

## Jean Monnet Lecture Series on EU-Asia Connectivity

# EU-Asia Connectivity: Chaos, Competition or Cooperation?

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### ASEM: Where Eurasia meets the Indo-Pacific

- “I think that if ASEM, if Asia and Europe, get together and work on making connectivity slightly less competition, more cooperation, perhaps we can bring added value to the global landscape... together Asia and Europe do matter.”

#### ASEM factsheet



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### The EU and the Indo-Pacific

- “Geopolitical Europe” is still a work in progress – looking for a “third-way” amid US-China tension.
- The EU is no stranger to the Indo-Pacific, having built up a network of trade agreements and “partnership” pacts across the region over years.
- Once primarily dominated by business, the EU-Asia conversation is becoming more multi-faceted, covering climate change, connectivity, health and security.



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### Don't make a bad situation worse

- As the Indo-Pacific area is already marred by geopolitical tensions, increasing military assets in the region amid the accelerating militarization of Asia would risk further precipitating an arms race.
- The EU should play to its strengths – with its significant market and regulatory power, it should focus on trade and investments, climate change, sustainable development goals and building digital connectivity networks.
- The European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy should encourage a broader, more inclusive and nuanced conversation in the region that is not dominated by hard security ideas.

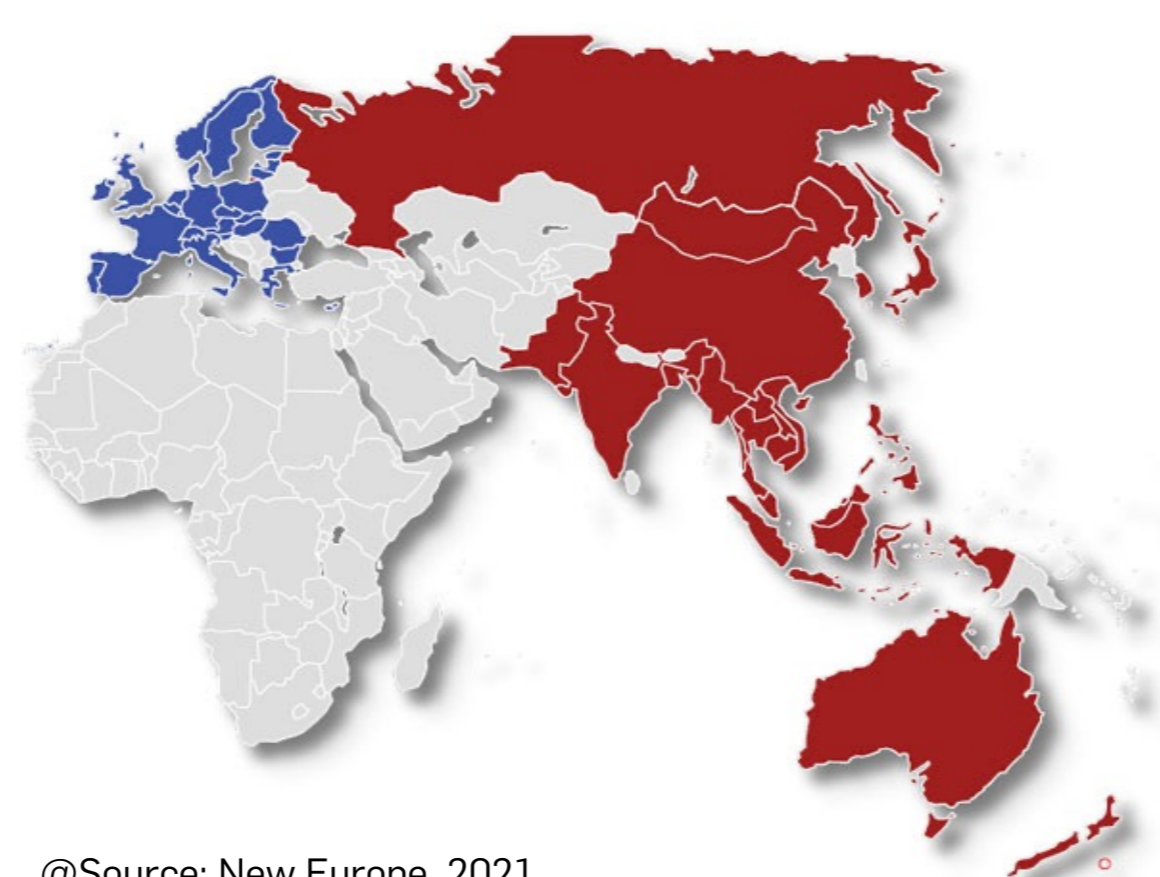
### Connectivity: a new Great Game

- Competing regional and national plans for lucrative infrastructure projects have transformed the much-needed connectivity agenda – a global common good – into a new geopolitical Great Game.
- Including: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Japan-India Joint Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, The US Blue Dot Network, G7's Build Back Better plan, the EU's Global Gateway strategy
- There is a lack of clear communication between connectivity actors which is leading to a wasteful duplication of initiatives. And rival plans and counter-plans are injecting additional strains in an already tense geopolitical environment.



### A role for ASEM

- ASEM's issue-based leadership model and working groups framework can facilitate the beginning of real dialogue on the different dimensions of connectivity and the underlying rules and principles for each of them.



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### Outlook – Upcoming ASEM Summit

- The EU should use its convening power and experience of multilateral procedures to kick-start negotiations on a multi-stakeholder connectivity code of conduct. The upcoming ASEM summit should be the start of such an ambitious process.



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