



First International Conference of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum

**Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region
Significance of Ideas and Thoughts**

19th-20th March

**C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium,
India International Centre, New Delhi**

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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FOREWORD

It is with great humility, profound respect, and an unwavering commitment to peace that I pen this foreword to the proceedings of the First International Conference of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF), held on the 19th and 20th of March 2025 at the historic C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre, New Delhi. This gathering was not merely a moment in time—it was a testament to the rising consciousness of nations and people across the Indo-Pacific region who believe that peace, security, and sustainable development are not lofty ideals, but achievable realities when envisioned together.

The conference, convened under the theme “Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region: Significance of Ideas and Thoughts,” was designed as a platform not only for discussion but for collective ideation. We did not come together simply to speak—we came to listen, to reflect, and to co-create a future founded on the pillars of mutual respect, regional cooperation, and shared prosperity.

The Indo-Pacific region, stretching across a vast maritime and continental expanse, represents more than a strategic geopolitical arena—it is home to nearly 60% of the world's population, a crucible of global trade routes, and a repository of some of humanity's most vibrant and ancient civilisations. This immense diversity of culture, economy, governance, and language demands equally diverse and inclusive approaches to diplomacy and development. The vision of IPPF, therefore, is rooted in pluralism and seeks to unite stakeholders from every sector and every part of this region to foster an enduring culture of peace.

However, the Indo-Pacific is not without its trials. It faces increasing strategic tensions, climate-induced vulnerabilities, ecological degradation, economic disparities, and transnational security threats. The fragile equilibrium between growth and sustainability is frequently disrupted by unilateral interests, and it is here that the IPPF steps in—not to compete, but to convene; not to dictate, but to encourage dialogue.

The First International Conference of IPPF was honoured by the esteemed presence of our Chief Guest, the Honourable Governor of Mizoram, General (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh. His gracious presence and wisdom during the inauguration elevated the tone of the proceedings, reminding us all that leadership in peacebuilding requires both courage and compassion. His message highlighted the need for proactive engagement, ethical leadership, and inclusive decision-making to stabilise and secure this dynamic region.

What made this conference truly international was its expansive and meaningful representation from across the Indo-Pacific region. Korea was represented by Mr. Ingill Ra, Regional Coordinator of Strategic Partnership Development for the Global Peace Foundation in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. From Nepal, we were joined by Mr. Ram Rohan Panta, Regional Representative—South Asia at the Global Peace Foundation. Distinguished scholars such as Dr. Hidekazu Sakai and Professor Yoichiro Sato travelled from Japan, enriching the dialogues with East Asian perspectives. Dr. Sonali Shrikant Gokhale brought valuable insights drawn from her experiences in the United States. This robust representation reinforced the conference's central belief—that only by transcending national boundaries can we build a truly inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

India, too, was prominently represented by eminent leaders such as Dr. Priya Ranjan Trivedi, President of the Confederation of Indian Universities, and a cohort of seasoned diplomats, including Ambassador Dr. Ketan Shukla, Ambassador Deepak Vohra, Ambassador Virendra Gupta, and Ambassador Gurjit Singh. Their deep institutional memory, policy acumen, and long-standing service to the nation added immeasurable depth to the deliberations.

Over the course of two dynamic days, the conference hosted more than 250 guests, including chairs, panellists, speakers, scholars, and peacebuilders. The sessions were structured across six interlinked themes that reflect the complex yet interconnected challenges of our times:

- **Geopolitics, Security, and Economic Landscape:** This session explored the shifting power dynamics in the region, calling for balance and multilateralism amidst growing tensions.
- **Role of Indian Diaspora in Promoting Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific:** The global Indian community, spread across oceans and continents, is a potent soft power resource that can serve as a bridge across cultures and nations.
- **Maritime Security, Trade, and Transport:** As the Indian and Pacific Oceans remain the arteries of global commerce, safeguarding maritime routes and ensuring open sea lanes is vital to the global economy.
- **One Korea Global Campaign:** A special session emphasised the vision of a peaceful, united Korea—a call for reconciliation and healing in the only divided region in the world.

- **Relevant Peace Initiatives and Prospects for Peace in the Indo-Pacific:** This dialogue highlighted ongoing peace efforts, offering new frameworks for collective action and regional collaboration.
- **Blue Economy, SDGs, and Regional Development:** Perhaps one of the most urgent themes, this session drew attention to the sustainability of our oceans, the need to align economic models with environmental protection, and to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among these, the Blue Economy stands out as both an opportunity and an imperative. The Indian and Pacific Oceans are lifelines to billions, yet the unchecked exploitation of marine resources, unregulated coastal development, and the looming threat of climate change pose dire consequences. If we are truly concerned about the 60% of humanity that resides in the Indo-Pacific, we must act with equal urgency to protect the 75% of the world's marine biodiversity that exists in these very waters. Ocean governance, equitable access, and environmental justice must become central to our regional agenda.

In my keynote address, I emphasised the necessity of building a cultural brotherhood—a human-to-human relationship founded on shared history, empathy, and values. The idea is simple but powerful: lasting peace cannot be achieved through political treaties alone; it must be woven into the cultural and spiritual fabric of our societies. When people connect at the level of identity and aspiration, politics naturally follows the path of peace.

The publication that you now hold in your hands is the result of tireless editorial efforts. The Editorial Board has performed an outstanding task in compiling, curating, and editing the wealth of knowledge shared during the conference. The voices of all participants—through papers, addresses, and panel exchanges—have been preserved with care and intellectual integrity.

Our collective efforts culminated in the announcement of the New Delhi Declaration—an action roadmap that embodies our shared commitment to measurable progress. This declaration is not a symbolic rhetoric; it is a living document, a blueprint for cooperation, and a call to every institution, government, and citizen of the Indo-Pacific region to join hands in peacebuilding.

May this volume serve not only as a record of ideas but as a call to action. May it inspire policymakers, academicians, civil society leaders, and youth to believe in the possibility of a more harmonious Indo-Pacific region. The path ahead is not without its challenges, but with unity of purpose, mutual respect, and unwavering belief in the power of dialogue, a better future is well within reach.

With warm regards and enduring hope,

Dr. Markandey Rai
President, Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF)
Chairman, GPF India

EDITORIAL BOARD'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

The First International Conference of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum, held on the 19th and 20th of March 2025 at the prestigious C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium of the India International Centre, was a milestone initiative towards fostering peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Themed "Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region: Significance of Ideas and Thoughts," this was more than just a conference. It was a confluence of visionaries, leaders and changemakers, all dedicated towards the common commitment of ensuring a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, where the aspirations of all nation-states (small or large) are included in the economic, geographical and political landscape of the region.

The conference was inaugurated by the esteemed presence of our Chief Guest, the Honourable Governor of Mizoram, General (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh, who graced the event with his dignified poise and enlightened thoughts. The constitution of the Indo-Pacific region goes way beyond India, and so does the representation at this conference. Korea was represented by Mr. Ingill Ra (Regional Coordinator of Strategic Partnership Development for the Global Peace Foundation in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia), while Mr. Ram Rohan Panta (Regional Representative -South Asia at Global Peace Foundation) represented Nepal. Dr. Hidekazu Sakai and Prof. Yoichiro Sato came to attend the conference from Japan, while Dr. Sonali Shrikant Gokhale brought with her extensive professional experience from across the United States of America. The conference was further illuminated by the presence of dignitaries like Dr. Priya Ranjan Trivedi (President of the Confederation of Indian Universities), Ambassador Dr. Ketan Shukla, Ambassador Deepak Vohra, Ambassador Virendra Gupta, and Ambassador Gurjit Singh.

The conference saw the presence of more than 250 guests, including chairs, panellists, speakers, and scholars. The two-day conference delved into six major themes pertaining to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, spanning across six different sessions. These themes included: 1. Geopolitics, Security, and Economic Landscape; 2. Role of Indian Diaspora in Promoting Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific; 3. Maritime Security, Trade and Transport; 4. One Korea Global Campaign; 5. Relevant Peace Initiatives and Prospect for Peace in the Indo-Pacific; 6. Blue Economy, SDGs, and Regional Development.

Through this conference, this Editorial Board was more than fortunate to receive not only pathbreaking ideas and perspectives but, along with it, concrete measures bound to produce tangible outcomes. With brilliant minds presenting actionable strategies through their words and research papers, this conference was beyond resoundingly successful. It is a new sunrise in the domain of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, one which will exemplify what true international cooperation looks like to the rest of the world. This wide range of ideas covers a varied spectrum of subjects – from geopolitical and security landscapes to the Blue Economy. It became incumbent upon us to ensure that these ideas are collected and curated into a carefully structured publication, which will guarantee the preservation of these invaluable intellectual treasures.

This Editorial Board has provided careful consideration and dedicated hard work into assembling these Conference Proceedings and Paper Presentations into a consolidated publication which does justice to the intellectual contributions of all the academicians, scholars and policy enthusiasts who participated in this event. Utmost care has been taken to ensure the essence and meaning of the ideas and strategies shared at this event are kept intact and are disseminated in the manner they were intended to be by the author or speaker.

We, the Editorial Board, along with the entire team of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum, are profoundly grateful to all the honourable participants of this significant gathering, who contributed their wisdom, insights, and an earnest hope that an Indo-Pacific region where peace and prosperity for all is actualised is an achievable reality. Their shared commitment with ours to work towards creating a robust platform wherein communication is free flowing, diplomacy is the foundation of all solutions, and cooperation is respected as the need of the hour, is greatly appreciated. This publication is a dedication to all the visionaries who collaborated with us and provided us with their kind support and heartfelt cooperation, without which this event would not have been a possibility. It is the great pleasure and honour of this Editorial Board to have the opportunity to read through such admirable work and present it as a dedicated publication.

This publication is the collective effort of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum and the participants of the conference to tell those who will read this far and wide, that it is time we all took a stand to recognize how immediate and pertinent the need to strengthen diplomatic cooperation and peaceful integration of the Indo-Pacific region is in today's day and age. Being one of the most strategically valuable regions in the world, the Indo-Pacific region has vast potential to become a torchbearer of international peacebuilding, and we, the citizens of the world, must come together to make this possibility an undeniable and visible reality.

EDITORIAL BOARD



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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXTUALISING THE INDO-PACIFIC MOMENT



The Indo-Pacific is not just a geographic construct; it is an idea—fluid, aspirational, and central to the global future. As a connective corridor for over half of the world’s GDP and population, the region presents a paradox: while it promises economic dynamism and democratic resilience, it also faces persistent risks—strategic competition, ecological strain, and uneven development.

India’s Act East policy, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and diaspora networks signal its commitment to shaping this evolving narrative. Yet, the path forward demands new frameworks for peacebuilding, rooted in culture, community, and cooperation. The Indo-Pacific Peace Forum seeks to catalyse this transformation, offering a platform that transcends state-centric agendas to empower local voices and multilateral solutions.

IPPF 1.0 addressed six critical themes that define the Indo-Pacific challenge: maritime security, trade corridors, climate resilience, diaspora diplomacy, the Korean Peninsula, and the role of youth in peace processes. This document distils key insights from those sessions and charts a course for collective action.





OPENING THE GATES TO DIALOGUE INAUGURAL SESSION

The Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the east coast of Africa to the western shores of the Americas, encompasses vast tropical waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and holds immense economic, ecological, and geopolitical significance. In his opening address, General (Dr.) V.K. Singh emphasised the importance of the sustainable use of the region's vast resources to ensure future prosperity. He called upon all stakeholders to rise beyond competition and adopt collaborative approaches to resolving tensions and securing the well-being of future generations.

His vision for the Indo-Pacific underscored the need for a harmonious balance between development and conservation, urging nations to adopt innovative, eco-friendly technologies and practices.

To facilitate this, General Singh proposed the establishment of an inclusive forum that would serve as a platform for open dialogue and mutual understanding. This forum would bring together governments, businesses, and civil society organisations to share knowledge, best practices, and strategies aimed at fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

He highlighted the role of youth and education in this endeavour, advocating for investment in educational programs that promote environmental awareness and leadership skills. By empowering the younger generation, he suggested, the region could cultivate a new wave of leaders committed to sustainable development and international cooperation.



PANEL DISCUSSION

GEOPOLITICS, SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

This foundational session unpacked the shifting dynamics of global power and India's evolving strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific. Among our young presenters, Ms. Neha Gogoi, a scholar, emphasised that economic self-reliance and inclusive development are central to stability, while Mr. Jagjit Singh (student) proposed a "QUAD 2.0" model, which reimagined security alliances through the lens of disaster management and diplomatic balance. Another presenter, Ms. Subhashree Dhal, examined India's Indo-Pacific strategies, such as SAGAR and the Act East Policy, highlighting infrastructural ambition tempered by trade imbalances.

Ambassador Dr. Shukla bridged classical diplomacy and contemporary challenges by invoking the Saptanga Theory and spotlighting projects like the Sagar Mala initiative. Ambassador Deepak Vohra offered a candid appraisal of China's regional assertiveness, calling for Indian innovation in AI and startups. Dr. Sujata Aishwarya's discussion on cybersecurity, climate diplomacy, and India's strategic autonomy underscored the need for nuanced global partnerships. Collectively, the session advocated for a multifaceted, pragmatic policy framework to solidify India's role as a responsible Indo-Pacific power.

**Chairperson: Ambassador
Dr. Ketan Shukla**



PANEL DISCUSSION

THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN PEACE AND SECURITY

**Chairperson: Professor Ajay
Kumar Dubey**

As transnational connectors of culture, diplomacy, and economy, the Indian Diaspora emerged as a strategic asset in advancing regional peace. Professor Ajay Kumar Dubey opened the session by emphasising Diaspora diplomacy as an instrument for maritime security and cultural exchange. Dr. Rahul Varma introduced a spiritual dimension, arguing that inner peace within Diaspora communities fosters global harmony. Dr. A. K. Merchant mapped the expansive global footprint of over 32 million Indians, while Dr. Bijay Ketan Pratihari stressed the Diaspora's role as a soft power catalyst. Drawing on examples from East Africa and the US, Dr. Sushmita Rajwar and Dr. Rajneesh Kumar Gupta outlined how Diaspora-led initiatives enhance governance, trade, and civil rights dialogues. Dr. Hidekazu Sakai discussed India's growing global influence by highlighting how India is poised to surpass Japan's GDP, marking its emergence as a major global power. India's superpower status will be defined by its ideas of democratic values and economic growth, contrasting with authoritarian models.



Dr. Bijay Ketan Pratihari explored the concept of soft power, stating that the Indian Diaspora represents India's soft power through culture, heritage, and influence in global affairs. Paper presentations reinforced the theme of global interconnectedness, people-to-people diplomacy, and the need for love, justice, and universal brotherhood, as also echoed in Mr. Fateh's address. Concluding the session, Professor Ajay Kumar Dubey called for a unified, compassionate vision of the diaspora as part of a "one world, one family" approach, essential for building lasting international partnerships. This session affirmed the Indian Diaspora's strategic importance in shaping global peace, security, and India's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific.

PHOTO GALLERY

19TH MARCH 2025



PANEL DISCUSSION

MARITIME SECURITY, TRADE, AND TRANSPORT

Chairperson: Dr. Rajesh Kharat

As maritime routes become contested and climate change intensifies, this session explored the pressing need for sustainable, secure sea corridors in the Indo-Pacific region. Dr. Krishnendra Meena spotlighted the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative, enhancing connectivity across regions.



Focused on the evolving maritime dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region, and highlighting strategic connectivity, security, and sustainability, Dr. Krishnendra Meena presented the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) as a transformative initiative enhancing trade, infrastructure, and geopolitical balance, especially for India, Europe, the U.S., and West Asia.

Dr. Subhmitra Das emphasised the growing security challenges faced by Pacific Island nations, including climate threats, deep-sea mining, and biodiversity loss. She underscored the need for sustainable maritime practices through the Green and Blue Pacific frameworks.

Dr. Rahul Mishra discussed Southeast Asia's environmental degradation from illegal mining and geopolitical tensions involving the U.S., China, and regional powers like India and Japan.

Dr. Rishi Gupta highlighted the strategic importance of protecting undersea cables and digital infrastructure, citing India's growing role in regional crisis response and global supply chain security.

Dr. Rajesh Kharat called for stronger advocacy of maritime law and cooperation, linking modern efforts with the legacy of ancient maritime civilisations.

PANEL DISCUSSION

ONE KOREA GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

**Chairperson: Professor
Satyanshu Srivastava**

The session on Korean unification examined the issue through political, cultural, spiritual, and feminist lenses, identifying India as a potential mediator and peacebuilder. Ambassador Virendra Gupta advocated for a paradigm shift from rigid geopolitical strategies to people-centric peacebuilding efforts. He emphasised India's neutral and balanced engagement with both North and South Korea. He called for leveraging soft power tools, such as Bollywood, Yoga, and civil society initiatives, to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

Professor Satyanshu Srivastava revisited India's historic contribution to the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement and underlined the persistent ideological and economic rift between the two Koreas. He proposed a roadmap centred on a formal peace treaty, economic collaboration, and youth-led cultural exchanges as pillars of unification. He stressed that unification must be inclusive and forward-looking, with youth and culture acting as vital instruments of peace.



Mr. Ingill Ra approached the topic from a spiritual and educational standpoint, recommending that the "One Korea Dream" be introduced in school curricula to inspire a new generation committed to unity. He highlighted India's neutrality and cultural richness as unique assets for leading peace-driven, youth-empowered initiatives. According to him, the India-Korea relationship is not only strong but also foundational for guiding future peace efforts in the region.

Dr. Sonali Shrikant Gokhale introduced the concept of space diplomacy as a novel and neutral platform for cooperation. She argued that shared aspirations in space research and treaties could provide a non-contentious avenue for dialogue between the Koreas.

Mr. Ram Rohan Panta brought attention to the emotional and human rights dimensions of reunification, stressing the impact on divided families and the promise of freedom and dignity for all Koreans.

Anamika P.K. presented a paper on a feminist perspective, advocating for inclusive peacebuilding and highlighting the marginalisation of women in formal negotiations. She emphasised demilitarisation and grassroots activism as core strategies.

PANEL DISCUSSION

RELEVANT PEACE INITIATIVES AND PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

**Chairperson: Ambassador
Gurjit Singh**

This session examined diverse strategies for fostering peace across the Indo-Pacific, integrating diplomacy, education, economics, and community-driven models.

Ambassador Gurjit Singh emphasised the need to turn broad strategic concepts like the Indo-Pacific and QUAD into functional, people-centred initiatives. Peace must be embedded in education, dialogue, and cultural exchanges to build long-term trust.

Professor Yoichiro Sato highlighted the importance of preparing future leaders through problem-solving, adaptability, and diplomacy training. He called for deeper bilateral cooperation and stressed student exchange between Japan and ASEAN as a catalyst for cross-cultural peacebuilding.

Dr. Areeba (Ahsanat) Moazzam underlined the role of economic diplomacy, shared values, and inclusive narratives in achieving sustainable peace. She advocated for greater Indo-Japanese cooperation under the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF), and the use of trade, tariffs, and cybersecurity as peace tools.

Dr. Kamal Taori introduced a novel framework for assessing peace-related investments—HIPPO (Hidden), KIPPO (Known), THIPPO (Threatening), GIPPO (Globalisation), and DIPPO (Disappointment). Currently, the region is in the DIPPO phase, needing grassroots-driven transformation through social entrepreneurship and voluntary conflict resolution cells.

Dr. Pandey A.K. Arun said that peace begins with shifts in leadership behaviour and policy making. He stressed the need for Joint Peace Responsibility (JPR) mechanisms to handle evolving strategic threats. Initiatives like Sankalp Bharat could empower youth to drive change, while lessons from global peace efforts should be integrated into local policies.



PANEL DISCUSSION

BLUE ECONOMY, SDGS & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chairperson: Dr. H.R.P. Yadav

This session explored the Blue Economy as a vital driver for economic growth, environmental sustainability, and regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Dr. H.R.P. Yadav emphasised that the Blue Economy faces critical challenges such as a shortage of skilled manpower, ocean pollution (BOD/COD), overfishing, and the impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity.

Shri Ranjet Sinha highlighted India's Sagar Mala Project and the Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA) efforts to develop sustainable maritime infrastructure. While small-scale fisheries are vital, their unchecked expansion poses risks to long-term sustainability.

Dr. Aishwarya Singh Raikwar traced the evolution of the Blue Economy from 1995 to its inclusion in UN discussions in 2012. She outlined six key sectors: fisheries, marine energy, maritime transport, coastal tourism, climate mitigation, and aquaculture. Political instability in the Indian Ocean region remains a barrier to sustainable development. Dr. Manoj Srivastava stressed the importance of investment in research and policy reform to build equitable and resilient maritime economies. Mrs. Rekha Udit called for greater youth and women's participation in maritime sustainability and peacebuilding. She recommended platforms for cross-cultural dialogue and youth-led initiatives. Mrs. Bela Gandhi advocated for inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaboration to address resource conflicts and geopolitical tensions through dialogue rather than rivalry. Madhvi Dev presented a paper on the Indo-Pacific region and talked about how the region is rich in trade and natural resources, making it a critical area for economic reliance. Government-led models in countries like Australia provide examples of effective maritime governance.



PHOTO GALLERY

20TH MARCH 2025



CONCLUSION

The First International Conference of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum offered a multi-dimensional exploration of peacebuilding in the region, weaving together strategic, economic, cultural, and humanitarian perspectives. From fostering Korean reunification and promoting feminist and youth-led peace efforts to leveraging education, diplomacy, and the Blue Economy for sustainable development, the sessions highlighted the importance of inclusive, people-centric approaches. India's evolving role as a diplomatic and developmental partner was emphasised throughout, alongside the need for cross-border cooperation, regional frameworks, and grassroots participation. Together, these insights present a roadmap for a peaceful, prosperous, and resilient Indo-Pacific. This conference not only fostered dialogue among diverse stakeholders but also laid the groundwork for future collaboration and innovation in peace strategies. The shared commitment to addressing regional challenges through cooperative efforts signifies a hopeful trajectory for the Indo-Pacific. By prioritizing inclusivity and mutual respect, the forum underscored the potential to transform the region into a beacon of stability and harmony. The insights and connections forged here are stepping stones towards realizing a vision where peace is not just an aspiration but a tangible reality for all communities across the Indo-Pacific. With continued dialogue and concerted efforts, the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum envisions a future where diverse cultures and nations work hand in hand, navigating challenges and seizing opportunities together. As the conference concluded, it left participants with a renewed sense of purpose and optimism. The collective wisdom shared and the networks established promise to inspire ongoing initiatives that will bridge divides and foster enduring peace. Looking ahead, the Indo-Pacific region stands at the cusp of transformation, driven by the collective will to cultivate an environment where every voice is heard, every perspective is valued, and peace becomes the cornerstone of progress.



PAPER PRESENTATIONS

PAPER 01

Role of Blue Economy in India's Economic Growth

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Abstract:

In view of the increasing trend of the world's population, the entire world faces the biggest challenges of the 21st century, and the population of the world is expected to be around 9 billion by 2050. This will create situations of climate change impacts, economic and financial uncertainty and the growing competition for natural resources. This paper discusses the emerging concept of Blue Economy for addressing the sustainable economic growth in the coastal areas, such as oceans, seas, fisheries, and marine resources. The integrated approach and an urgent transition of India's economy towards a sustainable, inclusive and resource-efficient trajectory have also been outlined in this paper. The paper has described the sustainable use and protection of ocean resources for economic growth. It may include sectors like fisheries, aquaculture, offshore, renewable energy and marine biotechnology. The paper also presents the Indian perspective regarding sustainable use of maritime ecosystems while reducing environmental deterioration, SDGs 14 (Life Below Water), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 13 (Climate Action) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) can all be achieved in the Indo-Pacific region by harnessing resources from fisheries, deep-sea minerals, coastal tourism, and renewable ocean energy projects. The challenges, such as marine pollution, overfishing, illicit, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, rising sea levels, habitat degradation, and geopolitical tensions over maritime territory and resources of the Indian region have also been described in this paper. In order to evaluate regional approaches to marine resource management and climate resilience, the study also looks at multilateral frameworks like the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Quad's Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and ASEAN Blue Economy initiatives. In order to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of the ocean economy in the Indo-Pacific, this study emphasises the necessity of greater regional cooperation, technological advancements and inclusive policies.

Keywords: Blue economy, Sustainable marine resources, SDGs, Climate resilience

Introduction:

In 2012, the world formulated its Blue Economy strategy to harness the potential of oceans, seas and coasts for economic growth and jobs. India, too, being a developing nation, embraced this strategy of Blue Economy and defined objectives to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and employment opportunities through the utilisation of the drivers of maritime economy, such as coasts and other resources.

With a focus on regional policies, economic tactics and environmental protections, this study examines how the Blue Economy contributes to the Indo-Pacific's long-term sustainable growth and marine security. In order to combat issues like plastic pollution, ocean acidification and climate change, it examines how Indo-Pacific countries are using ocean-based sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, offshore energy and maritime transportation.

The world's most commercially and geopolitically significant marine region is the Indo-Pacific, which spans two continents (Asia and Australia) and includes about 38 countries. This region, which spans enormous marine stretches from the Pacific Ocean and its island states to the eastern coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean, is responsible for more than 50% of global maritime trade and about 65% of the world's GDP. Through the Blue Economy framework, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a key location for sustainable ocean governance due to its critical economic zones and abundant marine biodiversity.

One of the world's most strategically important maritime regions is the Indo-Pacific, which includes over 38 countries spread across two continents (Asia and Australia). This region is a vital centre for international trade, marine biodiversity, and geopolitical dynamics. It encompasses enormous maritime territories, such as the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the waters surrounding Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Its waters are essential to regional stability and economic progress since they support more than 50% of global marine trade, host three of the major economies in the world (China, Japan, and India), and contribute close to 65% of the global GDP.

One of the main forces behind the Indo-Pacific's economic expansion is the Blue Economy, a sustainable framework for ocean-based business ventures. The Blue Economy, as defined by the World Bank, is the sustainable use of ocean resources for improved livelihoods, economic success, and ecosystem health. It places a strong emphasis on integrating economic development with climate resilience and marine conservation. With its vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and vital shipping lanes, the Indo-Pacific region has enormous potential to promote sustainable growth while tackling geopolitical and environmental issues.

Despite these pledges, a number of challenges stand in the way of the Indo-Pacific region's attaining sustainable Blue Economy objectives, including:

Marine Waste and Climate Change: Coastal economies and marine biodiversity are in jeopardy due to plastic waste, rising sea levels and coral reef damage.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Overfishing: Unchecked exploitation of marine resources endangers livelihoods and food security.

Geopolitical Conflicts: Attempts at sustainable government are hampered by territorial disputes over maritime borders, resource claims and security issues.

Lack of Policy Coordination: An obstacle to the efficient management of marine resources is the Indo-Pacific countries' lack of a common governance framework

Regional and Multinational Frameworks:

Several regional and multinational frameworks have been formed to address these issues and encourage sustainable Blue Economy activities throughout the Indo-Pacific region:

1.1.1 Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): This organisation focuses on regional collaboration in marine conservation and ocean governance.

1.1.2 ASEAN Blue Economy Initiatives: Enhances policy for climate adaptation and sustainable fishing.

1.1.3 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF): Addresses climate resilience and marine resource protection for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

1.1.4 The Quad (U.S., Japan, Australia, and India): Promotes sustainable infrastructure initiatives and maritime security.

1.1.5 UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030): Provides a global scientific framework for ocean sustainability efforts. Figure 1 shows the map of the Indo-Pacific Region



Literature Review:

As a comprehensive strategy for sustainable ocean-based economic activity, the Blue Economy is becoming more and more significant on a worldwide scale. Its importance in regional governance, economic development, and environmental sustainability—particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, has been studied by academics and policymakers. With an emphasis on Indo-Pacific countries, this section examines the body of research on the Blue Economy's theoretical underpinnings, alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), governance issues, and economic prospects.

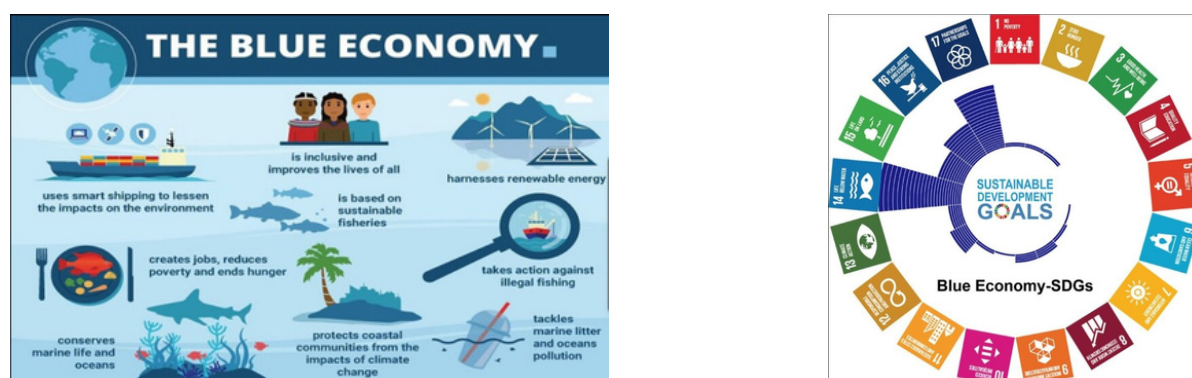
The Blue Economy's Theoretical Underpinnings:

The 2012 (Rio+20) United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development gave rise to the phrase "Blue Economy," which has subsequently been integrated into international economic and environmental policies. The Blue Economy, as defined by Lee et al. (2020), emphasises industries including marine biotechnology, sustainable fisheries, maritime trade, and renewable ocean energy in an effort to strike a balance between economic expansion and marine conservation.

Comparing the Blue Economy to the Green Economy is a common theme in the literature on the latter. Although both frameworks encourage sustainability, Martínez-Vázquez et al. (2021) point out that the Blue Economy focuses especially on maritime ecosystems and their long-term viability. The Blue Economy, which emphasises climate resilience and responsible resource management, is defined by the World Bank (2017) as the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, enhanced livelihoods and ecosystem health.

Scholars observe notable differences in the way policies are implemented, especially in developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region, despite worldwide efforts to include the SDGs in Blue Economy goals.

Figure 2 shows key features of the Blue Economy



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Blue Economy

The relationship between the Blue Economy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN is being examined in an increasing number of studies. Although studies indicate that a number of other SDGs are also closely related, the UN has designated SDG 14 (life below water) as the cornerstone of the Blue Economy. The following are important SDGs related to the Blue Economy.

Water quality management, wastewater treatment and marine pollution are all addressed in SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

Fostering sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, and blue-collar maritime sectors is the focus of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Adapting to the effects of climate change, cutting carbon emissions, and enhancing coastal resilience are the objectives of SDG 13 (climate action).

Promoting global collaboration in ocean governance, research, and policy implementation is the focus of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Figure 3 shows the SDGs and their actions for addressing the Blue Economy.

Current Challenges to the Blue Economy

Efforts are being made to address challenges globally in the areas of Blue Economy, including sustainable fisheries management, marine conservation and the advancement of eco-friendly technology. The following challenges need to be addressed:

Overfishing: - There is insufficient control and management of ocean resources, particularly with fisheries, animals and bottom resources.

Marine Pollution: - The coastal regions and bustling sea lanes of communications witness frequent contamination of the ecology and environment of marine resources due to frequent shipping activities. Pollution from cargo ships and waste from land is causing severe harm to the oceans.

Ocean Governance: - Lack of ocean governance is envisaged in the western and eastern Indian Ocean coastlines, and hence, these challenges need to be addressed.

Coordination of policies and governance continues to be a significant obstacle to the Indo-Pacific region's Blue Economy implementation. According to research by Martínez-Vázquez et al. (2021), the main obstacles are divided into marine governance structures, competing national interests and geopolitical conflicts. In addition, some of the key governance challenges are as follows :

Marine Pollution and Habitat Degradation: Studies reveal that plastic pollution, oil spills, and unsustainable coastal development are degrading marine ecosystems.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing: The lack of coordinated policies across Indo-Pacific states has led to overexploitation of marine resources, jeopardising food security and livelihoods.

Geopolitical Tensions over Maritime Boundaries: Research highlights disputes in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean as obstacles to regional cooperation on sustainable ocean governance.

Weak Institutional Frameworks: Many developing Indo-Pacific nations lack the institutional capacity to enforce sustainable fishing laws, marine conservation policies and climate adaptation strategies.

Scholars emphasise that multilateral cooperation, capacity building and technology-driven marine governance solutions are essential for overcoming these challenges.

Economic Opportunities in the Indo-Pacific's Blue Economy

Despite governance issues, the Blue Economy presents significant economic opportunities for Indo-Pacific nations. Studies have identified high-growth industries that can drive sustainable regional development, including:

Renewable Marine Energy: Offshore wind, tidal and wave energy have been highlighted as promising sources of low-carbon energy generation.

Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture: Research indicates that investment in responsible aquaculture can reduce pressure on wild fish stocks and improve food security.

Coastal and Marine Ecotourism: Studies suggest that eco-friendly tourism initiatives can support local economies while preserving marine ecosystems.

Marine Biotechnology: The development of marine-based pharmaceuticals, biofuels, and sustainable materials is a growing field in Blue Economy research.

According to Lee et al. (2020), investment in ocean-based industries, technological innovation and public-private partnerships can maximize the economic potential of the Blue Economy while ensuring environmental sustainability.

General Key Initiatives for India's commitment to the Blue Economy:

Sagarmala Initiative (2016): This is a flagship port-land development and focuses on modernisation of ports, improving port connectivity and integrating the maritime and industrial sectors (UNDP, 2023).

PMSSY (Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana) (2020): This scheme intends to bring about a 'Blue Revolution' by fostering sustainable and responsible growth in the fisheries industries via the modern fishing methods, infrastructure development and aquaculture.

Deep Ocean Mission: This scheme recognises the importance of exploring ocean resources beyond the coastal area (UNDP, 2023).

Comprehensive Maritime India Vision 2030 (2021): This provides a roadmap for the sustainable development of India's Maritime sector, including infrastructure development, technology indigation and capacity building, giving a balance between economic growth with environmental protection and conservation in the maritime domain.

Conclusion:

A comprehensive plan for leveraging technology and innovation needs to be created to align blue economy methodologies. Indo-Pacific countries should aim for a balanced combination of economic development and environmental sustainability. The results emphasise that although Blue Economy policies have been integrated into regional frameworks like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), ASEAN and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), gaps in marine governance, data transparency, financial limitations, and geopolitical tensions limit their efficacy.

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PEACE & SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: SIGNIFICANCE OF IDEAS & THOUGHTS

Dr. A. K. Merchant, General Secretary, Temple of Understanding India Foundation (TOUIF)

Greetings from the Founder-Chairman, TOUIF, Honourable Dr. Karan Singh and other Trustees, it gives me great pleasure and privilege to make my brief presentation.

Right from the inaugural session with the opening speeches of Dr. Priya Ranjan Trivedi, President, Confederation of Indian Universities; Dr. Markandey Rai, President, Indo-Pacific Peace Forum & Chairman, GPF India, and the powerful address by the Chief Guest, General (Dr.) V. K. Singh, Honourable Governor of Mizoram, all of us have been getting enlightened and appreciating the laudable endeavours of the organisers of this International Conference. Diasporas have emerged as powerful entities since they are recognised as 'soft power' in the realm of foreign policy strategy and also agents or catalysts of economic, societal development, as well as addressing geopolitical security issues. In recent years, India's stature, as perhaps the de facto leader of the Global South, has been growing. In fact from ancient times, for example, the port and city of Banda Aceh, located on the northern tip of Sumatra Island of Indonesia, was considered part of the India sphere because of its sizeable Indian merchant community and its proximity by sea to the Coromandel and Malabar coasts of India than to the rest of Indonesian archipelago.

Today, India's soft power, coupled with its military influence, remains strong because trading communities exist between the subcontinent and as far as Japan for trade and political influence, as clearly demonstrated during the G20 presidency in 2023.

India's Indo-Pacific Vision has two main pillars: (i) The central pivot joining the Indian Ocean community to the Pacific community is ASEAN, the multilateral grouping of 10 nations of South East Asia, which form a "geographical and civilizational bridge" between the two Oceans; (ii) India sees all littoral and even non-littoral nations as part of a "free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific," irrespective of their ideology or form of government. To this end, a number of case studies have been done, and for the sake of brevity, I may only cite the example of Singapore and its affluent Indian community.

Indian migration to Singapore came in three distinct waves: (i) The initial influx came as Indian administrators, workers, policemen, and soldiers who were sent to the newly founded British colony of Singapore after it was acquired by treaty by Sir Stamford Raffles on 6 February 1819. Early Indian immigrants were Chettians and Telugus, Sikh and Sindhi traders. (ii) The second wave took place before the founding of Singapore as a nation state in 1965, as families displaced by India's Partition, particularly Sindhi, Sikh and Punjabi, looked to existing transnational community networks, including the one in Singapore, for better opportunities. (iii) A third wave came with India's economic liberalisation after the forex crises of 1991, which was followed by its Look East policy (started in 1994 and updated as Act East policy in 2014), which created opportunities for Singapore's resident Indian community and led to an influx of Non-Resident Indians. Along the way came the India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) of 2005-the first free trade agreement (FTA) between Singapore and a South Asian country. Indian migrants came especially from the IT, financial technology, and commercial services (legal, banking and accountancy) sectors, as hundreds of multinational Indian companies opened branches and offices in Singapore to access South East Asian markets and the Far East (China, South Korea and Japan).

Singapore as a nation is also strategically important for India. It played a key role in connecting India with the 10-member ASEAN and in bringing this larger grouping together in the annual East Asia Summit forum.

Now, with respect to the peace and security issues and particularly after the emergence of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a diplomatic partnership between the United States, Australia, India, and Japan, to promote a free and - contain the growing influence of China-open Indo-Pacific region let me share my reflections.

The primary disease that afflicts society and generates the ills that cripple present-day society, from the interfaith perspective and personally as a member of the Bahá'í Faith, is disunity at all levels of human existence. Rather, humankind should distinguish itself by its capacity for collaboration and cooperation. For, upon these virtues, depends the well-being of the whole world. Civilisation itself does not arise merely from material progress, but rather is defined by and founded upon the ideals and shared beliefs that weld society together. What uniquely defines the human experience is the transcendent components of life. It is this dimension of existence that enriches, ennobles and provides direction to human beings. It is this dimension of life that unlocks the creative capacities within human consciousness and safeguards human dignity.

Recognition of the vital necessity of a world-embracing vision by the highest leadership in every country and the moral strength to translate it into action so that the millions upon millions of people everywhere may be lifted out of their heart-rending miseries is the first step. Next in importance is acceptance of the natural unity of the human family in which the well-being of the individual is identified with the well-being of all. Thirdly, ethical principles of themselves have always been ineffective in producing lasting results if divorced from religion and spirituality. The fourth aspect is allegiance to the Law of Harmony as the primary principle of conduct in society. Legal requirements imposed by an external authority of force and power win for themselves only an outward compliance, whereas obedience to an ethical principle would spring from the inner and voluntary choice of the individual. The universal adoption and application of this law to the global problems would certainly provide a solution to much of the present-day unrest and uncertainty. It would mean the end of greed and selfish exploitation of each other; an end to the scandals and scams that keep battering at the fabric of our present-day civilisation. The most important action for achieving the betterment of the world is through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct. The reality of our Age is the interdependence of all peoples, and the institutions and policies which regulate our political, economic and social life must achieve a world order in which the consciousness of world citizenship, and the planet as our common homeland, will find complete expression.

It is quite evident that with every passing day, the complexity of the world situation is becoming more and more difficult to fathom; acts of insanity are increasing, it seems to me. It has become clear that, in different nations in different ways, the social consensus around ideals that have traditionally united and bound together a people is increasingly worn and spent. It can no longer offer a reliable defence against a variety of self-serving, intolerant, and toxic ideologies that feed upon discontent and resentment. With a conflicted world appearing every day less sure of itself, the proponents of these destructive doctrines appear to be becoming more brash and brazen. Well-meaning leaders of nations and people of goodwill are left struggling to repair the fractures evident in society and powerless to prevent their spread. In the distrust that pits neighbour against neighbour and severs family ties, in the antagonism of so much of what passes for social discourse, in the casualness which appeals to ignoble human motivations are used to win power and pile up riches-in all these lie unmistakable signs, that the moral force which sustains society has become gravely depleted. Indeed, every heart that aches at the wretched conditions of the world must strive with determination and selfless action to save our planet from "the slough of impending extinction".

In conclusion, I would like to offer the following proposals for recasting the role of the United Nations Organisation and possibly the establishment of a World Government that would abolish war and serve as the supreme arbitrator for disputes among nations:

1. Raising minimum requirements for membership;
2. Appointing a commission to study borders and frontiers;
3. Searching for new financial arrangements;
4. Committing to a universal auxiliary language and a common script;
5. Limiting the exercise of veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council;
6. Applying the notion of collective security to other problems of the global commons.
7. Institutionalising ad hoc military arrangements;
8. Launching a determined campaign to fulfil the Agenda 2030—Sustainable Development Goals.

Additionally, I would like to flag four other areas that are draining the planet's precious finite resources and making it impossible for all peoples, regardless of their particular religious or spiritual affiliation, to live in harmony and peace:

- The Military Industrial Complex spends approximately USD 2.2 trillion per annum [2024 data];
- The Government subsidies in different countries, of approximately USD 2.0 trillion per annum, hardly provide much benefit to the poor; the maximum benefit goes to the rich & upper middle class.
- The Black Economy, in every country, to the tune of approximately USD 2+ trillion per annum.
- The currency war inflicted by developed countries is highly detrimental to the advancement of the poor and the developing nations. Some 135 countries are defaulting on debt servicing annually.

With just 89 seconds to midnight on the Doomsday Clock of the Security Board of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, one thing is clear, the present-day order of separate blocks of nations, divided by political entities but endeavouring to trade together (each nation striving to extract the maximum benefits), cannot last long. The result would be World War III, after which, if a section of humanity survives, it would have to begin anew. Therefore, let every man, woman, youth and child, urgently act and understand that this is not the time for triumphalism of this nation or that nation, this community or that community, this religion or that religion, this leader or that leader (whether religious or secular). All must unitedly and nobly play their part for the positive march of civilisation, as we know it, and save this planet, a pale blue dot, our only home!

PAPER 03

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC CONVERGENCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF QUAD NATIONS (2000–2023)

Dr. Rohin Gaddam

Abstract

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a vital axis in the global economic and geopolitical order, with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)—comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States—positioned at its strategic core. This paper analyses key indicators of economic growth, trade openness, foreign direct investment, labour force participation, and technological innovation across the QUAD nations from 2000 to 2023. Using panel data and descriptive statistics, this study uncovers significant patterns in GDP growth, export dependence, industrial output, and investment dynamics. The findings reveal distinct economic trajectories among the member nations, highlighting their converging interests and divergent capacities in shaping a cohesive Indo-Pacific trade strategy. The paper concludes with policy implications aimed at enhancing intra-QUAD cooperation and regional economic resilience.

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific has gained significant attention over the last two decades as a centre of economic vitality and geopolitical contestation. At the heart of this evolving landscape lies the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), a strategic forum composed of four major democracies: Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. Originally conceived for maritime security and regional cooperation, the QUAD has increasingly extended its focus to economic collaboration and sustainable growth.

Amid growing concerns over supply chain resilience, trade imbalances, and global economic fragmentation, the QUAD nations represent both diversity and strategic convergence. While the United States and Japan bring advanced technological ecosystems and capital-rich economies to the table, Australia and India contribute resource wealth and demographic dividends, respectively. Collectively, the QUAD accounts for a substantial share of global GDP, trade flows, and innovation.

This paper explores the intersection of economic growth and trade strategies among the QUAD nations from 2000 to 2023. It specifically examines seven key indicators—GDP growth, industrial output, export-to-GDP ratio, FDI inflows, domestic consumption, labour force participation, and technological investment—to uncover both macroeconomic trends and strategic complementarities. By analysing these metrics through a comparative lens, this study aims to understand the evolving role of QUAD in the Indo-Pacific economic order.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on economic integration and strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. Section 3 outlines the methodology and data sources. Section 4 presents the findings based on panel data analysis. Section 5 discusses the implications for QUAD-based trade policy. Finally, Section 6 concludes with suggestions for future research and cooperative frameworks.

Literature Review

The Indo-Pacific region has increasingly become the epicentre of global economic activity and strategic recalibration. The rise of China and the shifting balance of power in Asia have compelled regional and extra-regional powers to reconfigure alliances and economic strategies. In this context, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) has evolved from a security-centric platform into a multifaceted framework that encompasses economic collaboration, infrastructure investment, and technological cooperation.

Indo-Pacific Economic Architecture

Much of the existing literature focuses on the Indo-Pacific as an emerging economic construct rather than a formally institutionalised bloc. While regional organisations like ASEAN and RCEP have provided partial economic integration, the Indo-Pacific remains a contested and fluid concept. Scholars argue that economic alliances within this space often reflect strategic alignments rather than strict market logic. The QUAD, despite its loose institutional structure, is increasingly viewed as a mechanism to counterbalance China's economic and infrastructural dominance, particularly through initiatives like the Blue Dot Network and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

Economic Complementarities Among QUAD Nations

The four QUAD nations exhibit distinct yet complementary economic profiles. The United States and Japan are advanced economies with robust technological capabilities and mature markets. Australia, though smaller in population, plays a crucial role in resource exports and commodities, while India's large and youthful population makes it a prospective engine of labour and consumption-driven growth. Existing comparative analyses emphasise these asymmetries as both strengths and challenges in forging coordinated trade strategies.

Trade and investment data suggest differing orientations among the QUAD members. While the U.S. and Japan have relatively high foreign direct investment (FDI) outflows, India and Australia often function as FDI recipients, particularly in manufacturing and infrastructure. The Indo-Pacific's economic evolution, therefore, hinges on leveraging these complementarities without allowing asymmetries to hinder collective action.

Data & Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, using panel data from 2000 to 2023 to examine key economic indicators across the four QUAD nations: Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. The dataset includes 96 observations per variable (24 years × 4 countries) and is primarily sourced from aggregated national statistics and multilateral databases (e.g., World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD).

Variables and Indicators

Seven core indicators were selected to capture the breadth of economic dynamics within the QUAD nations:

- **GDP Growth (GDPgr):** Measures annual percentage change in gross domestic product, serving as the primary indicator of economic performance and resilience.
- **Industrial Output (indout):** Represents the percentage of industrial output relative to GDP, reflecting the structure and scale of productive sectors.
- **Export to GDP Ratio (exp_gdp):** Indicates the dependence of national economies on export-led growth, revealing external orientation.
- **FDI Inflows (fdi_in):** Expressed as a percentage of GDP, capturing the scale and attractiveness of foreign investment.
- **Domestic Consumption to GDP (dcon_gdp):** Measures internal demand as a percentage of GDP, illustrating economic self-reliance or domestic market robustness.
- **Technological Investment (tech_inv):** Includes spending on R&D, digital infrastructure, and innovation as a share of GDP.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** Indicates the percentage of the working-age population that is economically active.
- **Terms of Trade Index (ttoi):** An index capturing fluctuations in export-import price ratios, indicating the relative advantage in global trade.

These variables were chosen for their theoretical relevance to long-term economic development and strategic trade positioning. The focus on comparative statistics allows for the identification of macroeconomic patterns, structural imbalances, and potential synergies among the QUAD members.

Analytical Framework

The study employs descriptive statistics to establish central tendencies and variability within each indicator. Summary statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values, provide insight into economic volatility, policy orientation, and structural dependencies across the four nations.

Results and Discussion

This section interprets the statistical trends in the QUAD economies across the 2000–2023 period. Each variable is analysed comparatively to identify cross-national strengths, vulnerabilities, and strategic implications.

Table 1 outlines the descriptive statistics for all variables, across all member countries for the period in consideration, covering 96 data points per metric:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for QUAD Panel Data (2000-2023)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GDP Growth	2.98	2.90	-5.78	9.69
Industrial Output	25.42	3.93	17.27	32.51
Export/GDP	17.05	4.72	9.04	26.80
FDI Inflows	1.74	1.47	-3.61	6.98
Domestic Cons/GDP	75.26	4.99	65.62	85.13
Tech Investment	2.21	0.89	0.65	3.47
Labor Force Part.	61.21	4.11	51.55	66.78
Terms of Trade	35.78	9.24	19.56	55.79

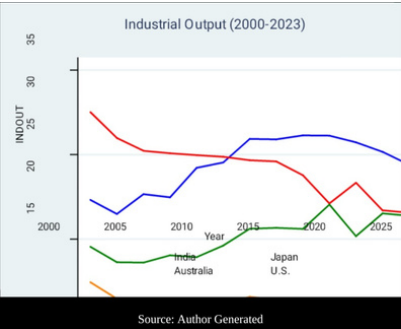
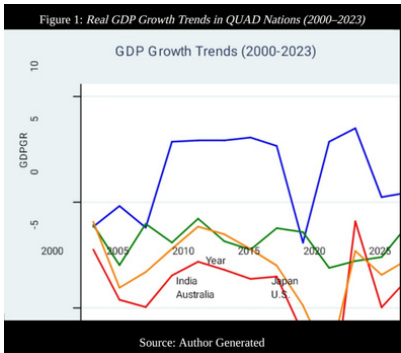
Source: Author's Calculations from Secondary Data

GDP Growth Patterns

The average GDP growth across all four QUAD nations stood at 2.98%, with a high variability (SD = 2.90), suggesting uneven growth performance. India recorded the highest peak in GDP growth (9.69%) and the lowest trough (-5.78%), reflecting a volatile but high-potential growth path. The United States and Japan demonstrated more stable growth trajectories but with lower peaks, characteristic of mature economies. Australia, although consistent, was vulnerable to global commodity cycles.

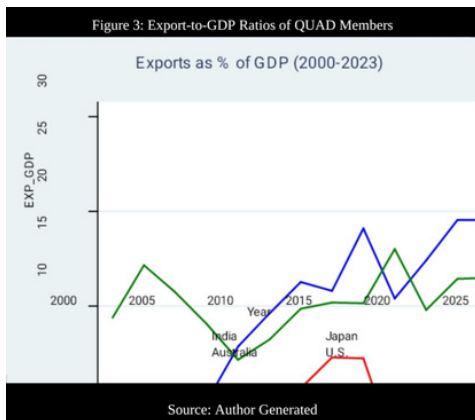
This divergence reflects varying stages of economic development. India's rapid growth is largely catch-up driven, while the other QUAD members are navigating post-industrial growth plateaus. For strategic cooperation, this asymmetry implies the need for differentiated but complementary policy coordination.

This structural divergence impacts intra-QUAD supply chain integration. For instance, Japan and India may act as manufacturing hubs, while the U.S. leads on design, services, and R&D. Coordinated industrial policy could harness these strengths through regional value chains



Export Dependence

The export-to-GDP ratio averaged 17.05%, with Japan and Australia generally more export-oriented than the U.S. and India. India's lower export ratio highlights the potential for trade expansion, particularly in pharmaceuticals, IT, and engineering services. The United States' modest export dependence reflects a large domestic market but also a relative retreat from global trade leadership in recent years.

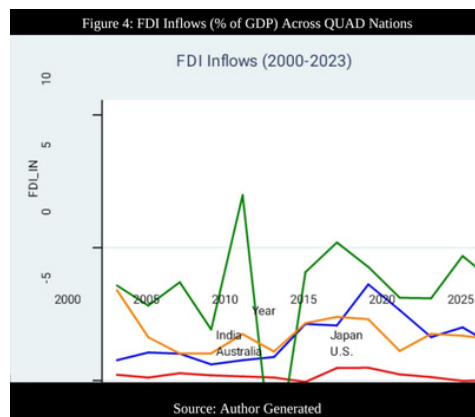


An export-led model, while effective for East Asia historically, may not uniformly apply across the QUAD. For India, enhancing trade facilitation and logistics infrastructure remains key. Meanwhile, Japan and Australia benefit from diversified export markets but are also exposed to China's economic fluctuations.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Inflows

FDI inflows averaged 1.74% of GDP, with India and Australia registering higher inflow variability. The negative minimum value (-3.61%) suggests occasional net capital flight or disinvestment, particularly during global downturns or policy uncertainty. The United States, while a major source of outbound FDI, remains a net recipient in high-tech and service sectors.

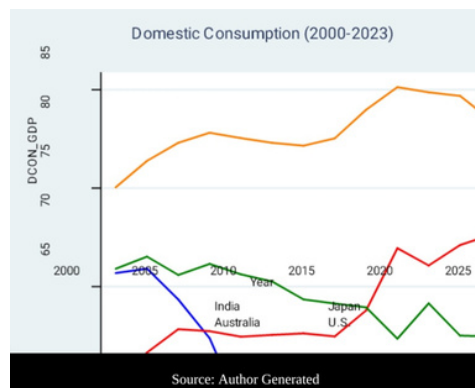
FDI is a critical variable for understanding external confidence and strategic engagement. India's FDI trends suggest rising interest in its manufacturing and digital sectors, boosted by liberalisation and production-linked incentives. Coordinated FDI strategies among QUAD nations—such as co-investment in critical technologies—could strengthen mutual economic security.



Domestic Consumption and Economic Resilience

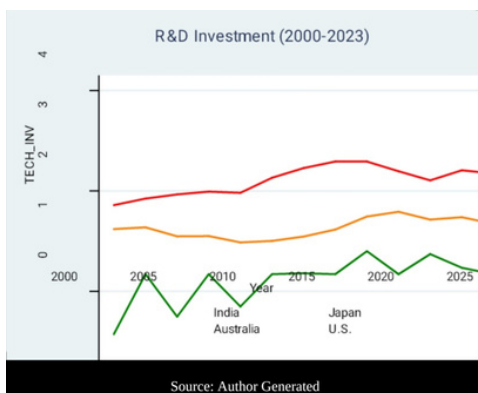
Domestic consumption accounted for 75.26% of GDP on average, highlighting the importance of internal markets across the QUAD. The U.S. leads in this regard, with a highly consumption-driven economy. India also exhibits high domestic demand, increasingly driven by an expanding middle class.

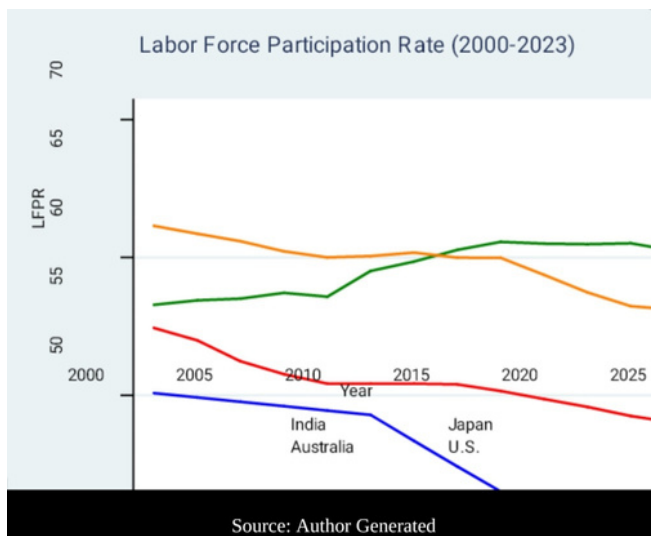
In contrast, Japan's ageing population constrains consumption growth, while Australia balances between exports and household spending. The high reliance on domestic demand across QUAD nations underscores the strategic potential of promoting internal market integration, such as enabling freer movement of digital services and investment.



Technological Investment

Technological investment averaged 2.21% of GDP, with Japan and the United States far ahead of India and Australia. The standard deviation (SD = 0.89) reflects the technology gap within the group. Japan remains a leader in robotics and manufacturing tech, while the U.S. dominates in AI, cloud infrastructure, and biotechnology. India's lower investment reflects capacity constraints, but also presents opportunities for strategic technology partnerships, particularly in digital public infrastructure. Joint R&D initiatives, cross-border intellectual property agreements, and capacity-building programs can bridge the tech investment gap.

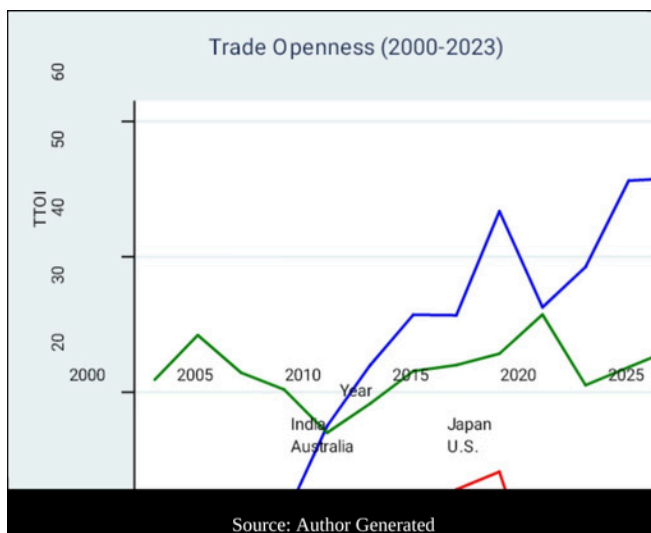




Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

LFPR across the QUAD averaged 61.21%, with India recording the lowest rates, especially among women. The United States and Australia consistently recorded higher participation rates, while Japan struggled with demographic ageing and gender disparities.

Addressing LFPR disparities—especially in India and Japan—is crucial for unlocking human capital potential. Policies that support female workforce inclusion, skills training, and flexible labour markets could have cross-QUAD relevance



Terms of Trade Index

The terms of trade index averaged 35.78, with high variance (SD = 9.24). Australia, due to its dependence on commodity exports, exhibited sharp fluctuations, reflecting its vulnerability to global price shocks. Japan's terms of trade remained relatively stable but sensitive to energy imports.

For the QUAD as a strategic unit, stabilising terms of trade through cooperative energy policy (e.g., clean energy transitions, critical minerals agreements) and diversified sourcing strategies can cushion external shocks.

Policy Implications

The comparative analysis of economic indicators across the QUAD nations underscores both the diversity and the strategic potential of this grouping. While each country brings unique strengths to the table, aligning economic strategies under a common framework could enhance collective resilience, regional integration, and global competitiveness. Below are several policy recommendations drawn from the findings.

Deepen Strategic Trade Coordination

Given the varied levels of export dependence and industrial development, QUAD nations can enhance strategic coordination by harmonising trade policies and identifying sectoral complementarities. For example:

India and Japan could expand bilateral value chains in electronics and automotive components. Australia's resource base could support U.S. and Japanese clean energy initiatives, including hydrogen and rare earths.

A shared Digital Trade Agreement could ease cross-border service delivery, cloud data flows, and AI governance.

Such cooperation would reduce reliance on non-aligned economies and enhance the resilience of QUAD-centric trade architecture.

Promote Inclusive Investment Frameworks

To leverage foreign direct investment as a growth multiplier, QUAD members should design shared investment standards and screening mechanisms for strategic sectors. These may include:

- Co-investment platforms in critical technologies (e.g., semiconductors, quantum computing).
- Infrastructure financing aligned with the Blue Dot Network principles.
- Enhanced support for start-ups and SMEs to scale innovation across borders.

A harmonised FDI approach would not only attract external capital but also prevent duplication and encourage knowledge spillovers among members.

Align Technological Development Agendas

Disparities in R&D investment highlight the need for more integrated innovation ecosystems. The QUAD should establish a Technology Cooperation Council to:

- Share R&D resources and laboratories.
- Fund joint ventures in areas like cybersecurity, health-tech, and renewable energy.
- Facilitate reciprocal access to patents, licensing regimes, and STEM talent mobility.

India's digital infrastructure initiatives (e.g., Digital Public Goods) and the U.S. leadership in software and AI can serve as anchors for regional collaboration.

Enhance Labour Market Resilience

The analysis shows uneven labour force participation, especially in India and Japan. Cross-national strategies can address this gap through:

- Workforce reskilling programs targeting digital and green economy sectors.
- Women's labour participation initiatives, including flexible work policies and childcare access.
- Mutual recognition of qualifications and certifications to ease labour mobility within the region.

Such labour policies would support inclusive growth and mitigate demographic and employment pressures.

Develop a QUAD Economic Resilience Mechanism

The volatility in GDP growth, FDI, and terms of trade—particularly in response to global shocks like COVID-19—calls for a formal mechanism to monitor and mitigate systemic risks. This could take the form of:

- A QUAD Economic Stability Board focused on real-time data sharing and crisis response.

- Joint reserves or swap arrangements for liquidity support.

- Coordinated fiscal stimuli in response to external demand collapses or geopolitical disruptions.

This institutionalisation would build economic trust and operational readiness within the QUAD.

Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the strategic and economic nexus of 21st-century geopolitics, and the QUAD—comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States—has the potential to shape the region's economic architecture in profound ways. This paper examined key economic indicators across the four countries from 2000 to 2023, using a comparative panel analysis to highlight areas of strength, divergence, and complementarity.

While each nation faces unique economic challenges—ranging from demographic ageing to labour force participation, technological investment gaps, and trade dependencies—their strategic alignment offers a historic opportunity. Coordinated policy frameworks on trade, technology, investment, and labour mobility can amplify each member's comparative advantage while insulating the group from external shocks and adversarial economic coercion.

Ultimately, the QUAD's success as an economic coalition will depend on its ability to institutionalise cooperation, balance asymmetries, and operationalise shared values into actionable strategies. As global uncertainties persist, building a resilient, inclusive, and innovation-driven Indo-Pacific economy may be the most consequential objective of the QUAD's evolving agenda.

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Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for India (2000–2023)

Variable	Count	Mean	SD	Min	Max
gdpgr	24	6.1776	3.10369	-5.77773	9.68959
indout	24	27.9796	2.12053	24.5915	31.1367
exp_gdp	24	20.0066	3.57139	12.5584	25.4309
fdi_in	24	1.61262	0.699155	0.605888	3.62052
dcon_gdp	24	69.7806	2.98212	65.6226	75.9083
tech_inv	24	0.917609	0.487302	0.64636	2.17059
lfpr	24	55.4436	2.97569	51.547	60.079
ttoi	24	43.0138	8.54245	25.9933	55.7937

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Japan (2000–2023)

Variable	Count	Mean	SD	Min	Max
gdpgr	24	0.738808	2.08241	-5.69324	4.09792
indout	24	28.8923	1.47974	26.5626	32.5136
exp_gdp	24	15.5519	3.14661	10.0768	21.8105
fdi_in	24	0.37782	0.343991	-0.0520879	1.23793
dcon_gdp	24	74.5671	2.12993	70.218	77.9928
tech_inv	24	3.07703	0.308455	2.17059	3.36788
lfpr	24	60.7289	1.18247	59.012	62.9
ttoi	24	31.0753	7.29484	19.5596	46.8437

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Australia (2000–2023)

Variable	Count	Mean	SD	Min	Max
gdpgr	24	2.83747	0.982478	-0.119591	4.24238
indout	24	25.0817	1.34516	22.32	27.6509
exp_gdp	24	21.1988	2.26569	17.1625	26.7992
fdi_in	24	3.26889	1.88282	-3.60693	6.98072
dcon_gdp	24	74.3154	1.56933	70.9904	76.9684
tech_inv	24	2.0992	0.195348	1.5732	2.39995
lfpr	24	65.0348	0.964264	63.282	66.784
ttoi	24	42.4668	2.59689	37.0096	49.2252

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for United States (2000–2023)

Variable	Count	Mean	SD	Min	Max
gdpgr	24	2.18505	1.79761	-2.5765	6.05505
indout	24	19.7206	1.41794	17.2677	22.4516
exp_gdp	24	11.4283	1.41275	9.03565	13.6441
fdi_in	24	1.7192	0.645054	0.641872	3.40578
dcon_gdp	24	82.3601	1.26351	80.0391	85.1263
tech_inv	24	2.73239	0.314391	2.17059	3.46777
lfpr	24	63.6358	1.4977	61.501	66.146
ttoi	24	26.5555	2.55821	22.2864	30.8425

Changing Perspectives of Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific: A Case of Pacific Island Countries (PICs)

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Abstract

The study of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical construct is usually understood from the threat perceptions in the maritime domain, the diplomatic and defence capabilities, the contestations, competitions, conflict of interests and cooperation. The threats and security culture of the Indo-Pacific is perceived by multiple players and emerging economies. Maritime security became a quintessential aspect of study due to the technological advancement, heightened trade and movement on the seas, multipolarity and questioning the status quo by China and Russia on the efficacy of the 'International Rules-based' order. The question is, do all the countries in the region follow the same pattern or the narratives used by the big and influential powers like the US and its allies? What is the role played by small island countries in the making of the world order? Though the central factor of the Indo-Pacific security perspective revolves around the US-China rivalry and the interplay of the littoral countries, the building of different narratives was also on the rise, especially human security. The role played by the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in building a different perspective on amalgamating traditional and non-traditional security aspects will be dealt with in the paper.

The PICs' ideas of the Indo-Pacific were to understand it from the perspective built by the US, Australia and New Zealand and hence were introspective. The Pacific Islanders feel that the emphasis is a lot tilted towards the Indian Ocean more than the Pacific Ocean, and the PICs were treated as pawns in the whole game of power politics. One significant reason is that the agency among the Indian Ocean littoral countries is more pronounced compared to the Pacific Island States. Secondly, the emerging economies in the Indian Ocean region and China's assertive claims on the South China Sea have led to a tug-of-war among claimant countries and China that has had an impact globally. Thirdly, the PICs are microstates; except for Papua New Guinea, with hardly any military power and have a local police force that takes care of the domestic law and order situation, and hence the Pacific Rim countries fill the gap of containing China. Fourthly, the Pacific region has always been under the Anglo-American influence ever since the colonial rule from the 18th century and was strictly fortified as forward defence.

Pacific Island Countries (PICs)

The Pacific Ocean is surrounded by powerful countries like the US, Canada, Peru, Chile on the west and China, Japan, Russia, parts of Southeast Asia on the east and Australia and New Zealand to the South; the Pacific Rim countries created the strategic culture of the region. Nearly 25,000 small and scattered islands on the Pacific Ocean are aligned with the Pacific Rim Countries by politics, history and culture. Due to seaborne trade, the PICs became the transit point for global trade and thus gained strategic importance. The geographical positioning of the Pacific Islands provides advantages for monitoring and controlling naval movements in the Pacific, and Maritime Domain awareness becomes critical as it can control telecommunication and transport routes, critical infrastructure and marine resources. Moreover, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept brought the PICs geopolitical relevance, where the great game of balancing and contestations is played against China by all the powers.

Contrarily, before the Second World War, PICs remained insignificant until the US entered the region to fight and defeat Japan after the Pearl Harbour attack. In the late 18th Century, these islands were colonised by the UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands, and after Germany was defeated in the First World War, its possessions were divided by the victors. Colonisers gave a cartographical representation to the islands and divided them into three cultural regions: Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. Colonialism had significantly changed the identity of the PICs into 'a subaltern entity at the margins of global power, and the major task of the islanders was to gain their lost place in the table of nations and be recognised as independent sovereign states.' The story of independence is woven around their smallness, remoteness, most importantly for being resource-rich and lastly for being strategically proximate to the Pacific Rim countries. Most of the islands gained independence in the late 1960s and 70s; New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna remained under the French as French overseas territories. Niue and Cook Islands were freely associated to New Zealand, Pitcairn Island remained under UK and Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau remained in Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States while Guam and American Samoa remained as the unincorporated states of the United States that were made into strong military bases by the United States in the Pacific region. Ever since the Second World War and the Cold War, the region has been carefully fortified by the American forces. The region remained within the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Furthermore, 'institutionalisation of a direct and comprehensive involvement in regional affairs by the United States changed the pattern of regional politics in a fundamental way.' During the post-Cold War period, the United States shifted its focus and withdrew diplomatic presence, closed USAID to Fiji and Papua New Guinea, and removed the Subic Naval base from the Philippines, making it easy for China's entry. Though it withdrew from the Pacific, its strategic importance could not be undermined; in 1990, the Solarz report was released to engage with the PICs and act as a balancer for regional order and stability while using it for the forward deployment of forces all across the Pacific region. Australia has been the regional power and has willfully acknowledged the US and UK's presence in the region and also individually chalked out the region for strategic denial for nearly 140 years. China's entry has disrupted the age-old calculation in the region.

China, PICs and the Great Game

China entered the region with its 'cheque-book' diplomacy, a no-strings-attached loan system defying the western norms of aid, grants and loans. China was also able to spread the narrative that the Western powers are paternalistic and do not heed to Pacific Islands' core interests. Since China shows itself to be a developing country like the PICs, with a shared history of imperialism and hence belonging to the 'South-South Cooperation' category. Though China was able to manipulate the PICs, the financial crisis of Sri Lanka and China's debt-trap diplomacy in weak states like Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Cambodia were examples enough for the islanders to be cautious and not depend upon China more than necessary. The traditional partners, like Australia and New Zealand, who are also the major donors of the PICs, are much more reliable than China in the region. China's entry into the region made the regional powers wary of its intentions since Chinese aid, its development initiatives, labour and environmental standards are directly linked to corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, leading to ineffective governance mechanisms and infrastructural development. The regional powers like the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and India, from the past decade, have channelled their priorities with PICs and made a visible contribution in bringing the island nations towards their Indo-Pacific strategy. Australia's 'Pacific step-up' was to support a more resilient region with enhanced partnership with economic growth, security and people-to-people ties. New Zealand's 'Pacific Reset' was like Australia's Pacific step-up to involve the islanders in decision-making on their policies and to train and capacitate the island countries so that the islanders can deal with the Chinese style of political manoeuvring and diplomacy.

China's entry was easier since, during the post-Cold War era, almost all of the PICs were decolonised and were serious about taking independent decisions away from their diplomatic dependence on Australia and New Zealand. Creating an islander identity was simultaneously carried out along with autonomy in decision-making. Most of the islands, apart from Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Solomon Islands, do not have arable land and were dependent on imports of food, manufacturing goods, pharmaceuticals, etc, which has made them aid dependent, and China is willing to aid and invest in the PICs. The post-colonial governance patterns clashing with the traditional patterns led to poor governance structures, while unbridled aid and secrecy in aid distribution by Chinese authorities led to corruption, which had its precedent in the Cold War days.

During the Cold War period, these islands were slowly decolonising, so it was easy for the US and Australia to keep them tied with aid, which eventually led to high corruption, cargo cult, civil strife, and severely hampered the governance mechanisms. Aid became a political and diplomatic tool of both the Pacific Rim countries as well as the Pacific islanders. The Post-Cold War was different since China had already made visible inroads in the region, unlike the USSR during the Cold War with aid or rather through 'chequebook diplomacy.' China's BRI is signed by PNG, Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga and Vanuatu. 4 billion USD was promised to PNG to build the first national road network, a 1600 KM highway by China. For Tonga and Vanuatu, nearly 50-60 per cent of the total foreign debt is owed to China. China's debt trap diplomacy is quite known by the island countries, but then Australia is still the number 1 donor through its Pacific Aid Map compared to the next largest donor in the region, with China in the second place.

To stop China's increasing influence, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, and the US have stepped up with more political, diplomatic and economic assistance to the islands. Though China was successful in signing Comprehensive Security Partnerships (CSPs) with Solomon Islands and Cook Islands for law enforcement mechanisms, police training and other issues, we can see that the islands are not really dependent on China, as the popular anxiety of Australia and the US goes. The Police Cooperation Agreement that was signed by Frank Bainimarama with China in 2011 was stalled by Sitiveni Rabuka, the present Prime Minister of Fiji, who had allowed the Chinese Police force to be deployed in Fiji. Tuvalu refused China's proposal to build an artificial island as a relief mechanism for Climate Change, instead giving diplomatic support to Taiwan. Palau is a case in point where China is using every possible tactic to make it refute its diplomatic support to Taiwan. PICs are playing in their terms, but they are following the narrative of the Indo-Pacific is an important question. The Pacific Islands' maritime perspective is their oceanic identity. The security culture that was woven by the PICs is quite different from the majority of big powers.

Maritime Threat Perception of the PICs

Islands face maritime threats from not only geopolitical aspects of security but also from a lack of capability to maintain their vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) due to Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, gill-net fishing and drift-net fishing, causing environmental hazards, plastic pollution and heightened tourism. Lack of proper law enforcement mechanisms leads to faulty development and bad governance, aid dependence due to unsustainable economies, and importantly, being geographically extensive and scattered all across the Pacific Ocean makes connectivity and disaster management a gigantic challenge. Climate Change is one singular problem that is described as the 'death sentence' for the Pacific. Sea level rise, coastal flooding, loss of biodiversity, extreme weather patterns, acidification of seas, coral bleaching and warming of the seas made local fishing a severe challenge. Water salinity, freshwater scarcity and resource scarcity led to deeper hazards on livelihoods and day-to-day survival. In short, Climate Change and global warming multiply the risks and threats to maritime security. Transnational crime is another major issue in the Pacific Islands, which are vulnerable to drug traffickers due to weak borders and a severe lack of capacity to tackle and trace the movements.

Transnational crime has a 'maritime dimension leading to illegal logging, illegal trade in wildlife and trafficking in drugs and small arms, apart from IUU fishing, more so due to weak legislation, poor communication and low cooperation.'

Human trafficking, sea robbery are also found in the region. In order to address these challenges, PICs need to cooperate with the traditional regional powers while strictly adhering to their narrative of security and strategic autonomy. The 2018 Boe Declaration had set the pace for an exclusive 'Pacific narrative' of regional security through the 'Blue Pacific.' Baron Waqa, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), had mentioned at the 53rd meeting of PIF at Tonga that "though being small countries, as the Blue Pacific Continent we are a force to be reckoned with and we are at the centre of strategic geopolitical interests." The tensions between China and Taiwan, the US and China have considerably brought the islands into the realists' realm, but the island countries have insisted that Climate Change is a singular objective to be achieved as an immediate strategy of the Pacific Islanders.

Blue Pacific Narrative

The narrative on maritime security of the Pacific region was mostly found to be by the big and powerful countries. The Pacific Islanders do not comply with the realist perspectives of security and geopolitical manoeuvring by creating a strategic culture leading to militarisation, arms race and nuclear proliferation. These islands are small according to popular understanding of geographic space. But these islands are not small because they have large EEZs, making them large oceanic countries with an oceanic identity, a maritime identity. Their perception of security is existence, survival, identity and dignity. Their assertive attitude is seen in this new Pacific Diplomacy; to take care of their regional diplomatic agenda by creating institutions and to popularise the Pacific voice globally. Sustainable development, economic growth, climate change, water security, violence against women, urbanisation, unemployment, oceans management, fisheries and decolonisation are the real issues that form the security perspective. The strategic culture of the Pacific islanders is quite new, which is seen in the framing of strategies by Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) 'Draft Strategic Plan 2017-2020' that emphasized on self-determination and green and blue Pacific for economic development, sustainable and inclusive economic growth while questioning mining, carbon emissions, illegal and unregulated fishing within their EEZs and forestry management, even deep seabed mining. Given their fragile ecosystem, Climate Change is the primary cause for concern.

The concept of 'Blue Pacific' is to create a counter-narrative of security and threat perceptions for being the first victims of global warming. Pivotal to PICs' responsibility and stewardship is the issue of Climate Change. The term 'Blue Pacific' was coined by Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi at the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) for freedom to express their interests, autonomy and independence and the ability to determine their understanding of regional security. Blue Pacific is primarily to portray pan-oceanic identity as 'oceanic people' with an oceanic cultural heritage. Blue Pacific 'is the core driver for collective action to enhance Pacific regionalism, with an expanded concept of security an inclusion of human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and Climate Change.' Blue Pacific is an expression that showcases Pacific agency with alacrity; a collective action to tackle the Pacific's major security threat, i.e., climate change. 'This is a historical opportunity for the Pacific Rim countries to engage with PICs in their own terms, if not, PICs will not be ideally be involved in the Indo-Pacific Strategy.' Building Pacific resilience has become a top priority of the PICs, which means deciphering what are long-term interests of the region i.e., economic empowerment, infrastructural development, encouraging renewable energy and agriculture, with increasing expertise on homegrown investments, fisheries and tourism management. The Boe Declaration in 2018 emphasised regional security to broaden the concept of security to include human security, cyber and environmental security, which is to be carried out from the newly established Australian Pacific College and Pacific Fusion Centre. The non-traditional security aspects were highlighted in the Boe Declaration, like Climate Change, water security, violence against women, urbanisation, inequality, youth unemployment, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and corruption.

Conclusion

PICs want the world to know that climate change is reshaping the world map and also the parameters on which one is accustomed to living. Though the colonisers and US from Second World War used cartographical interpretations for demarcating boundaries and regions; it seems like the impact of climate change will again remove these countries from the map and this time it will be due to human negligence and repeated negation to the notion of global warming as an immediate threat or present calamity. Climate change, instead of global warming, has pushed the threat to future generations, saying we are safe, but not the future, so we can breathe for now and plan for the future. This is the very reason why the targets of global emissions were not reduced, nor followed by the industrialised countries, from 2 degrees to 1.5 degrees.

Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Tuvalu are all atolls, i.e., ring-shaped reefs with an inner pool called the lagoon. Most of the islands have coral reefs that balance vegetation in the deep sea, and due to acidification of the oceans, coral bleaching has become a dangerous phenomenon, creating major disruption to the biodiversity of deep ocean beds. Plastic pollution and tourism have further deteriorated the oceans' biodiversity. China's CSP with the Cook Islands is a major cause of concern due to the seabed mining, since research on the environmental consequences of deep-seabed mining is not yet known. So the Pacific Island Forum and Pacific Island Development Forum need to strongly refute such proposals until further understanding and research is done. Thus, the maritime security perspective of the Pacific Islanders is preservation and conservation of the maritime region and hence should propose the region to be a Zone of Peace for the basic survival and conservation of the pristine nature. PIC's major concern is human security; good governance, decolonisation, economic growth, labour mobility, women empowerment, digital connectivity, blue and green economy, which was comfortably intertwined with the traditional security. PICs are at the juncture where the great power game has not made them pawns but protagonists and autonomous decision-makers of the region. PICs are also pursuing constructive cooperation with Australia, New Zealand (the traditional regional partners), Japan, the US and India, which can constrain the adverse effects of Chinese diplomacy and also bring the countries out of aid dependency by creating better governance structures that could enhance economic growth and climate resilience.

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U.S. Peace Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: Comparative Analysis of Trump and Biden Administration (2019-2025)

"The United States is an Indo-Pacific power... In the years ahead, as the region drives as much as two-thirds of global economic growth, its influence will only grow—as will its importance to the United States."

--The United States Indo-Pacific Strategy, February 2022[1] (Yuki Tatsumi, 2025)

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Abstract

Maintaining peace in international relations is traditionally understood to imply the absence of war, conflict or direct violence. However, apart from this negative definition of peace, there is also a positive aspect of peace, which involves ensuring cooperation, justice, stability, and order to avoid direct war or military confrontation between states. The Indo-Pacific region, which has evolved as the theatre of global geopolitics, can also be understood through this positive aspect of peace. In the region, the United States has been ensuring its strategic presence to deter China's dominance through security, diplomacy and economic cooperation. This paper attempts to analyse through comparison the US Peace Strategy in the Indo-Pacific under Donald Trump's administration (2019) and Joe Biden's administration (2022), with the focus on military posturing, economic engagement, and diplomatic outreach. Three case studies of the Taiwan crisis, South China Sea disputes, and India-China border tensions are incorporated to assess the effectiveness of U.S. peace strategic approaches.

Keywords: US peace strategy, Indo-Pacific, Trump administration, Biden Administration, etc.

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific in recent decades has become the centre of global strategic competition, which is driven primarily by the rise of China's dominance in the region and counterbalance attempts from the U.S. to dismantle it. Peace in the region is monumental for maintaining stability and security for all.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy has evolved over time, reflecting different administrations' approaches to military, economic, and diplomatic challenges. The Trump administration's 2019 strategy emphasised hard power, economic nationalism, and bilateralism, while Biden's 2022 approach focused more on multilateral engagement, alliance-building, and economic integration through frameworks like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). As Trump reassumes office in 2025, his approach is expected to reflect elements of his earlier strategy but adjusted to contemporary geopolitical realities.

The central argument of this paper is that peace in the Indo-Pacific is not merely the absence of conflict but the establishment of strategic stability and order to deter war and confrontation. The research evaluates the comparative strengths and limitations of the Trump and Biden strategies and offers a forward-looking framework for Trump's anticipated 2025 approach.

Comparative Analysis: Indo-Pacific Strategy under Trump (2019) and Biden (2022)

Military Strategy

The Indo-Pacific region, encompassing vital maritime routes and geopolitical flashpoints such as the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, has emerged as a central axis of U.S. foreign policy. Both the Trump (2019) and Biden (2022) administrations viewed the region as a strategic priority, but their military approaches reflect significant differences in emphasis, operational modalities, and alliance management.

Trump's Indo-Pacific Strategy

The Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy emphasised hard power deterrence and the projection of military strength as the primary means of countering the People's Republic of China's (PRC) assertive behaviour in the region. The strategy focused on ensuring a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) through increased freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs), particularly in contested waters such as the South China Sea, where Beijing's artificial island-building and militarisation posed a direct challenge to international maritime norms.

Trump expanded U.S. naval presence in the region and ramped up bilateral military engagements with key partners, notably through arms sales to Taiwan and India. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) received renewed strategic prioritisation, with an increased defence budget allocation and calls for advanced missile systems and forward-operating capabilities.

Furthermore, under Trump, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)—comprising the United States, Japan, India, and Australia—was revitalised with a heavy military dimension in 2017. Joint exercises such as the Malabar naval drills were expanded, emphasising interoperability, high-seas deterrence, and readiness against Chinese maritime adventurism. However, critics argue that Trump's emphasis on bilateralism and burden-sharing occasionally strained regional alliances and overlooked the value of multilateral diplomacy.

Biden's Indo-Pacific Strategy

President Biden's 2022 Indo-Pacific strategy preserved many of the military deterrence components from his predecessor's framework but recalibrated them within a broader architecture of multilateral cooperation, alliance-building, and integrated deterrence. Rather than focusing solely on unilateral military assertiveness, Biden promoted a more holistic concept of deterrence that included economic, technological, and diplomatic elements alongside military power.

One of the most significant shifts was the launch of AUKUS—a trilateral security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. AUKUS exemplified Biden's commitment to enhancing maritime security through cutting-edge defence collaboration, notably by facilitating the provision of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia and fostering joint research in cyber, AI, and undersea warfare capabilities. This marked a clear departure from Trump's bilateralism, advancing collective deterrence. Additionally, Biden emphasised maritime domain awareness (MDA) and interoperability among regional forces. Initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness program aimed to share real-time intelligence and satellite data with smaller Southeast Asian nations, strengthening their ability to monitor and respond to Chinese grey-zone tactics.

Importantly, Biden's military strategy placed ASEAN at the centre of his regional security vision. The administration's language and outreach signalled an intent to avoid creating rigid blocs that might alienate Southeast Asian partners. Biden's inclusion of ASEAN in strategic dialogues, combined with capacity-building efforts, signalled a return to coalition-based leadership in contrast to Trump's transactional and sometimes confrontational posture.

In sum, while both administrations recognised the centrality of military deterrence in managing Indo-Pacific tensions, Trump pursued a more unilateral, hardware-intensive approach focused on raw deterrence and power projection. In contrast, Biden integrated military tools within a broader diplomatic and multilateral framework, like seeking to involve ASEAN more actively in regional security, reflecting a more layered and inclusive conception of regional security.

Economic Strategy

The economic dimension of U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is critical to shaping regional alignments, enhancing resilience against Chinese coercion, and ensuring sustained American influence in an increasingly multipolar order. While both Trump and Biden acknowledged the economic centrality of the Indo-Pacific, their strategic orientations diverged significantly in terms of structure, ideology, and engagement mechanisms.

Trump's Economic Strategy

President Donald Trump's Indo-Pacific economic policy was grounded in economic nationalism, protectionism, and a rejection of the liberal internationalist economic frameworks that had defined prior administrations. Trump's most consequential move in the region was his withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in January 2017, which he labelled as "the death blow for American manufacturing" as it would undermine "US economy and sovereignty." It was an ambitious multilateral trade agreement originally intended to serve as a U.S.-led counterweight to China's economic rise. By 2019, this decision had fully crystallised into a broader strategic posture that prioritised bilateralism and trade leverage over multilateralism and rule-based economic cooperation.

Trump initiated a series of tariff escalations against many countries, but more pertinently on China, triggering a full-scale U.S.-China trade war that had reverberating effects throughout the Indo-Pacific. The administration imposed tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods, citing intellectual property theft, unfair subsidies, and trade imbalances. While these measures were aimed at reducing U.S. economic dependence on China, they also disrupted global supply chains and created uncertainty among Asian economies caught between the two giants.

Rather than pursuing region-wide economic integration, Trump favoured bilateral trade agreements—such as the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement, U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement and revisions to the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS)—which he believed provided greater negotiating power and ensured "America First" benefits. However, critics argue that this approach reduced U.S. credibility as a long-term economic partner and opened the door for China to expand its economic footprint via the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Biden's Economic Strategy

President Biden, while continuing some elements of economic decoupling from China, recalibrated U.S. strategy by re-engaging with regional partners through a multilateral economic vision. Central to this vision was the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May 2022—a non-traditional trade initiative involving 14 Indo-Pacific countries including USA, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. IPEF was designed not as a free trade agreement, but as a flexible framework encompassing four key pillars: (1) fair and resilient trade, (2) supply chain resilience, (3) clean energy and decarbonization, and (4) tax and anti-corruption standards.

IPEF represented a strategic response to regional demands for U.S. economic leadership without the political risks of market access concessions. Through it, Biden sought to build resilient and secure supply chains, reduce strategic dependency on China, and create a rules-based economic architecture that aligned with democratic values. While lacking tariff reductions or enforcement mechanisms, IPEF nonetheless signalled Washington's intent to shape the region's economic norms in areas like digital trade, labour standards, and green transitions.

In contrast to Trump's confrontational and protectionist rhetoric, Biden's approach emphasised partnerships, capacity building, and infrastructure investment, particularly in Southeast Asia. Initiatives such as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) were aimed at offering credible alternatives to China's BRI by funding digital infrastructure, clean energy, and health systems across the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, Biden pushed for digital trade rules and data governance in line with U.S. standards, aiming to harmonise regulatory environments and promote the free flow of data with trust. This was evident in dialogues with economies like Japan, Singapore, and South Korea, which are central to the regional tech and semiconductor ecosystems.

In essence, while Trump's economic Indo-Pacific strategy was largely defensive and bilateral, shaped by zero-sum thinking and punitive tariffs, Biden's was proactive and aimed to be normative, when it tried to prioritise institution-building and networked economic resilience. Where Trump sought leverage, Biden sought legitimacy.

Where Trump dismantled multilateralism, Biden attempted to reinvent it without politically costly free trade agreements. Yet, both strategies shared the underlying objective of containing Chinese economic influence, albeit through markedly different means.

Noteworthy is the Biden administration's continuation of the trade war and, in fact, revision of the tariff restrictions to include restrictions on access to US Artificial Intelligence chips and chipmaking tools. Consequently, even though the approaches have been different, the trade war and attempts to contain China have been the underpinning of US foreign Policy in the Indo-Pacific region.

Diplomatic Engagement

Diplomatic engagement remains a cornerstone of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy, shaping how Washington aligns with allies, manages rivalries, and projects influence across a region characterised by political diversity and strategic competition. The Trump and Biden administrations adopted notably different diplomatic approaches, particularly in their treatment of multilateral institutions, regional blocs, and normative leadership.

Trump's Diplomatic Strategy

President Trump's Indo-Pacific diplomatic engagement was defined by a bilateralist approach, rooted in his administration's preference for transactional relationships and scepticism toward multilateralism. The U.S. under Trump prioritised ties with a narrow set of major partners—particularly Japan, India, and Australia—which formed the core of the revived Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). High-level summits and defence agreements were aimed at reinforcing this “concert of democracies” to counterbalance China's growing assertiveness.

Trump also cultivated personal diplomacy with leaders such as India's Narendra Modi and Japan's Shinzo Abe, emphasising strategic convergence on regional security and economic matters. Notably, the U.S.-India relationship gained significant momentum, including deepening defence cooperation and symbolic displays of solidarity such as the “Howdy Modi” and “Namaste Trump” events.

However, this focus on a few strategic partners came at the cost of broader regional engagement. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—a central actor in Indo-Pacific diplomacy—received limited attention. Trump's erratic participation in ASEAN-related summits and the lack of sustained diplomatic outreach created a perception of U.S. disengagement from Southeast Asia. Additionally, the U.S. under Trump failed to appoint a permanent ambassador to ASEAN, further weakening Washington's regional presence.

Noteworthy is also President Trump's Indo-Pacific diplomatic engagement that marked a distinct departure from the Obama administration's “Pivot to Asia”, which had emphasised multilateral diplomacy, economic integration, and sustained strategic presence in the region. Under Obama, the U.S. actively cultivated relationships across East and Southeast Asia through regular summitry, strengthened ties with ASEAN, and initiatives like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The term “Pivot to Asia”—later reframed as the “Rebalance to Asia”—encapsulated this vision of increasing U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military engagement with the fastest-growing region in the world.

In contrast, Trump's approach represented a partial retrenchment from Asian multilateralism. While the Trump administration advanced the Indo-Pacific narrative and underscored the region's geostrategic importance, it prioritised bilateral relationships over institutional diplomacy. The administration often bypassed regional frameworks and forums that were central to Obama's strategy, including limited U.S. participation in ASEAN-led mechanisms and neglect of key multilateral summits like the East Asia Summit and APEC.

This erosion of multilateral engagement weakened U.S. credibility in Southeast Asia, a region where smaller states value inclusive dialogue and institutional balance against great power politics. Southeast Asian leaders expressed concern over Washington's inconsistent attendance at regional summits, which was often interpreted as a lack of commitment. The failure to nominate a U.S. ambassador to ASEAN for much of Trump's term further reinforced perceptions of disengagement.

Moreover, Trump's transactional diplomacy—shaped by an “America First” ethos—often treated allies and partners as competitors rather than collaborators. This approach undermined trust and alienated regional actors who had become accustomed to the cooperative tone of the Obama years. Washington's withdrawal from the TPP, arguably the economic backbone of the Pivot to Asia, sent a particularly damaging signal to regional economies that had invested political capital in U.S.-led trade architecture.

In sum, while Trump's Indo-Pacific rhetoric affirmed the region's importance, his administration's diplomatic posture represented a strategic regression from Obama's peak-era engagement. It substituted comprehensive regional diplomacy with selective bilateralism and reduced institutional presence, leaving a vacuum that Beijing was quick to take advantage of through its own multilateral and developmental diplomacy, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and active participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Consequently, multilateral platforms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) were often sidelined by the Trump administration, contributing to a narrative that the United States was retreating from its traditional leadership role. Trump's broader “America First” rhetoric and withdrawal from agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and the TPP reinforced the impression of diplomatic unilateralism, undermining U.S. credibility among smaller Indo-Pacific nations.

Biden's Diplomatic Strategy

President Biden reversed many of the diplomatic tendencies of his predecessor by pursuing a multilateralist, alliance-restorative approach to Indo-Pacific engagement. Recognising the strategic vacuum left by Trump's retreat from regional forums, Biden made a concerted effort to rebuild ties with ASEAN, elevate Pacific Island nations in the strategic calculus, and reassert U.S. presence in regional diplomatic architectures.

Biden's strategy was not simply additive diplomacy but integrative diplomacy—linking economic initiatives, security frameworks, and environmental cooperation to a broader vision of an open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. His administration appointed a dedicated U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN and held high-level dialogues with Southeast Asian leaders, signalling a renewed commitment to ASEAN centrality.

In 2022, Biden hosted the first-ever U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit in Washington, where issues such as infrastructure investment, pandemic recovery, and maritime security were addressed. The administration also launched the “Partners in the Blue Pacific” initiative, aimed at strengthening diplomatic and developmental ties with Pacific Island nations that had increasingly come under Chinese influence through aid and infrastructure diplomacy.

Biden's diplomatic engagement was characterised by a networked and consultative approach, often combining symbolic gestures with institutional mechanisms. While the Quad was retained and upgraded to the level of a leader-level summit, it was framed less as an anti-China coalition and more as a platform for regional public goods—COVID-19 vaccine distribution, climate cooperation, and supply chain resilience.

Moreover, Biden's diplomacy sought to reaffirm normative leadership by linking foreign policy with values such as democracy, transparency, and human rights. This was evident in the administration's emphasis on a “free, open, connected, prosperous, resilient, and secure” Indo-Pacific, which aligned with the aspirations of many regional actors wary of hegemonic dominance.

In contrast to Trump's reliance on leader-centric diplomacy and strategic exclusivity, Biden's approach aimed to broaden and deepen U.S. engagement, reinforcing alliances while also engaging middle and smaller powers. His use of diplomatic statecraft as a bridge between economic frameworks like IPEF and security platforms like AUKUS (trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK and the USA) represented a more coherent and inclusive vision for U.S. regional leadership.

Strategic Flashpoints in the Indo-Pacific: Case Studies of U.S. Engagement

The Indo-Pacific is defined not only by its strategic ambitions and diplomatic frameworks but also by several high-stakes flashpoints that test the efficacy and credibility of U.S. regional engagement. This section examines three critical zones of tension—Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the India-China border—where U.S. strategic behaviour under Presidents Trump and Biden has shaped regional security dynamics.

The Taiwan Crisis

Taiwan remains one of the most volatile and symbolically charged issues in the Indo-Pacific, embodying the broader contest between U.S. support for democratic partners and China's pursuit of territorial unification. The island's geostrategic location near major shipping lanes and advanced semiconductor production capabilities further elevate its global importance.

The Trump administration escalated U.S. support for Taiwan to unprecedented levels since formal diplomatic ties were severed in 1979. Major arms sales—amounting to over \$18 billion by the end of his term—included advanced missile systems, tanks, and F-16 fighter jets. The administration also expanded Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) through the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, signalling a strong deterrent posture. Moreover, Trump's 2018 Taiwan Travel Act and 2019 Taiwan Assurance Act facilitated greater diplomatic engagement and unofficial exchanges, aggravating Beijing.

The Biden administration, on the other hand, not only continued Trump's military assistance and naval presence but also sought to temper tensions through strategic ambiguity and calibrated diplomacy. Biden publicly reaffirmed U.S. commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act, while engaging Beijing in multiple high-level dialogues to prevent miscalculations. His administration emphasised maintaining the status quo and discouraged unilateral changes through force. The U.S. also worked with allies like Japan and Australia to reinforce Taiwan's international space and resilience, integrating Taiwan into broader regional discussions without triggering overt escalation from Beijing.

South China Sea Disputes

The South China Sea (SCS) is a hotspot of maritime disputes involving multiple claimants, including China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei. The region is rich in natural resources and vital for global trade, making it a central theatre in the Indo-Pacific competition between the U.S. and China.

The Trump administration adopted a hardline stance by regularising FONOPs and conducting joint military exercises with regional actors such as Vietnam and the Philippines. It rejected China's maritime claims as inconsistent with international law, particularly the 2016 UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) arbitral ruling favouring the Philippines. U.S. ships routinely sailed within 12 nautical miles of disputed features to challenge Chinese militarisation and assert freedom of navigation. Trump also upgraded security ties with Manila and Hanoi, offering arms deals and increased defence dialogues.

President Biden alternatively advanced a multilateral and technology-driven approach, focusing on enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through the Quad and AUKUS. He emphasised collaborative surveillance, intelligence sharing, and coast guard cooperation with ASEAN states. Unlike Trump, Biden actively engaged ASEAN as a central stakeholder, promoting legal norms and peaceful dispute resolution through forums such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. His administration invested in undersea cable security and joint maritime exercises that linked deterrence with capacity building.

India-China Border Tensions

The India-China border, particularly along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), has emerged as a major land-based flashpoint in the Indo-Pacific, especially after the deadly 2020 Galwan Valley clashes. This standoff has implications for U.S. strategic partnerships, particularly with India. Trump's administration significantly expanded U.S.-India military cooperation, promoting interoperability and defence sales. The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), which is a foundational agreement between the U.S. and India, and close partners, was aimed at enhancing military interoperability, particularly in communications. It facilitates secure real-time exchange of information and data between the armed forces of both countries, including the sale of high-end technology. The agreement was signed on September 6, 2018, during the inaugural 2+2 dialogue. The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is a defence agreement between the United States and India that facilitates the exchange of geospatial intelligence and other military data.

This agreement, signed in 2020, allowed for the sharing of real-time geospatial data, including satellite imagery, which can be used for military targeting, navigation, and other defence purposes. These agreements, signed under Trump, enhanced real-time intelligence sharing and geospatial cooperation, contributing directly to India's border preparedness. U.S.-India joint exercises like Yudh Abhyas (aimed at enhancing interoperability, cooperation, and understanding between the two militaries focus on areas like counter-terrorism operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and sharing of best practices) and Tiger Triumph (which is a bilateral tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) amphibious exercise between India and the United States) demonstrated growing strategic alignment in the wake of rising Chinese assertiveness.

The Biden administration strategically built upon the defence and strategic foundations laid during the Trump era by significantly deepening India's integration into multilateral security architectures, most prominently the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which includes the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. While Trump had laid the groundwork for stronger bilateral military ties with India, Biden expanded this framework through institutionalised cooperation, emphasising shared democratic values and mutual concerns about China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

A key priority for the Biden administration was enhancing defence technology collaboration. This involved not only continued arms sales but also joint development and co-production initiatives, such as cooperation on advanced drones, jet engines, and cyber-defence technologies. Central to this effort was the launch of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) in January 2023. iCET aimed to institutionalise collaboration in frontier areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, space, and semiconductors, reflecting a long-term strategic commitment to building India's capacity as a technological and military partner.

Biden's administration also lent political and diplomatic support to India's ambitions of developing an indigenous military-industrial base, aligning with New Delhi's Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) policy. This support took the form of facilitating joint ventures, easing export controls, and encouraging U.S. private sector investment in Indian defence startups.

In the realm of strategic dialogues, Biden engaged India in high-level consultations not only on Indo-Pacific maritime security but also on sensitive continental flashpoints, such as the Himalayas, where India faces persistent Chinese military pressure. This multidimensional approach portrayed India not just as a regional partner but as a strategic pillar in maintaining deterrence and balance of power across the broader Indo-Pacific arc.

Therefore, both the administration's approaches varied on the Taiwan Crisis: while the U.S. increased arms sales to Taiwan and conducted naval operations through the Taiwan Strait to signal deterrence under Trump, Biden's approach reinforced these commitments but placed greater emphasis on diplomatic engagement with China to avoid escalation. On the issue of South China Sea Disputes, Trump's strategy involved regular FONOPs and increased defence cooperation with Vietnam and the Philippines. Biden's approach enhanced maritime domain awareness through AUKUS and increased ASEAN's involvement in conflict resolution. And on the India-China Border Tensions, while Trump's strategy deepened U.S.-India military cooperation, including joint military exercises and defence technology transfers, Biden's strategy expanded this cooperation through the Quad and technology-sharing agreements.

Projected Strategic Outlook: Trump 2.0 and the Indo-Pacific Balance

In his anticipated second term, President Trump is expected to reassert a strategy centred on hard power projection, economic nationalism, and strategic bilateralism. This strategy aims to restore American naval dominance, particularly in the South China Sea, while reinforcing U.S.-ASEAN security coordination without significantly increasing foreign aid commitments.

On the India front, Trump has already signed a 10-year military cooperation agreement with New Delhi, signalling a long-term commitment to enhancing bilateral defence ties. His administration is likely to focus on deepening U.S.-India defence industrial partnerships, expanding joint military readiness programs, and enhancing operational interoperability to deter Chinese aggression along the Himalayan frontier.

Militarily, Trump is expected to prioritise deterrence through increased forward deployments and expansion of joint military exercises across the Indo-Pacific. He may also strengthen the Quad's rapid response capacity, making it a more agile and mission-ready grouping, while focusing on arms sales and defence tech co-production, especially with India and Australia. Economically, Trump is expected to move away from multilateral economic frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) and return to bilateral trade agreements. His approach may include encouraging private-sector-led infrastructure investment, promoting reshoring and friend-shoring to build resilient supply chains independent of China and emphasising "America First" economic nationalism aligned with the continuation of his "Make America Great Again" campaign.

Diplomatically, Trump may adopt selective engagement, where ASEAN and Pacific Island nations are viewed as strategic buffers, with security ties strengthened but aid commitments limited. He may also give priority to transactional diplomacy, emphasising mutual strategic benefit over normative alliances. Technologically, his administration is likely to deepen cooperation with Indo-Pacific allies—particularly India, Japan, and Australia—on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity, semiconductor development and digital infrastructure resilience and restricting the regional spread of Chinese 5G and digital surveillance technologies.

Hence, to ensure long-term sustained peace, order and stability in the Indo-Pacific, a Trump-led U.S. should intensify U.S.-India military cooperation, including joint production, technology transfers, and logistics integration. It will also have to strategically engage ASEAN and Pacific Island states through a balance of security guarantees and economic incentives. And finally, to secure digital infrastructure, the US will aim to promote alternatives to Chinese technology ecosystems and enhance regional cybersecurity cooperation.

Conclusion

The evolving trajectory of U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy—culminating in the anticipated Trump 2025 framework—signals a recalibrated emphasis on hard power projection, economic nationalism, and targeted diplomatic engagement. This vision reflects a strategic pivot from expansive multilateralism to purpose-driven bilateralism and alliance fortification, particularly with key partners like India, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN states.

The comparative analysis of Trump's 2019 and Biden's 2022 approaches highlights a fundamental continuity in deterrence-based posturing but also reveals differing emphases: where Trump prioritised unilateral assertiveness and military dominance, Biden layered in multilateral diplomacy, technological cooperation, and institutional engagement. These shifts underscore the importance of strategic adaptability in an increasingly contested and complex regional environment.

In this context, peace in the Indo-Pacific cannot be reduced to the mere absence of conflict. Rather, it must be understood as the presence of a stable, rules-based order upheld by credible deterrence, resilient economic frameworks, and inclusive security partnerships. As geopolitical competition with China intensifies, the U.S. must adopt a realist but flexible approach—one that secures its strategic interests while empowering regional actors to contribute to collective stability and long-term peace.

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ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE AMONG THE POLICYMAKERS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

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Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a focal point of global geopolitics, economic competition, and strategic cooperation. Policymakers in the region are increasingly confronted with complex challenges, including security threats, climate change, economic interdependence, and diplomatic realignments. As a result, attitudinal and behavioural changes among policymakers are necessary to foster stability, cooperation, and sustainable development. This article explores the evolving mindset of policymakers in the Indo-Pacific, the factors driving these changes, and the implications for regional governance and international relations.

Historical Context of Policymaking in the Indo-Pacific

Traditionally, policymaking in the Indo-Pacific has been influenced by national interests, colonial legacies, and Cold War-era alliances. During the 20th century, many nations in the region pursued inward-looking policies, prioritising sovereignty and security over regional collaboration. The advent of globalisation and multilateralism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries gradually altered this approach, leading to greater economic integration and diplomatic engagements.

Drivers of Attitudinal and Behavioural Change

Several factors contribute to the shift in policymakers' attitudes and behaviours in the Indo-Pacific:

Geopolitical Shifts: The rise of China as a dominant power, coupled with the strategic interests of the United States, has reshaped regional dynamics. Policymakers are adapting to the shifting balance of power by fostering new alliances and reevaluating their diplomatic strategies.

Economic Interdependence: The Indo-Pacific is home to some of the world's largest economies, including China, India, Japan, and Australia. Economic globalisation has necessitated a shift from protectionist policies to collaborative trade agreements and infrastructure development projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

Climate Change and Environmental Concerns: Rising sea levels, natural disasters, and environmental degradation have compelled policymakers to adopt more sustainable policies. The shift towards green energy, climate adaptation strategies, and international cooperation on environmental issues highlights a significant change in policy priorities.

Technological Advancements: The digital revolution has influenced policy thinking, with nations investing in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and digital governance. There is a growing recognition of the need for cross-border collaboration in technology regulation and innovation.

Regional Security Threats: The Indo-Pacific faces security challenges, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea, North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and non-traditional security threats like terrorism and piracy. Policymakers have increasingly turned to multilateral security frameworks such as the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.) and ASEAN-led initiatives to address these concerns.

People-to-People Diplomacy and Soft Power: Cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and tourism have influenced policymakers to embrace diplomatic soft power strategies. Countries are investing in public diplomacy efforts to strengthen international goodwill and foster mutual understanding.

Case Studies of Attitudinal and Behavioural Change

India's Act East Policy: India has shifted from a passive Look East policy to a more proactive Act East policy, engaging with ASEAN and Pacific nations on trade, security, and infrastructure projects.

Japan's Pacifist Stance to Strategic Engagement: Japan has gradually moved from a pacifist approach post-World War II to active participation in regional security, including defence partnerships and military cooperation under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's leadership.

Australia's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Traditionally reliant on Western alliances, Australia has diversified its foreign policy to engage more deeply with Asian economies and security frameworks.

ASEAN's Balancing Act: Southeast Asian nations have embraced a pragmatic approach to balancing relations with major powers like the U.S. and China, promoting a rules-based order through regional institutions.

Challenges to Attitudinal and Behavioural Change

Despite progress, several obstacles hinder the transformation of policymakers' attitudes and behaviours:

Historical Animosities: Long-standing territorial disputes and historical conflicts continue to influence policy decisions, creating diplomatic friction.

Domestic Political Constraints: Policymakers often face internal political pressures that limit their ability to pursue progressive or cooperative policies.

Economic Disparities: Variations in economic development levels create challenges in aligning policy priorities across nations.

Strategic Ambiguity: The uncertainty surrounding the long-term objectives of major powers leads to cautious policymaking and limited trust among nations.

Future Directions and Policy Recommendations

To facilitate further attitudinal and behavioural changes among policymakers in the Indo-Pacific, the following measures are recommended:

Strengthening Multilateral Institutions: Policymakers should reinforce institutions like ASEAN, the Quad, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to enhance regional governance.

Promoting Inclusive Economic Policies: Trade agreements should consider the economic needs of smaller nations to ensure equitable growth.

Enhancing Public Diplomacy: Cultural and educational exchanges should be expanded to foster trust and cooperation among nations.

Adopting a Sustainable Development Agenda: Environmental concerns should be integrated into all policy decisions to ensure long-term regional stability.

Leveraging Technology for Good Governance: Digital governance frameworks should be developed to address cybersecurity threats and promote innovation.

Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing a significant transformation in policymaking attitudes and behaviours, driven by geopolitical, economic, environmental, and technological factors. While challenges remain, the shift towards greater cooperation and strategic engagement suggests a promising future for regional stability and development. By embracing inclusive policies, strengthening multilateral collaborations, and prioritising sustainable development, policymakers can navigate the complexities of the Indo-Pacific and contribute to a more secure and prosperous region.

Beyond Strategic Primacy: Reassessing India's Security-Centric Approach and the Need for Economic Integration in the Indo-Pacific
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Abstract

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the key theatre of geopolitical rivalry, driven by shifting power dynamics, economic interdependence, and security concerns. India, being one of the major players in the new world order, has participated energetically in security structures while remaining cautious about regional economic arrangements. This paper examines India's strategic positioning in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on its security-first approach and the implications of its limited economic engagement. Though India has gone to great lengths to position itself as a regional security provider through forums such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), and forward-looking naval deployments, it is hesitant to become part of big regional economic blocs such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). India's reluctance to join multilateral trade pacts stems from apprehensions regarding internal economic weak points, the threat of growing ever-larger trade deficits vis-a-vis China, and structural limitations of its manufacturing sectors. Although in the short term this policy will protect India's domestic industries, it also renders India isolated from the greater Indo-Pacific economic universe, reducing the latter's prospects of engaging itself in shaping the Indo-Pacific economic order. The paper attempts to examine whether the security-dominated Indo-Pacific approach of India, without its economic counterpart, is viable in the long term. Through the comparative examination of India's QUAD membership versus its withdrawal from the RCEP, the paper points out India's increasing divergence of security and economic interests. Further, the paper looks at India's counter-BRI initiatives by China, such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project, Chabahar Port, and India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway, analysing whether they have been successful in enhancing India's strategic and economic influence. The study also analyses India's selective participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), wherein it has declined trade negotiations but is involved in other pillars such as supply chains and clean energy. The findings reflect that while India's security-oriented Indo-Pacific strategy strengthens its image as a net security provider, its economic conservatism limits its leadership in the region. For upholding its Indo-Pacific ambition, India must counterbalance its policy by integrating more intense economic linkage with security collaboration. The paper suggests policy steps like reconsidering RCEP and CPTPP with protection, enhancing infrastructure financing to counter BRI, and utilising QUAD and IPEF for influencing economic frameworks at the cost of no loss of strategic autonomy. In the end, only a whole and balanced Indo-Pacific strategy, both in security and economic dimensions, is going to be important for India to assert itself as an effective regional power.

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific has become a hotspot of geopolitical and geoeconomic competition in the 21st century, fast transforming the strategic calculations and equations of world and regional powers. Stretching across the wide ocean distance between the east coast of Africa and the western Pacific Ocean, the Indo-Pacific region is a major hub for global trade, with approximately 63% of the world's GDP and 46% of global trade passing through its sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), making it as the world's economic powerhouse[1]. At the same time, it is a geopolitical battleground dominated by great power rivalries, above all the increasing strategic competition between the United States and China, the rising militarisation of the South China Sea, and the role of regional groupings like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in balancing these tensions[2]. Here, India has positioned itself as an important actor, promoting a "free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific" while consolidating its security presence through multilateral frameworks like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative[3].

Although its strategic footprint has been increasing in the Indo-Pacific, India has been surprisingly reticent in integrating into regional economic institutions. This is illustrated by its withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 due to fears of an asymmetric trade relationship with China and damage to its domestic industries[4]. In the same vein, India has been hesitant to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and has practised selective participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), opting to participate in supply chains, clean energy, and anti-corruption efforts but not trade negotiations[5]. These moves, as much as they demonstrate India's strategic autonomy and economic self-reliance initiatives, pose fundamental questions regarding the long-term viability of a security-focused Indo-Pacific approach without deep economic engagement. This article attempts to examine the logic behind India's focus on security ahead of economic integration in the Indo-Pacific and assess the implications for its regional stature and economic resilience.

Principal research questions are:

Why does India prioritise security above economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific? What are the long-term geopolitical and economic consequences of this strategy, and how does India need to rebalance its Indo-Pacific strategy in a way that attains equilibrium between security requirements and economic interaction? The main argument presented here is that while the security-oriented focus raises India's geopolitical stature, its refusal to sign up for regional trade agreements and economic engagements weakens its strategic negotiating clout. A more regionally integrated Indo-Pacific strategy, one that combines economic diplomacy with security interests, is imperative for India to continue its leadership in the region and counter China's assertive economic footprint. In the subsequent sections, this article will examine India's prioritisation of security in the Indo-Pacific, assess the economic implications of disengagement, examine the economic integration prospects under emerging paradigms like IPEF, and offer policy recommendations towards a more equitable Indo-Pacific vision. In reframing India's Indo-Pacific positioning through an inclusive security and economics lens, this study aims to contribute to available scholarly and policy debates on the evolving role of India in the region.

India's Strategic and Security Prioritisation in the Indo-Pacific

India's Indo-Pacific strategic vision has been shaped by its evolving security interests and geopolitical ambitions. While India has been a proactive player in multilateral security frameworks such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and promoted maritime security through its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative, its regional economic integration strategy is cautious. This part discusses India's expanding security role within the Indo-Pacific and its reluctance to join vast economic frameworks. The QUAD's primary objectives include promoting a "free, open, and inclusive" Indo-Pacific, ensuring maritime security, and countering China's growing influence in the region[6]. Multilateral naval training like the Malabar Exercise has been important for improving QUAD members' interoperability. The 2020 Malabar Exercise, for example, was notable in that it was the first time in more than a decade when all four QUAD countries were exercising together[7]. In addition to QUAD, India's SAGAR policy is a testament to its regional maritime development cooperation and security interests. SAGAR is focused on strengthening security partnerships between ASEAN member states, Australia, Japan, and India through cooperative maritime patrols, sharing information, and capacity-building initiatives[8]. These moves reflect India's aspiration to emerge as a key security provider in the Indo-Pacific. India has also invested heavily in naval expansion and infrastructure to develop its strategic reach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India's sole tri-services command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), is centrally located to oversee key sea lanes and deter security threats[9]. ANC's placement strategically allows India to expand defence cooperation with QUAD partners and other regional allies. Further, India has focused on naval modernisation by commissioning cutting-edge warships, submarines, and maritime monitoring systems to enhance its maritime dominance.

The Indian Navy commissioned a submarine, a destroyer, and a frigate in a single day- a decision that highlighted India's commitment to expanding its maritime power against potential regional threats[10]. These steps point towards an aggressive strategy to maintain stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. Despite rising security commitments, India has adopted a cautious attitude toward regional economic arrangements. India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2019 due to fear of its likely impact on domestic business[11]. The main reasons were the anticipated surge in Chinese imports and, as a result, India's widening trade deficit, and the threat of greater competition for Indian farmers and small manufacturers. Although India's abstention from RCEP was primarily informed by near-term economic interests, it has created long-term strategic disadvantages. By staying out, India has restricted its role in defining regional economic standards, enabling China to further consolidate its economic preponderance in the Indo-Pacific. In 2024, B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, CEO of NITI Aayog, proposed that India revisit RCEP membership to strengthen its export competitiveness, especially for small and medium enterprises[12]. Moreover, India has also been reluctant to access the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), another regional trade bloc of Indo-Pacific importance. The reasons for this are apprehensions regarding strict intellectual property regulations, labour and environmental standards, and domestic manufacturing pressure from lower tariff protections. In addition, India's existing trade policy is not fully harmonizable with CPTPP provisions, requiring wide-ranging economic reforms before membership may be considered. As a result, India's Indo-Pacific approach reflects a remarkable emphasis on security alignments and military consolidation that positions it in the middle of regional stability. But its reluctance to sign up for the leading economic agreements poses challenges to securing long-term strategic expansion. Whereas India has been actively engaged in security arrangements such as QUAD and SAGAR, India's withdrawal from RCEP and lack of clarity on CPTPP are symptomatic of hesitation when it comes to regional economic integration. An appropriately balanced strategy with security assurances combined with economic exchange will be most important for India to secure its strategic role in the Indo-Pacific.

Implications of India's Limited Indo-Pacific Economic Engagement

India's Indo-Pacific policy is characterised by a robust security policy but minimal economic engagement. While India has increasingly been involved in security partnerships such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), its exit from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and reluctance to enter the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) indicate a cautious economic policy. This economic distancing is worrisome and requires a balance between India's capacity to maintain strategic autonomy and greater economic integration in the Indo-Pacific.

The Cost of India's Absence from Indo-Pacific Trade Agreements

India's involvement in QUAD has made it a dominant security player in the Indo-Pacific. But its decision to withdraw from RCEP in 2019 has created a strategic imbalance, deepening security ties without equal economic involvement. While QUAD offers a mechanism for cooperation on maritime security, critical technology, and supply chains, RCEP is the world's largest trade bloc, accounting for 30% of global GDP and almost 28% of world trade[13]. By not becoming a member of RCEP, India might have diminished its economic presence and made it easier for China to increase its access further in Indo-Pacific trade networks[14]. India's exclusion from RCEP has also restrained its ability to contribute to regional trade norms, and it has to rely on bilateral free trade arrangements. In comparison to QUAD members, particularly Japan and Australia, who are part of both RCEP and CPTPP in order to offset their security as well as economic interests, India's limited economic engagement taints its bargaining power during trade and investment negotiations with Indo-Pacific nations.

Effect on India's Industry & Trade

India's economic retreat in the Indo-Pacific is further complicated by its domestic economic policies. The Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) program, introduced in 2020, is aimed at strengthening local manufacturing and diminishing reliance on imports. While the policy is beneficial to Indian strategic interests, it has also created protectionist policies such as higher import tariffs and stricter foreign investment controls. The policies also raised the complexity of India's involvement in global value chains, reducing its competitiveness with lower trade-barrier RCEP members. Secondly, India's manufacturing industry is marred by structural inefficiencies in the form of high production costs, weak infrastructure, and bureaucratic delays[15]. While the other countries of Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia have utilised RCEP to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and expand their export-oriented industries, India's protectionist approach has made the country less competitive in Indo-Pacific trade balances[16].

India's Counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): A Limited Success?

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has boosted the economic and strategic influence of Beijing in the Indo-Pacific through record infrastructure expenditures in South and Southeast Asia. India has met this by propagating alternative connectivity initiatives, which have faced dismal challenges.

Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project (India-Myanmar)

The Kaladan project to enhance connectivity between India's northeast and Myanmar is a key component of India's Act East Policy. The repeated delays on the basis of bureaucratic hurdles, internal insurgencies, and insufficient funding, however, have slowed it down[17]. Planned first in 2008, the scheme is still not completed, thwarting India's effort to foil BRI investment in Myanmar.

Chabahar Port (India-Iran-Afghanistan)

The Chabahar Port project, being developed with Iran together, is geopolitically significant for India as it provides an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia that does not involve Pakistan. U.S. sanctions against Iran have, however, drastically curtailed India's capacity to fully operationalise the port [18]. Although Chabahar continues to be an important element of India's regional strategy, its development has been uneven, and it has not yet come forward as a credible alternative to China's Gwadar Port in Pakistan.

India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

Another important connectivity project is the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, attempting to increase the land connectivity between South and Southeast Asia. However, similar to the Kaladan project, the project has been plagued by delays, inadequate infrastructure funding, and geopolitical risks[19]. While China's BRI initiatives are financed with huge state-capital subsidies and rapid roll-out, Indian infrastructure initiatives are marred by broken-down execution and financial austerity. While India has sought to balance BRI with regional connectivity initiatives, its efforts fall behind China in terms of scale and capital. Chinese state-owned companies and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) finance BRI projects in massive amounts and with speed[20]. Indian infrastructure investment, however, is limited by internal economic challenges and geopolitical constraints. Without enhanced economic integration and better implementation of projects, India can lose economic clout in the Indo-Pacific to China. Hence, India's Indo-Pacific approach remains security-oriented, but its limited economic outreach suggests scepticism about long-term strategic influence. Retreating from RCEP and embracing a protectionist economic agenda has reduced India's trade competitiveness. While India has sought to counter China's BRI through regional infrastructure efforts, delays and capital constraints have limited their effects. A more balanced approach in the future—yet one that seeks to merge economic interaction with strategic autonomy—will be vital for India to continue its leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

India's Partial Engagement with IPEF

IPEF, conceived as a flexible economic partnership, not a traditional trade agreement, has four key pillars: (1) Trade, (2) Supply Chains, (3) Clean Energy, Decarbonization & Infrastructure, and (4) Tax & Anti-Corruption. India has opted to be a member of three of them—excluding the trade pillar—emphasising its defensive orientation towards regional economic integration[21]. India's hesitation to accede to the trade pillar is based on binding trade obligations and market access concerns, as was its earlier withdrawal from RCEP. Accession to supply chain resilience, clean energy, and anti-corruption policy, however, aligns India with salient Indo-Pacific economic initiatives without full membership in multilateral trade liberalisation. This selective membership enables India to solidify its economic relationships without exposing its domestic industries to over-competition from abroad.

Strategic Autonomy with Economic Gains

Through IPEF's supply chain pillar, India aims to diversify its economic relationships and decrease dependence on China, especially in key areas like semiconductors and pharmaceuticals[22]. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed weaknesses in international supply chains, and India sought to advance a more diversified and resilient economic framework. IPEF enables India to partner with like-minded countries such as the United States, Japan, and Australia to secure key supply chains. India's involvement in the clean energy pillar is also consistent with its national interests, for instance, Paris Agreement obligations and domestic renewable energy policies. IPEF, India benefits from access to finance and technology collaboration on green hydrogen, electric mobility, and energy efficiency initiatives[23]. The anti-corruption pillar, on the other hand, supports India's greater role in enhancing transparency and governance on cross-border economic activity.

QUAD and Economic Cooperation Possibilities

Although QUAD has so far been centred on security cooperation, momentum is increasing to broaden its focus into economic spheres. The COVID-19 pandemic hastened QUAD's economic agenda, especially through the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) that aims to de-risk overdependence on China by promoting alternative production and distribution chains[24]. QUAD nations have also initiated cooperation in infrastructure building, digital trade, and emerging technologies, which suggests a shift towards a better comprehensive economic agenda. The question is whether QUAD can be transformed from a security-oriented coalition to a complete economic framework, such as RCEP or CPTPP. Although individual QUAD members like Japan and Australia are well-integrated into Indo-Pacific trade chains, India's penchant for selective economic engagement is a hurdle. In contrast to IPEF, which is a loose and non-binding economic association, a fully-fledged QUAD economic bloc would involve deeper trade commitments that India has long been resistant to. But India has expressed interest in QUAD-driven economic initiatives in areas like regulation of the digital economy, AI, and semiconductor supply chain diversification[25]. Should QUAD pursue further the economic agenda, India can look to enhance trade and investment relationships in a context consistent with its strategic interests. India's Indo-Pacific economic outreach continues to be a tightly calibrated policy of balancing economic engagement with strategic independence. IPEF has been India's instrument for selectively joining the important areas of economic activity without taking on binding trade obligations. At the same time, QUAD's changing economic agenda offers new prospects for increased technology engagement and supply chain security. India's success in integrating into regional economic mechanisms while defending its interests in the future will define its influence on Indo-Pacific economic trends.

Blending Economic and Security Strategies for a Balanced Indo-Pacific Strategy

India's Indo-Pacific strategy needs to blend economic and security components to facilitate inclusive regional engagement. Although India has actively been involved in security forums like QUAD and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), its economic engagement has been low, especially through trade frameworks such as RCEP and CPTPP. To enhance its strategic influence while guaranteeing protection of national interest, India needs to pursue a multi-track strategy through the renegotiation of trade pacts, support for infrastructure projects, and optimisation of multilateral economic unions.

Reconsidering RCEP and CPTPP with Safeguard

India's retreat from RCEP in 2019 was a result of trade imbalance fears, particularly with China, and the risk of the adverse impact on domestic industries[26]. However, staying clear of big Indo-Pacific trade agreements also keeps India out of regional economic standards. Reconsideration of RCEP and CPTPP, with required protections, would enable India to benefit from these frameworks while protecting its economic interests. One of the viable alternatives is renegotiating RCEP membership on Indian industry and farm-friendly terms. For example, India can insist on stricter rules of origin, safeguard against surge imports, and gradually reduce tariffs to correct trade. The Vietnamese case with the CPTPP is a case in point. After preliminary reservations of opening up to external competition, Vietnam negotiated on preferential terms, such as extended transition periods and sectoral exceptions, while using the agreement to pull in FDI and integrate into global supply chains[27]. India can do the same by negotiating sectoral carve-outs and sector-specific exemptions for sensitive sectors.

India's Indo-Pacific Infrastructure and Connectivity Projects

India's infrastructure construction in the Indo-Pacific region serves as a key counterbalance to China's BRI. Project delays and costs, however, have undermined the efficiency of high-profile ventures such as Chabahar Port, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project, and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. India needs to overcome financing bottlenecks, bureaucratic holdups, and geopolitical obstacles that delay project execution. One of the proposals is to establish a specialised Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Development Fund with Japan, Australia, and ASEAN partners. Japan's experience in infrastructure finance under programs such as the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure can be used for co-investment[28]. The Chabahar Port, which gives India direct connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia, needs greater investment and planning to counter the effects of American sanctions on Iran. Likewise, the Kaladan project, for India's Act East Policy, has been stalled because of logistical and security issues in Myanmar. Institutional simplification of cooperation with ASEAN allies and a results-driven mindset can push such projects forward. Alternative Economic Corridors? India can, in addition, counterbalance Chinese economic influence through the development of alternative Indo-Pacific economic corridors involving ASEAN and Australia. An example is the India-Japan-Australia-led Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, prioritising digital connectivity, maritime infrastructure, and supply chain resilience.

QUAD and IPEF for Economic Leadership

Though QUAD has thus far been a security-focused framework, it has commenced working on economic initiatives, specifically on supply chain resilience, technology partnerships, and infrastructure finance. India needs to proactively influence these to build its economic presence in the Indo-Pacific. QUAD's Infrastructure Coordination Group, launched in 2021, plans to offer financing options more suitable in the long term for China's BRI.

India must capitalise on this opportunity by getting the capital for its sub-regional schemes and deepen participation in QUAD-led economic engagements like the Semiconductor Supply Chain Partnership and Critical and Emerging Technology Cooperation[30]. India's selective inclusion in the IPEF enables it to pursue supply chain resilience and clean energy cooperation without making binding trade commitments. Nevertheless, India must insist on a broader IPEF framework embracing trade facilitation instruments without accepting full market opening[31]. E-commerce, regulatory harmonisation, and investment facilitation can enable India to enhance Indo-Pacific economic integration without compromising national agendas.

Conclusion

A comprehensive Indo-Pacific strategy calls for India to move beyond security-focused engagement and integrate economic strategies in a suitable manner. By renegotiating RCEP and CPTPP membership with safeguards, upgrading regional infrastructure initiatives, and utilising QUAD and IPEF for economic leadership, India can emerge as the forerunner in the formation of Indo-Pacific economic and security architecture. With the geopolitical environment continuing to change, a pragmatic approach that combines economic pragmatism with strategic autonomy will be vital for India's long-term leverage in the region. India's Indo-Pacific policy has been security-oriented and has been aimed at projecting the nation as a regional stability player. By active participation in QUAD, SAGAR, and maritime security efforts, India has positioned itself as a strategic balancer of the region. However, its restrictive economic engagement, such as its withdrawal from RCEP and indecision regarding CPTPP, has circumscribed its reach to shape regional economic norms and enhance its strategic leverage. Economic distancing can disconnect India from the broader world of the Indo-Pacific economic system, where commerce and investment are a determining factor in exerting influence. Where security coalitions offer strategic depth, these need to be complemented with economic stewardship if India is going to maintain regional standing in the long term. The advent of new economic frameworks such as IPEF and QUAD's stronger economic agenda offers India a chance to reorient its strategy, balancing strategic autonomy with deeper economic engagement. For India to be a complete leader in the Indo-Pacific, it will need to align security efforts with economic outreach. This means a pragmatic course of action engaging in regional trade mechanisms with sufficient protections for indigenous industries, building connectivity infrastructure, and leveraging multilateral forums such as QUAD and IPEF for Indo-Pacific economic integration on a larger scale. A more pragmatic Indo-Pacific policy should contain: Reconsidering RCEP and CPTPP with certain protections, ensuring trade liberalisation and development of critical domestic industries go hand in hand. More dedicated focus on proper financing of strategic infrastructure development projects (Kaladan, Trilateral Highway, and Chabahar) to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Harnessing QUAD's new economic initiatives towards creating supply chain robustness and technology collaborations. Using IPEF's non-trade pillars to shape Indo-Pacific economic governance without the burden of binding trade obligations. Through synchronising its economic policy with its security ambitions, India can achieve increased regional prominence, strengthen its economic power, and gain a leadership role in Indo-Pacific stewardship. As the Indo-Pacific continues to transform into the hub of global economic and strategic rivalry, India's policy decisions will play a pivotal role in determining the balance of power in the region. A revised strategy that welcomes both security collaboration and economic integration will be crucial in securing India's long-term leadership and influence in the Indo-Pacific.

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PAPER 08

Re-Imagining Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue (Quad) in Trump 2.0: Challenges and Prospects for India

Jagjeet Singh

Abstract

From working as "Tsunami core group" in 2004, to a limited partnership of Quad nations in 2007, to the formation of informal Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue (Quad) in its present form in 2017, the grouping of four nations, i.e. Australia, India, Japan and USA, have come a long way. During the first Trump presidency, the Quad grouping made its comeback in the Geopolitical scenario as one of the major pillars of the USA's Indo-Pacific Policy. The return of Quad was a result of a shift of the Global centre of gravity from West Asia to the Indo-Pacific region (IPR). In the background of Quad lies the aggressive rise of China, which not only challenged the post-Cold War Unipolar global order but also poses a threat to the "rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific (IP). From the militarisation of the South China Sea (SCS), to border skirmishes in the Himalayas with India, to predatory lending practices under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to its String of Pearls policy in the Indian Ocean, China's aggressive posture has posed a direct security threat to India. However, since 2017, India has continuously downplayed the role of the Quad grouping by terming it as "Informal" in nature and terming it "Not a Security Alliance." After coming back to power in his Second Term, Trump, along with his cabinet colleagues, has made it clear on multiple occasions that the present US administration views China as its "Principal Challenger" and wants to focus all its resources on the IPR. This is aptly clear in the urgency with which the USA has clearly stated that it wants the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to end. This brings about many challenges for India, ranging from its relationship with Russia, as India is partnering with Russia under the "Act Far East" Policy in the region, while Russia has categorically stated on multiple occasions its opposition to the Quad as a "Military Grouping." Other challenges are in the form Sino-Pakistan Nexus, which poses a two-front security threat to India; to Isolation of Iran by the USA, which India views as critical due to the Chabahar Port and its "Connect Central Asia" Policy. Another Challenge is in the form of the dichotomy of ASEAN nations about the Quad grouping, while India provides "ASEAN Centrality" in its IP Strategy. At the same time, various prospects like the opportunity to balance China and provide an alternative to the Chinese BRI in the region, enhancing Joint Capabilities and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA); Cooperation in the field of Emerging Technologies is critical to India's Security.

Introduction and Evolution of Quad

The beginning of the Quadrilateral "Quad" partnership between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia began when the "Tsunami Core Group" was formed as an ad-hoc grouping in order to respond to the devastating Boxing Day tsunami of 2004[1]. The Core Group led to a "new type of diplomacy" that created a new network which brought together the four nations best equipped to swiftly mobilise tsunami aid[2]. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech at the Indian Parliament on August 22, 2007, entitled "Confluence of the Two Seas," called for a "broader Asia" with the cooperation of Japan and India along with the United States and Australia in the entirety of the Pacific Ocean[3]. This led to a limited partnership between the Quad nations in 2007, which was discontinued in 2009 due to Chinese pressure and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd deciding not to antagonise the Chinese[4]. Shinzo Abe again pushed the idea of the Quad Partnership in the Indo-Pacific, in a published article for the Project Syndicate in 2012 named "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond." Abe said that "I envisage a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean Region to the western Pacific"[5]. In the same article, Abe also says, "the peace, stability and navigation freedom in the Pacific Ocean are inseparable from those of the Indian Ocean... As the oldest marine democracy in Asia, Japan needs to play a bigger role in defending the shared interests in the above two regions"

With the knowledge of hindsight, it will not be wrong to say that the end of Quad 1.0 was only a minor distraction in the larger picture of realignment among the four maritime democracies[7]. Bit by bit, they identified convergent interests across the two-ocean region, with misgivings about China being a significant driver[8]. In 2016, the idea of the Quad got renewed attention when Donald Trump was elected as President of the USA. After coming to power, Donald Trump adopted an “Indo-Pacific Strategy” in place of the previous US President's “Pivot to Asia Policy.” This Indo-Pacific Strategy, adopted by Donald Trump, aimed at partnering with like-minded nations to balance China's aggressive rise. This policy also finds its supporters in Japan and Australia, which were wary of increasing Chinese aggression in the region. India, however, was reluctant in the initial days. However, the incursion of Chinese forces in Bhutan's Territory of Doklam, which is near India's Strategic chicken neck corridor, followed by a long stand-off in Doklam, pushed India reluctantly towards re-institutionalising the Quad as an informal grouping in 2017. The revised “Quad” —the 2017 version of the informal quadrilateral security dialogue originally formed by the US, Japan, India, and Australia in 2007— represents a renewed attempt to shore up a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Challenges for India in the Quad under Trump 2.0

Managing Relations with Russia

Russia is one of the major arms providers to India, with which India has a strategic partnership, but strained USA-Russia relations and proximity of Russia with China have resulted in a dilemma for the Indian State. According to Russian Officials, the whole idea of the Indo-Pacific was a construct aimed at containing China by the USA, and the idea of “Rule-based world order,” which is championed by the USA, is solely aimed against China and thus is “Less and Less” about International Law[10]. Also, the Russian State views Quad as a ‘divisive’ and ‘exclusivist’ tool, which was being used by the US to implement its ‘devious policy’ of engaging New Delhi in games against China as well as to undermine Russia's close partnership with India[11]. With Trump coming back in office with a promise to end the Russian-Ukraine war and to act as a bridge between Russia and Ukraine, it will be critical to see how the Russian State views Quad in the coming days.

The Sino-Pakistan Nexus and Two-Front Security Challenge

The events of clashes at Galwan and incursion by China in the Finger area of Pangong Pso lake, Demchok, Dapsang Plains, Gogra and hot springs, in the Union Territory of Ladakh in the summer of 2020 have shown that China can't be trusted[12]. These incidents came a few years after the Doklam crisis. In the background is the “All-weather partnership” between China and Pakistan, which makes the threat of a two-front war even more real. Since 2015, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has brought China and Pakistan closer. It was the first phase of Chinese President Xi Jinping's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to get operationalised, knitting their economic development and fusing their military capabilities[13]. Also, with the development of Gwadar port under CPEC and the emerging maritime partnership between China and Pakistan, there are chances of Chinese PLAN intrusions in the Arabian Sea along with the Pakistan Navy. Due to Boundary disputes with Pakistan and China, the overall security outlook in Indian defence forces remained “land-based,” which can be gauged by the fact that the largest amount of defence budget went for the Indian Army, thus giving little space for focusing on the maritime domain and on upgrading Indian naval forces. Thus, the issue of mobilisation of funds, especially for the Indian Navy, is presenting India with various limitations.

The Isolation of Iran and Implications for India

In the Indian Navy's Maritime Security Strategy Doctrine, Areas like the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf (Including the Strait of Hormuz) is considered as “primary security concerns” for India as it's the source of majority of our oil supplies and gas imports, and is home to more than seven million expatriate Indians[14]. India is also developing Chabahar Port in Iran in order to establish a trade route with Central Asia, and this Chabahar port is just a few kilometres away from Gwadar port of Pakistan, developed under the CPEC Project. In this backdrop, maintaining good relations with Iran is thus critical to India's Security needs as well as India's Indo-Pacific policy.

However, due to the emerging security partnership between India and the USA and not to antagonise the USA, India has been forced to abide by sanctions put on Iran by the USA, under the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, popularly known as CAATSA[15]. India, however, has been able to get a waiver for the Chabahar port project under CAATSA, but was forced to reduce its oil imports. This isolation of Iran due to American sanctions is pushing Iran towards China. China is currently the largest consumer of Iranian oil, that too with huge discounts, as China decided not to abide by the USA's sanctions. Recently, both Iran and China have signed a 25-year-long Strategic Cooperation Agreement, marking a renewed commitment to their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership established in 2016; besides, Iran has become part of the Chinese BRI[16].

ASEAN's Dichotomy on Quad and India's Indo-Pacific Strategy

On the broader issue of the Indo-Pacific in general and the Quad in particular, the ASEAN group is divided. This ambivalence can be gauged from a Survey by the ASEAN Studies Centre of ISEAS –Yusof Ishak Institute. In its 2019 and 2020 editions of the State of Southeast Asia (SSEA) survey, it was found that the majority of respondents – 61.3% (2019) and 54% (2020) – thought that “the concept is unclear and requires further elaboration.” Meanwhile, few of them – 17.2% (2019) and 28.4% (2020) – pinned their hope on the concept to present “a viable option for a new regional order”[17]. ASEAN nations in their “ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific” tried to articulate ASEAN's inclusive and cooperative “vista” on the Indo-Pacific with the hope to present “an inclusive meeting place for the competing visions of regional order offered by great and regional players” and to maintain ASEAN's relevance and Southeast Asia's strategic autonomy[18]. This becomes even more critical for India as India's Indo-Pacific Policy is based on “ASEAN Centrality.”

Prospects for India

1. Counterbalancing China and Providing an Alternative to BRI

It seems likely that the downturn in Sino-India relations between 2014 and 2017 contributed to India's decision to support the Quad's revival[19]. It will not be wrong to say that, due to this downturn, China is today a significant factor in every one of India's major relationships and most aspects of Indian policy[20]. Taking advantage of its geographical centrality in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India's approach to the Quad has been an evolutionary experience in the emerging Indo-Pacific construct, where India's interdependent but complex relationship with China is a strong factor[21]. Since 2013, the Chinese state under Xi Jinping has actively pursued BRI as a tool to enhance its global footprint. The objectives of the BRI fall under two key themes: (i) internal economic rebalancing and (ii) expansion of strategic presence across resource-rich and geographically important nations[22]. “Internal Economic Rebalancing” aims at facilitating China's long-term plans of developing its landlocked hinterland regions and other underdeveloped regions; outsourcing internal productive glut and infrastructure overcapacity amid slowdown in global demand for its exports; assisting and promoting troubled state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which employ tens of millions of workers, through provision of lucrative projects overseas; and developing infrastructure in developing partners to help China in reversing anemic growth in global trade by enhancing the absorption capacity of export markets in the emerging world[23]. On the other hand, China wants to attain the “Expansion of Strategic Presence” by gaining a foothold across strategically located nations, especially in the Indo-Pacific Region; lock in rare commodities key to Chinese long-term development; and globalise Chinese technological and industrial standards across emerging markets[24]. Various projects which China has undertaken under BRI present security threats to Indian national security and violate India's territorial integrity and sovereignty under its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. India has often criticised China's maritime activities in the Indian Ocean Region, and the construction of maritime infrastructure by China in the countries along the Indian Ocean as military projects of the Chinese navy[25]. It is noteworthy to mention here that this criticism of Chinese initiatives echoes commonly among other Quad nations, too.

2. Enhancing Joint Capabilities and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)

As India moves forward in the 21st century, its development and prosperity will remain closely linked to the maritime domain[26]. MDA can be defined as an all-encompassing term which involves being cognizant of the position and intentions of all actors, whether own, hostile or neutral, in the constantly evolving maritime environment in the areas of interest[27].

In this, the gaps in the knowledge available at various levels are sought to be filled by surveillance, intelligence and sharing of information; thus, MDA is a vital ingredient to a nation's maritime security and economic well-being[28]. It is in this MDA where a defence partnership with the Quad nations will help in India's holistic security needs. Among Quad nations, there is a "natural desire" to cooperate and collaborate for greater prosperity in the field of MDA, as the Indo-Pacific region provides tremendous opportunities for issue-based convergences[29]. Also, most threats in the maritime domain are transnational in nature, and there has been a realisation that one nation can't go at it alone, thus clearly requiring partnerships of like-minded nations[30]. India has signed three foundational agreements - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) with the USA[31]. With Japan, India is implementing arrangements for deeper cooperation between the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force and the Indian Navy, which will result in greater cooperation and exchange of information in Maritime Domain Awareness between the Indian Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force[32]. With Australia a "Joint Guidance for the Australia-India Navy to Navy Relationship" document has been signed which will result in serving as a guideline document to showcase the intent of both the Navies to work together bi/ multi-laterally and will provide a broad scope of guidance in developing mutual understanding, cooperation for regional security, collaborate in mutually beneficial activities, and to develop interoperability[33]. At the summit level also, Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) was launched at the 2022 Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo for partnering with near-real-time, cost-effective, cuttingedge radio frequency data, enabling them to better monitor their waters; counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; respond to climate change and natural disasters; and enforce their laws within their waters.

3. Cooperation in Emerging Technologies and Supply Chain Resilience

With the advent of Sixth Generation warfare, technological advancements in general and critical technologies in particular can act as "Gamechangers.". These technologies are also key to economic and social transformation locally as well as globally. To develop such "Gamechanger" critical technologies like machine learning, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, 5G technology, biotechnology, blockchain technology and robotics, the Quad nations are also actively engaged in collaborating and cooperating in the field of science and technology. It is also observed that China controls and dominates the supply chains of many crucial raw materials, which are critical for the development of technologies like rare earth metals, which are crucial for the development of semiconductors, active pharmaceutical ingredients (API are crucial for the development of the Pharma and Biotechnology Sector. The last summit meeting in 2024 of the Quad leaders specifically focused on all these domains. Thus, Quad is leading the way to create a digital Indo-Pacific with strong institutions and a digital architecture that is free, transparent, inclusive and democratic, therefore being reflective of liberal norms.

Conclusion

With the experience of hindsight, it can be concluded that Quad 1.0 was formed with an understanding that it would not take a "military dimension" but instead be a regional consultative forum[36]. While it will not be wrong to say that, the essence of Quad 2.0 is an outcome of the strategic concerns and contingencies that Australia, India, Japan and the United States collectively share in regard to China and its unilateral measures[37]. India's approach towards Quad can be gauged thought how from Indian PM Speech at First Quadrilateral Leaders' Summit held on 12 March 2021, in which PM said "Quad has come to age" and it will "remain an important pillar of stability in region" and will help "promoting a secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific"[38]. Under Trump 2.0, as the U.S. advocates an "America First" agenda and adopts a more isolationist stance, India can seize this opportunity to enhance its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, counter China's growing power, and advocate for the interests of the Global South[39]. Donald Trump's 2024 victory has undoubtedly reshaped the geopolitical order, ushering in a period of uncertainty and realignment.⁴⁰ Thus, it will not be wrong to say that the coming 2025 Quad leaders summit meeting in India is going to be an important one not only for India but for the whole Indo-Pacific region.

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The Strategic Importance of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation in Indo-Pacific **Vanshika**

Abstract:

Over the past few years, there has been a significant shift in the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) has emerged as a crucial framework in the evolving geopolitical landscape of the region. Key players in this area include the United States, China, Japan, Australia, and multilateral organisations such as ASEAN. China's strategic initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the String of Pearls strategy, and territorial assertions in the South China Sea, pose significant challenges to regional stability. This paper examines the strategic importance of MGC in advancing India's Act East Policy, enhancing regional connectivity, and countering China's growing influence. Using a qualitative and analytical approach based on secondary sources, the research explores geopolitical dynamics, economic trends, and diplomatic engagements. It argues that strengthening MGC can contribute to regional stability, cooperation, and India's strategic ambitions in the Indo-Pacific. While China's rise and increasing assertiveness have intensified strategic concerns, the Indo-Pacific concept continues to gain broader acceptance despite differing perspectives among key stakeholders. **Keywords:** Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Act East Policy, Regional Connectivity, China, Geopolitics, ASEAN.

Introduction

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation is a vital regional initiative that strengthens ties between India and five Southeast Asian nations—Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Established in 2000, the MGC focuses on cooperation in areas such as culture, tourism, education, connectivity, and trade. In the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific, the MGC has gained strategic importance as India seeks to enhance its influence in Southeast Asia, counterbalance China's growing presence, and contribute to regional stability. For over two decades, the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) has been a vital bridge connecting India with mainland Southeast Asia. Launched in 2000 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, this initiative embodies the spirit of India's "Act East Policy," fostering deep ties in culture, economy, infrastructure, tourism, education, and connectivity. More than just a diplomatic framework, the MGC highlights the rich civilizational links between the people of the Mekong and Ganga River basins, strengthening historical bonds and paving the way for meaningful collaboration in the modern era (Hardy, 2025). Despite a deep-rooted civilizational connection, cultural exchanges and communication between India and the Mekong subregion remain limited. In today's interconnected world, where cultures blend and evolve with modern perspectives shaped by science and rationality, it is crucial to adapt to emerging challenges. As India's Act East Policy marks its 10th anniversary in 2024, the country stands at a pivotal moment, bolstered by its technological advancements, growing influence, and rising global stature. This milestone presents an opportunity for India to deepen its engagement with the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) in the lower Mekong region. By extending technological cooperation in agricultural development and environmental protection, India can contribute meaningfully to the economic growth and security of the five ASEAN member countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Given India's human-centric approach to development—one that values respect and diversity—this collaboration can foster inclusivity while reducing tensions with other regional actors. Such an approach will enable nations in the lower Mekong region to balance their national interests with the complexities of regional and global dynamics. In turn, this will contribute to greater economic and political stability, further strengthening the implementation of the MGC and advancing India's Act East Policy in a way that is both strategic and mutually beneficial (Phakdeewanich, 2023). The four foundational areas of cooperation under MGC include tourism, culture, education, and transport & communication. It has further expanded to include new areas like health and traditional medicine, agriculture and allied sectors, small and medium enterprises, water resources management, science and technology, skill development, and capacity building.

While we take pride in our shared heritage, we also witness how relationships evolve, incorporating new influences over time. The rapidly changing dynamics of the region, along with shifts in the global landscape, bring fresh ideas and unique challenges. This makes it essential for the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation to serve as a platform for meaningful dialogue—one where countries can share their expertise, learn from each other's experiences, and work together toward a more collaborative future (Chaturvedy, 2020).

Key Players

1. United States: Strategic and Developmental Engagement

The U.S. promotes its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy, emphasising regional security, economic cooperation, and governance reforms. Through the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP) (formerly the Lower Mekong Initiative), it provides support for infrastructure, water resource management, and human rights in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The U.S. sees MGC as a potential counterbalance to China's influence in the Mekong region and supports India's engagement. It collaborates with India, ASEAN, Japan, and Australia to promote connectivity, trade, and security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

2. China: Economic and Strategic Dominance

China exerts strong influence in the Indo-Pacific through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC). It funds massive infrastructure projects, including dams, highways, and railways, to expand its regional economic footprint. China's control over upstream Mekong River dams has caused environmental concerns, affecting water availability in downstream ASEAN nations. China views MGC as part of India's growing presence in the Mekong region and a challenge to its strategic influence.

3. Japan: Infrastructure and Economic Collaboration

Japan aligns its "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" (PQI) and FOIP strategy with MGC's goals, prioritising sustainable development and high-quality infrastructure. It funds Mekong region connectivity projects, including railways, ports, and smart city initiatives, as an alternative to China's BRI. Japan actively collaborates with India in MGC, focusing on capacity building, human resource development, and technology transfers. Japan's engagement strengthens the Act East Policy, reinforcing India's economic and strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

4. Australia: Security and Climate Cooperation

Australia's Indo-Pacific engagement centres on governance and climate change adaptation. On regional security, through ASEAN and Mekong initiatives, it supports education, environmental sustainability, and economic resilience in the region. As a Quad member (with India, the U.S., and Japan), Australia contributes to maritime security and regional stability, countering China's expansionist policies. While Australia is not directly involved in MGC, its support for India's Indo-Pacific vision aligns with MGC's broader objectives.

5. ASEAN: The Central Pillar of Regional Cooperation

ASEAN is the core of regional diplomacy, ensuring stability, trade, and multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The five MGC member states (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) are part of ASEAN, linking MGC with ASEAN's connectivity and development initiatives. ASEAN supports a rules-based regional order, balancing India, China, the U.S., Japan, and Australia's interests in the Mekong region. ASEAN's Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC 2025) aligns with MGC's goals of enhancing trade, infrastructure, and cultural exchanges.

Strategic Significance

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) continues to thrive, driven by the strong political will of its member countries. For India, deepening ties with the Mekong region is not just a diplomatic priority—it is essential to advancing its key foreign policy initiatives, including the Act East Policy and Neighbourhood First Policy. Emphasising India's growing focus on its eastern neighbours, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar remarked, "Much of India's interests and relationships now lie to its East, a testimony of its ties with ASEAN." This underscores India's strategic commitment to fostering closer economic and security ties with the region. From a domestic standpoint, connectivity and development in India's northeastern states depend heavily on stronger transnational cooperation with ASEAN nations, especially its Mekong neighbours, given their geographical and cultural proximity. The Kaladan Multi-modal Transport Project, jointly developed by India and Myanmar, is a prime example of this collaboration. By providing sea access via Myanmar's Kaladan River, the project aims to boost trade and connectivity for India's landlocked northeastern states. At the same time, the Mekong region is becoming a geopolitical battleground for U.S.-China competition, pushing Mekong countries to seek a balanced approach in engaging external partners. Rather than becoming overly dependent on either power, these nations are looking for alternative models of development and economic partnerships. India offers just that—an inclusive approach to infrastructure development, market access, and sustainable growth. Recognising this need, India has extended a \$2 billion loan for various projects, ranging from water resource management and digitalisation to rural electrification, irrigation, and education. The most recent 11th MGC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, co-chaired by Cambodia, highlighted the forum's role in diversifying Cambodia's foreign policy and strengthening multilateral engagement. Meanwhile, Mekong nations are also expanding security cooperation with India. Vietnam, for instance, has been cultivating closer defence ties with New Delhi, demonstrated by a joint naval exercise in the South China Sea earlier this year. Additionally, Thailand, Myanmar, and India participated in a BIMSTEC military exercise, aimed at improving interoperability among forces and sharing best practices in counter-terrorism. This growing military collaboration reflects India's strategic and security role in the Indo-Pacific, positioning it as a key partner for Mekong nations in maintaining regional stability. As the MGC evolves, India's engagement offers a balanced, sustainable, and human-centric approach to regional development—one that respects the sovereignty of its partners while promoting economic growth, connectivity, and security in the lower Mekong region (Hussain, 2021).

China's influence in the Mekong Subregion

China's engagement with the Mekong region is driven by two key principles. The first is 'rights protection,' under which China asserts its sovereign right to utilise and develop the Mekong's waters within its borders as it sees fit. The second pillar is a modernist development approach, where China prioritises economic growth and regional stability through large-scale infrastructure projects, such as dams and waterways, to manage the river's flow. While these projects have contributed to economic expansion and energy production, they have also had severe ecological consequences. Long-term hydrological studies indicate that the construction of upper riparian dams has significantly altered the river's natural flow, affected seasonal water levels and triggered extreme climatic variations. This disruption has particularly impacted the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB), where unpredictable water levels have led to droughts, increased sedimentation, and food security challenges for downstream communities that depend on the river for agriculture and fisheries. China has also faced criticism for allegedly withholding water in its reservoirs, exacerbating water shortages in lower riparian countries, especially during periods of low rainfall. This has fuelled concerns over China's control of the Mekong's flow and its long-term impact on regional stability. However, Beijing has denied such allegations, maintaining that its dam projects are primarily designed for flood control and water management rather than as tools of geopolitical leverage. As China continues to expand its influence in the Mekong Basin, balancing developmental ambitions with environmental sustainability remains a pressing challenge—one that directly affects the livelihoods of millions in Southeast Asia. Under the country's "Going Out" policy—which aims to mobilise external investments and control natural resources abroad—Chinese development banks and State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) have backed numerous dam constructions in the LMB. Their involvement has ranged from providing financial support and equipment to providing managerial and technical expertise. It is estimated that there are currently over 50 dams in the other Mekong riparian nations, supported by China (Jain, 2024).

Challenges

Geopolitical Rivalries and Strategic Competition

The Mekong region has become a battleground for major powers, including China, the United States, Japan, and Australia, each promoting its strategic interests. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) dominate regional infrastructure investments, often overshadowing MGC. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy also seeks to counter Chinese influence, adding complexity to regional cooperation.

Limited Financial and Institutional Capacity

Unlike China and Japan, India lacks large-scale funding mechanisms to support MGC infrastructure and connectivity projects. Bureaucratic delays and slow project implementation effectiveness of MGC-led initiatives reduce the efficacy of the project, and MGC lacks a dedicated institutional framework or a permanent secretariat, making coordination difficult.

Connectivity and Infrastructure Bottlenecks

Poor transport and digital infrastructure in Mekong countries hamper regional trade and the movement of people. The Kaladan Multi-modal Transport Project and India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway face delays due to political instability, funding gaps, and logistical hurdles.

Environmental and Water Security Concerns

China's hydropower dams on the upper Mekong River have altered river flow patterns, causing seasonal droughts and water scarcity for downstream countries. Climate change and deforestation in the Mekong Basin threaten regional food security and livelihoods. The lack of a coordinated water management framework weakens the ability of MGC nations to respond effectively.

Political Instability in the Region

Myanmar's military coup (2021) and ongoing civil unrest have disrupted regional connectivity projects and economic ties. Political uncertainties in Cambodia and Laos also affect the smooth implementation of MGC initiatives.

Way Forward

To enhance the strategic significance of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) in the Indo-Pacific, the following key steps should be prioritised:

Enhancing Connectivity & Infrastructure

Expedite the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project. Improve digital and energy connectivity, including fibre-optic networks and renewable energy cooperation.

Strengthening Institutional Framework & Funding

Establish a Permanent MGC Secretariat for better coordination. Create a Mekong-Ganga Infrastructure Fund with support from India, Japan, and ASEAN.

Expanding Trade & Economic Partnerships

Integrate MGC nations into regional supply chains in textiles, agriculture, and technology. Support MSMEs and startups through cross-border investment and trade facilitation.

Boosting Security & Defence Cooperation

Strengthen maritime security and counterterrorism collaboration with the Mekong nations. Align MGC initiatives with BIMSTEC and India's Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Sustainable Development & Climate Resilience

Advocate for Mekong River Water Management Agreements and sustainable hydropower projects. Enhance disaster management and climate resilience programs.

Cultural Diplomacy & People-to-People Ties

Increase scholarships and skill development programs for the Mekong countries. Promote Buddhist and Hindu heritage tourism to strengthen historical and cultural ties.

Conclusion

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) is a vital subregional framework that enhances connectivity, trade, and strategic engagement between India and the Mekong countries within the broader Indo-Pacific region. As global geopolitical dynamics evolve, MGC provides a sustainable and inclusive alternative for regional development, counterbalancing external influences while promoting economic integration, security cooperation, and cultural ties. For MGC to realise its full potential, infrastructure development, institutional strengthening, and deeper economic collaboration must be prioritised. Additionally, India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision must align with MGC initiatives to ensure regional stability, prosperity, and resilience. Strengthening this cooperation will not only enhance India's strategic footprint in Southeast Asia but also contribute to a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific order, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

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PAPER 10

War, Hunger, and Peace: Reimagining Food Security as a Catalyst for Global Peace **Shivam Billore**

Abstract

As the global community grapples with overlapping crises—pandemics, climate change, economic disruptions, and conflict—the resurgence of hunger and the deterioration of food systems underscore a harsh reality: food security is not merely a humanitarian concern but a geostrategic imperative. This paper explores the interlinkages between food insecurity and violent conflict, evaluates food's weaponisation throughout history, and proposes frameworks for integrating food systems into peacebuilding agendas. It charts a course for a food-secure and peaceful future based on global data and India's policy leadership.

Introduction

Human history is scarred by cycles of violence and conflict, often followed by fragile processes of peacebuilding. In the contemporary "era of no war," traditional conflict resolution must evolve to include tools like food security that address the aftermath and root causes of instability. As nations confront increasing shocks—from pandemics and climate change to economic collapses and war—the fragility of the global food system has been laid bare.

According to the United Nations Committee on World Food Security, food security is the state of all people having continuous physical, social, and economic access to enough, safe, and nourishing food that satisfies their dietary needs and food choices for an active and healthy life.

Today, over 349 million people face acute food insecurity across 79 countries—up from 287 million in 2021 (World Food Programme, 2023). Hunger is not just a consequence of conflict but often a catalyst. The war in Ukraine and global inflation have exposed how quickly localised instability can trigger a worldwide food crisis.

Global food security is seriously threatened by hunger, poverty, and food crises. The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the Russia-Ukraine war has intensified the vulnerability of already fragile food systems. According to the WFP, the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity has more than doubled since 2019, reaching over 340 million.

Food Insecurity and Conflict: A Reciprocal Relationship

Violent conflicts are a leading cause of hunger in instances where hostilities have ceased, peace is frequently fragile, and governance structures are weak. There is mounting empirical evidence that rising food prices and insecurity correlate strongly with the onset of social unrest (Bellemare, 2015). Violent conflicts worsen food and nutrition insecurity. Millions of lives have been affected and even lost in places like Gaza, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen, and other conflict-affected places.

Food security interventions—if timely and strategic—can prevent conflict by reinforcing economic stability and resilience (IFPRI, 2014). Conversely, efforts to promote peace and stability in fragile states often create the necessary environment for food systems to thrive (Kurtz & McMahon, 2015).

Agricultural rehabilitation, safety nets, and price stabilisation mechanisms are not only poverty-reducing strategies but are also critical to sustaining peace. Building resilient food systems contributes to long-term development and can inhibit the emergence of violent extremism or civil strife.

Global peace will be facilitated through collaborations that support the development of strong policy innovations through the creation of food safety nets and resilient livelihoods for all. In order to prevent human suffering and cater to the enormous humanitarian aid demands, it is crucial to not only address the hunger and food security needs of communities affected by conflicts but also to think about solving them as a global society.

While each region faces unique challenges, the roots of food insecurity—economic shocks, climate hazards, and anthropogenic threats—are increasingly interconnected. In countries like Yemen, where near-total dependence on imports has triggered a historic food crisis, the lack of local resilience exacerbates existing instability.

According to case studies and literature findings, food-based livelihood support has the potential to directly address some of the root causes of conflict in impacted communities (Frankenberger, 2012). It can accomplish this by building a productive infrastructure, offering social security, and enhancing the technical proficiency of local authorities and other stakeholders.

How can the connections between hunger and violence be broken? Although resolving an ongoing or latent civil conflict frequently necessitates addressing the underlying socioeconomic and political tensions, we contend that strengthening resilience to economic, environmental, and health shocks is even more crucial in conflict-affected countries than it is in more stable ones.

Weaponisation of Food: Historical and Contemporary Cases

Food has historically been wielded as a weapon—sieges, blockades, and starvation have been standard military strategies. During World War II, 1.5 million people died in the siege of Leningrad due to starvation. More recently, ISIS seized grain silos and wheat fields in Iraq as a strategic maneuver. In colonial India, historians have documented the use of food scarcity as a tool to suppress dissent, with the Bengal Famine standing as a tragic testament.

Today, the weaponisation of food has taken new forms. Missile strikes in Ukraine targeted farms and grain silos, affecting African and Middle Eastern nations dependent on Ukrainian exports. Hunger is again a battleground—this time, globalised.

Climate Change: The Silent Agitator

The U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which world leaders are committed to accomplishing by 2030, include eradicating hunger and reducing the effects of climate change. These two urgent concerns are connected, as are many SDGs.

Climate change is a multiplier of risk, intensifying weather events, degrading ecosystems, and undermining agricultural productivity. Floods, droughts, wildfires, and erratic rainfall have already reshaped food systems in vulnerable regions like South and Southeast Asia.

The IPCC (2019) and WFP both emphasise that unless climate change is aggressively addressed, food systems may collapse in ways that exacerbate existing inequalities and geopolitical tensions. Food production, distribution, and affordability all stand threatened.

Climate change contributes to extreme events like droughts, floods, and wildfires that directly impact food production. In South and Southeast Asia, these patterns are already leading to irreversible effects on food availability and rising prices. Without dedicated efforts to mitigate these effects, we risk systemic collapse of agricultural ecosystems.

India's Example: From Recipient to Global Food Ally

India's transformation from a food aid recipient during the PL-480 era to a major contributor to global food security is both instructive and inspiring. The Green Revolution catalysed a self-sufficiency movement, leading to a diversification of wheat varieties and the integration of digital tools in public food distribution.

Over the past decade, India has introduced 100 new wheat varieties, making it the country with the most diversified wheat production. This diversification and policy-driven innovation are instructive for other countries. Yet, challenges remain. As India continues its journey, a greater emphasis on land reforms, institutional support, and public investments is crucial to break the cycle of rural poverty and ensure inclusive food security.

India's National Food Security Act (2013), the world's largest food safety net, currently supports over a billion people. The PM-Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, launched during COVID-19, fed 800 million people through subsidised grain. India also plays a diplomatic role—donating grains through the WFP and promoting millet-based nutrition during its G20 presidency.

The New Diplomacy: Grain as Geopolitical Leverage

Food aid has long served diplomatic goals. The U.S. Food for Peace (PL-480) program used food assistance to prevent ideological unrest. India now holds similar power. As Asia faces a "poly-crisis," grain diplomacy, anchored in equity, sustainability, and regional solidarity, can become a hallmark of New India's foreign policy.

India's leadership in promoting coarse grains like millet, nutrient-dense and climate-resilient, further bolsters its position. As the world marks 2023 as the International Year of Millets, India's policy foresight could redefine global food strategies.

Building Local Self-Sufficiency and Diversification

Nations must focus on diversifying their food sources and reducing dependency on food imports. Self-sufficiency, driven by agricultural science and innovation, can shield countries from external shocks. Investment in local research, land reform, market regulation, and good governance must complement youth-led agricultural transformation for holistic resilience.

Future Pathways: Youth, Equity, and Resilience

To make food systems more resilient and inclusive, especially in conflict-prone and climate-impacted regions, three priorities must be addressed:

Youth Participation: With a demographic bulge in regions like South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, agri-food systems must be reimagined to appeal to and empower youth. Policies must enhance their access to land, finance, and digital tools.

Policy Innovation: Investment in agricultural R&D, market regulation, land reform, and institutional capacity building is crucial to transform rural economies and prevent the food-conflict trap.

Global Collaboration: Multilateral partnerships—between donor nations, institutions like the WFP, and emerging economies—must prioritise food equity, especially in vulnerable and conflict-ridden regions.

Conclusion

Hunger and conflict are intertwined phenomena—each reinforcing the other in a destructive loop. Yet, food can also be a pathway to peace. As global institutions reckon with rising humanitarian crises, building sustainable food systems must be central to their conflict prevention and resolution strategies. India's journey offers a model: resilient production, robust distribution, and diplomatic food engagement. By embracing food not just as a basic need but as a tool of solidarity, empowerment, and peace, the world may find a common table where both hunger and hostilities cease.

It's not enough to produce food—we must produce peace through food. As the world faces overlapping crises, it must reimagine food as a tool of equity, resilience, and shared humanity. Countries like India have shown what is possible. Now, the global community must act with urgency and unity.

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PAPER 11

The Regional Pedagogy For Indo-Pacific

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Understanding the regional pedagogy for the Indo-Pacific begins with tracing its bygone roots. The modern-day realities of the Indo-Pacific region can be formed by looking at critical geopolitical stories. It is more than an economic hub that includes global trade, security dynamics, and other sustainable development efforts. This research paper will build the relationship between geopolitics, security paradigm, financial landscape, and maritime trade with transport for regional stability. The role of the blue economy in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) is discussed here, along with regional cooperation and sustainable growth. Moving ahead into this, this research also highlights the importance of the Indian diaspora in contributing to peace & security in the Indo-Pacific domain. This diaspora works as a bridge through economic contributions, cultural and diplomatic exchanges, and fostering better mutual understandings. I have also drawn attention to regional policy-making and conflict mediation. Thus, my overall research comprehensively analyses the realities of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical and economic landscape by integrating all these themes. The long-term stability can be ensured via collaboration in peacebuilding projects. This paper further unfolds the key challenges and opportunities that help to shape today's Indo-Pacific realities. It also offers policy recommendations for sustainable regional security and economic progress.

Introduction

The term 'Indo-Pacific' is given more importance in a rule-based international order. It is an apolitical term that is neither fully descriptive nor value-neutral. ASEAN or India gives more importance to aspects like economic prosperity, connectivity, and multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific concepts. As a country, India's role is seen as crucial by different countries such as Australia, Japan, and the United States of America. The question of maritime security has remained an outside topic of India's strategic interests, its concerns, and thinking. It is all because of its continental threats. It's the overall image of New Delhi's presence in the Indian Ocean. In India's foreign policy engagements, the concept of Indo-Pacific is a new domain that represents New Delhi's strategic environment by expanding its threats from its continental borders to maritime space. There are nations such as Paris, Tokyo, Washington DC, and Canberra that continue to support and promote Indian role in the Indo-Pacific region. This paper also highlights New Delhi's perceptions, challenges, and opportunities in the region.

"Indo-Pacific" as an organic and integral space primed for political consciousness- Karl Haushofer (1869–1946)

The Indo-Pacific is a multipolar region whose geographical coverage includes several countries in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It includes as many as 43 countries from Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, the Pacific, West Asia, Latin America, North America, and France. The region's heterogeneity in terms of economic development gives a variety of challenges in the economic, political, and security domains.

Literature Review

Moving on to this section of my research paper, I would like to present a global view of the Indo-Pacific from Scott, D. (2018). The Indo-Pacific in US strategy: Responding to powershifts. *Rising powers quarterly*, 2(2), 19–43, states that the US President Donald Trump has directed to respond directly to the perceived Chinese challenge by presenting a strategic concept called the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) as a counter-narrative to a potential Sinocentric reorganisation or restructuring of the region.

It helps in the comprehensive development of the region. Additionally, the ASEAN nations, such as Japan and Australia, have given their idea about the Indo-Pacific. Coming onto the EU, France is the only country that has adopted the term 'Indo-Pacific'. China, on the other hand, rejects the concept of "Indo-Pacific" – and the FOIP in particular – as a containment strategy directed against Beijing. The research paper was written by Heiduk, F., & Wacker, G. (2020). From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: significance, implementation, and challenges firstly mentions that the term Indo-Pacific has been increasingly replacing Asia-Pacific in the eyes of Western powers such as Germany and the European Union etc. This major reconceptualisation has been done by the USA along with other powerful nations in their key discussions. India sees the Indo-Pacific as a natural extension of its strategic domain. The authors, towards the end, suggested that the long-term grounded strategy for the Indo-Pacific is multilateralism, security cooperation, and sustainable development. Next, after analysing the Chacko, P. (2016). New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific (p.55). Routledge mentioned how wonderfully the economic links and trade have helped in building new geopolitical understanding between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The writers look into discussing the rise of China and India and changes in politics in places like Australia, Japan, the US, and Indonesia. They also talk about what might happen to regional stability and international order as a result. Conclusively, it is said that the Indo-Pacific is a contested and politically constructed region.

Figure 1: Indo-Pacific Visions Issued by Countries



Source: De and Kumarasamy (2020)

Moving further, the document titled Denisov, I., Paramonov, O., Arapova, E., & Safranchuk, I. (2021). Russia, China, and the concept of Indo-Pacific. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 12(1), 72-85, highlights how these powerful countries see the concept of Indo-Pacific. This has also gained new heights from the Western powers. China recognised this concept as an ageopolitical strategy aimed at its rise, tho it can be achieved through security initiatives such as QUAD. China ultimately emphasises connectivity and development throughout the whole region. On the other hand, Russia has a distinctive view of the Indo-Pacific. It sees it as a US-dominated model that excludes its key powers. Thus, both countries reject the Indo-Pacific as an exclusionary, ideologically driven concept and advocate for a more inclusive and multipolar regional structure.

It helps in the comprehensive development of the region. Additionally, the ASEAN nations, such as Japan and Australia, have given their idea about the Indo-Pacific. Coming onto the EU, France is the only country that has adopted the term 'Indo-Pacific'. China, on the other hand, rejects the concept of "Indo-Pacific" – and the FOIP in particular – as a containment strategy directed against Beijing. The research paper was written by Heiduk, F., & Wacker, G. (2020). From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: significance, implementation, and challenges firstly mentions that the term Indo-Pacific has been increasingly replacing Asia-Pacific in the eyes of Western powers such as Germany and the European Union etc. This major reconceptualisation has been done by the USA along with other powerful nations in their key discussions. India sees the Indo-Pacific as a natural extension of its strategic domain. The authors, towards the end, suggested that the long-term grounded strategy for the Indo-Pacific is multilateralism, security cooperation, and sustainable development. Next, after analysing the Chacko, P. (2016). New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific (p.55). Routledge mentioned how wonderfully the economic links and trade have helped in building new geopolitical understanding between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The writers look into discussing the rise of China and India and changes in politics in places like Australia, Japan, the US, and Indonesia. They also talk about what might happen to regional stability and international order as a result. Conclusively, it is said that the Indo-Pacific is a contested and politically constructed region.

INDO-PACIFIC INITIATIVES IN COMPARISON

The table below presents all initiatives taken by Indo-Pacific in a comparative perspective. The ASEAN countries are said to be the heart of the Indo-Pacific region.

Countries	Key Objectives	Focus Area
ASEAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on existing regional arrangements Strengthening and optimisation of ASEAN-led mechanisms to contribute to the maintenance of peace, freedom, and prosperity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime cooperation Connectivity UN SDG 2030 Economic and other areas of cooperation.
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepening economic and security cooperation Strengthening maritime security capacities Advancing peace and security Dealing with emergencies Calling for respect for international maritime rules and norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime ecology, security, & resources. Capacity building and resource sharing. Disaster risk reduction and management. Science, technology, and academic cooperation. Trade, connectivity, and maritime transport.
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. Enhancing connectivity through quality infrastructure Ensuring sustainable development Enhancing maritime safety and security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality infrastructure Environment/Health Human resource development Energy sector. Legal system development.
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolution of disputes peacefully, by international law, and without the threat or use of force or coercion. Facilitation of open markets for free flows of goods, services, capital, and ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance regional training on maritime domain awareness. Protection of the maritime environment and international law. Support the regional forum.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusivity of economic integration and open regionalism Upholding the rights of freedom of navigation and overflight, and the protection of the rights of small States. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address fault lines, especially, South China Sea issues. Promote regional trade and investment, and infrastructure financing arrangements.
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Further reading the Li, H. (2022). *The "Indo-Pacific": intellectual origins and international visions in global contexts. Modern Intellectual History*, 19(3), 807-833, explores that the rise of the Indo-Pacific has long geographical and intellectual roots. Historically, the linking of maritime geography and geographical thought existed via connecting the Indian Pacific and the Asia Pacific. In today's time, the Indo-Pacific has gained renewed significance due to several shifts, including China's rise, India's maritime ambitions, and the US's strategic pivot to Asia as a whole.

Table 1: Major Indicators of Indo-Pacific, 2019

Indicators	Indo-Pacific	Share in World (%)
Land area (million sq. km)	74.23	58.29
Population (billion)	5.24	68.28
GDP (current US\$ trillion)	60.19	68.63
Export in Goods (US\$ trillion)	11.76	47.43
Import in Goods (US\$ trillion)	11.98	49.27
Total Trade in Goods (US\$ trillion)	23.74	48.27
Intra-Regional Trade (US\$ trillion)	6.81	69.65

Note: ASEAN: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines; South Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives; Latin America: Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru; North America: Canada, Mexico, United States; North-East Asia: China, Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation; Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji; West Asia: Iran, Islamic Rep., United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Rep., Oman; Africa: Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles; European Union: France.

Source: De and Kumarasamy (2020) based on World Development Indicators, World Bank

Partnerships as a Central Pillar of India's Indo-Pacific Strategy

After reading this working paper written by Baruah, D. M. (2022). *India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theatre of Opportunity*. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace presents different opportunities for New Delhi to expand its influence in terms of geographical parameters. This article makes sure that partnerships are a central pillar of Indo-Pacific strategy and foreign policies. It also discloses India's military strategies and principles about the Indo-Pacific. There have been efforts to improve the maritime domain along with the naval presence itself. Although India's primary theatre of interest is the Indian Ocean region (IOR). Thus, overall, this paper is concerned with the issue-based partnerships and burden-sharing models altogether.

Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific": From strategy to vision

Several countries have adopted different interpretations of the Indo-Pacific from strategy to vision. Japan and India have advocated for a "free and open Indo-Pacific," which emphasises maintaining openness and consistency. Similarly, the EU (European Union) countries, such as France and Germany, have already begun incorporating the Indo-Pacific strategies into their foreign policies. Moreover, it's a fact that the concept of Indo-Pacific cannot be raised without certain sarcasms. As some see it as a potentially exclusionary militarised framework aimed at having China, while others see it as a useful construct for helping cooperation and balance in an increasingly multipolar world for all. Thus, it can be witnessed that the Indo-Pacific is an evolving concept. It reflects a larger global order with ideological principles.

Research Methodology

This research paper is created with a strategic, multifaceted approach. It typically included the empirical, statistical, conceptual, and descriptive diagnostic methods. Additionally, it combines some secondary sources compatible with this field of study. This paper also includes some prerequisite data and some on-table research works to enhance the transparency of this research. Although the overall research has been done by combining and evaluating my arguments. There are scholarly articles from prestigious research platforms. I have acquired knowledge from various sources to write this paper. The paper is based on a 'Descriptive Qualitative Approach.' It is a mixture of various academic writings, books, magazines, educational websites, and platforms such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, and many more. Some articles from government websites and their statistics are being used to frame the core themes of this research proposal. Moreover, towards the end of this paper, I have given my hypothesis and its final results while writing this paper

Hypothesis

Coming to this section of my research paper, I would want to raise my research question, which is "What role does economic connectivity—including maritime trade, Blue Economy and infrastructure—play in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the region"? The region's ultimate cooperation leads to security and stability in the area. The economic activity of the countries with including maritime trade, blue economy, and infrastructure, helps in achieving sustainable development goals for all. The Indian diaspora actively supports peacebuilding, diplomacy, and regional development as a whole. Now, I hypothesise that if multilateral security, cooperation, and economic connectivity are to be achieved, then long-term stability and sustainable development of the Indo-Pacific region are essential. It also includes the policy framework building and diaspora's engagement to address the multipolar order.

Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific region plays a distinctive role in shaping countries' economic and security architecture. This area offers unlimited opportunities for cross-border trade and investment. Its overall heterogeneity in economic size and development has different problems, but can be overcome by improving countries' skills, financial, and technical resources to promote long-term development and growth. The Indo-Pacific region faces issues like ensuring long-term finance and excellent infrastructure. The projects, like India's SAGAR and IPOI, Japan's Quality Infrastructure, ASEAN's Master Plan on Connectivity 2025, and the USA's BDN, and others. These are being adopted on an international scale. All of these majors help to improve regional connections. They intend to have a complete financing scheme, making a master plan for Indo-Pacific connectivity. It includes establishing necessary institutions to help consolidate and release funds for infrastructure projects throughout the region.

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PAPER 12

Dr. Rahul Varma

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Spirituality cannot directly solve tangible threats like cyber crime or physical attacks, it can indirectly contribute to a sense of personal security by fostering positive mental states like resilience, compassion and a strong moral compass, which can help individuals navigate challenging situations and potentially reduce the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors that could lead to security threats; however, it is not a standalone solution and should be combined with practical security measures. A strong spiritual practice can provide individuals with the mental fortitude to cope with stress and difficult situations, making them less susceptible to panic or rash decisions in the face of danger. Spiritual traditions emphasise ethical conduct and compassion towards others, which can deter individuals from engaging in harmful or criminal activities. Belonging to a spiritual community can provide a support system and a sense of belonging, which can be especially important during trying times. Meditation and other spiritual practices can enhance self-awareness, allowing individuals to be more vigilant and attentive to potential threats. While spirituality can contribute to a positive mindset, it cannot replace necessary security practices. The impact of spirituality on security can vary greatly depending on the individual's beliefs, practices and interpretation of their faith. In some cases, extremist interpretations of spirituality can be used to justify harmful actions. Only true humanness consists in cultivating our spirit that gets reflected in intellectualities, morality and humanities. These impulses act as motivations and deepen our relationships with fellow human beings, and as a unifying factor in bringing nations together to understand each other, in bringing about peace. Ironically, the more serious problems emanate from the more industrially advanced societies. Science and technology have worked wonders in many fields, but the basic human problems remain. There is unprecedented literacy, yet this universal education does not seem to have fostered goodness, but only mental restlessness and discontent instead. There is no doubt about the increase in our material progress and technology, but somehow this is not sufficient, as we have not yet succeeded in bringing about peace and happiness or in overcoming suffering. Today 1. Universal humanitarianism is essential to solve global problems; 2. Compassion is the pillar of world peace 3. All world religions are already for world peace in this way, as are all humanitarians of whatever ideology; 4. Each individual has a universal responsibility to shape institutions to serve human needs. We must remember that different religions, ideologies, and political systems of the world are meant for human beings to achieve happiness. We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal, and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained. By far the greatest single danger facing humankind - in fact, all living beings on our planet - is the threat of nuclear destruction. We need not elaborate on this danger, but let us appeal to all the leaders of the nuclear powers who hold the future of the world in their hands, to the scientists and technicians who continue to create these awesome weapons of destruction, and to all the people at large who are in a position to influence their leaders: let's appeal to them to exercise their sanity and begin to work at dismantling and destroying all nuclear weapons. In the quest for happiness, humans have used different methods, which all too often have been cruel and repellent. Behaving in ways utterly unbecoming of their status as humans, they inflict suffering upon fellow humans and other living beings for their selfish gains. In the end, such shortsighted actions bring suffering to oneself as well as to others. One nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. A universal humanitarian approach to world problems seems the only sound basis for world peace. What does this mean? We begin from the recognition mentioned previously that all beings cherish happiness and do not want suffering. We must bring about a viable consensus on basic spiritual values that touch every human heart and enhance general human happiness. This means we must emphasise the common denominator of all world religions - humanitarian ideals. These two steps will enable us to act both individually and together to create the necessary spiritual conditions for world peace. Religious leaders and humanitarians all over the world have a special role to play in this respect. Whether we will be able to achieve world peace or not, we have no choice but to work towards that goal. Hatred and fighting cannot bring happiness to anyone, even to the winners of battles. Violence always produces misery and thus is essentially counter-productive. It is, therefore, time for world leaders to learn to transcend the differences of race, culture, and ideology and to regard one another through eyes that see the common human situation. "There Is No Path To Peace. Peace Is The Path" - Mahatma Gandhi

ADDITIONAL PAPER

Role of India in the Peaceful Unification of Korea

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Ms. Hema Chakraborty

(Program Officer, GPF India)

Introduction

India has, since its independence, championed at every stage peace and harmony across the world. Whether it be the Non-Aligned Movement or Panchsheel, India has proven time and again that its stance on the global stage will always promote and bolster peaceful co-existence and international cooperation. The Korean Peninsula is one of the most vulnerable and conflict-ridden regions in the world today, and India's stance on this issue is no different. India, without hesitation, stands for the peaceful unification of the two Koreas into a democratic, free and prosperous Korean Peninsula. India's stance is balanced and nuanced, and encompasses India's belief in the right to autonomy, regional and global stability, and economic and diplomatic cooperation. India's commitment to take its due responsibility in the unification of Korea is both a strategic consideration and a principled stand in support of peaceful conflict resolution. India's carefully considered approach is both pragmatic and achievable, as India recognises its diplomatic strengths and geographical limitations while engaging with the situation in the Korean Peninsula. While India is highly respectful of the voice and aspiration of the Korean population in guiding the road to unification, India is also aware of its strategic and diplomatic leverage, which India aims to utilise in creating neutral grounds of dialogue, mediation and cooperation between North and South Korea.

Through diplomatic, cultural and economic channels, India has remained a vital international actor in the Korean Peninsula, and India's commitment to peace, nuclear non-proliferation, and a rules-based order makes India an ideal and crucial ally in the efforts to unify Korea peacefully. While historical ties have laid the foundation for the Indian-Korean brotherhood we witness today, India has actively evolved and strengthened these ties over the years, as per the changing times. With a contemporary world order shaping itself gradually, India has expanded its associations with both Koreas to include political, socio-cultural and even military cooperation. India has forever been aware of the challenges posed by North Korea's nuclear stance and has been respectful of the international sanctions against it, while also maintaining ethical and restrained diplomatic relations with the latter in a measured effort to bring North Korea to engage in diplomatic dialogue and cooperation with South Korea. With South Korea, on the other hand, India has a more robust and extensive association, ranging from trade ties and cultural and educational exchanges to diplomatic cooperation and joint naval exercises. India has the appropriate approach to the geopolitical situation in the Korean Peninsula, wherein India is highly respectful of the right of the Korean people to live with dignity, human rights and freedom, because India too fought hard to establish its freedom and sovereignty. On the other hand, India is also aware of the ground realities of the tension between the two Koreas, and the capability of India to bring about a constructive change in the Korean Peninsula, keeping in mind the other major international powers involved and India's own alliances and security interests.

This paper is a detailed exploration of the origins and the subsequent developments in India-Korea relations, with special emphasis on India's role in the peaceful unification of Korea through a wide spectrum of pathways, including diplomatic, economic and cultural dimensions. Through dedicated and concerted effort with various international and regional organisations in the Indo-Pacific region and Asia, India has continued to strive for security and stability in the above-mentioned regions, to ultimately establish an inclusive, peaceful and rules-based world order. This paper is a heartfelt effort to understand and appreciate India's long-standing efforts and unwavering commitment to aid our Korean brothers and sisters in uniting with their separated loved ones, in living a life of peace and prosperity and in establishing a newfound relationship between India and a united Korea – one that is founded on mutual respect and brotherhood.

Historical Foundations of India-Korea Relations

The roots of India-Korea relations trace back over two millennia, beginning with the legendary tale of Queen Heo Hwang-ok. As per Korea's ancient chronicle Samguk Yusa, Queen Heo was a princess from Ayodhya, who sailed to Korea in 48 CE and married King Suro of the Gaya Kingdom. This matrimonial alliance is a symbol of the deep historical and cultural bonds between the two nations. Today, thousands of Korean descendants—especially those with the surnames Kim, Huh, and Lee of Gimhae—visit the Queen Heo Memorial in Ayodhya. This memorial, constructed jointly by India and Korea in 2001 and expanded during South Korean First Lady Kim Jung-sook's visit in 2018, is a living testament to this ancient connection.

Spiritual and scholarly ties were further strengthened through Buddhism, which spread to Korea from India via China in the 4th century CE. Korean monks, notably Hyecho, journeyed to India in search of spiritual wisdom. His 8th-century travelogue, Wang ocheonchukguk jeon, offers rare insights into Indian society and Buddhist practice. He visited key centres like Nalanda and Bodh Gaya, deeply influencing Korean Buddhism's development.

Ancient maritime and land routes facilitated cultural, religious, and trade exchanges between India and Korea. Indian ports like Tamralipta and Kaveripattinam played vital roles in this connectivity.

Both nations share a history of colonisation and resilience. Rabindranath Tagore, moved by Korea's spirit, wrote a poem in 1929 that reflects the bond of solidarity and hope:

**"In the golden age of Asia,
Korea was one of its lamp-bearers,
And that lamp is waiting to be lit once again
For the illumination in the East."**

Diplomatic Ties of India in the Korean Peninsula

Such strong historical ties manifested in modern-day diplomatic relations with both Koreas. In fact, India is one of the few to have diplomatic relations with both Koreas, and this makes India an ideal neutral mediator between the two, and a strong potential facilitator of dialogue between North and South Korea. Right after independence in 1947, India maintained a non-aligned position during the Korean War (1950-53) and took a constructive stand towards humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping. India chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission under the United Nations Command, which supervised the repatriation of the prisoners of war. This was the first step in India's contribution to establishing peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.

India utilises a balanced approach with its diplomatic relations with North Korea, which is both realistic and disciplined. India and North Korea have each other's embassies in their respective capital cities. India has also provided North Korea with food and medical assistance; however, India has done so only in accordance with the humanitarian exemption clauses of the UN's sanction regime.

India strictly adheres to the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) sanctions on North Korea, particularly those related to arms trade, ballistic missiles and nuclear technologies. India has maintained diplomatic relations with an isolated country such as North Korea, but simultaneously been extremely vocal about its concerns regarding North Korea's illicit nuclear and missile development programs. The destabilising and threatening nature of North Korea's proliferation linkages with Pakistan has also been pointed out firmly by India as a glaring security concern for India and global security overall. India has raised repeated concerns at the United Nations and multilateral platforms about the same and has supported the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation (CVID) of the Korean Peninsula.

India's stance has been that of dialogue over coercion and the removal of all threats to international peace, including North Korea's nuclear program. India has been extremely cautious to never exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in North Korea and has been proactive in providing aid and assistance to ordinary and innocent North Korean citizens. India has played an important role in enforcing UN sanctions on North Korea, restricting North Korean officials' movement (those who are involved in proliferation), and freezing North Korean assets under international directives. Therefore, it is evident how India's diplomatic relations have always been principled and laced with the appropriate restrictions on North Korea.

India's diplomatic relations with South Korea are vibrant and ever-expanding. An alliance established in 1973 was renamed as a "Strategic Partnership" in 2010, and elevated to a "Special Strategic Partnership" in 2015. South Korea has been a vital trade, defence and diplomatic partner for India. South Korean companies like Hyundai, Samsung, and LG have penetrated Indian markets, while bilateral trade in recent years has reached up to USD 23 billion, and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and South Korea is likely to enhance these numbers. India and South Korea have initiated defence dialogues, naval exchanges, and defence industry cooperation as part of both countries' larger Indo-Pacific strategy and counterbalancing China. This bilateral engagement is being expanded in areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and clean energy.

India has the commitment to peace and security, the diplomatic channels with both Koreas, and the strategic leverage of its international position as an economically, socio-culturally and geopolitically prominent country. This gives India an important role in the mitigation of the geopolitical crisis in the Korean Peninsula, a responsibility which India has taken with grace and dedication, while respecting the agency of the people of both the Koreas and other international organisations and actors. India can offer backchannel diplomacy and diffuse tensions while facilitating humanitarian dialogue. India's calibrated humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea can be a soft power tool to maintain communication channels and build goodwill. India's think tanks and retired diplomats have engaged in Track II dialogues and scholarly exchanges with stakeholders in the region, contributing to policy discourse on peace and denuclearisation. India's legacy of non-alignment and its policy of strategic autonomy give India potential credibility as a neutral dialogue partner, who can engage with all sides without being seen as partisan. Peaceful unification of Korea is also central to India's broader mission and vision in the Indo-Pacific region. India's strategy for the Indo-Pacific region includes openness, inclusivity, freedom of navigation, and respect for international law. Unveiled in 2018 at the Shangri-La Dialogue, India's Indo-Pacific strategy requires multilateralism, peaceful dispute resolution and stability in the Korean Peninsula to be fulfilled. Therefore, peaceful unification of Korea is a prerequisite for achieving India's goal for an Indo-Pacific which is free, rules-based and where peace and prosperity are for all. India's participation in regional organisations and strategic groupings like ASEAN, ADMM-Plus and Quad allows India to contribute constructively to discussions on stability in the Korean Peninsula and reinforces its credibility as a responsible stakeholder in regional security.

Economic Engagements between India and Korea for Peace in the Korean Peninsula

India and South Korea have a "Special Strategic Partnership" under which the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in 2009, has bolstered bilateral trade and could serve as a model of inter-Korean economic integration (MEA, 2021). However, when it comes to North Korea, bilateral trade was minimal and largely halted post-UN sanctions (UN COMTRADE, n.d.), but India has not completely disengaged itself, allowing room for future engagement if conditions improve (Press Information Bureau [PIB], 2020). India has been aware of the economic realities of both Koreas – where on one hand South Korea has flourished and boasted of an open and rapidly developing economy, North Korea has mostly been isolated from the international economic ecosystem – and India's economic engagements in both Koreas have been measured and relevant to North and South Korea's respective economic models.

While South Korea has been an ever-amplifying economic partnership, which has led to heightened proximity between the governmental and economic organisations of both countries, North Korea has been dealt with adequate caution in terms of trade ties, which have at times been restricted or even cut by India as per international sanctions on North Korea and North Korea's nuclear and military stance. India has utilised trade and economic exchanges as a model of trust-building and negotiations, to potentially create a platform for peaceful cooperation, even if it is restricted to only economic terms.

India's participation in multilateral economic and diplomatic platforms like the G20, East Asia Summit, and ASEAN Regional Forum offers a powerful avenue to introduce peaceful cooperation models relevant to the Korean Peninsula (MEA, 2021). These platforms are not solely security-focused—they also prioritise inclusive development, connectivity, and capacity-building. India could advocate for integrating North Korea into long-term economic frameworks through gradual confidence-building mechanisms, trade connectivity, and infrastructure support (KIEP, 2020). As an emerging global economy with growing influence in these forums, India is well-placed to present proposals for inter-Korean cooperation that are development-driven rather than politically confrontational. For instance, India's leadership in the G20 Development Working Group could be leveraged to promote economic inclusivity, digital access, and energy cooperation—areas where North Korea lags and would benefit immensely (PIB, 2020). By shaping discourse on peace through prosperity, India can expand its soft power while creating conditions that allow for gradual inter-Korean integration driven by economic logic and shared gains (Chaudhuri, 2018). India's experience with Special Economic Zones (SEZs) across Asia and Africa can serve as a model for involvement in future inter-Korean industrial cooperation zones like Kaesong, should they reopen (MEA, 2021). Indian firms specialising in textiles, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, and Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) could bring affordable technology and job creation models that suit both North and South Korean interests. Moreover, India could partner with South Korean companies and international development institutions (e.g., UNDP, Asian Development Bank) to launch trilateral development initiatives aimed at rebuilding North Korea's infrastructure (KIEP, 2020). This could include power grids, rail connectivity, public health facilities, and vocational training centres. Indian engineering firms like L&T or infrastructure consultancies like RITES have already contributed to post-conflict reconstruction (MEA, 2021) in the past, making them suitable candidates for such projects. These initiatives would not only foster trust between the two Koreas but also create a stable economic corridor that reduces military tensions. India's involvement would send a strong signal: peace and profit can grow together (Chaudhuri, 2018).

India's Cultural and Educational Diplomacy for the Peaceful Unification of Korea

India's cultural outreach to both Koreas rests on millennia-old ties that resonate with shared Buddhist heritage and scholarly exchange. One notable historical connection unfolds through the travels of Hyecho, an 8th-century Silla monk whose travelogue detailed Buddhist sites across India—an early gesture of spiritual and intellectual reciprocity (UNESCO Archives, n.d.). Today, this ancient legacy is revitalised through contemporary initiatives like film forums and art festivals that bring North and South Korean audiences closer to Indian culture (KCCI, n.d.).

India's longstanding cultural relationship with DPRK dates back to a 1976 Cultural Agreement and a continuous sequence of Cultural Exchange Programmes—including troupes visiting Pyongyang's April Spring Friendship Art Festival (MEA, 2021). Such sustained cultural presence serves to humanise bilateral ties and subtly foster mutual understanding. Similarly, India–South Korea cultural diplomacy is institutionalised through the KoreaIndia Joint Cultural Commission, first convened in 1974, with regular cultural exchange programmes every 2–3 years to strengthen people-to-people links (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.). These frameworks—rooted in art, music, film, and scholarly dialogue—lay the groundwork for a cultural gestalt that can transcend political separation. By reinforcing shared human values, they sow seeds of trust in both Koreas, vital for any future reconciliation journey (Chaudhuri, 2018).

India's educational engagement with North Korea also runs deep. Since the early 1990s, North Korean officials have participated in India's ITEC (Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation) programme, acquiring training in public administration, language, and computer applications (ITEC, n.d.). Though sensitive areas like space and satellite technology were restricted post-2016, training in diplomacy and governance continues—cultivating future North Korean civil servants exposed, however modestly, to democratic values and administrative norms (MEA, 2021). On the South Korean front, India fosters knowledge exchange via university collaborations, research projects, and online joint courses. The Korean Cultural Centre in India (KCCI) actively promotes Korean language and studies: since 2012, it partners with universities such as JNU, DU, IGNOU, and EFLU to offer structured programmes via Hangeul classes, literature seminars, and digital modules (KCCI, n.d.). These initiatives empower Indian scholars and students to engage with Korean society and thought, while also serving as platforms for Koreans to glimpse India's scholarly richness. Educational diplomacy creates familiarity—language proficiency grants cultural fluency, and academic collaboration nurtures mutual respect. In a reunification context, India-driven scholarship networks could extend to include North Korean students if conditions eased. Such exchanges would bridge ideological chasms, building channels of empathy between youth across the Peninsula (Chaudhuri, 2018).

Language lies at the heart of one's cultural identity. India's integration of the Korean language in its New Education Policy (NEP 2020) underscores a strategic pivot: offering Hangeul as a secondary-level option enhances cultural literacy and provides a geopolitical insight into East Asia (KCCI, n.d.). The global rise of Hallyu – encompassing Kpop, Kdramas, fashion, and cuisine – has accelerated interest in the Korean language, seen in surging enrolments in Korean studies programmes across Indian universities (News18, 2024). Hangeul's growing popularity helps cultivate a shared cultural space for deeper inter-Korean understanding. By equipping Indian learners with linguistic competence, India strengthens its role as a cultural conduit—one that can later include reunification-focused educational platforms connecting South and North Korean participants. Film and art are potent vehicles for empathy. The Indo-DPRK Film & Cultural Forum, launched recently, has taken proactive steps such as screenings, artist exchanges, and film workshops meant to nurture understanding (MEA, 2021). These informal, grassroots interactions transcend divisions, allowing citizens to get a glimpse of the lives, narratives, and creative expressions of each other. In the South, vibrant cultural festivals and cinematic collaborations encourage broader public immersion into Indian arts. By placing shared emotions and storytelling at centre stage, these platforms plant seeds of emotional affinity—essential for countering decades of division (Chaudhuri, 2018).

India's Role in Humanitarian and Peacebuilding Efforts in Korea

India's involvement in Korea's peace and humanitarian landscape spans over seven decades, underscoring its commitment to non-alignment, human rights, and global stability. While geographically distant, India has maintained a moral and diplomatic closeness to the Korean Peninsula, shaped by its post-independence foreign policy and Gandhian ideals of peace (Banerjee, 2009). India's engagement began during the Korean War (1950–1953). As hostilities erupted, India emerged as a key player advocating for an immediate ceasefire. Rather than aligning with Cold War blocs, India took a principled stand of neutrality and humanitarian concern (Banerjee, 2009). India played a pivotal role in facilitating armistice negotiations and chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) in 1953, tasked with overseeing the return of prisoners of war. The Indian Custodian Force Korea (ICKF) supervised this sensitive mission, earning global respect for India's balanced diplomacy (Ministry of Defence Archives; United Nations Archives). In the decades following the armistice, India maintained limited but respectful diplomatic ties with both Koreas, never abandoning its interest in a unified and peaceful peninsula. The establishment of diplomatic relations with North and South Korea allowed India to keep a rare dual engagement — ethically providing humanitarian support to the North while expanding economic and educational exchanges with the South (Ministry of External Affairs, n.d.). In recent years, India's humanitarian outreach to North Korea has included food-related aid, medical assistance, and disaster relief, notably through the World Food Programme (WFP). Between 2002 and 2020, India provided rice, wheat, and essential medicines to Pyongyang on multiple occasions (World Food Programme, n.d.). Importantly, India has done so without politicising its aid — a testament to its emphasis on the Korean people's welfare rather than strategic gain (Ministry of External Affairs, n.d.).

Meanwhile, India's peacebuilding efforts have expanded through people-to-people exchanges, soft diplomacy, and support for denuclearisation. India has consistently advocated for dialogue-driven solutions to the North Korean nuclear crisis at multilateral forums like the United Nations (Banerjee, 2009). While not a central actor in the Six-Party Talks, India supports a rules-based international order and urges restraint and negotiation on all sides. Culturally and educationally, India has provided scholarships for Korean students through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), while academic institutions in both countries have engaged in dialogue on peace, unification, and regional security (ICCR, n.d.). Indian think tanks and civil society organisations have actively promoted Korean unification through youth mobilisation, international forums, and interfaith collaboration. In the contemporary Indo-Pacific discourse, India sees peace on the Korean Peninsula as crucial to regional stability. As a balancing power and a democracy with civilizational ties to East Asia, India is uniquely positioned to offer a neutral, moral voice in peacebuilding, particularly as U.S.-China rivalries complicate traditional diplomatic routes (Banerjee, 2009). From principled neutrality to current humanitarian outreach and cultural diplomacy, India's role in Korean peacebuilding is consistent — a reminder that sometimes, it is the steady hands of non-aligned nations that carry the deepest commitment to peace.

Dr. Hyun Jin Preston Moon's Korean Dream

Dr. Hyun Jin Preston Moon has been a leading advocate for achieving peace and unification on the Korean Peninsula, guided by his spiritual and historical vision encapsulated in the Korean Dream. As founder of the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) in 2009 and initiative leader of the Action for Korea United coalition, he has mobilised civic society across Korea and the diaspora toward reunification (Korea Times, 2024). His framework places emphasis on grassroots movements rather than top-down political action, believing authentic and sustainable change must originate from the people themselves (Korea Times Interview, 2025). In his keynote speeches—such as at the International Forum on One Korea—Dr. Moon defined the Korean Dream as a unifying vision rooted not in ideology or wealth, but in shared identity, spiritual values, and human rights. He calls upon Koreans worldwide to embrace their historical mission, citing the ancient philosophy of Hongik Ingan ("living for the benefit of all humanity") as the ethical foundation for a new, unified Korea (PR Newswire, 2018). Dr. Moon's emphasis on economic solidarity includes proposing a "Marshall Plan"-style recovery model for North Korea—backed by international support—to build confidence and infrastructure. He also orchestrated public campaigns like the "10 Million People's Korean Dream Rally," encouraging civic participation toward unification goals (Global Peace Foundation, 2020). Through his writings, speeches, and institutional platforms, Dr. Moon reframes unification not merely as a geopolitical objective, but as a people-led, values-driven transformation—uniting hearts, minds, and communities in pursuit of enduring peace.

The Future of India-Korea Relations in the Unification Process of Korea

The Korean Peninsula stands at a critical historical crossroads, where the dream of unification—though complex—continues to ignite hope among Korean people and advocates of peace globally. Amid this delicate balance of diplomacy and ideology, India emerges not as a dominant powerbroker but as a partner with considerable potential to contribute meaningfully to the unification process. As the geopolitical chessboard shifts, the future of India-Korea relations may well become an indispensable thread in the tapestry of a unified Korea (Singh, 2021). India's connection with both South and North Korea is rooted in its legacy of principled neutrality and its belief in non-interference coupled with proactive peace engagement (ICWA, n.d.). While India's current ties with South Korea are defined by a robust Special Strategic Partnership, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange (Ministry of External Affairs, India, n.d.-a), its diplomatic relationship with North Korea, though limited, is uniquely enduring. India remains one of the few democracies maintaining an embassy in Pyongyang, keeping open a rare communication channel that may become more vital in a post-unification transition (Ministry of External Affairs, India, n.d.-b). In the future, India's most valuable role could be that of a bridge between ideologically divergent parties, between economic models, and between the peninsula and the broader Global South. As a nation with experience in managing diversity, federalism, and peaceful transitions, India holds soft power capital that is deeply relevant to Korean unification (UNESCAP, n.d.). Its model of post-colonial nation-building may offer insights into integrating two vastly different political and economic systems while preserving cultural and national unity (Singh, 2021). Economically, India's potential to aid the post-unification rebuilding of North Korea is substantial.

With its strengths in infrastructure development, digital governance, and affordable innovation, Indian companies and public sector units could support North Korea's transition through technology transfer, vocational training, and capacity-building (Ministry of External Affairs, India, n.d.-b). Indian investment in the North could also serve as a stabilising factor that prevents overdependence on any one major power (ICWA, n.d.). Diplomatically, India's emphasis on multilateralism positions it to support a unification process that respects regional stability. India could advocate for inclusive peace mechanisms through platforms such as the United Nations, ASEAN, or the East Asia Summit, where it already plays a strategic role (UNESCAP, n.d.). It could also act as a facilitator in interfaith and civil society dialogues, which are often overlooked yet essential to social reconciliation in a post-conflict setting (Global Peace Foundation India, n.d.). The future of India-Korea relations in the context of unification is not merely about statecraft—it is also about vision. It envisions a partnership that is resilient and credible, grounded not in coercion but in cooperation. As South Korea deepens its global alliances and North Korea potentially opens up, India's balanced voice, development experience, and deep cultural respect for Korea could shape a unification process that is humane, inclusive, and lasting (Global Peace Foundation India, n.d.). Unification may take time, but when it comes, India will be ready—not to lead the process, but to walk alongside it with wisdom and friendship.

Mongolia's Neutral Position in the Korean Peninsula and India's Affirmation of Mongolia's Efforts

Mongolia has emerged as a quiet but influential neutral actor in the Korean Peninsula's peacebuilding landscape. Despite its geographic location in Northeast Asia, Mongolia does not participate in the rivalry dynamics of larger regional powers. Instead, it adopts a balanced foreign policy known as the "Third Neighbour" strategy, engaging democracies outside its immediate neighbourhood to strengthen its sovereignty and diplomacy (Hong, 2022). This neutrality has positioned Mongolia as a trusted intermediary, especially in dialogues related to Korean unification and regional stability.

The Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, launched in 2013, is Mongolia's flagship Track 1.5 initiative, bringing together policymakers, academics, and civil society from both Koreas, the US, China, Russia, and Japan (Korea Economic Institute of America, 2022). Mongolia's track record includes facilitating humanitarian negotiations between North Korea and Japan, such as family reunification talks, reinforcing its credibility as a neutral venue (Campi, 2014). Additionally, as a nuclear-weapon-free state with a stable democracy, Mongolia offers a compelling model of peaceful development for North Korea to consider.

India has consistently affirmed Mongolia's role in Korean Peninsula peace efforts. The two countries share a spiritual and strategic bond, reflected in India's Act East Policy and its commitment to democratic partnerships. India supports Mongolia's diplomatic efforts and recognises the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue as a potential platform to advance regional cooperation and Korean unification through peaceful dialogue (Drishti IAS, 2024). By aligning on shared values of democracy, peace, and multilateralism, India and Mongolia present a compelling vision for small- and medium-sized powers contributing meaningfully to Northeast Asian peace and Korean reconciliation.

Conclusion

In a world often shaped by loud declarations and power politics, India's role in the Korean Peninsula is a quiet flame—steady, warm, and rooted in empathy. From the time India stood with compassion as a peacekeeper during the Korean War, to today's bridges of diplomacy and cultural solidarity, India has offered something rare: a voice untainted by self-interest, a hand extended in humanity. As the Korean people yearn for reunion, India listens. Not as a power, but as a friend shaped by its own struggles of partition and peace. Its moral compass, forged in non-violence and democratic pluralism, gently urges the two Koreas toward reconciliation—not through force, but through dialogue, dignity, and dreams. India's responsibility is not to dictate, but to support; not to dominate, but to accompany. In doing so, it lends credibility, stability, and heart to the unification process. The road to a united Korea is long, but if walked with patience and principled partners like India, it may lead not only to a geopolitical solution, but to a human one—where families are restored, histories are healed, and hope rises anew.

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SPEAKERS - INAUGURAL SESSION



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*Chairman GPF India & President
IPPF*



Dr. Priya Ranjan Trivedi
*Confederation of Indian
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Founder IIEE, New Delhi*



**General (Dr) Vijay Kumar
Singh**
Honorable Governor of Mizoram



Ingill RA
*Regional Representative, Global
Peace Foundation for Asia Pacific*



**H. H. Acharya
Lokesh Muni Ji M**

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Former Ambassador



Amb. Dr. Deepak Vohra
Former Ambassador



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Prof. Ajay Kumar Dubey
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Amb. Virendra Gupta
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Regional Representative, Global Peace Foundation for Asia Pacific



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Former Ambassador to Germany, Indonesia, Ethiopia



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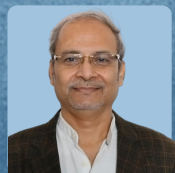
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Development Specialist at
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Mrs. Rekha Udit
Chairperson, Women
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Mrs. Bela Gandhi



Mr. Manoj Srivastava

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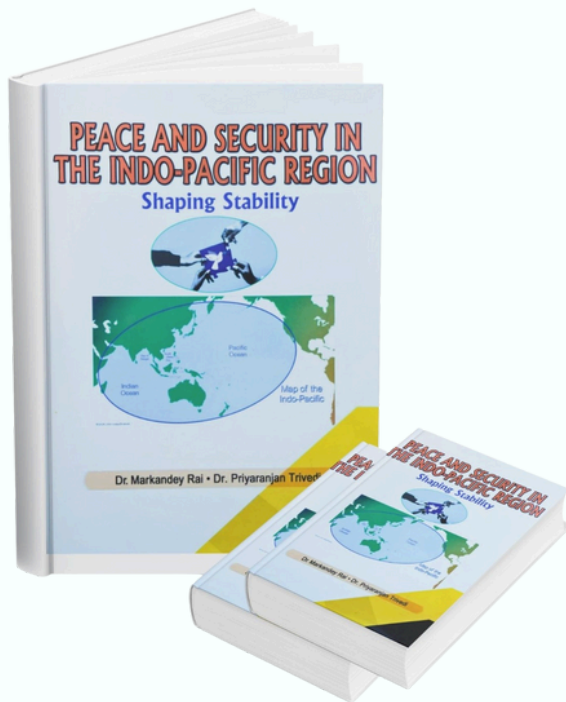
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BOOK LAUNCH

PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: SHAPING STABILITY



During the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF) Conference, a significant milestone was marked with the official launch of the book "Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region: Shaping Stability", authored by two distinguished peacemakers — Dr. Markandey Rai and Dr. P.R. Trivedi. This comprehensive volume explores the evolving geopolitical dynamics, strategic interests, and security frameworks shaping the Indo-Pacific region, one of the most vital and contested regions of the 21st century. The book offers a multidimensional perspective on peacebuilding, diplomacy, regional cooperation, and sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of inclusive dialogue and collective security. Drawing from historical context and contemporary challenges, the authors present a forward-looking vision for maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The launch, held in the presence of global delegates, diplomats, and youth leaders, highlighted the intellectual contribution of the IPPF platform in promoting scholarly discourse and practical pathways for peace in the Indo-Pacific region.



NEW DELHI DECLARATION FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC PEACE FORUM CONFERENCE

Organized by GPF-India, New Delhi
In Collaboration With
Confederation of Indian Universities, Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad and
Amity University Gurugram
March 20, 2025, India International Centre, New Delhi

We, the delegates of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum Conference, gathered at the India International Centre, New Delhi, on March 19-20, 2025, acknowledge the growing significance of the Indo-Pacific region in global peace, security, and economic stability. We recognize the need for a collective vision based on cooperation, inclusivity, and shared prosperity.

Recalling the Global Peace Leadership Conference (GPLC) from 11-13 April 2023, at New Delhi, it was agreed to establish the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF) a significant platform for dialogue, collaboration and follow-up action for peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Affirming the same, in several meetings, including the one at the Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad, and the most recent one at India International Centre on the 11th of February 2025, an Advisory Council was conscripted at the national and international level, and it was decided that the IPPF shall organize an international conference soon.

Keeping in mind the significance of the demographic and economic power of the Indo-Pacific region, this Conference is a determined step in the promotion of peace and prosperity for all in the Indo-Pacific, and through it, the world. Therefore, we the people present at this milestone gathering at the 2-day First International Conference of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum (IPPF) titled, "Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region: Significance of Ideas and Thoughts," have unanimously agreed that this Conference is crucial and timely in the creation of concrete pathways for establishing peace and security in the pivotal region of the Indo-Pacific. Collectively, we resolve to adopt the following "New Delhi Declaration on Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region."

Committing to our endeavor to establish peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, on the foundation of collaboration, dialogue and cooperation, we acknowledge the importance of inclusive and balanced representation. Diplomatic alliances based on mutual understanding and respect are of paramount importance.

Understanding that universal principles provide the moral foundation for ethical societies that honor and protect human dignity, freedom, faith, and equality, which are essential for lasting peace and development, these are the necessary basis for good governance and national flourishing.

Further understanding that economic prosperity, growth, and a safe and open international economic systems are crucial for all nations involved, we encourage free, open and multilateral trade, safeguarding pivotal trade routes, which are the pre-requisite for an economically stronger and vibrant Indo-Pacific. Enhancing regional connectivity and infrastructural development to ensure sustainable economic growth and partnerships is paramount.

Fostering security and stability which is multidimensional and includes considerations of smaller islands and countries of the Global South. The value that multilateralism and the engagement of international and regional organizations like the UN, ASEAN, QUAD, and IORA in ensuring a rules-based order and peace on a regional and global level, has been unanimously recognized and upheld by this gathering.

Realizing the significance of the G20 Summit in 2023, the IPPF aims to advocate for the implementation of the Summit's recommendations and outcomes, emphasizing on the importance of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' to integrate the whole of humanity as one family.

Considering that the Indo-Pacific region comprises of two major oceans, it is essential to uphold international laws like UNCLOS, which aim for a secure and safe maritime trade system, along with the uninterrupted flow of trade through all crucial sea lanes and trade routes. A robust framework of economic and diplomatic safeguards needs to be in place to counter emerging and pre-existing traditional and non-traditional security threats like piracy, among others.

Valuing greatly the contributions and role of the Indian and other Diaspora, we believe that deeper connections on a geo-political, economic and cultural level with them, will be highly beneficial to peacebuilding efforts in the Indo-Pacific, as well as India's leadership role in global peace frameworks. An effective network based on common cultural roots and bolstered by a system of incentivization, will enable a sustainable partnership.

Urging Indo-Pacific nations to adopt and promote a Blue Economy, where maritime resources are collectively and sustainably utilized in an environmentally friendly manner, we aim to mitigate environmental degradation and climate impacts and protect marine biodiversity and habitats. To promote balanced development and reduce poverty while maintaining environmental resilience and advancing clean energy, national policies should be aligned with long-term goals that ensure sustainable development.

Committing to resolve regional conflicts through moral and innovative leadership, dialogue, cooperation, and confidence-building, we support a vision of lasting peace, human rights, and freedom. For the Korean Peninsula, we advocate for a unified Korea founded on freedom, the protection of human rights, and the resolution of Cold War-era security challenges, ensuring lasting stability of Northeast Asia and beyond.

Encouraging the engagement of people at the grassroots level to promote people-to-people connectivity, including Track II diplomacy, cultural exchanges, intellectual and academic collaborations, and tourism, we recognize the vital importance of strengthening regional ties and mutual understanding. We also recognize that just and inclusive systems are necessary for peacefully resolving regional disputes.

Calling for a greater role and representation for women in peace and security domains across the Indo-Pacific, IPPF will work with regional governments and organizations to ensure inclusion of families and women in these endeavors, integrating gender perspectives into policies and programs.

Envisioning a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, which is the beacon of peace and unity for the rest of the world, and an exemplary of peace, unity, and strong economic growth. Through technological advancements and strengthening defence cooperation, and geopolitical stability and economic diplomacy, we strive for a world where nations collaborate for a secure, stable and sustainable future.

To achieve the above Declaration, it is imperative to put into action certain concrete steps.

1. Through meetings and conferences, the IPPF will bring together experts, leaders, scholars and policymakers to create and publish new literature and discourse on peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The publications and declarations, like this one, will be sent to government bodies and multilateral organizations, to extend the reach of the ideas proposed and turn them into policy.
2. Inclusion of subjects like Blue Economy and SDGs, and Maritime Security and Trade in school and university curricula, and further research on these subjects must be furthered through specialized courses and training.
3. Through the IPPF, we aim to work with national governments and international organizations to advocate for an Indo-Pacific Corridor, which increases connectivity between Indo-Pacific nations.
4. The IPPF will aim to engage diplomats and dignitaries of organizations like the UN, ASEAN, SAARC, IORA and QUAD through its Advisory Council for organizing Track II dialogues.
5. The IPPF will work with organizations and institutions of the Indo-Pacific region to create and engage stake holders for the promoting peace and an environment for free movement of people, and sustainable utilization of common marine and coastal resources.
6. IPPF will actively collaborate with the Global Peace Leadership Corps in developing a cadre of young peacebuilders in nations of the Indo-Pacific region. With peacebuilding training and practical experience, they will work on innovative projects on peace, security and sustainable development.
7. Recognizing the critical role of families and women in peacebuilding and security, IPPF commits to developing a Family and Women's Peace Leadership Initiative to empower families and women as agents of change in strengthening social cohesion, conflict resolution, sustainable development, and regional cooperation.
8. Through support of signature campaigns and art, music and food festivals, the IPPF will endeavor to engage students and scholars at educational institutions to promote the One Korea Campaign and create a sustainable support base for peaceful Korean unification, an example for sustainable and transformative peace.
9. Through digital engagements, we strive to spread the word of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, especially through the soon to be launched Indo-Pacific Peace Podcast, where experts and researchers on the subject will share their thoughts to a wide audience.

Adopted in New Delhi on March 20, 2025 during the Valedictory Session of the Indo-Pacific Peace Forum's First International Conference in the presence of all the Delegates, Speakers, Panelists, Participants and Rapporteurs, this New Delhi Declaration on Peace and Security in the Indo-Pacific Region is our unanimous commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region in the light of dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration on a regional and international level.

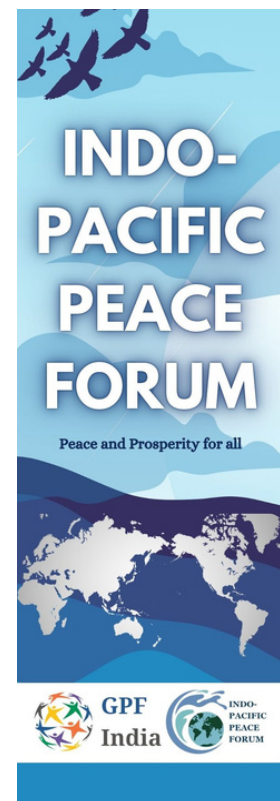
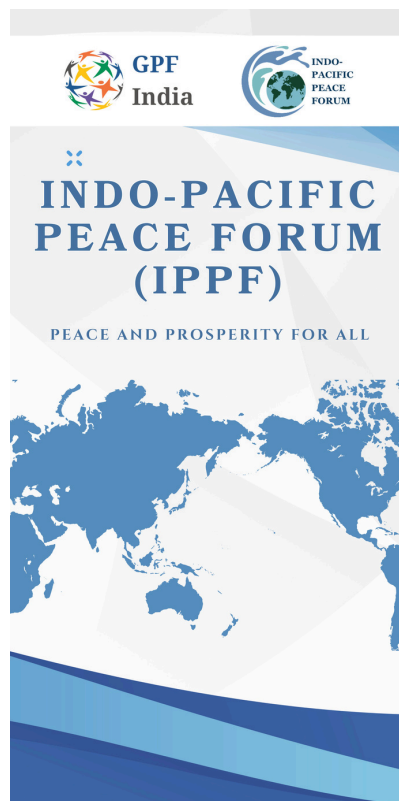
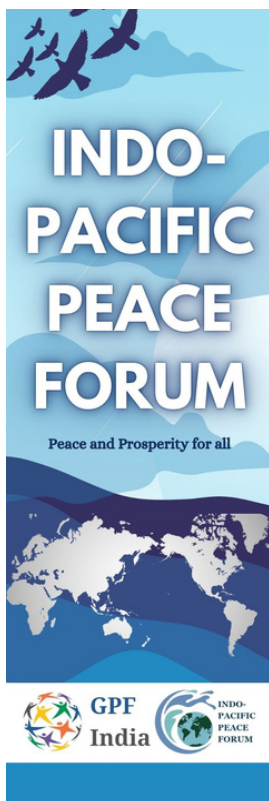


INDO-PACIFIC PEACE FORUM

**PEACE & SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION:
SIGNIFICANCE OF IDEAS & THOUGHTS**



The Indo-Pacific Peace Forum International Conference aims to address the region's security, economic, and geopolitical challenges through dialogue, collaboration, and innovation. With over 50% of the world's population and 60% of global GDP linked to the Indo-Pacific, regional stability is crucial for global peace and prosperity. Key discussions will focus on maritime security, the Blue Economy, climate resilience, and multilateral cooperation, aligning with global initiatives like QUAD and G20. The Conference will also advocate for initiatives such as the One Korea Campaign to promote unity and stability. Bringing together policymakers, youth leaders, and experts, it seeks to develop actionable strategies for a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific.





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