are working together on NASA-ISRO synthetic aperture radar, NASA X satellite being developed and to be launched on us Indian Satellite Launch Vehicle in the next couple of years.

So, there are increasing amount of collaboration that are taking place between India and the US. India and Japan, again, there is a big focus on moon missions and so on and so forth. On the space stuff, there is a lot more going on. And this is again, driven by the fact that each of these countries have had their own smaller missions but nothing that is comparable in scope and size to that of China. And therefore they have decided to come together, combine that effort, join hands in undertaking some of the moon missions and other such missions.

But in terms of the larger collaboration, we are not taking the big steps. There are of course, like I said, the like-minded states such as Australia, Japan, India, US, to come together. There are huge amount of potential and it can further expand to other like-minded states capable countries such as Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and others. So, there are huge opportunities, huge potential, but we are still kind of taking baby steps when it comes to... And unless we are pushed to doing something, I think India at least doesn't take that big jump into doing things on its own taking the initiative. So, we are still kind of taking baby steps when it comes to technology collaboration. But where we are possibly seeing some big goal is in terms of the political and military stuff which I kind of touched upon in my initial remarks, which is that what are the Indian goals at the end of the day?

If we are talking about having an open free, inclusive Indo-Pacific that is stable and prosperous, that plays by the rules of the road, where there is respect for international law, how do we get there? That's

a critical question. And economic tools are key. Dr. Mullen talked about the for instance, the US walking out of the TPP, India walking out of the ASEAN. So, there are a lot of... Even wild countries do understand the importance of economic and trading arrangements at a regional level and so on and so forth. We are still very... And this is something that has to become much more important because economic tools are key especially as the undermining motivating factor is China who is using economic tools to achieve their strategy goals.

One another problem that I see and I am slightly dive moving away from the technology front, but this is something that we need to address in an upfront manner, even though there is a common if unstated and a sort of a recognition that China is the big problem. But there is far too different areas of focus among the different countries that could possibly drive these potential partners and allies in different directions. For instance, the US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, they are big focus on the Pacific and the South China Sea, rightly. But whereas India, is primarily concerned about China's growing footprint and influence in the Indian Ocean region.

So, therefore one issue that needs to be resolved is to how to bring about a sort of a more effective Indo-Pacific strategy by developing closer coordination among the Indo-Pacific partners even if they are all about China, but how do we bring about some sort of a coordinated understanding on this Chinese concerns. And that clarity in that understanding could actually push for some burden sharing. Obviously, that's a long way off. But unless we take the first step of developing some sort of the coordinated approach, even talking about burden-sharing would be a sort of a meaningless thing. But that's a next step that is needed in that sense in pursuing the Indo-Pacific strategy for India.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you Rajagopalan, I may come back to you in the next round for further elaboration on a few issues. Dr. Odgaard, I was hoping to sort of draw you out on the notions of you've written a lot, and you've spoken on panels that I have been on about the need to uphold a liberal international order and how for Europe, in many ways, maybe the economic dimension and the desire to hold up a liberal international order, are some of the important areas when it comes to Indo-Pacific. If you could elaborate a little bit on that.

Liselotte Odgaard:

Thank you, Aparna for the question. It's a very good question because if you look at it superficially, there's a lot of support for liberal world order also in the Indo-Pacific. But we also have to remember that there is a diversity of countries there and a lot of the contents of liberal world order hasn't really taken root in the Indo-Pacific. Well, there may be in most countries, except for China, and a few others support for free market economy, the country's represent very different views on issues such as human rights and democracy. And so it's a very mixed bag when it comes to liberal world order and it's very difficult to sort of see a united set of countries in the Indo-Pacific, in fact, supporting liberal world order. And in fact, I would argue that that is why it's important for the US and Europe to coordinate and cooperate on their Indo-Pacific strategies because Europe remains the main support for the US in upholding liberal world order, although Europe also have authoritarian trends on its continent as does the US.

So, I would say it's not that easy. And in fact, if we turn to India, that would be one of the countries where Europe should have a lot in common focusing at least on democracy. But what brings the countries together, what brings Europe and the Indo-Pacific countries together, I think these days is more in resisting China's increasingly assertive and illicit practices in the areas of economic and security. And the concern that this creates is shared by Europe and by numerous Indo-Pacific countries irrespective of their different profiles on liberal world order.

And if you look at Europe's approach to this, they have taken a fairly pragmatic approach in recent years. So, they have created free trade agreements with very different countries. For example, with Japan, with Singapore, who's an authoritarian state, numerous other countries. So, they do not emphasize value based differences too much. Europe is also trying to have a free trade agreement with all of at the ASEAN area. They also have strategic partnerships with many countries in the Indo-Pacific. And a lot of these are quite at hold and long-standing, but not much has been made of them but I think it will change in the future.

Again, if you look at EU-India relations, they have had free trade agreement negotiations since 2007 and they have never succeeded in making an agreement, but that may change. They've also had a strategic partnership for even longer. And again, there is some cooperation but not much. But if you look at the last summit they had in July 21, a lot of the debates were about China and what to do about it. And there, I think the two can be brought together in a new way around how to counter China. So, in the discussions, Europe and India talked about the rules based international order and how to control China's influence in international institutions. They also talked about digital cooperation and how to develop global standards for 5G and artificial intelligence where China is also a security problem. They discussed how to preserve security and stability in the Indian Ocean region where China again is playing an increasing role and they also talked about how to promote connectivity alternatives to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

So, China was very much on the European-Indian agenda. And I think that's sort of a general point about how Europe is brought closer together with countries in the Indo-Pacific. Speaking again, about Europe and India, they decided in July 21, to establish a high level ministerial dialogue on trade and investment. And that initiative might break the deadlock they've had in free trade negotiations. So, both sides may be ready to make concessions and the driver of that I think, would be to decrease their dependency on China on both sides. There are still serious problems and some of them has to do with liberal world order. So, Europe is not terribly impressed with India's human rights policy as of late and in particular, the Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act gives Europe grave concerns about human rights developments in India.

There is also the situation in Kashmir. And last but not least, Europe is very concerned about growing Indian protectionism. So, there are issues and barriers that are long-standing and are seen to be worse, but then on the other hand, India has attractions. They have a big pharmaceutical industry and so they could provide an alternative supplier to China of medical goods to Europe. India's also the world's largest openly accessible data market and it's home to the world's second largest internet user base. And as such, it provides attractive opportunities for European companies, although the nationalist regulations, the way Europe sees it in India, they constitute a barrier.

India is only the EU's 10th largest trading partner. So, there is clearly a potential for developing the relationship and make it more symmetrical in an economic sense. And I think this potential will be

exploited in coming years. Also with Brexit, India needs a stronger economic foothold in continental Europe for economic reasons. It can no longer use the UK as its gateway to Europe and the EU is India's largest trade partner. So, there are economic reasons as well, for both sides to try to compromise. But I think the main driver will be the unity around opposing China actually. And for Europe, that will mean a more pragmatic and a more interest-based approach to Asia and more willing to cooperate and have close relations with states even if they don't live up to European conceptions of human rights and democracy.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you Dr. Odgaard. Dr. Mullen turning to you. You've written a lot and you have researched a lot on state building exercises, building on soft powers. I was hoping that if you look at Afghanistan, for example, the US, there's a military draw down is going to leave the region. Are there other countries and other regions within the Indo-Pacific which need capacity building, which need developmental assistance, which need a counter to the Belt and Road Initiative? The Indo-Pacific has to some extent emphasize regional capacity building, connectivity, soft power, options to BRI. In your opinion, do you see this continuing? And if so, is it always going to be a race between China and the rest of the world in providing developmental assistance? Is it going to be dollar for dollar or is it going to be quantity versus quality?

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

Lots of questions there. Let me just first say that the US shares many of the concerns that Europe has with regard to this region from individual actors to the larger sort of real politic issue of China and balancing through partnerships against that aggression in the Indo-Pacific. And one way that the US and that the EU and others can help is not only by building these alliances, but as you mentioned, development assistance. Actually giving countries other choices. You mentioned India. People think of India as the new kid on the block in terms of foreign aid. But as some of you might know, actually Indian aid, Indian development partnerships go back quite a long way.

A couple years after India gained its independence in 1947, it was already giving assistance to Myanmar and other neighbors. So, it's not new Indian engagement, it predates China's assertiveness in the region. It's part of its foreign policy package, if you will. But quite a bit has changed in terms of Indian foreign aid. So, let me just sort of as a background, or say a couple words about Indian aid, Indian development assistance and what has been changing.

Indian development assistance has risen substantially since the turn of the century. From a few \$100 million equivalent at the turn of the century, to a peak of \$1.5 billion in 2014, 2015. It decreased the first few years under the Modi administration, picked up in 2019, 2020 and then decreased in the current budget to about \$950 million. But I've always made the argument that because foreign aid from any country, including from India, is often used to purchase goods and services from that country, from the donor country, for example, India gave Afghanistan 100 million to build the Afghan parliament building and Afghanistan then used that contract to purchase materials, contractors from India to actually help build that building. So, because this is the case, it makes much more sense to compare aid using purchasing power parity, because \$1 of Indian aid simply buys more than \$1 of USAID.

And so if you use PPP to compare, then India and India's foreign engagement through development assistance partnerships is much larger. So, for example, in 2016 and 2017, India provided \$1.4 billion equivalent in grants and loans. But if you use that formula to convert it into purchasing power parity, it comes out to \$5 billion. By comparison in the same year, Australia, one of the other main actors in the Indo-Pacific gave 3.8 billion Australian dollars, which in PPP terms was 2.6 billion or about half of what India gave in that same year in PPP terms.

So, India is increasingly a large actor in the region in terms of development partnerships, it's much more diverse and how it engages in which countries it engages in. And increasingly, in the last few years, it has started focusing on the Indo-Pacific where competition with China and where countries are increasingly feeling that they have less opportunities and other places to turn to. So, India has been engaging much more in the Maldives, in Myanmar, where we know China also has quite a footprint. But India, of course cannot match China's deep pockets, there very few countries which can. And so it has started using some of China's development assistance methods in terms of ramping up its line of credits.

Today, India has over \$25 billion and open line of credits. But I also want to be clear that neither India nor have other countries engaged in the kind of debt-trap diplomacy that has led countries from Myanmar and Sri Lanka, to Pakistan and Kenya, to Australia, in fact, to turn overland in the form of 99-year lease agreements or to actually even cede substantial land to China as in the case of Tajikistan. So, China has enlarged its territory in the region. It has built what looks to me like imperial outposts through coercive tactics that no other donor has since World War II.

India has also been engaging in building up its soft power by giving development assistance to rebuild Hindu temples at Angkor Wat in Cambodia, or, for example, the Afghan parliament building, which I already mentioned. Some of these projects are not very large if you just look at them in dollar terms but they send a message of India supporting a democratic country in the region and giving grants. All of India's aid to Afghanistan is in the form of grants. China doesn't give grants and it's footprint is mostly economic and often with coercive tactics and strings attached.

So, certainly much of India's foreign aid engagement in the Indian Ocean Rim countries is, to get back to the topic of China, is really with the aim of countering China's growing presence in places like the Maldives or Sri Lanka. It notably has continued with its aid commitments despite the Indian economy reportedly contracting as much as minus 9%, their thinking maybe for this year. That tells you I think, how important building these relationships are to India in terms of countering China in the region. And I think this is also very important for the incoming Biden administration to keep in mind with regards to partnerships in India. I'll stop there because there were many other questions you touched on but I'll turn it over.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you so much, you've done an excellent job. I just threw questions at you and so thank you. What I'd like to now do is I'm going to throw a question to each of you, the same question. And this will be the concluding question before we wrap up. So, as Shakespeare said; a rose by any other name smells as sweet. So, let's say the Indo-Pacific is no longer called the Indo-Pacific and it reverts to Asia-Pacific or it is called some Indo-Asia-Pacific. Would that really make a difference in your opinion to the strategy and the policy? Would the countries in the region view it differently? Would sort of it doesn't matter what it is called and the US-China pier competition will continue and the rise of China will continue to force

countries to more or less choose a side? What do each of you think? I'll start with Dr. Rajagopalan and then Dr. Odgaard and then Dr. Mullen.

Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan:

Thank you. I think that's been sort of a question that has come up in a lot of different conversations ever since the Biden elect has been announced in essence. What does this really mean? Is there going to be a reset in the US-China relations? Because many countries in the region; Japan, India, and even some of the smaller countries in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, for instance, are seriously looking at how the US-China equations are going to develop and a lot will depend on that, the whole Indo-Pacific concept. It doesn't really matter what you call it and we don't even really know, he hasn't even come to office. So, it's very difficult to kind of clearly state as if there is a sort of a de-emphasizing of the region and so on and so forth.

But what India would look at and India would like to see in the Indo-Pacific or the Asia-Pacific that we might come to call is for instance, a couple of different things. For instance, one is to see that it non-hegemonic Asia. Can the US commit to seeing the rise of a non-hegemonic Asia that India does not, for instance, want to see an Asia that is dominated by any one single part. And this has been articulated by Prime Minister Modi, our Foreign Minister, Jaishankar repeatedly. So, in a sense, India would welcome both a multipolar world and a multipolar Asia. I'm not sure that it is going to be leading to a stable period but I think this is the Indian articulation. And so what it would look to the Biden administration is to see what kind of commitments it would make in seeing that there is not going to be a hegemonic Asia.

And the second aspect that India would look to is in seeing, India has an emphasizing in the rule-based order, rule-based international order. One of the previous speakers panelists talked about it, but this has been an emphasis from the Indian side, in a sense. It has repeated this emphasis on respect for international law rules of the road. Again, highlighted through many of the Indian positions whether it is on some of the regional issues such as the South China Sea. On South China Sea, when you look at it in the Indian position, it has taken an unusually strong position given that it is far away from the Indian shores. And that is precisely the fact that this is the kind of positioning that India does on the South China Sea will also have a bearing on how India is able to deal with the bilateral issue, but also standing for rules and regulations, the respect for international law.

And again, this is not just the rhetoric, but if you look back to India's respect for one of the international court tribunal verdict on the Bangladesh issue, in a sense, we had to cede away the some of the territory, but that was the verdict and we respected that. So, this is not just kind of a talk and rhetoric, but India believes a truly in that sense and... So, these are the kind of couple of things that India might be looking to, in a sense the Biden administration how it is kind of looking at policy framework. I just want to quickly respond to one particular set of questions that Lise talked about, for instance, in Europe and the Indo-Pacific and particularly regarding India, in essence. I'm not a defender of the many of the policies currently underway in India, whether it is on developments in Jammu and Kashmir or whole range of things, the majority realism policy that we see. There is no way to defend that.

But I think what gets somewhat problematic in India is the fact that, okay, you make the issue about India, these issues, human rights issues and democracy and how those problematic and so on and so forth. But Europe silence and almost complete silence when it comes to issues such as Xinjiang—the

plight of Uighurs. You have literally concentration camps running in Xinjiang. The Europe has not really come out and talked about those issues. What about the problem in Hong Kong, Tibet? These are burning issues and yet you do not see Europe taking a principled stand or even a policy stand. That really gets India totally as to why this kind of a double-standard.

And of course, power balance and power issues really speak at the end of the day but I think this will continue to be a problem in EU-India relations, if we see that Europe is absolutely silent about some of the major burning issues when it comes to China, but is willing to take up issues, of course. And I like I said that there are serious issues, whether it is freedom of the press or human rights developments in Kashmir, none of these are justifiable. I'm not trying to justify but I think this is a point that the EU especially needs to keep in mind when it deals with the issues of this kind in essence. Yeah, I'll stop there and thank you.

Aparna Pande:

Odgaard.

Liselotte Odgaard:

Thank you. Just to come in quickly on the human rights issue. Europe has adopted sanctions against Hong Kong and you have to remember that on a lot of issues, the EU leaves it to the member states and there has been a lot of pushback from Europe on all the issues you mentioned, including Xinjiang. So, you can't just look at the EU, you also have to look at the member states when you pass judgment. And on the question about Indo-Asia-Pacific, I think Europe would naturally prefer in Asia-Pacific, that's why it's been so slow to develop Indo-Pacific strategies, but I don't think it would change policies on the ground or strategies at all.

Europe is very much against having to choose sides between the US and China not because they're great fans of China's authoritarian moves and market economic policies in all respects, but because it's unhealthy to have one dominant power. And in that sense, I think, in their view, and I think that view is shared by numerous powers. Like the previous speaker said, no one wants to see a hegemonic power. They will encourage multipolarity and that means that Europe will have its own separate relationships and develop these with Japan, with the ASEAN countries, with India and they will have a profile in their engagement with these countries that is different from that of the US.

So, it will bring, if you like, the middle powers of the Indo-Pacific together, to try to avoid having to choose sides between the US and China while still working with the US on countering some of the malpractices of China. And I think that's a healthy development because that will mean that these countries, including Europe, will have to work more on an interest-based platform not so much on a value based-platform. And I think that's in a way, a healthy development and be more pragmatic about things. The US, I think will also continue to expect more from its partners, more military, for example, contributions from Europe in the Indo-Pacific. And they agree about the objective to oppose that China becomes too dominant in military power and that it doesn't continue with these non-liberal market economic practices.

And so because that objective is very much a common objective across many Indo-Pacific and Western countries, I think that should be the important focus. And it's only natural, if Europe develops a more

strong and significant Indo-Pacific footprint that it will also pursue European specific interests that are not shared by the US. But as long as that doesn't ruin the common agenda of opposing Chinese policies that both parties don't like, I don't think that should be a problem.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you, Dr. Odgaard. Dr. Mullen, you get the last word.

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

Thank you. I am quite clear that changing the title from Indo-Pacific to Asia-Pacific is a very bad idea. And let me just say why. The change of the term that we refer to this region as Indo-Pacific, changing it might be seen here in the US as signaling a shift away from Trump and return to the multi-lateralism of Obama era policies. And I think that part of it is good, but I think that is not how it will be perceived in the Indo-Pacific. And I think that's really important for the incoming Biden administration to be cognizant of.

The western part of the Indo-Pacific in particular, will not be in favor, I would say, of a change in term. Remember the pivot the re-bounce to Asia, the Asia-Pacific policy of Obama, was largely focused on, as the name implies, Asia-Pacific. Countries in Western Asia such as India, Eastern Africa, understandably felt left out of that policy. I understand that there are examples of how this well thought out Indo-Pacific strategy was consistently undermined by US policy under President Trump to individual countries such as Iran. But renaming the policy to one of Asia-Pacific implies a narrowing of vision and exclusion of issues such as... we have seen China's building of a military base in Djibouti. We have seen a significant debt-trap diplomacy under China from Hambantota in Sri Lanka to currently Kenya's Mombasa port. We have seen similar debt-trap approaches in western Indian Ocean countries such as the Maldives, not to mention that the June 2020 Comprehensive Strategic pact between Iran and China really grew out of Trump's policy towards that country and needs a focus on that part of the Indo-Pacific.

It would exclude South Asia at a time when the largest South Asian country, India, is facing a major standoff with China and the Himalayas. So, it would imply a narrowing of the vision and undermine the more holistic, cross-regional approach that has grown under the term Indo-Pacific. I also think that a return to Asia-Pacific is a bad idea because it sends China the wrong message. It implies an old school focus on landmass rather than maritime cooperation. And it was during America's Asia-Pacific policy that China started creating islands out of nothing and changing the geopolitical map of the South China Seas. Americans might have forgotten but Asians have not.

I came to see this quite clearly when I spent a couple years in Singapore recently. The changes to US government's strategic approach dealing with this region more holistically. Recently, for example, they renamed the Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command. So, you have the structures now changed and in place, implying a more holistic approach. But also because the pivot to Asia, as well as Trump's policy in the region has done little to stem China's assertiveness, instead leaving countries in the Indo-Pacific to bear the brunt of China's aggression. And at a time where Chinese aggression has picked up in eastern Africa to the Chinese-Indian border to the Pacific and narrowing a vision, sends totally the wrong message. And I for one, very much hope that is not the direction that the incoming Biden administration will go in.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you very much. Raj, you get a five seconds and then I wrap up. You unmuted.

Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan:

Yeah. Hi, sorry. Yeah, I completely endorse Rani out here because I think the fact is that it's not so much about the inclusion of the India why the Indo-Pacific concept became so important. I think it is strategically bringing together the maritime spaces of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean which is the most critical aspect. And therefore, if you go back to the Asia-Pacific, really you're taking away the importance of the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific spaces, maritime spaces.

Second, it will send a bad, a terrible message to China that some sort of a reset is on China, but at the same time Biden is actually going to be faced with a dilemma on a number of different policies because he might want to reach out to China in sort of building bridges, but at the same time, he cannot go back on a number of policy initiatives that Trump has already done because that will be seen as a sign of weakness. So, that is going to be a problem in a sense. How he handles that is going to be a significant issue.

Multilateralism, the rhetorical multilateralism is good, but I hope that US will not start believing in too much of multilateralism because that is what happened with the Obama administration and that ceded away a lot of strategic space to China at that point of time. So, the rhetoric of multilateralism and style is good, but I hope the US leadership will continue to be pretty decent and decisive in a sense in the coming years. Thank you.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all of our panelists, Dr. Odgaard, Dr. Mullen and Dr. Rajagopalan. It was a pleasure, and I think we covered almost every aspect of the Indo-Pacific region. So, thank you very much.

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

Thank you so much for having us.

Liselotte Odgaard:

Thank you.

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

Thank and stay safe.

Aparna Pande:

All of you.

Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan:

Bye.

Liselotte Odgaard:

And great being on a panel with you. Thank you.

Aparna Pande:

Thank you.

Dr. Rani D. Mullen:

Exactly, thank you, bye.