



# How far is Mediterranean Europe from China and the Indo-Pacific?

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**10 December 2025**

# MED-9 Summit in Cyprus, 2024



# The Mediterranean and the BRI

## China's new silk roads

### Transport infrastructures



# EU Framework of Relations with China and the Indo-Pacific

- **Strategic Outlook (2019)**
- **EU Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021)** – 2025 update
- **Even-growing legal arsenal** of the EU
- **Trade agreements** with Indo-Pacific partners
- **MS national strategies** vis-à-vis China and the Indo-Pacific
- **MS Bilateral agreements** with Indo-Pacific partners
- **Return of geopolitics** – Ukraine as a turning point



# Joint Statements of MED-9 Leaders, 2021-2025

Year	Host	Topics
2021	Greece	Climate change; preservation of natural and cultural heritage; COVID-19 pandemic; migration; crisis in Afghanistan; conflicts in Syria, Lebanon and Libya.
2022	Spain	War in Ukraine; resilience of critical supply chains; migration; tensions between Turkey and Greece/Cyprus; war in Ukraine.
2023	Malta	Migration; naval missions in the Mediterranean; EU investment in the Southern Neighbourhood; natural disasters; war in Ukraine.
2024	Cyprus	Conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria; Iran-Israel conflict; war in Ukraine; tension between Cyprus and Turkey; climate change; irregular migration.
2025	Slovenia	Competitiveness of European businesses; green transition; conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria; Peace Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh.

# Four Case Studies

## **France**

- The only resident power in the Indo-Pacific
- First EU MS to produce an Indo-Pacific strategy

## **Italy**

- Go East approach
- Ambitious agenda

## **Spain**

- Traditional interest in Latin America
- Chinese FDI attraction

## **Greece**

- Biggest merchant fleet in Europe
- Increasingly pro-active, but facing constraints

# European Military Presence in the Indo-Pacific

Country	Operation Atalanta	Operation Aspides	Western Indian Ocean	India	South China Sea	East China Sea	Taiwan Strait	Pacific Ocean
<i>Mediterranean Europe</i>								
France	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Italy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greece	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Spain	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Portugal	✓	✓						
Croatia	✓	✓						
Montenegro	✓							
<i>Other European Countries</i>								
Norway	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Ukraine	✓							
Germany	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
UK	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Belgium		✓						
Netherlands		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Finland		✓						
Sweden		✓						
Estonia		✓						
Latvia		✓						

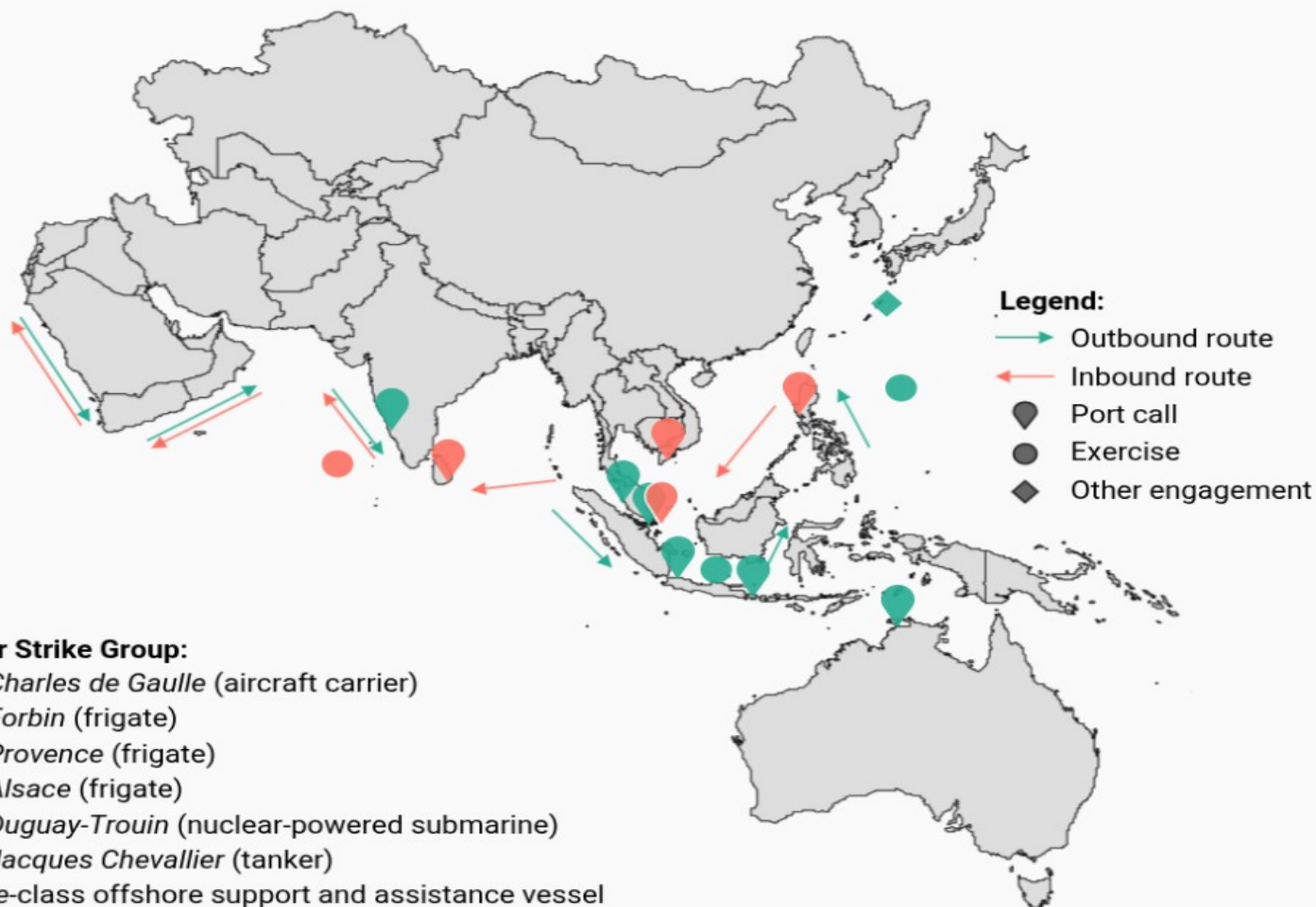
**Source:** Institute of International Economic Relations

# France's Military Footprint in the Indo-Pacific

**Clemenceau 25**

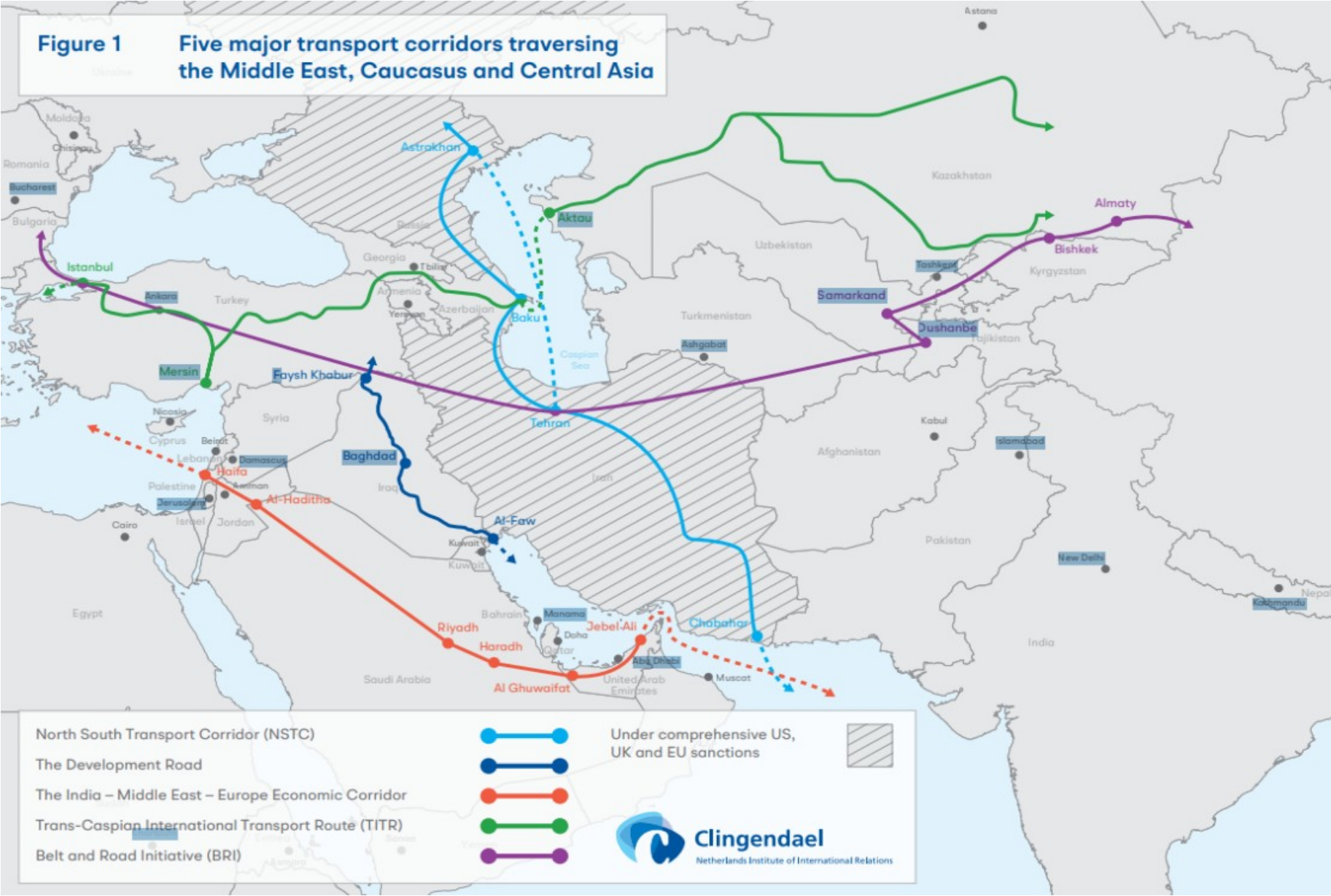


November 2024–April 2025





# IMEC and Other Prospective Transport Corridors



# Conclusions

- The EU's updated Indo-Pacific Strategy - anchored on the new geopolitical reality.
- Most Indo-Pacific states refuse to choose between China and the US
- Mediterranean EU MS have – partly, at least - grasped the strategic relevance of the Indo-Pacific, but their long-term strategic endurance remains to be seen
- Leading role of France, followed by Italy, Spain and Greece
- Military engagement – an effective tool in terms of signalling, but it does not vouch involvement in warfare in case of a contingency
- Mediterranean Europe's engagement with the Indo-Pacific cannot be viewed separately from the overall EU posture

# Food for Thought

- All MED-9 countries need coherent and up-to-date China and Indo-Pacific strategies
- The MED-9 agenda would benefit from an Indo-Pacific dimension and could thus contribute in a meaningful way to related EU policies
- Mediterranean Europe could be more ambitious and look at the Indo-Pacific in its entirety, beyond the boundaries of the Western Indian Ocean
- Mediterranean Europe could contribute to a beneficial division of labour between the EU and the US in containing China
- Only three MED-9 countries (France, Italy and Spain) have representative offices in Taiwan - other MED-9 countries could also consider opening offices in Taipei.



**THANK YOU!**

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