

Abstract

The Atlantic Powers' Indo-Pacific Strategy and Implications for South Korea's Geostrategic Initiative

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This study examines the Indo-Pacific strategies of the U.S. and European countries with an aim to contribute to overcoming the various layers of South Korea's "structural entanglement." The U.S.-China strategic competition and the Russia-Ukraine war have accelerated the global division of spheres of influence, shaking the foundations of the postwar order. In particular, the U.S.-China strategic rivalry, which began with trade conflicts, has gone beyond the separation of high-tech and supply chains

and expanded to the political and military fields, revealing patterns of an all-out war. The problem is that the Indo-Pacific region with the utmost geostrategic significance is where the U.S.-China strategic competition takes place. The U.S. has established the Indo-Pacific strategy, a geostrategic initiative to keep China in check, expanded the Pacific Command's area from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific region, and changed its name to the Indo-Pacific Command. Furthermore, the U.S. formed the QUAD with Japan, Australia, and India, and in terms of economy, it is promoting the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). In addition, the U.S. is pursuing a link between the Asia-Pacific regional alliance and the trans-Atlantic alliance. For example, the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Australia launched the security pact AUKUS in 2021. Also, the 2022 NATO Summit invited countries from the Asia-Pacific, including South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. After the International Court of Justice (ICJ) dismissed China's claim to exclusive rights to the South China Sea in 2016, European countries supporting the freedom of navigation sent aircraft carriers to counter the

China challenge in the Indo-Pacific waters. The UK and France, NATO's key forces, have also moved eastward to keep China in check in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to the UK and France, the so-called Atlantic forces, such as the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, are showing increased interest and involvement in the Indo-Pacific region not only to keep China in check but also in preparation for the opening of the Arctic route following climate change. In other words, the Atlantic powers' preemptive response to Russia and China's interest in the Arctic route has prompted their enhanced involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. Based on such an analysis, the Atlantic powers' activities in the Indo-Pacific region will likely become more active. Therefore, the South Korean government should assess if the Atlantic powers' strategic involvement in the Indo-Pacific region is a factor of crisis or opportunity for the country.

Keywords

geopolitical strategy, Indo-Pacific strategy, Atlantic powers, U.S., Europe, U.S.-South Korea alliance, South Korea-Japan relations, UNC-Rear, global pivotal state