

Daily Memo: Alternative Indo-Pacific Supply Chains, Russian-European Relations Up in Flames

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Bypassing China. Australia, India and Japan formally **launched a so-called Supply Chain Resilience Initiative**, an effort to present a supply chain alternative to China in the Indo-Pacific. The three countries will cooperate on trade, investment promotion and buyer-seller matching to help countries and companies diversify their supply chains. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman **condemned the initiative**, saying it does not support the stability of global supply chains and economic recovery.

Diplomatic blowup. A spokeswoman for Bulgaria's chief prosecutor said **investigations are underway** into suspected Russian involvement in explosions at four Bulgarian weapons production and storage facilities from 2011 to 2020. Separately, days after Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia expelled several Russian diplomats over Moscow's alleged responsibility for a 2014 explosion at a Czech arms depot, the **Kremlin retaliated** with its own **expulsions** targeting officials from those states.

Australian base expansions. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the **expansion of four military training bases** in the country's Northern Territory. The government has allotted 747 million Australian dollars (\$580 million) for the project, whose goal is to enable more wargaming exercises with the United States. Morrison emphasized Australia's interest in a "free and open" Indo-Pacific and in protecting Australia's national interests amid high uncertainty in the region. The announcement comes against the backdrop of souring Australian-Chinese ties.

RCEP progress. **Japan's parliament officially ratified** participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a free trade zone that includes the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and five other countries, including China. Six more countries must ratify the agreement for it to take effect.

Anticlimax in Europe. The European Parliament formally **approved the EU-U.K. Trade and Cooperation Agreement**, which provisionally went into effect on Jan. 1.

Chinese-Bangladeshi military cooperation. Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and

Bangladesh's president, Abdul Hamid, **agreed to advance bilateral military cooperation**. Hamid highlighted China's contribution to the development of Bangladesh's economy and defense. Wei also met with the chief of Bangladesh's army staff.

Iranian-Turkish trade and economic cooperation. The Iranian president's chief of staff and Turkey's energy minister will address trade, health care, transport, energy, investment and more on Wednesday at the 28th meeting of the Iranian-Turkish Joint Economic Cooperation Commission. They plan to sign several memorandums of understanding to expand economic and trade cooperation.

Russian-Uzbek defense cooperation. During a visit to Uzbekistan, Russia's defense minister said Moscow and Tashkent had **developed a strategic partnership program** in defense through 2025.

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