



EU IN THE INDO-PACIFIC JEAN MONNET NETWORK

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 11

PROJECT UPDATE

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Contact Us



+6433690390



nick.smith@canterbury.ac.nz



[@NCREurope](https://twitter.com/NCREurope)



www.canterbury.ac.nz/ncre/

Everything is set for the EUIP final symposium to be held in Brussels at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) on Monday, September 29th.

The symposium is a culmination of three years of hard work by the more than 40 people involved in the EUIP Network. But, a special thanks needs to go to the unsung hero of the Network, our project coordinator, Jenny Wilson, whose tireless coordination has been the bedrock of a tremendously successful project.

At the symposium, we will showcase the findings of the research we have conducted in 8 Indo-Pacific locations (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand) to a variety of EU officials, foreign diplomatic officials, think tank experts, and other interested parties.

I can also report that our special issue (in *Global Policy* journal) and our edited volume (with Routledge) are progressing nicely and are due for publication in 2026.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'N. Smith'.

Nicholas Ross Smith

EUIP INTERNS

The EUIP Network has welcomed two new interns over the past two months, taking the total for the project up to 6.



EUIP Intern: Monica Yu

Monica is a scholarship recipient at the National Centre for Research on Europe, studying towards a Masters of European Union Studies.

Monica completed her Bachelor of Arts specialising in International Affairs, with a minor in Political Science and International Relations in 2024, also at the University of Canterbury.

Her research interests include EU migration governance, particularly irregular migration.



EUIP Intern: Emma Husband

Emma is a scholarship recipient at the National Centre for Research on Europe, studying towards a Master of European Union Studies.

She completed her Bachelor of Arts in 2024 at the University of Canterbury – Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, majoring in Political Science and International Relations with a minor in European and European Union Studies.

Emma looks forward to exploring how the European Union is perceived across the Indo-Pacific as part of the internship. Her research interests focus on human rights, with a particular emphasis on gender equality.



NEW OUTPUT: RE-THINKING THE INDO-PACIFIC

Two EUIP Network members, Nicholas Ross Smith (University of Canterbury) and Paul Bacon (Waseda University) have published a peer reviewed article in the leading IR/Area Studies journal, The Pacific Review, titled: 'The Indo-Pacific as a macrosecuritized constellation: revising Regional Security Complex Theory for the age of the Indo-Pacific'.

In this article, they challenge conventional thinking about the Indo-Pacific, arguing that this increasingly important geopolitical concept should not be understood as a traditional region but rather as an active "macrosecuritization" effort by like-minded nations.

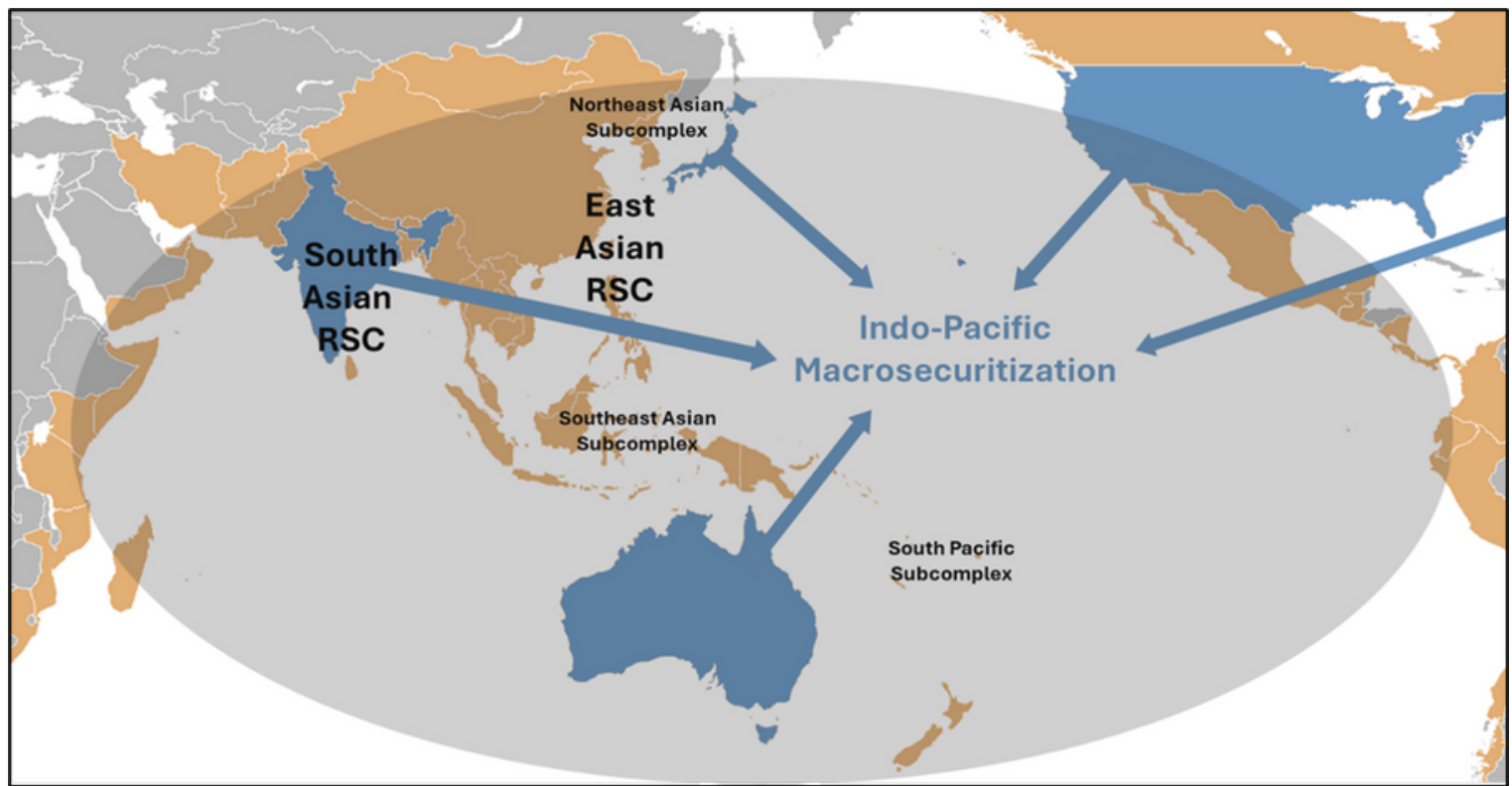
The Problem with Current Approaches

The Indo-Pacific has become a dominant term in international relations, with countries from the United States to Lithuania developing Indo-Pacific strategies. However, Smith and Bacon argue that treating this vast geographical space—stretching from Africa's east coast to South America's west coast on maximalist definitions—as a coherent region creates theoretical problems. The authors note that while the concept has gained widespread acceptance in policy circles and media, academic analysis has been lacking in theoretical rigor.

A New Theoretical Lens

Drawing on Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), the authors propose that the Indo-Pacific represents something fundamentally different: a "macrosecuritization constellation." This framework suggests that rather than being a natural region, the Indo-Pacific is an artificial construct created by a group of securitizing actors—primarily Australia, India, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union—who present China's rise as an existential threat to the "rules-based international order."

This macrosecuritization process involves powerful states making coordinated "speech acts" that frame China as a threat to shared values, particularly the concept of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP). The goal is to convince other nations to adopt this framing and join efforts to counter Chinese influence.



Evidence of Success and Resistance

The paper demonstrates varying degrees of success for this macrosecuritization effort. Using a five-point scale measuring securitization success, the authors show how the concept has achieved "durable success" among its core promoters. The case of New Zealand illustrates this evolution—the country initially rejected Indo-Pacific framing in 2018, with Foreign Minister Winston Peters stating that "Asia-Pacific" better reflected New Zealand's geography and interests. However, by 2019, New Zealand had officially adopted Indo-Pacific terminology and began exploring closer security cooperation with AUKUS partners.

However, the macrosecuritization faces significant challenges. China actively engages in "desecuritization," rejecting the Indo-Pacific concept entirely in favor of maintaining the previous Asia-Pacific framework. Chinese officials consistently refuse to acknowledge Indo-Pacific terminology, instead promoting narratives about "Cold War mentality" and "colonial mentality" to counter what they see as U.S.-led containment efforts.

Alternative Visions

The Pacific Island Countries present perhaps the most radical challenge through "counter-securitization." Their Blue Pacific Continent strategy deliberately shifts focus from China-related security concerns to climate change as the region's primary existential threat. This alternative framework incorporates non-Western ontologies and emphasizes environmental rather than geopolitical security.

ASEAN takes a different approach, engaging in strategic hedging rather than outright rejection. While not explicitly challenging the Indo-Pacific concept, ASEAN promotes its own centrality and seeks to shape the concept on its own terms, maintaining relationships with both China and Western powers.

Implications for Regional Security

The authors argue this framework better explains current dynamics than treating the Indo-Pacific as a traditional region. Rather than one homogeneous security complex, they see a constellation of distinct but related regional security complexes—South Asia, East Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific—held together by the overarching macrosecuritization narrative.

This perspective helps explain why, despite increased tensions, the region hasn't split into rigid Cold War-style blocs. Many states prefer hedging strategies that allow them to maintain relationships with both China and the United States, rather than choosing sides definitively.

Looking Forward

The paper suggests that while the Indo-Pacific macrosecuritization has successfully reshaped regional discourse, its ultimate success remains uncertain. High levels of economic interdependence between China and other regional powers, along with competing priorities like climate change, limit the appeal of a purely confrontational approach.

The authors note that changes in U.S. leadership could significantly impact this dynamic, as the Trump administration has shown relatively less interest in Indo-Pacific initiatives compared to the Biden administration. This highlights how macrosecuritization efforts depend on sustained commitment from key securitizing actors.

Conclusion

This theoretical reframing offers valuable insights for understanding contemporary geopolitics. Rather than assuming the Indo-Pacific is a natural region, recognizing it as an active securitization project helps explain both its rapid rise and the various forms of resistance it encounters. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how geography, power, and discourse interact to shape international relations in this crucial part of the world.

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

EUIP Symposium, Monday 29th September 2025

Agenda

Venue: CEPS, Pl. du Congrès 1, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

Time: 0830-1730

Time	Session	Main speaker	Participants
9:00	Introduction session	Nick Smith	Martin Holland
10:00	Morning tea		
10:30	China	Zhang Li	Suetyi Lai, Shen Wei, Chun Ding, Jörn Gottwald
11:10	Japan	Paul Bacon	Karolina Pomorska, Nick Smith, Neils van Willigen
11:50	South Korea	Sae Won Chung	Neils van Willigen, Stephen Calleya, Nick Smith
12:30	Lunch		
13:20	India	Sheetal Sharma	Tobias Theiler, Ankita Datta, Archil Chochia
14:00	Taiwan	Marc Cheng	Hungdah Su, Robert Kissack, Cho-Hsin Su, Florence Chen
14:40	Thailand	Natthanan Kunnamas	Heidi Maurer, Martin Holland, Barrie Wharton
15:20	Afternoon tea		
15:40	Australia	Bruce Wilson	Anne McNaughton, Richard Whitman, Katarzyna Williams, Héctor Sánchez-Mateos
16:20	New Zealand	Nick Smith	Matthew Castle, Martin Holland, Juan Manfredi, Serena Kelly
17:00	Administrative discussion	Jenny Wilson	Everyone

RECENT OUTPUTS FROM PROJECT MEMBERS

Journal articles

Smith, Nicholas Ross & Paul Bacon. 2025. "The Indo-Pacific as a macrosecuritized constellation: revising Regional Security Complex Theory for the age of the Indo-Pacific", *The Pacific Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2025.2546013>

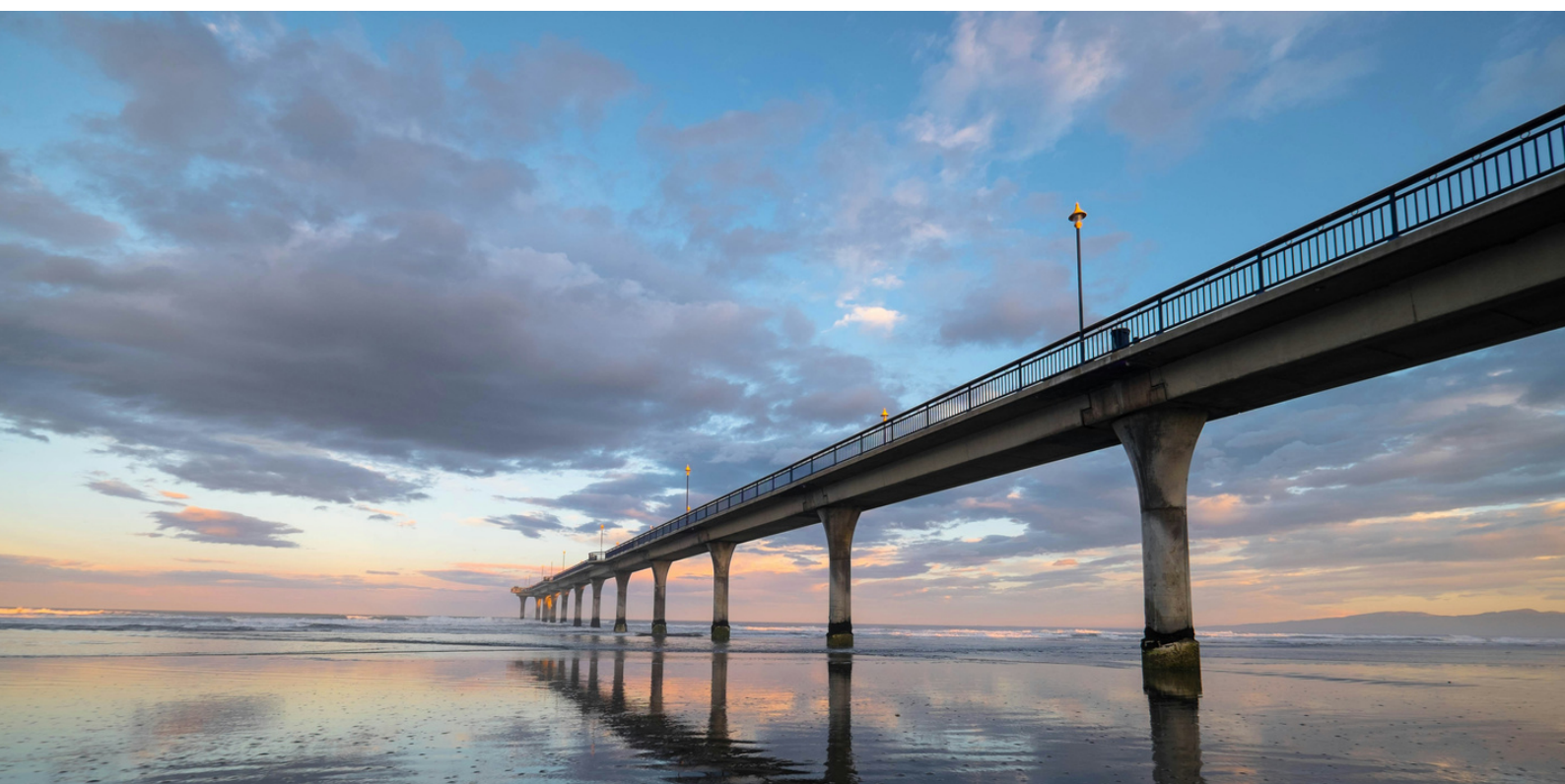
Smith, Nicholas Ross. 2025. "Dependently Independent: Theorizing New Zealand's "Independent" Foreign Policy via a Neoclassical Realist Lens", *Global Studies Quarterly* 5 (3) <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksaf056>.

Book chapters

Reiterer, Michael & Kim So Jeong. 2025. "South Korea", in George Christou, Wilhelm Vosse, Joe Burton, & Joachim Koops (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook on Cyber Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 593-612

Commentaries

Smith, Nicholas Ross & Paul Bacon. 2025. "The Indo-Pacific Is Like the Cold War, But Not in the Way Most Think". *The Diplomat*.





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