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The Discursive Construction of the Indo-Pacific Region as a Coherent Strategic Space: The Case of the EU

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The Discursive Construction of the Indo-Pacific Region as a Coherent Strategic Space: The Case of the EU

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) has recently developed a strategic interest in the Indo-Pacific due to its expanding economic, political, demographic, and military weight. The literature treats the Indo-Pacific region as an objective reality, overlooking how this region is socially constructed as a coherent strategic space. Through qualitative content analysis, this thesis finds that the EU symbolically treats the Indo-Pacific as a key actor in international affairs that is characterized by threat, as a consequence of which the EU assumes a role in this region to alter the status-quo in line with its normative principles. Simultaneously, the abundance of interregional relations between the EU and the Indo-Pacific illustrates the positive identification between both actors and presents opportunities for cooperation. This thesis concludes that the individual speech acts contribute to a metaphorical conversation in which the Indo-Pacific is positioned as a particular kind of actor in global affairs, due to which the EU and the Indo-Pacific stand in diverse relationships with each other. It is moreover concluded that the EU discursively constructs the Indo-Pacific region in a multifaceted and simultaneously ambivalent fashion. The ambivalent nature of the Indo-Pacific construct is however not coincidental, but rather serves specific European needs and interests.

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HR/VP	High Representative and Vice-President
ILO	International Labour Organization
IR	International Relations
U.S.	United States
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Chapter 1: Introduction

On 29 November 2022, High Representative and Vice-President (HR/VP) Josep Borrell held the opening speech at the first Brussels Indo-Pacific Forum that discusses the European Union's (EU) role in the Indo-Pacific region. He claimed that "how the region develops is of direct interest to us. And the main question is: Which kind of political model will this region follow? Will the regional order remain open and rules-based? Or will it fall victim to power politics, spheres of influence, and arms races" (Borrell 2022c)? This quote is indicative of the recently developed strategic interest of the EU in the Indo-Pacific as a region with expanding economic, political, demographic, and military weight. Constituting a region that is pivotal to the European market through global value chains, foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade, the strategy aims to guide the EU's contribution to regional stability, development, welfare, and security (European External Action Service 2022).

Based on this brief thematic introduction, the main research question that this thesis revolves around is: *how does the European Union construct the Indo-Pacific as a coherent strategic space?* In line with the speech, the EU understands the Indo-Pacific as a region and/or regional order that is characterized by various factors, based on which the EU has formulated the notable EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Although studies on this strategy and the broader role of the EU in the Indo-Pacific are scarce, those that do exist mainly focus on individual Member States' strategies (Ferchen 2021; Wacker 2021), the EU's *role* in the region (Fiot and Simón 2022; Simón 2021, 4–5), and how the Strategy can be understood through a geostrategic/geo-economic lens (Esteban and Armanini 2021, 2–3; Grare and Reuter 2021, 4–7; Melnikova 2022; Pejsova 2021). This literature views the existence of the Indo-Pacific region as an objective reality that is taken as a given. This thesis, therefore, aims to problematize this assumption by explicating how the Indo-Pacific region is constructed by the EU to begin with.

This thesis aims to do so by analysing how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific region as a coherent strategic space through its official discourse. A regional *construct* in this context refers to regions as socially constructed entities that have no objective reality independent of one's understanding of them (Searle 1996). Region-building should be understood as a *discursive* practice, as regions come into existence as institutionalized entities through language, a process called "regionification" (van Langenhove 2011, 66–67). This thesis will study how the Indo-Pacific region is discursively constructed by adopting the framework of

positioning theory. It understands speech acts, the entities of a discourse, as linked to speaking positions and the discursive context within which an actor is acting (van Langenhove 2011, 69).

To answer the main research question, this thesis will adopt a discourse analysis methodology that adopts a qualitative form of content analysis which does not assume stable meaning of words but rather analyses their usage in context. This thesis will analyze 32 texts in which the EU refers to the Indo-Pacific as a region, in order to inductively derive categories that illustrate how the Indo-Pacific region is constructed as a coherent strategic space. This thesis finds that the EU symbolically treats the Indo-Pacific as a key actor in international affairs that is characterized by threat, both to security in the region itself and to European foreign policy principles, notably democracy and human rights. As a consequence of these threats the EU assumes a role in this region to alter the status-quo in line with its normative principles. On the other hand, the abundance of interregional relations between the EU and the Indo-Pacific illustrates the positive identification between both actors, thereby indicating that the EU considers the Indo-Pacific as a cooperative partner that presents the EU with rich opportunities. This thesis therefore concludes that the EU discursively constructs the Indo-Pacific region in an ambivalent and simultaneously multifaceted fashion, serving particular European needs and interests.

Having introduced the research question and the foundations of this thesis, the second chapter will review the existing literature on the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, and will conclude by justifying how this thesis fits into that scholarly debate. Chapter three will subsequently outline the theoretical basis that this thesis will draw on by discussing regionification as a discursive process and how positioning theory fits into this framework. Chapter four will set out the case selection and research design, including its methodological foundations and methods of data collection. Chapter five will provide the results, which are subsequently discussed in chapter six. Chapter seven will conclude this paper and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will outline and critically evaluate the relevant literature on the EU and its approach towards the Indo-Pacific. Because of the focus on the EU, the review will be predominantly limited to work by European scholars, which narrows its focus. The review will illustrate that scholarship on the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy is primarily focused on individual Member States' strategies, the EU's role in the region and how the Strategy can be understood through a geostrategic and/or geo-economic lens. The review will conclude that the literature considers the existence of the Indo-Pacific region as an objective reality that is not questioned. This thesis, therefore, aims to problematize this assumption by explicating how the Indo-Pacific is constructed as a region by the EU to begin with.

A number of scholars analyze the distinct Indo-Pacific Strategies of EU Member States Germany (Schatz 2021; Ulatowski 2022), France (Fisher 2020; Fraioli 2022; McDougall 2023), as well as EU Member States comparatively (Ferchen 2021; Wacker 2021). Whereas the German focus lies on maritime security to maintain free trade, multilateralism, and the rules-based order, the French focus lies on challenged sovereignty interests by increased Chinese assertiveness in the region, since France considers itself a resident power in the Indo-Pacific. What binds these studies together is that they primarily examine the distinct national interests reflected in the Indo-Pacific Strategies and emphasize specific policy outcomes, whilst disregarding the broader EU Strategy.

In addition to those scholars that analyze the distinct Strategies of individual EU Member States, there is a growing body of literature that underlines the demand for a cohesive EU Strategy in the region. This normative and policy-based approach to understanding the Indo-Pacific Strategy prioritizes the specific role that the EU *should* play in the Indo-Pacific region (Fiot and Simón 2022; Simón 2021, 4–5). This becomes especially evident in a context of increasingly tense relationships between the EU and China, in addition to power competition between the United States (U.S.) and China. Adding to that, Mohan (2020) and Esteban and Armanini (2021, 5–8) claim that an EU Indo-Pacific strategy should serve to diversify relationships in the region beyond China and to address topic-based coalitions with smaller powers. The focus here is on strategic security partnerships and diversification of supply chains to counter Chinese assertiveness that jeopardizes European security and economic interests (Cantalapiedra 2020). It is argued that diplomatic engagement with 'like-minded' states in line with European normative standards should be at the basis of these partnerships, as well as the

maintenance of practical dialogues with ‘less like-minded’ states (Pajon and Pejsova 2021, 6). In contrast to those authors who claim that the EU has a role to fulfil, however, Grare and Reuter (2021, 3) claim that the EU has yet to determine its specific role in the region and how it will effectively engage with partners in the Indo-Pacific. Because numerous EU Member States are still indifferent vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific rather than opposed, the EU should establish a more determined position. The findings will however illustrate that the EU has defined its role vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific in a multifaceted fashion.

In contrast to the normative approach highlighted in the literature, there are those authors that understand the Indo-Pacific Strategy through a geo-economic and geostrategic lens, with a recurrent focus on Chinese assertiveness in the region (Esteban and Armanini 2021, 2–3; Grare and Reuter 2021, 4–7; Melnikova 2022; Pejsova 2021). This literature claims that the Strategy can be understood in response to increased Chinese military assertiveness, political intrusion in Europe, and economic dependency (Kaura and Singh 2022, 547). This convergence between geopolitics and geo-economics is further specified by Toropchin (2022, 400), who claims that the EU Strategy arguably constitutes a response to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a means to securitize the region. In a slightly more nuanced fashion however, Ferchen (2022, 14–15) claims that although the so-called ‘China factor’ features prominently in the EU Strategy, albeit implicitly, it is not the EU’s primary focus. The EU’s approach rather underlines cooperation and non-exclusivity in a context of geopolitical competition, but is not principally motivated to counter Chinese assertiveness. Despite these differences regarding the China factor, however, the literature illustrates the prominence of geostrategic and geo-economic aspects of the EU Strategy, in particular relating to China.

In contrast to those scholars that focus on policy output, normative underpinnings of the Strategy and the geo-economic/geostrategic focus, a fairly limited literature, lastly, acknowledges the intersubjective nature of the Indo-Pacific region and understands it as a regional *construct* (Cantalapiedra 2020, 48; Kaura and Singh 2022). A regional *construct* in this context refers to regions as socially constructed entities that have no objective reality independent of one’s understanding of them (Searle 1996). Closely linked to this thesis’ main research question is the argument by Alatas (2022, 130–32) who claims that the Indo-Pacific is a regional construct that is discursively created. The author traces the historical development of the Indo-Pacific construct, originating from Indian National Maritime Foundations’ executive director Gurpreet S. Khurana against the backdrop of geostrategic amalgamation of the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific to counter Chinese assertiveness. The construct’s use however increased under Trump, and Alatas claims that its conceptualization is primarily

informed by Western understandings of regional order. These reflect great power interests and thereby overlook historical and cultural categories within the region itself. Although these ‘Western’ constructs focus on strategy, geopolitics and (maritime) security, the author argues that a more holistic Indo-Pacific construct should be more informed by non-western conceptualizations of regional order. The Indo-Pacific in this context would be constructed with reference to post-colonialism, self-determination, neutrality, equality, multilateralism, and non-aggression (Alatas 2022, 131). Although valuable, Alatas essentializes the Western conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific and does not account for the distinct way in which the EU as part of this ‘Western’ approach constructs the region, which is the aim of this thesis. A second study that is closely linked to this thesis’ main question was conducted by Heiduk and Wacker (2020, 7–10), who found that the Indo-Pacific region is geographically and strategically constructed based on political intentions and interests. The findings will illustrate that this also applies in the context of the EU Strategy. Heiduk and Wacker however provide a comparative analysis of the conceptualizations and implementations of the Indo-Pacific construct by the U.S., Japan, India, Australia, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Not only does this leave out the EU as a key actor in global politics with a distinct conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific region, but the authors also do not account for how regionification of the Indo-Pacific takes place through discourse. Instead, the authors trace the evolution of the Indo-Pacific concept and its associated goals, and provide a shallow interpretation of regional order for each aforementioned actor. However, since regions come into existence as institutionalized entities through language, region building should be recognized as a discursive practice that precedes the goals of the concept (van Langenhove 2011, 66–67).

This review has illustrated that the literature is primarily focused on individual Member States’ strategies, the EU’s *role* in the region and how the Strategy can be understood through a geostrategic and/or geo-economic lens. A small number of scholars focus on the constructed nature of the Indo-Pacific in general. Regarding the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, however, the literature takes the existence of the Indo-Pacific region as given. This thesis, therefore, aims to question this assumption by illustrating how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific as a region to begin with. The next chapter will lay out the theoretical framework that is at the foundation of this analysis.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The main purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how regions and the process of regionification are theoretically defined. The chapter will then continue to discuss the specific analysis of regionification as a discursive construct by adopting positioning theory, and the positioning triangle specifically. The last section will describe how this framework relates to the research question.

3.1 Regionification

The theoretical perspective on region-building that this thesis takes is embedded in the constructivist tradition in International Relations (IR), focusing on the role of ideas and intersubjectively constructed understandings of the social world (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 392–93). Constructivism primarily focuses on “social facts” that have no objective reality independent of one’s understanding of it (Searle 1996). In the context of region-building, constructivists would claim that regions can only be understood as socially constructed entities rather than objective realities that need to be explained. However, the sole acknowledgement that regions are socially constructed and are therefore defined differently by social actors is insufficient. It does not ask how the region is geographically defined and constructed, and how it becomes institutionalized. Region-building should therefore be recognized as a *discursive* practice, as they come into existence as institutionalized entities through language, a process called “regionification” (van Langenhove 2011, 66–67). The discursive construction of the region in this context means that a region comes into existence through collective language, implying that a region is not an objective ‘fact’. Discourse and social constructivism are intricately related because the former serves as the mechanism through which the latter takes place (Potter 1996). That is, understandings of the world are created through everyday interaction and language use, and inform how this world is constructed so that it appears natural (Cap 2019, 4).

Nye (1987, 7) understands (international) regions as “a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence”. This definition highlights two important approaches to the analysis of regionification: territorial and relational approaches. Whereas the former understands regions as bounded, static and ahistorical depictions of space, the focus in this thesis is on the latter (Jonas 2012, 263).

Relational approaches understand a region as an open and discontinuous space comprised of interspatial flows and connections that spread through given territorial boundaries (Allen et al. 1998, 5). The point in discontinuity is important here, as it indicates that regions can be constructed based on the integration of otherwise heterogeneous territorial spaces (Dubois et al. 2009, 19). It underlines that regions constitute an assembly of proximate or distant political, economic, and social interrelationships that do not by definition coincide around formal jurisdictions or territories (Jonas 2012, 263). Indeed, in line with Jones and MacLeod (2004) and Paasi (2003), this thesis understands a region as fluid, socially constructed, and historically contingent.

An analytical and conceptual distinction should moreover be made between “old” and “new/project” regions. The former can be based on historical and cultural resonance as a source of regional identity, economic integration, or a unit of governance and administration (Keating 2017). The latter, in contrast, refers to regionalization in response to a particular need or interest, “representing a political space or forum for joint political action” (Cappellin 1998, 324; Gaberell and Debarbieux 2014, 124). New regions constitute ad hoc projects that are created through (occasionally contested) economic, political, and cultural discourses (Paasi 2009, 133–34). These are subsequently proposed into plans and will ultimately materialize to guide policy. It is this conceptual understanding of new/project regions that will guide the analysis of the Indo-Pacific construction by the EU and how this responds to specified needs identified by the EU.

3.2 Positioning Theory

Although the previous section outlined how to understand regionification conceptually, it did not yet discuss regionification as a discursive process. One way to study how the Indo-Pacific region is discursively constructed is by adopting the framework of positioning theory. It assumes that *speech acts*, the entities of a discourse, are linked to *speaking positions*, and subsequently develop into patterns of narratives called *storylines*. Positions emerge in (metaphorical) conversations and refer to the discursive production of oneself and the other actor as standing in diverse relationships with each other using rhetorical devices (van Langenhove 2011, 69). Harré (2012, 193) adds that a position constitutes a cluster of “rights, obligations and duties”, which are expressed through speech acts. The totality of speech acts in which positions are determined result in an overarching narrative, understood as a storyline.

Taken together these components constitute the ‘positioning triangle’, in which the constituent elements are mutually influential (see figure 1).

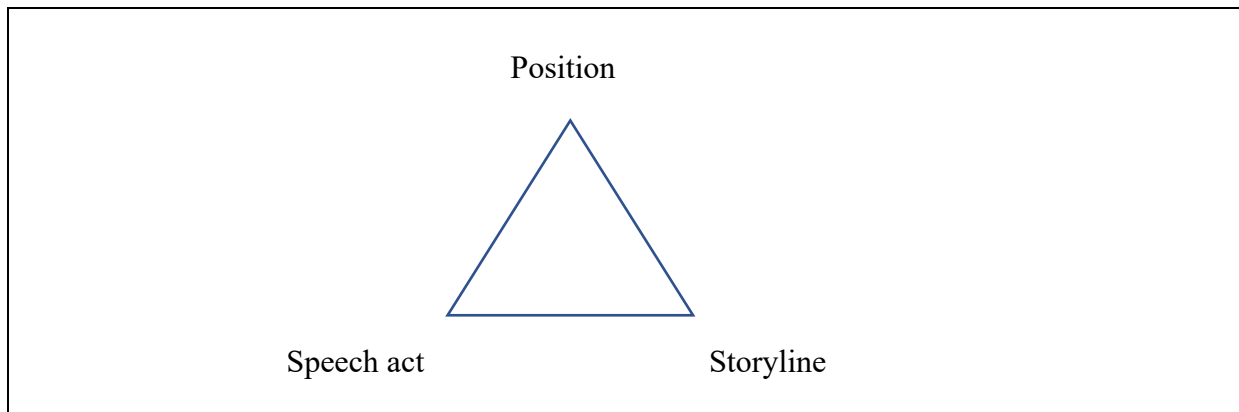


Figure 1: The positioning triangle. Modified from Slocum and Langenhove (2004, 234)

When applied to the study of regionalization, positioning theory can be adopted to illustrate how regions are discursively constructed. In this context, regions are symbolically treated as actors that can hold certain positions in global politics. Regionification is not a unilateral act but rather occurs in a dialogical social context. This means that a region can only be constructed when multiple social actors embark on a similar storyline and positioning strategy vis-à-vis the region in question (van Langenhove 2011, 84). In the context of the EU, this would imply that the Indo-Pacific is constructed by multiple actors within the EU who are in metaphorical dialogue. This framework allows to understand how individual speech acts position the Indo-Pacific and the EU and how this leads to an overarching narrative of the Indo-Pacific as one coherent region. In empirical terms, this framework tells that regions come into existence if they are recognized as such by persons that represent states or other regions. Already alluded to by Heiduk and Wacker (2020, 7–10) in the context of the Indo-Pacific, the discursive construction of a region is furthermore often dependent on the goals of the actor that constructs the region. Because of the interests involved, this implies that a singular region can be constructed in multiple ways, which is why the particular construction of the Indo-Pacific by the EU is of interest here.

In the context of the discursive construction of the Indo-Pacific region by the EU, it should be noted that it is assumed that the EU constitutes an actor in international affairs that has a certain position and can make speech acts. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a deeper analysis of the EU as a kind of actor in international affairs and whether it is unitary.

In line with (van Langenhove 2011, 90–93) it is therefore assumed that the EU as a regional institution itself constitutes an actor involved in the process of regionification.

This chapter has outlined the concept of regionification and how it can be understood as a discursive process. Positioning theory will serve as the analytical vehicle to answer the main research question of this thesis. It understands the regionification of the Indo-Pacific by the EU as a speech act in which the region is discursively positioned as an actor in international affairs that becomes meaningful in a certain context. Having established the theoretical foundations of this thesis, the next chapter will discuss how this framework is integrated into the research design.

Chapter 4: Research Design

The theoretical framework explained that regionification, the process whereby regions come into existence as institutionalized entities through language, should be understood as a discursive process. This chapter will outline and justify the use of discourse analysis as a methodology and method of data collection, as well as this thesis' case selection.

4.1 Methodology and Data Analysis

The previous chapter accounted for the intersubjectively constructed nature of region-building, in line with interpretivist epistemology. This assumption about the social world is at the core of discourse analysis. It involves the systematic analysis of texts and how these produce and hold in place the socially constructed ideas and objects that constitute reality. Because the meaning of discourses is not inherent, they need to be embedded in their historical and social context in order to understand their constructive impact (Hardy, Phillips, and Harley 2004, 19-20). As Hardy (2001, 28) notes, the meaning of a discourse is “created, supported, and contested through the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts; and emanate from interactions between the social groups and the complex societal structures in which the discourse is embedded.”

This thesis will adopt a discourse methodology that uses qualitative forms of content analysis which do not assume stable meaning of words but rather analyze their usage in context. In practice, this means that the textual data will be categorized in coding schemes, and will subsequently be located in relation to the social context and discourses within which the text is embedded (Hardy, Phillips, and Harley 2004, 21). 8 main categories and 96 subcategories that were inductively derived from the texts will be analyzed using ATLAS.ti. The main categories and their application are listed in table 1. For a full overview of the coding frame see appendix 2. This method allows to understand the meaning of words in text, but also to subsequently go beyond this meaning by exploring *how* this meaning is *constructed* in a historical and political context. Referring to the question this thesis seeks to answer, it not only allows to specify the textual categories by which the EU understands the Indo-Pacific as a region, but also how these categories of meaning are embedded in a foreign policy discourse of the EU as an actor in global politics.

When conducting a discourse analysis, however, it is key to acknowledge the

interpretivist stance of the analyst that provides a reading of the discourse. The author is aware of potential biases that may inform the analysis, such as European citizenship. The author will account for reflexivity by showing transparency of the research process and data collection.

Main Category	Frequency	Coded when the statement:
<i>China</i>	44	Refers to China's role in the Indo-Pacific region.
<i>Intraregional Hierarchy</i>	190	Discusses certain subregions or countries within the Indo-Pacific more or less prominently than others.
<i>Indo-Pacific as Actor</i>	159	Refers to the Indo-Pacific region as one singular actor that occupies a position in the international system.
<i>Geographical Interpretation</i>	533	Refers to separate countries, seas, geographic (sub) regions, or regional bodies that the EU considers to be part of the Indo-Pacific
<i>Normative Outlook</i>	475	Refers to normative principles that should underpin the Indo-Pacific or the designated role for the EU in the region in line with these principles.
<i>Relationship</i>	579	Refers to different areas of cooperation between the EU and Indo-Pacific
<i>Threats to Principles</i>	32	Refers to threats in the Indo-Pacific to EU foreign policy principles such as democracy and human rights.
<i>Threats to Security</i>	144	Refers to threats in the Indo-Pacific to regional security and stability, such as maritime and cyber threats.

Table 1: Main Categories of the Coding Frame

4.2 Case Selection

The construction of the Indo-Pacific by the EU constitutes a single case study and is selected for two reasons. The first reason is that the Indo-Pacific constitutes a vast and heterogeneous territory, consisting of diverse states, economies, and cultures that culminate in a unique understanding of the Indo-Pacific region. Constructing this diverse territory as a distinct and coherent geographic space is therefore puzzling.

The second reason that justifies the case of the EU specifically, is that the EU as an actor in global politics itself constitutes an example of regionification that constructs another

region in global politics. In contrast to state actors such as Australia and the U.S., the European case constitutes a cohesive understanding of the Indo-Pacific region by a supranational entity that represents 27 Member States. Moreover, because the EU arguably constitutes a significant and powerful actor in global politics, it is important to understand how it constructs a region that it will direct a substantial amount of its foreign policy towards.

4.3 Methods of Data Collection

The sources that this discourse analysis will draw on are joint communications by the European Commission to the Parliament and Council, factsheets, interviews, Council conclusions, strategies and speeches by EU representatives that specifically refer to the EU's role in the Indo-Pacific as well as subregions (e.g., ASEAN), and individual states that the EU considers part of the Indo-Pacific.¹ In total 32 texts will be analyzed, consisting of 160 pages and 152 minutes of audio, listed in appendix 1. The majority of sources was accessed through the newsroom and resources section of the European Union External Action Service website, found at <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/en>. The EU discourse on the Indo-Pacific since August 8, 2018 will be examined, marking the first instance the term Indo-Pacific was coined by an EU representative (Mogherini 2018).

This chapter has outlined the use of discourse analysis as the methodology that will guide this thesis' empirical analysis. It has explained how discourse analysis complemented with qualitative forms of content analysis may help answer the question, and how some methodological weaknesses of interpretation must be accounted for. It is this methodological framework that will help answer the main research question through empirical examination of EU discourse about the Indo-Pacific as a coherent strategic space.

¹ A majority of example statements in the results chapter are derived from speeches and texts written by Josep Borrell. As HR/VP of the European Union External Action Service, Borrell represents EU external policy and is therefore featured prominently in texts. The author is aware of this.

Chapter 5: Results

This chapter serves to provide the main findings of the qualitative content analysis that aimed to analyze how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific region as a coherent strategic space through its official discourse. The results will be structured according to the main categories that emerged from the texts, and will focus on overall patterns and trends, frequencies, and contradictions within categories, as well as relations between categories. For a complete overview of the coding frame, consisting of categories, subcategories, and example codes see appendix 2. Each thematic category will be clarified and supported with direct quotations from the texts.

5.1 Geographical Interpretation and Intra-regional Hierarchy

5.1.1 Geographical Interpretation

Before presenting the various themes and characteristics that underline the EU's construction of the Indo-Pacific as a coherent region, it is key to understand the geographical interpretation of the region as it is presented in the texts. In official documents, the region is most frequently considered to encompass the geographical area stretching from East Africa to the Pacific Island States. From a broader perspective it represents the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, involving subregions such as East Africa, South Africa, the Gulf, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific. In addition to the Indian and Pacific Oceans, it involves strategically significant waterways such as the East and South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, the Malacca Strait, and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. A notable characteristic of the EU's regional understanding specifically, is the emphasis on outermost regions and overseas territories that are constitutionally linked to the Member States.

Figure 2 outlines the geographical interpretation of the region at the country level. The findings demonstrate that some countries are represented more prominently than others. These most notably include China (58), Japan (55), Indonesia (40), the Republic of Korea (39), Australia (35), India (32), and Singapore (32). It can furthermore be observed that East Africa is less represented than Asia and the Pacific. EU Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific Gabriele Visentin however claimed that there is no "strict hierarchy of sub-regions in the Indo-Pacific where the EU will focus more on the Indian Ocean and less on the Pacific" (Visentin 2022, 33:35).

5.1.2 Intraregional Hierarchy

Although the aforementioned regions are claimed to constitute integral pillars of the EU Strategy, the findings illustrate a disproportionate representation of subregions within the Indo-Pacific, most notably Asia and ASEAN specifically. Especially but not exclusively in case of texts produced by HR/VP Josep Borrell, Asia is given emphasis. This is exemplified during his speech at the Brussels Indo-Pacific Forum, saying that “in many ways this region [the Indo-Pacific] will be the center of the history. I often say that- I'm saying that to the Europeans and to the Asians- that we have a stake in each other's security (Borrell 2022b, 00:25). In addition, ASEAN was coded 106 times and constitutes a natural and strategic partner for the EU. Igor Driesmans and Vincent Piket (2021), EU ambassadors to ASEAN and Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, respectively, explicitly state that ASEAN is at the center of the Indo-Pacific region, and therefore at the center of the EU Strategy. These findings suggest that there is a disproportionate emphasis on Asia, particularly ASEAN, in the EU's construction of the Indo-Pacific.

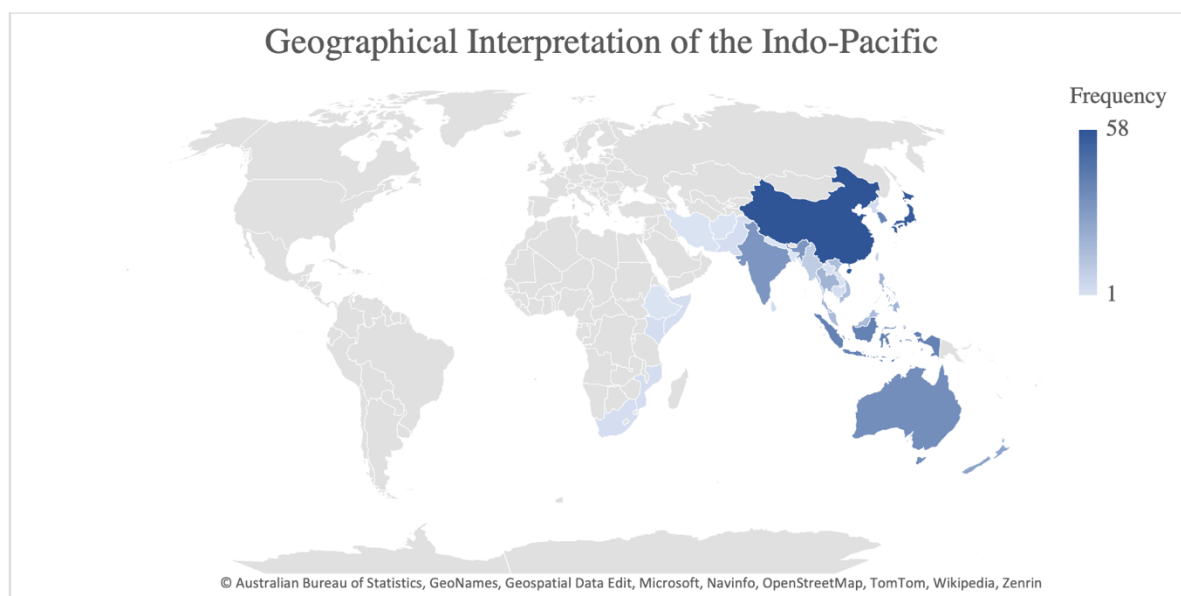


Figure 2: The EU's geographical interpretation of the Indo-Pacific region is based on the frequency of country codes found in the texts.

5.2 The Indo-Pacific as a Particular Kind of Actor

This category refers to the symbolic treatment of the Indo-Pacific region as a particular kind of actor that has certain characteristics, and is especially key to interpret the regionification of the Indo-Pacific in light of positioning theory. That is, how the Indo-Pacific is presented as an actor informs about how it is positioned by the EU. In EU texts, the region's increasing importance and strategic significance, and the EU's recognition thereof, is underlined. This significance is recurrently substantiated by providing statistical data. The EU for example stresses that "it [Indo-Pacific] is home to 60% of the world's population producing 60% of global GDP, contributing two thirds of current global growth. By 2030, the overwhelming majority (90%) of the 2.4 billion new members of the middle class entering the global economy will live in the Indo-Pacific" (European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan 2021). This subcode 'statistical attributes of significance' was coded 36 times, underlining the significance of the Indo-Pacific actor.

In addition to statistics, the EU attaches specific labels to the region to stress its significance. The Indo-Pacific is distinguished as *vast*, *dynamic*, *vital*, and *vibrant*, and constitutes the region towards which the global center of demographic, geopolitical and geo-economic gravity is shifting. Secondly, the Indo-Pacific is characterized as the region where history and the future merge, exemplified by Borrell (2021) who claimed that "history will [be made] in the Indo-Pacific region. This is where History will [be made] in this century. The Indo-Pacific is a very important part of the world for us. It is the future, where the world's center of gravity is moving, both in geo-economic and geo-political terms."

Lastly, the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific is stressed by characterizing the region as proximate to the EU in the context of globalization and associated interconnectedness. Special Envoy for the Indo-Pacific Richard Tibbels (2023) for example notes that "we live in one strategic theater. European security and the security of the Indo-Pacific are linked and therefore our prosperity is also." This rhetorical device is instrumentalized to imply that regional dynamics in the Indo-Pacific are of *direct* concern to the EU because of its relative proximity.

5.3 Threats

This category refers to the construction of the Indo-Pacific as a region that is characterized by threats. On the one hand this refers to threats *to the Indo-Pacific region itself*, in particular to principles that are at the core of the EU's foreign policy agenda such as democratic governance and human rights. It should however be noted that these constitute threats that are considered as such from the perspective of the EU, which is in line with constructivist reasoning. On the other hand, this category concerns the Indo-Pacific region as characterized by physical and digital threats to security, which are direct or indirect threats *to the European Union*. This category is therefore subdivided into *threats to principles* and *threats to security*.

5.3.1 Threats to Principles

In its official discourse the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific as a region that is characterized by threats to principles that are at the center of the EU's external policy. From the perspective of the EU these therefore constitute threats to the Indo-Pacific itself. Within this category, three themes are given emphasis: threats to *democracy*, *the rules-based international order*, and *human rights*. This is inextricably linked to but different from the normative outlook on the Indo-Pacific that is held by the EU, which the next main category will discuss. According to the EU the region is characterized by threats from authoritarian governments to democratic values such as pluralism and fundamental political freedoms. These threats subsequently put the region's stability at risk (European Commission 2021, 2). Myanmar's military junta was mentioned 4 times in this regard. The rules-based international order is equally undermined, for example by unfair trade practices and economic coercion (European Commission 2021, 2), as well as threats to freedom of navigation and overflight. Similarly, universal fundamental human rights are frequently undermined. The Commission (2021, 3) for example notes that the "EU will also continue to support steps to combat all forms of discrimination, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and to advocate the abolition of the death penalty that remains on the books in several Indo-Pacific countries." In spite of the fact that these subcategories are comparatively small, they do underline the key principles that the EU considers to be threatened in the Indo-Pacific.

5.3.2 Threats to Security

In addition to foreign policy principles, the Indo-Pacific constitutes a region that is characterized by threats to peace and security, which become direct or indirect threats to the European Union. Figure 3 illustrates that geopolitical competition is a prominent factor in the construction of the Indo-Pacific. The region is characterized by its conflictual and contested nature over territories and maritime zones that threaten the order and balance in the region. The Taiwan Strait and South-China Sea take center stage in this regard. Josep Borrell (2021) further specifies the geostrategic nature of the Indo-Pacific region by understanding it as “the place where the geo-political competition between the United States and China is intensifying.” In the context of rising geopolitical competition in the region, the U.S.-China great power competition was mentioned 13 out of 39 times. It is further noteworthy that the EU frames the region as one that could be potentially ‘trapped’ in the “impossible choice” of great powers (Borrell 2022b, 2:57).

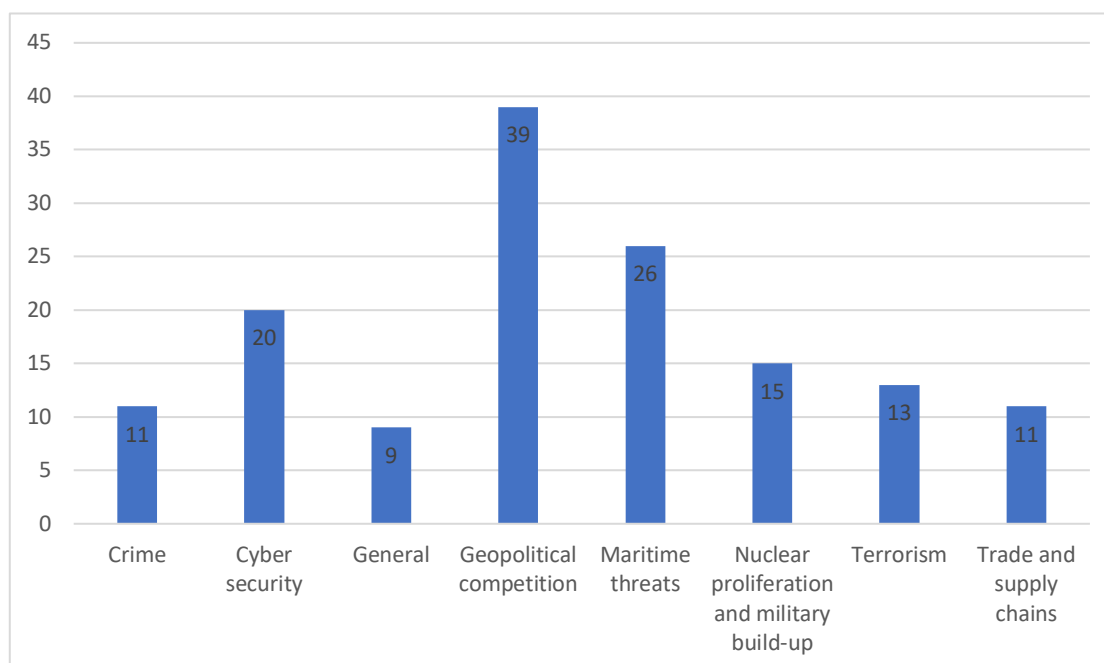


Figure 3: Bar chart illustrating the frequency of codes referring to security threats in the Indo-Pacific.

In addition to geostrategic threats, the region’s stability is undermined by cyber/hybrid threats and maritime threats. Although the EU discusses cyber/hybrid threats such as information manipulation and interference by state and non-state actors (European Commission 2021, 15), the vast majority of codes merely describe that the region is

characterized by such threats, without further specification. This is in contrast to those phrases that were mentioned under maritime threats, particularly referring to disputed waters that undermine freedom of navigation and secure sealines of communication. Although such maritime threats are particularly observed in the South-China Sea, Taiwan strait, and to a lesser extent in the western Indian Ocean, these threats are discussed in the context of the Indo-Pacific region at large.

Smaller categories of security threats that define the Indo-Pacific region include crime (11), nuclear proliferation and military build-up (15), terrorism (13), and threats to trade and supply chains (11). In the context of crime, the EU particularly refers to drug- and human trafficking and piracy. With regard to military build-up and nuclear proliferation, the Indo-Pacific is characterized as the region in which “military spending has risen like nowhere in the world (Borrell 2022a).” Nuclear proliferation and threats of missile launches particularly refer to North Korea and to a lesser extent China, about which the EU is notably less explicit. The geostrategic nature of the region furthermore gives rise to significant threats to supply chains and trade. Although not applicable to all subcategories, geopolitical competition constitutes the overarching threat that defines the Indo-Pacific as a security theatre. This is primarily due to its strong links to maritime threats, nuclear proliferation and military build-up, and threats to trade and supply chains.

5.4 Normative Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the Role for the EU

The previous section outlined the construction of the Indo-Pacific as a region that is characterized by threats to European foreign policy *principles* and threats to regional *stability and security*. The various themes that are given prominence by the EU indicate how it defines the current state of threats that harm principles and security in the Indo-Pacific. Notwithstanding, a discernible discrepancy exists between the current state of affairs in the region, and its anticipated ideal state. To put it differently, the Indo-Pacific is moreover a normative construct that informs about the EU’s ideal state of the region.

5.4.1 Normative Outlook

Figure 4 illustrates the various themes that underpin the EU’s normative construction of the Indo-Pacific region. Many constitute direct responses to the threats that were discussed in section 5.3, for example threats to principles. The Indo-Pacific as a region that ought to be

rules-based stands out most prominently. The EU recurrently underlines the desire for the Indo-Pacific to be rules-based in accordance with international law. These include the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Not only should this enhance a level playing field and fair standards for trade and investment, but this will also strengthen regional security and maintain freedom of navigation. In addition to a region that should be rules-based, the Indo-Pacific as a *democratic* region in which *human rights* are protected region furthermore constitute direct responses to the threats identified in section 5.3.1. All three principles intersect in the following quotation: “It [EU] will seek to solidify and defend the rules-based international order, by promoting inclusive and effective multilateral cooperation based on shared values and principles, including a commitment to respecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law” (European Commission 2021, 2).

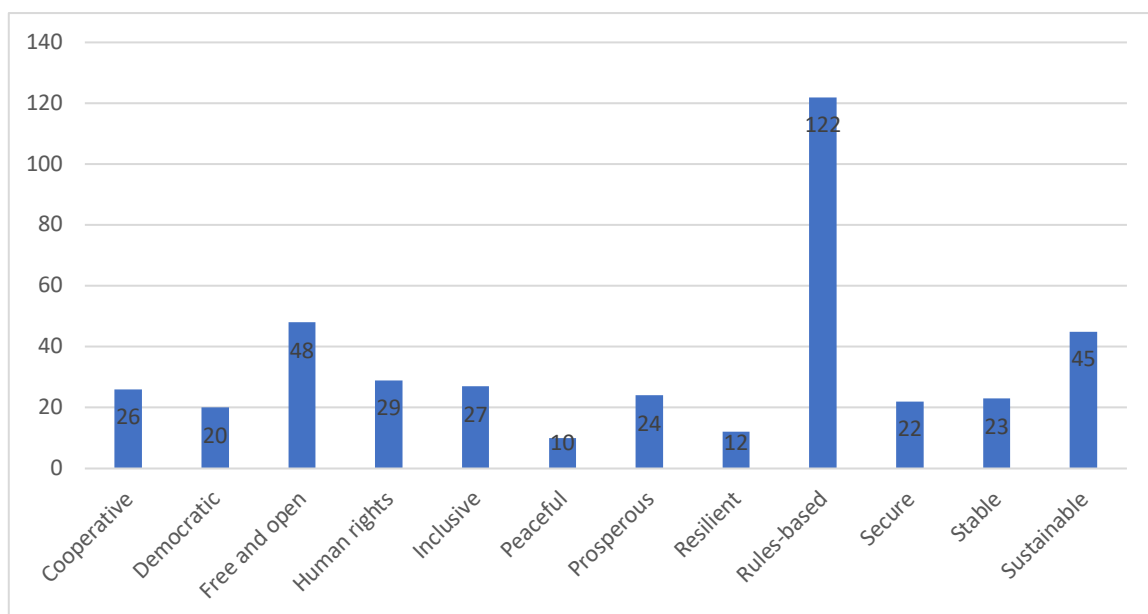


Figure 4: Bar chart illustrating the frequency of codes that refer to the EU’s normative outlook on the Indo-Pacific

In the context of threats to security, the norms *free and open*, *peaceful*, *prosperous*, *resilient*, *secure*, and *stable* come to the fore. Especially the *free and open* nature of the region is recurrently emphasized, referring to sea passages and navigation areas that are threatened due to geopolitical competition. This is intricately related to the Indo-Pacific as a *prosperous*, *stable*, *secure*, and *peaceful* region, as economic growth, development, and stability rest on open (maritime) supply routes (Borrell 2021b).

Residual themes that were identified are the Indo-Pacific region as *cooperative and*

sustainable. The last category, *inclusive*, will be discussed in the next section. Cooperation is recurrently underlined by the EU in its approach towards the Indo-Pacific, embodied in the phrase “our Strategy is one of cooperation not confrontation” (Borrell 2021c). In spite of the fact that the EU explicitly emphasizes the desire to cooperate with the region, it states that it will ‘protect whenever necessary’, linked to the principles under threat. *Sustainable*, lastly, refers to sustainable connectivity and development through green economies in the Indo-Pacific region.

5.4.2 Role for the EU

The previous section outlined the normative construct of the Indo-Pacific region and the various themes that can be identified within this construct. In order to address the discrepancy between how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific *as it is* and *how it ought to be*, the EU understands the region as one in which it should assume a role. Both HR/VP Josep Borrell and Special Envoy Richard Tibbels underline that the EU constitutes an actor with a distinct role and a distinct offer to a region that is characterized by “a battle of offers”, implicitly referring to the U.S.-China battle (Borrell 2022c; Tibbels 2023). Specifically, the findings illustrate that the EU identifies as a *political and security actor*, *development partner*, *trade and investment partner*, and *potential geopolitical actor* in the Indo-Pacific. With regard to the former, the EU’s role is primarily characterized by the promotion of a rules-based and open security structure, for example through the promotion of secure naval routes, capacity building initiatives and joint exercises, and increased European naval presence (European Commission 2021, 13–14). The EU as a *development* and *trade and investment partner* refers to the EU’s role as a top investor in the region and development assistance provider. This moreover includes post-pandemic socio-economic recovery, institutional capacity building, macroeconomic stability, and strengthening regional integration (Council of the European Union 2021, 7).

Overarching the aforementioned identifications of the EU as an actor, lastly, is the EU as a (potential) *geopolitical actor* and *normative power* in the region. With regard to the former, contrasting views can be observed. Gabriele Visentin, for example, notes that the EU constitutes a geopolitical actor that has the capacities and will to address challenges in the Indo-Pacific (Visentin 2022). Josep Borrell (2021a) however notes that “if we [EU] want to be a geopolitical actor, we also have to be perceived as a political and security actor in the region, not just as a development cooperation, trading or investment partner,” which indicates that the

EU has yet to become a geopolitical actor in the region. In addition to a geopolitical actor, the EU also constitutes a *normative actor* that seeks to protect and promote its values in the region, linked to the normative outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Based on the identified threats that characterize the Indo-Pacific as a region, and the normative outlook on how the region *should be*, the EU assumes a role to project this normative framework on the region, which includes a region that is democratic, free and open, sustainable, and respectful of human rights.

5.5 Relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific

The last significant category derived from the texts concerns the relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific as actor, regional threats, and the normative construct intersect in the relations with the EU, since the regional threats and normative views guide the interaction between the Indo-Pacific and the EU. Figure 5 illustrates the diversity of codes under ‘relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific’, constituting the most commonly coded category. In line with social constructivism, the abundance of cooperative relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific is indicative of the positive identification between both actors that is socially constructed through interaction.

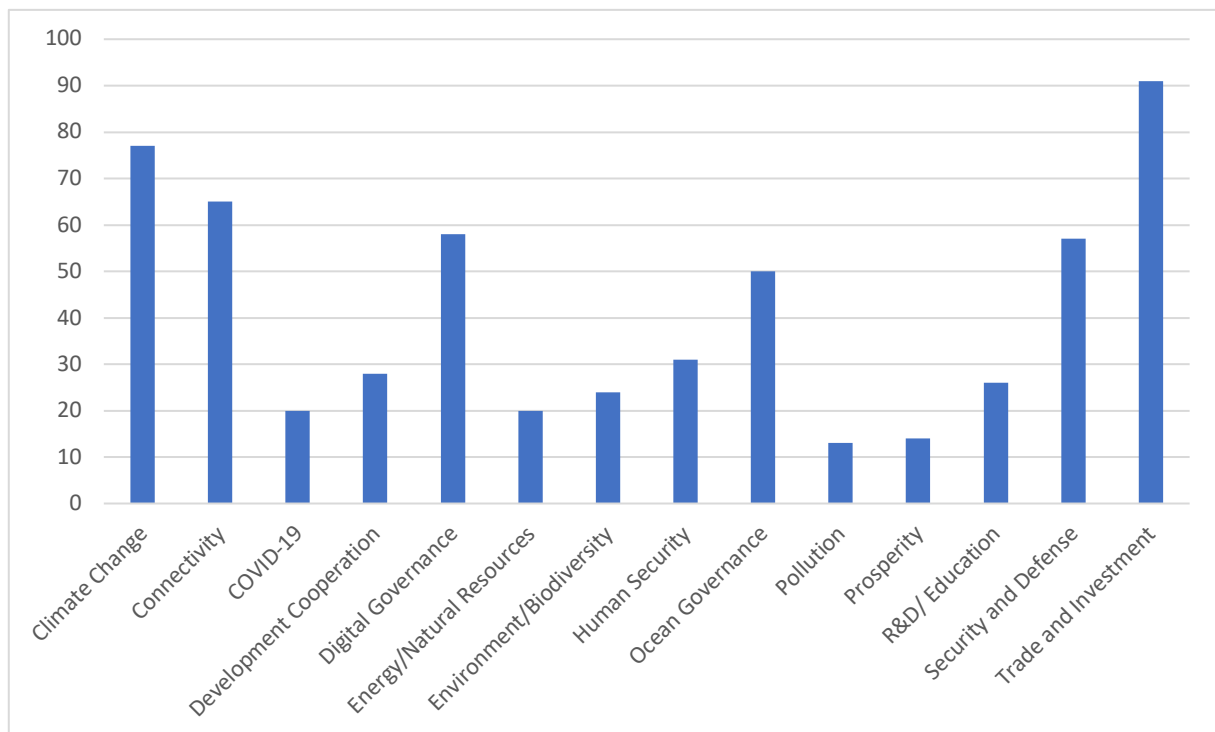


Figure 5: Bar chart illustrating the frequency of codes that refer to the relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific

Figure 5 illustrates that *climate change, connectivity, digital governance, ocean governance, security and defense, and trade and investment* are recurrently emphasized themes in the context of relations between both actors. With regard to *trade and investment*, which is linked to *prosperity* in general, the EU underlines its commitment to deepen and diversify mutually beneficial free trade and investment negotiations with the Indo-Pacific. With regard to the second largest category, *climate cooperation*, the EU notes that the Indo-Pacific region constitutes “both an important source of environmental challenges as well as a potential beneficiary of their remedies” (European Commission 2021, 2). Cooperation is principally based on increased engagement with the largest emitting countries and regional institutions that can be instrumental in climate change mitigation and the promotion of the green transition. Inherently related to this green transition is cooperation on *(sustainable) development, energy and natural resources, environmental protection and biodiversity, pollution*, and to a large extent *ocean governance*. In addition to marine conservation and sustainable fisheries, ocean governance includes maritime security cooperation. An overlapping and recurrent theme in the context of cooperation with the Indo-Pacific is *security and defense*. This includes the intensification of cooperation on violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, and organized crime. Linked to this is *digital governance*, which involves cooperation on the protection against cybercrime, in addition to free and safe data flows and digital innovation. *Connectivity*, lastly, includes the intensification of partnerships on secure and resilient connectivity- including human, digital, energy, and transport connectivity- in accordance with the green transition.

The EU underlines that cooperation with the Indo-Pacific is built “according to specific policy areas where partners can find common ground based on shared principles, values or mutual interest (European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan 2021). In this context the EU stresses the need to enhance cooperation with “like-minded friends” that are closest to the EU, despite being open to cooperate with every state in the region (Borrell 2022d). The stress on “like-mindedness” was coded 63 times, and refers to shared principles such as democracy and human rights. This focus on like-minded partners in the region suggests that relations with the Indo-Pacific region are based on positive identification with those partners that share similar “identities” in a certain policy area. Negative identification complicates cooperative relations, for example with China in the area of human rights.

Chapter 6 Discussion

In short, the previous chapter illustrated that the EU symbolically treats the Indo-Pacific as a key actor in international affairs that constitutes a threat both to itself and the EU, as a consequence of which the EU assumes a role in this region to alter the status-quo in line with its normative principles. On the other hand, the abundance of interregional relations between the EU and the Indo-Pacific suggests the positive identification between both actors, thereby indicating that the EU considers the Indo-Pacific as a cooperative partner that presents the EU with rich opportunities. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and explain the results presented in the previous chapter, partly in light of the theoretical framework.

6.1 Positioning the Indo-Pacific

The findings presented in the previous chapter can be interpreted from a more abstract and theoretical perspective. The individual speech acts by social actors within the EU contribute to a metaphorical conversation in which the Indo-Pacific is personified as an actor in global affairs, due to which the EU and the Indo-Pacific stand in diverse relationships with each other. By positioning this region as a kind of actor that is *vast, dynamic, vital, vibrant, proximate, and historically significant*, the Indo-Pacific is personified and treated with the capacity to behave as one politically constructed actor (van Langenhove 2011, 69). Moreover, by underlining the Indo-Pacific as a region that is characterized by threats to European foreign policy principles, besides threats to physical and digital security, the EU positions itself as an actor that can assume a role in the region, thereby justifying policy interventions in the region. The totality of speech acts in which positions are determined result in a complex storyline, illustrating an overarching narrative of the Indo-Pacific as a coherent region.

6.2 Ambivalence

The findings suggest that this overarching narrative of the EU's understanding of the Indo-Pacific is multifaceted and simultaneously ambivalent, indicating that the EU holds conflicting understandings of this region. This ambivalence in the EU's construction of the Indo-Pacific is first of all underscored by recurrently framing the Indo-Pacific region as a threat versus an opportunity, as is explained in the introduction of this chapter. Secondly, the findings on the one hand illustrate that the EU explicitly states that the Indo-Pacific comprises the region that

stretches from East Africa to the Pacific Island States. In line with the relational approach to regionification, the Indo-Pacific region is constructed as an open and discontinuous space based on the integration of otherwise heterogeneous territorial spaces (Allen et al. 1998, 5). On the other hand, however, the findings illustrate disproportionate emphasis on Asia and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific construct, leaving primarily East African states sidelined, constituting an inconsistency. Thirdly, as a consequence of threats to European principles and regional security, the EU assumes and appropriates a unilateral role to alter the status quo. Emphasis on military build-up by China and North-Korea, in addition to observations of democratic backsliding, for example, underline the partly negative identification with the Indo-Pacific region because these are not in line with the normative outlook held by the EU. On the other hand, the abundance of cooperative relations on numerous policy areas, and the importance and willingness to cooperate more intensively indicate the positive identification between the EU and “like-minded” Indo-Pacific partners, which informs about the Indo-Pacific as a region that the EU positively identifies with. The ambivalence that becomes clear here is that the EU’s identification with the region is partly positive and partly negative, depending on the issue area and degree of like-mindedness.

6.3 Serving European Needs

This ambivalence therefore suggests that the region is shaped according to the interests and needs that it serves. When analyzing the construction of this region from a higher standpoint, in line with constructivist theory, the findings illustrate that the Indo-Pacific does not constitute an inherently objective reality but is discursively constructed instead. The threats to European principles and regional security, the repeatedly underlined strategic significance of this region, and the normative outlook all suggest that the Indo-Pacific region as one strategic space is constructed in response to specific European needs or interests. By constructing such a new/project region, a “political space or forum for joint political action” emerges (Cappellin 1998, 324). The discourse on the Indo-Pacific thereby serves as an instrument to justify the EU’s role in the region, and to establish relations with the region where European needs are served. Although the literature has extensively unpacked and analyzed the various elements and policy themes of the EU Strategy towards the Indo-Pacific, the analysis in this paper sheds light on the overseen process of how the EU understands this region to begin with. Contrary to common assumptions in the literature, the analysis underlines that the Indo-Pacific

region is not an objective and straightforward reality, but rather a multifaceted and ambivalent construct that serves very specific needs.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to understand how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific region as a coherent strategic space through its official discourse. This research was embedded in the observation that the current literature views the existence of the Indo-Pacific region as an unquestioned objective reality that is taken as given. This thesis, therefore, aimed to problematize this assumption by conducting a qualitative content analysis in which eight main categories were inductively derived. By adopting the concept of regionification and the theoretical framework of positioning theory, the analysis aimed to identify how the EU constructs the Indo-Pacific as a coherent region to begin with.

Based on the findings and discussion it can be concluded that the individual speech acts by social actors within the EU contribute to a metaphorical conversation in which the Indo-Pacific is positioned as a particular kind of actor in global affairs, due to which the EU and the Indo-Pacific stand in diverse relationships with each other. The totality of speech acts and positions create an overarching storyline in which the EU discursively constructs the Indo-Pacific region in a multifaceted and simultaneously ambivalent fashion. The region simultaneously constitutes a threat and an opportunity, is open and discontinuous but also hierarchical, and is simultaneously characterized by both positive and negative identification with the EU. It was moreover argued that the ambivalent nature of the Indo-Pacific construct is not coincidental, but rather serves specific European needs or interests. This succinct answer to this paper's main research question- *how does the European Union construct the Indo-Pacific as a coherent strategic space*- illustrates that the implicitly assumed objective nature of this region is problematic and cannot be understood as given.

7.2 Recommendation for Future Research

A prominent element that was addressed in the theoretical framework but not adopted in the final analysis concerns the institutionalization of regions through language (van Langenhove 2011, 66–67). This thesis focused on the discursive practice, identifying how the EU's distinct understanding of the Indo-Pacific region is shaped through collective language by social actors. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to address how the Indo-Pacific is institutionalized by

the EU through formalized structures, procedures, and norms that solidify the existence and functioning of the Indo-Pacific region as a formally recognized entity to address the needs of both the EU and the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis one another. Future research is therefore invited to investigate how the regional understanding of the Indo-Pacific informs subsequent policymaking in the form of treaties, legal frameworks, and policy mechanisms that contribute to the EU's formalized role in and coordination of the region.

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Appendix

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Appendix 2: Complete Coding Frame

Category and subcategory:	Coded when the statement:	Frequency:	Example code:
China	Refers to China's role in the Indo-Pacific region	44	"At the same time, and working with international partners who share similar concerns, the EU will continue to protect its essential interests and promote its values while pushing back where fundamental disagreements exist with China, such as on human rights" (European Commission 2021, 4).
Negative		22	
Positive		22	
Intraregional hierarchy	Discusses certain subregions or countries within the Indo-Pacific more or less prominently than others.	190	"ASEAN is at the centre of the Indo-Pacific and it will come as no surprise that it is at the heart of the EU's strategy" (Driesmans and Piket 2021).
ASEAN Centrality		67	
Asian Centrality		29	
Hierarchy of regions		4	
Inclusivity		27	
Like-mindedness		63	
IP as actor	Refers to the Indo-Pacific region as one singular actor that occupies a position in the international system.	159	"The region's growing economic, demographic, and political weight makes it a key player in shaping the rules-based international order and in addressing global challenges (European External Action Service, 2022).
Attributes of significance: others		49	
Attributes of significance: statistics		36	
Globalization/proximity		13	

Increased engagement			49	
Strategic Significance			12	
				"Continue high-level dialogues and other forms of engagement on environment in the region notably with ASEAN, Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, South Africa and other partners showing interest" (European Commission 2021, 8).
Geographical interpretation		Refers to separate countries, seas, geographic (sub) regions or regional bodies that the EU considers to be part of the Indo-Pacific	533	
ACP States			5	
Afghanistan			3	
ASEAN			39	
Australia			35	
Bangladesh			1	
Brunei			2	
Cambodia			3	
China			54	
Comores			2	
Djibouti			1	
East Africa Community			6	
Ethiopia			1	
India			34	
Indonesia			40	
Iran			1	
Japan			55	
Kenya			3	
Laos			2	
Malaysia			17	
Maldives			5	
Mauritius			2	

Mozambique			3	
Myanmar			10	
Nepal			1	
New Zealand			26	
North Korea			4	
Overseas Territory			5	
Pacific Island States			10	
Pakistan			3	
QUAD			3	
Regional bodies			1	
Republic of Korea			39	
Singapore			32	
Somalia			3	
South Africa			3	
Sri Lanka			4	
Subregions			6	
Taiwan			7	
Thailand			20	
The Philippines			20	
Timor-Leste			2	
Topographic			16	
Vietnam			16	
<u>Waterways</u>			21	
				"So I think we are all seeking more or less the same thing, okay with different emphasis in certain cases, but we're all seeking to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region (Tibbels 2023).
Normative outlook on Indo-Pacific		Refers to normative principles that should underpin the Indo-Pacific or the designated role for the EU in the region in line with the normative principles.	475	
Cooperative			26	
Democratic			20	

Environment/biodiversity			24	
Human security			31	
Naturality			5	
Ocean governance			50	
Pollution			13	
Prosperity			14	
R&D/ Education			26	
Security and defense			57	
Trade and investment			91	
				Democratic principles and human rights are also under threat from authoritarian regimes in the region, putting the region's stability at risk (European Commission 2021, 2).
Threats to principles	Refers to threats in the Indo-Pacific to EU foreign policy principles such as democracy and human rights.		32	
Democracy			14	
Human rights			9	
Rules-based international order			9	
				"However current dynamics in the Indo-Pacific have given rise to intense geopolitical competition, adding to increasing pressure on trade and supply chains as well as in tensions in technological, political and security areas (European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan, 2021).
Threats to security	Refers to threats in the Indo-Pacific to regional security and stability, such as maritime and cyber threats.		144	
Crime			11	
Cyber security			20	
General			9	
Geopolitical competition			39	
Maritime threats			26	
Nuclear proliferation and military build-up			15	

Terrorism			13		
Trade and supply chains			11		