The French Republic is part of the Indo-Pacific space. The region includes the French overseas departments of Mayotte and Réunion, the overseas communities of French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, the special status community of New Caledonia and other overseas territories (French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Clipperton Island). Together, more than 2 million people live in the French territories in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific also contains 93% of the exclusive economic zones of the Fifth Republic. All this makes it possible to speak not of *France dans l'Indo-Pacifique* but of *France de l'Indo-Pacifique.*

The French Republic also has an extensive network of military bases in the Indo-Pacific. These include a complex of bases in Djibouti, an air base in the United Arab Emirates, bases in Mayotte and Réunion, the Southern and Antarctic Territories, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia. Worthy of note are the French Forces' participation in Operation Atalanta (off the coast of Somalia) and the AEGENOR maritime mission in the Strait of Hormuz. The total number of French troops in the Indo-Pacific. is about 8,000[[1]](#endnote-1). It's not a significant force, but the special feature of the French presence in the IDP is the advanced military infrastructure that allows a rapid buildup of forces in a given area[[2]](#endnote-2).

Since the turn of the century, Paris has made significant efforts to strengthen its position in the Indo-Pacific by building relationships with regional players. Emphasis has been placed on interaction with India and Australia due to contracts in the military-technical field. With New Delhi, Paris has a contract for the supply of 36 Rafale aircraft[[3]](#endnote-3). With Canberra, military-technical cooperation was initially concentrated in the aviation sector (helicopters, transport aircraft) and in the field of light armoured vehicles[[4]](#endnote-4). In 2016, a contract for 12 Barracuda-class electric-diesel submarines was awarded, which was terminated in September 2021.

It is worth noting that France was the first European power to introduce the concept of the Indo-Pacific process into its foreign policy discourse. The 2017 Strategic Review first mentioned Indo-Pacific; a year later, Emmanuel Macron, during a visit to Australia in 2018, introduced the term into widespread use. Subsequently, several doctrinal documents were issued by French ministries and the Elysée Palace: the French Defence Strategy for the Indo-Pacific, the Fifth Republic's White Paper on France's the Indo-Pacific strategy to 2030, and, finally, the official French the Indo-Pacific strategy published by the Elysée Palace in early 2021[[5]](#endnote-5).

It is worth noting, however, that the French geopolitical image of the Indo-Pacific space differs significantly from that of the US. The French understanding of the Indo-Pacific emphasises the multilateral, multipolar, inclusive nature of the macro-region; it is not aimed immanently at containing China[[6]](#endnote-6).

However, the formation of a new military alliance, entailing the breaking of the 'contract of the century', was perceived by Paris as a real 'knife in the back'. The actions taken by the Elysée Palace following the break-up of the contract - the withdrawal of ambassadors, the extremely harsh rhetoric towards Canberra and Washington - are unprecedented. Despite the ensuing 'reconciliation' in summit meetings with the Americans and Australians, the 'Australian Trafalgar' marked the end of French policy in the Indo-Pacific, which focused on interaction in the Paris-New Delhi-Canberra Troika format.

The paper presents an analysis of the directions of contemporary French foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region through a constructivist lens. Using the theory of critical geopolitics[[7]](#endnote-7), the paper explores how practical and formal French foreign policy discourse constructs the Indo-Pacific space and Paris's role therein. It examines how French discourse constructs the concept of "European strategic autonomy" in relation to the Indo-Pacific and how this concept relates to the 2021 EU Strategy for the Indo-Pacific.

The report's scientific novelty lies in the rethinking of French policy in the Indo-Pacific following the creation of AUKUS. It is argued that instead of bi-/trilateral formats, Paris will seek to establish itself in multilateral platforms such as the Indian Ocean Commission, the Association of Indian Ocean States and others. It is also argued that Paris seeks multilateral engagement because of the discursive Europeanisation of its presence in the Indo-Pacific, thereby acting as the bearer of EU 'normative power'. The following theses are put forward:

1) The Fifth Republic seeks to strengthen with key regional actors besides India, most notably South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. For instance, after the rupture of the contract with Australia, the Korean media reported Franco-South Korean contacts regarding the supply of the same Barracudas for the South Korean Navy[[8]](#endnote-8).

2) Paris seeks to consolidate both its and the EU's presence in the Indo-Pacific inter-state structures. Here, the Fifth Republic's policy acquires a strong European dimension, operating under the concept of "normative power" (normative power).

3) France is Europeanising its presence in the context of the adoption of the European Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The upsurge in the use of the phrase 'European strategic autonomy' (*autonomie stratégique européenne*) in French political discourse suggests that the Fifth Republic will redouble its efforts to build a coherent European strategy in the Indo-Pacific, especially in light of the forthcoming French presidency of the Council of the EU.

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