

**Geopolitical Implications of the US-India Strategic Partnership in the Indo-Pacific Region****Najm Ullah<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Zohaib<sup>2</sup>, Ziaul Islam<sup>3</sup>, Sikandar Bakht<sup>4</sup>**

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**Abstract:**

A geo-economics and geopolitical analysis of the shifting dynamics of the bilateral relationship between the USA and India has significant implications for the IPE in the Indo-Pacific region. This paper aims to evaluate the interaction process between the US and India, utilizing major theories related to China's emergence. This work, guided by the methodologies of realism, neoclassical realism, constructivism, and geo-economics, analyzes the strategic coordination of security defense technology and economic cooperation. It also scrutinizes how the cooperation impacts regional players such as ASEAN, Japan, and Australia, balancing the divergence of geographical perspectives and India's decoupled strategic sovereignty. The last chapter of the study analyses the transformation of the Indo-Pacific by the partnership and presents ways to advance this alliance. In fact, this paper will assist in developing a theoretical understanding regarding the great-power rivalry with the region and the importance of the bilateral partnership for the maintenance of the rule-based international order.

**Key Words:**

Security cooperation US-India, Free and Open Indo-Pacific, China BRI, strategic independence, geo-commerce, Quad, ASEAN, war of geopolitics, stability, weaker power.

**Introduction:**

The Indo-Pacific plays a vital sphere of the entire world with tremendous instability resulting from Chinese the Belt & Road infrastructural plan as well as military expansionism, especially in the South China Sea. The importance of the area can be best seen from the fact that the area is strategically located on key channels, has a number of natural resources and the economy of the countries in this area is growing at a very fast pace (Filimonova et al., 2022). Due to China's emergence as the economic and soon perhaps a military giant in the region the area is experiencing profound geo-socio-political changes (Liu, 2022). However, within these changes, the U.S.-India bilateral relationship has emerged as important because of democracies and vistas for cooperation and shared risks in the form of free and open Indo-Pacific. This alliance is a counter to China's increasing hegemony (Arslanal et al., 2016), the common concern with oceanic connectivity, stability and security as well as economic cooperation. In a broader sense, its effects can redraw the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific and impact related actors such as ASEAN, Japan and Australia (Abram et al., 2021) and even global governance framework.

However, there are certain issues and constraints which affect the bilateral US-India strategic relations these are; different strategic perspectives & perception, Indian strategic flip flop policy. In this paper, it assesses the strategic rationales of the partnership, domain of similarities and differences, and consequences for Indo-Pacific's future dynamics. It is designed to evaluate how the partnership responds to the rise of China and the potential formation of the new regional order on a proactive basis (Lalwani & Byrne, 2019).

### **Problem Statement:**

Despite having the noble intention of ensuring a rules-based international order and stability in the South Asian region the two have multiple challenges with strategic differences in goals and asymmetrical security relationships as well as India's adventitious policy of strategic autonomy.

### **Research Questions:**

To guide the analysis, the following research questions are posed:

1. How does the US-India strategic partnership align to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific, and what role do security, economic, and technological collaborations play in achieving this?
2. What strategic areas show convergence between the US and India, and where do their priorities diverge? How do these alignments and divergences impact the overall effectiveness of the partnership in shaping a stable Indo-Pacific?
3. In what ways does the US-India partnership influence regional actors, such as ASEAN, Japan, and Australia, and what implications does this hold for broader regional governance and stability?
4. How does the partnership address the geo-economics dimensions of regional stability, and what alternatives does it provide to China's Belt and Road Initiative?

### **Research Objectives:**

The objectives of this study are designed to provide a thorough analysis of both the strategic and economic dimensions of the US-India partnership. The primary objectives include:

1. This study aims to examine the strategic motivations, security goals, and economic collaborations shaping the U.S.-India partnership in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in response to China's influence.
2. To explore the economic collaboration between the US and India, with a focus on implementation of geo-economics strategies like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and alternatives to China's expansive and extensive Belt and Road Initiative.
3. To appraise the zones of strategic synchronization between the US and India, as well as facets of divergence, particularly concerning geographic conceptions of the Indo-Pacific and differing foreign policy stances (e.g., India's multi-directional strategy of engagement).
4. To dissect how the US-India partnership impacts the more extensive Indo-Pacific region, notably regarding the reactions of pivotal regional entities like Japan, Australia, the affiliated nations of ASEAN, and China itself.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this inquiry encompasses the geopolitical and economic facets of the US-India strategic alliance, with a specific concentration on its purpose in molding the Indo-Pacific order. The examination will cover:

### **Defense and Security Cooperation:**

The analysis will measure the effectiveness of these endeavors in countering China's armed forces presence and maintaining order in the region. Moreover, the exploration examines how these

cooperation security measures help constrain China's increasing geostrategic influence while promoting the liberal and matriarchic vision of the IAI as a region of sovereign and independent states (Stellner et al., 2023).

**Defense and Security Cooperation:** The analysis will measure the effectiveness of U.S-India defense cooperation in countering China's military presence and maintaining regional stability. These efforts not only constrain China's growing influence but also reinforce the vision of the Indo-Pacific as a region governed by the principles of sovereignty and independence (Keerthiraj & Sekiyama, 2023).

**Economic and Goeconomic Engagement:** In parallel, economic collaboration between the U.S. and India is a goeconomic counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By providing transparent and sustainable infrastructure alternatives through initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, this cooperation strengthens the region's economic independence, much like the defense measures bolster its security (Li, 2023).

**Economic and Goeconomic Engagement:** The economic collaboration between the U.S. and India serves as a counterbalance to China's BRI, offering transparent and sustainable infrastructure projects in the region (Rahat et al., 2022). Now and then, the allies embark on campaigns across the borders to promote fair and sustainable development and, by thus putting out the signal of sovereignty and territorial integrity about their intentions towards an open order. In other cases, they have got involved in force to address armed conflict threatening stability of a certain region (Shumilova et al., 2023).

**Blue Dot Network (BDN):** The Blue Dot Network, led by the United States, Japan, and Australia, seeks India's involvement as a key player in building sustainable infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region (Duzha, Melnyk, & Grek, 2023). under the banner of the network, projects meeting or exceeding the high standard of transparency, environmental stewardship, and financial sustainability, which the Blue Dot Network sets as the standard of its endorsement, are provided a certification seal of blue dot status that makes the initiatives backed by the Blue Dot Network far more attractive and safer propositions for the careful investor (Gaiato et al., 2023). This certification minimizes indebtedness to China by regional powers and seeks to guard against tendencies of the latter imposing and controlling for onerous debts (Hu, Nor, & Hooy, 2023).

**Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF):** The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework exists to strengthen new and old economic partnerships between like-minded countries through collective endeavours targeting trade, supply chain resilience, clean energy partnership and the formation of digital frameworks (Ivanov, 2023). IPEF is an opportunity for India to reinforce the economic integration in the Indo-Pacific region while promoting the member countries' common cause of promoting equitable trade and development models different from China's state-led model. One of these is the nurturing of long-term supply relations, especially in the key industries including semiconductors and rare earths, the lack of which is fundamental towards the development of both technologies and mutual financialisation of the region's economies.

**US-India Commercial Dialogue and Trade Policy Forum:** Bi-lateral forums of communicating business and trade policies have been instrumental in the airing of differences, the opening up of markets and broadening of trade relations (Masters, 2017). Through clauses like tariffs, regulatory norms, and data protection laws, they hope to create a commercial climate, which is predictable, stable, and prosperous (Le et al., 2022). Cutting-edge long term partnerships are crucial for

collective success in today's more interconnected world where countries both compete and cooperate. Beyond doubt, the liberalized trade agreements targeting core sectors including technology, medicines, and agriculture, undoubtedly bare the significant potential to significantly increase the bilateral trade balances and equally support the expansion of monetary growth both in the participating countries. These phenomena require unity and efforts in the growth of the critical industries in order to achieve abundance and collective prosperity (Koessler & Schuett, 2023).

**Collaborative Technological and Digital Infrastructure Projects:** Moreover, new ventures in the advancing technological fields: cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and space initiatives present signifying opportunities for business partnering (Kaur et al., 2023). Such endeavors like the US-India Synthetic Intelligence Initiative as well as the cooperation in the sphere of space, alongside with strengthening of an economic cooperation, affect stability and positioning of the countries – allies within the region alike. Such joint ventures in the sphere of significant scientific and innovative activity contribute to the building of the effective cooperation of the partners and the support of the democratic positions of states in the world (Abou-Chadi & Wagner, 2020).

**Impact on Regional Actors:** This financial model between America and India has major implications for the other nations in the Indo-Pacific region. Countries such as those in the ASEAN might benefit from more sustainable infrastructure choices and new connections that spread out markets and thus reduce their dependence on China. Since the Japanese and Australians appeared as the Quad's framers of point numbers, the particular bilateralism of their fiscal initiatives within the Quad format could create the multi-arch for cooperation contributing to growth and value addition for all in the region (Cassimon et al., 2015).

**Strategic Divergence and Challenges:** The US and India have divergent geographical imaginations of the Indo-Pacific, which has implications for cooperation. The U.S target area is East Asia and western part of Pacific whereas India's venue touches Indian Ocean along its east coast (Estrada, 2023). This divergence defines how each country directs its military as well as diplomatic power; While the US is more alarmed by China's conduct in East Asia, India shore up on the Indian Ocean. In addition, India's policy of strategic independence hinders building close military cooperation as a balance between New Delhi and other powers, including Russia and China. These differences have to be very delicate in order not to disrupt the coherency of the partnership.

**Impact on Regional Actors:** This paper thus aimed at establishing that the U.S-India strategic partnership which has gained prominence since the early 2000 has a profound impact on the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region especially as it affects; Japan, Australia, ASEAN, and China. (Lalwani & Byrne, 2019).

The emerging Quad is a key modality for cooperation in defense and security as the following account illustrate (Ba, 2023). Japan and Australia consider the Quad as necessary formation to confront China, while ASEAN countries show rather varied reactions to this Quad formation (Tang et al., 2022). For instance, both Vietnam and the Philippines approve the partnership as they look at it as a way of balancing China, while both Indonesia and Malaysia use a neutral position because they do not want to get involved in competition between great powers (Nathan et al., 2022). In general, these actors adjust their strategies and decisions according the regional motivations and objectives traced in geopolitical and economic spheres (Mahardika & Bayu, 2022).

## **Literature Review:**

It is necessary to state that the further steps in the development of the US-India relations and the tendencies observed in the regional security system of the SEA within the framework of the Indo-Pacific area need further development of the theoretical agenda. To understand how this partnership has evolved since inception and how it may shape the regional situation going forward we will look into the following factors: the simple fundamental argument for the existence of this partnership, past disagreements and different experiences faced from key players in the region. A Simon Style analysis of the various historical antecedents and current factors can help us get ready to examine the impact of this concept across Indo-Pacific theater.

## **Historical Context and Evolution of the Partnership:**

The Past and Development of the Alliance with the end of the Cold War, the US-India relations have come of age from a largely forums-oriented relationship into a strategic partnership based on interests that had developed with liberalization in early nineties, mostly in economic policies. Ongoing achievements realized by Indo-US relations include the Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2005 and India as an emerging strategic defense partner (Koh et al., 2023). These developments, together with Quad's formation and development, are driven by shared concern about China and its intention to form the rules of the region. the historical development of this partnership which they need to take address common security threats as they are now taking naval personnel activities together with Japan and Australia (Awawdeh & Tubaihat, 2014).

## **Strategic Convergence: Motivations and Goals:**

Both countries find China's assertiveness as shifts that upset the existing strategic equilibrium in the region, from China's militarization of vast swathes of the South China Sea to the BRI connectivity ease across continents (Liao, 2016). America and India have become allies more or less because of China growing power today in the South East Asia region of the world. Both countries view Beijing's actions as disruptive developments that jeopardize the status quo balance of power, such as building up islands in the South China Sea and extending its global infrastructure policy through the Belt and Road Initiative (Khan et al., 2023). In line with realist tenets of international relations theory, conjoinment seeks to safeguard each country's national goals through the development of coalitions to offset a shared threat, according to (Saggu et al., 2022). Strategic experts contend this newly forged partnership between the world's oldest democracy and largest democracy will likely reshape regional dynamics for decades to come. However, others argue Sino-American tensions could pull New Delhi into an unfavorable position, forcing it to choose between its defensive partnership with Washington or economic ties with Beijing.

For New Delhi, partnering with Washington bolsters regional security, particularly regarding China's influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. This convergence of strategic interests can be seen as a means for India to reinforce its standing, in light of Beijing's growing footprint in areas surrounding India (Estrada, 2023).

However, this partnership is not limited to security concerns. Geoeconomic cooperation has also emerged as a critical pillar of the relationship, with both nations working together on infrastructure projects that provide alternatives to China's BRI. The Blue Dot Network and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework are prominent examples of joint initiatives aimed at promoting transparent, high-standard infrastructure development in the region (Zhang et al., 2021).

## **Challenges and Divergences in Strategic Priorities**

Though progress has been made to deepen the strategic partnership that exists between the United States and India, there remain disparities and sources of friction. One important such issue is the difference in geographical perception of the Indo-Pacific. The American paradigm is usually one

that sees an Indo-Pacific region extending from the offshore areas of the western US to the western shore of India, mainly prioritizing East Asia and Western Pacific regions. The Indian understanding, however, extends this region to the Indian Ocean and the eastern coastline of Africa, showing its profound strategic interests in the neighborhoods. Moreover, the degree of complexities of issues also tend to differ from one component to the other over the layers of Indo Pacific, with regards to issues in the South East Asian sea areas and the Himalayan borders tending to require different policy responses. At the same time, developmental aspects in the Indian Ocean littoral regions call for integrated regional frameworks. Overall, developing a shared strategic framework demands appreciating each other's perspectives on this diverse swath of the globe (Zabakhidze et al., 2019). Strengthening military-political ties with Washington is complex for New Delhi, as India's strategic autonomy often complicates such efforts. While New Delhi looks to enhance safety collaboration with America, it also seeks to have independent relations with other great powers like Russia and China. India's aspiration to not become embroiled in great-power conflict due to its historical policy of non-alignment comes into friction with smooth relations with the US. For instance, India's reluctance to fully join activities in the disputed waters of the South China Sea is at best India's cautious stance on military engagements that may heighten tensions with China. Also, the strategic autonomy of New Delhi gets confronted by the other side's pressure during the times of global or regional conflict and confrontation. India's challenge is the balance between its own interests, including its value of neutrality, and the geopolitical environment in order to achieve a high level of strategic cooperation without being in a bloc (Monsonis, 2010). Geopolitical circumstances have not made commerce between the two powers entirely simple. Both countries have endeavored to fashion closer commercial bonds through trade pacts and business alliances. Nevertheless, disagreements over duties, product admittance, and safeguarding electronic information have at intervals exacerbated fiscal dealings. These frictions manifest the intrinsic competition between strategic collaboration and guarding internal markets, with the two states obligated to locate pathways to narrow divides if their association is to attain its optimum capacity (Moeletsi, 2021).

Moreover, financial issues remain significant to the contract. As the two countries seek to expand trade relations, differences in responsibilities, market access, and security policies sometimes hinder trade. These issues relate to the inconsistency between cooperation and trade protection, and both countries want to find ways to bridge these gaps if cooperation is to reach its potential. But striking a balance between trade openness and domestic trade protectionism has proven difficult. Discussions about cutting back on some businesses continue, while concerns about digital business regulations and security measures have caused disruptions in the country. But if the two sides can find compromise and show flexibility, the overall economic strength of the relationship will still be realized (Mauludiyah & Warsidi, 2023).

### **Regional Actors: Responses and Implications**

The strategic union between the United States and India holds significant implications extending far beyond their own borders into the broader Indo-Pacific region, influencing how other regional players approach their own calculations. Japan and Australia key Quad members in their own right have been stalwart advocates of the partnership. Both harbor concerns regarding China's increasingly bold behavior and view strengthening ties between Washington and New Delhi as absolutely necessary to preserving equilibrium across the area. The Quad's evolution into a platform for synchronizing security protocols, building infrastructure, and tackling transnational threats ranging from climate change to cyber-attacks demonstrates its potential to evolve into a genuine foundation for multilateral governance across the Indo-Pacific theater (Wagner, 2020).

Although several Southeast Asian countries have welcomed the enhanced collaboration between the United States and India as a counterbalance to Chinese territorial aspirations, reactions within

the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have varied significantly. Nevertheless, some ASEAN countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, exercise caution in forming excessive alliances with Washington and New Delhi, apprehensive of being entangled in power conflicts that might divert them from maintaining neutrality and their economic relations with China. This interference by foreign entities threatens to weaken ASEAN's pivotal position in regional diplomacy, hindering efforts to adopt a balanced stance towards a powerful China (Lee et al., 2022).

Finally, as China perceives the relationship between the US and India as one of many measures of containment method elaborated by Americans and their allies, John Garver stresses that China's strategic response has consistently reinforced relations with friendly states like Pakistan through the massive and diverse China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as well as expanding their maritime presence in the Indian Ocean. Newer partnership between the US and India impacted other linkages. The-growing naval numbers are complemented by growing military engagements assisting to offer a check to Beijing in the area, economic propositions, which are for example, infrastructure projects are provided which may be a viable option for countries like Pakistan. Such measures do not only enhance the security of certain regions but also ensure the acquisition of power over China as its influence is carved in all over the regions (Ullah et al., 2023).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Explaining partnership of United States & India through lens of international relation theory Security: As such, an analysis of these theories offer for a better understanding of the dynamics of the new US-India relationship in the context of indo-pacific.

### **Clearer Linkage Between Theories and Policy Recommendations**

While the paper's policy recommendations are practical and relevant, the connection between theoretical frameworks and these recommendations could be more explicitly outlined to strengthen the paper's coherence. By directly linking each theoretical framework to specific policy suggestions, the recommendations would flow more naturally from the analysis, reinforcing the theoretical insights and grounding policy advice in established political science concepts. Below is an example of how to create a more seamless linkage between the theories used and the proposed recommendations:

**Realism (Security and Military Cooperation):** Realism, focused on power dynamics and state security, should underpin all discussions related to the military aspects of the US-India partnership. For example, the joint military exercises, increased naval presence, and intelligence sharing directly embody Realist tenets as both nations work to counterbalance China's assertive behavior in the region (Montolalu et al., 2023).

**Neoclassical Realism (Strategic Autonomy and Domestic Influences):** Neoclassical Realism explains how internal factors, like domestic political pressures and national interests, shape each country's foreign policy. This framework should be applied to India's strategic autonomy, highlighting why India chooses a balanced approach with both the US and other global powers like Russia and China (Tang, 2023).

**Constructivism (Shared Democratic Values and Soft Power Initiatives):** Constructivism should be applied to areas where the US and India leverage shared democratic values to foster regional influence. Soft power initiatives, such as educational exchanges, joint technological ventures based on transparent governance, and the promotion of digital privacy standards, should be viewed as Constructivist efforts that appeal to regional democracies (Roth et al., 2023).

**Geoconomics (Economic Countermeasures and Regional Stability):** Geoconomics, emphasizing the use of economic strategies to achieve geopolitical goals, should guide the analysis of economic initiatives like the Blue Dot Network and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. These projects act as geoeconomic counterbalances to China's Belt and Road Initiative by offering financially sustainable infrastructure alternatives to regional actors (Clayton et al., 2023).

### **Domains of Strategic Convergence and Cooperation**

Among the valuable aspects of cooperation with India that form the base of multiple-dimensional approach in the United States there are the following ones: Infrastructure, and emerging technologies give cooperation directions against the growing influence of China while making sure that the ASEAN region is in tandem on the same essential goals. Several theoretical frameworks are used to analyze the relationship in further detail. It looks at domestic political dynamics, shared ideals, and coordinated economic initiatives in addition to security considerations. The roots of the strategic partnership lie in a convergence of geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations (Clayton et al., 2023). that transcend security cooperation. Its scope has expanded to incorporate diverse areas reflecting regional complexities. This new multifaceted theoretical model explores strategic coordination across security, economic, and technological domains through the integrated perspectives of Realism, Neoclassical Realism, Constructivism, and Geoconomics.

### **Maritime Security and Defense Cooperation (Realism)**

At its core, the partnership seeks maritime security, especially in contested waters like the Indian and South China Seas where China's assertiveness threatens open shipping lanes and the balance of power. Realpolitik explains the military ties as both sides try to bolster their might and safeguard interests opposed by China's rise, according to analysts (Oluyemi, 2020).

The Quad further strengthened security through coordinated shows of naval force, intelligence sharing on shared threats, and planned responses. The US, India, Japan, and Australia banded together to preserve an international order respecting lawful passage by sea and maintain unhindered commercial flows vital to Asian trade, confronting issues raised by China's growing grip. While aiming to check activities roiling Asian waters, their cooperation also protects global commerce's fragile East-West lifelines that could face risk from instability (Purohit et al., 2023).

### **Economic and Infrastructure Cooperation (Geoconomics)**

The geoeconomic perspective illuminates the economic core of the US-India alliance, which strives to offer alternatives to China's extensive Belt and Road venture. Initiatives like the Blue Dot Network and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework exemplify endeavors to encourage transparent, high-principle infrastructure projects that counter China's dominance over regional advancement. These plans aim to furnish nations with sustainable funding selections, evading the debt reliance regularly connected with Chinese venture (Clayton et al., 2023). The economic partnership also comprises trade relations and technological collaboration. While commerce disputes have sporadically aggravated bilateral relations, the two countries recognize the necessity to boost economic ties to back their geopolitical goals. The Indo-US Commercial Dialogue and joint investments in fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and space exploration showcase a dedication to expanding coordination beyond traditional defense (Umar et al., 2021).

### **Technological Cooperation and Cybersecurity (Constructivism & Geoconomics)**

In line with Constructivism, the US and India share a commitment to promoting technological innovation based on democratic principles of transparency, privacy, and freedom. As digital infrastructure becomes a critical part of national security and economic development, the US and India have strengthened collaboration in cybersecurity and emerging technologies (Mahardhani,



2023). The US-India Strategic Energy Partnership and initiatives in space technology underscore the strategic importance of joint technological innovation (Li, 2023). These efforts not only bolster the two nations' competitive edge but also offer a model for democratic governance of technology, in contrast to China's more authoritarian approach to digital surveillance and control. The Quad's engagement in cybersecurity resilience further highlights the importance of joint efforts to counter cyber threats, ensuring the security of digital and physical infrastructure across the region (Ashraf et al., 2023).

### **Challenges to the Partnership**

Nonetheless, the complete actualization of the US-India cooperation encounters persistent obstacles. Divergent geopolitical perspectives and India's strategic autonomy strategy exacerbate the situation, while economic obstacles persist and China implements actions in retaliation. Neoclassical Realism elucidates the significance of domestic factors, while Power Transition Theory highlights the instability resulting from changes in the global power distribution. Every difficulty will need intricate navigation and a readiness to comprehend diverse views (Klimburg-Witjes, 2023).

### **Differing Geographic Conceptions of the Indo-Pacific (Realism & Neoclassical Realism)**

Although variations in the geographic emphasis of the Indo-Pacific create obstacles, mutual understanding may facilitate reconciliation of differences. The US viewpoint spans a broad area from the western coast of India to western America, emphasizing East Asia and the Western Pacific. India's strategic interests extend across the Indian Ocean and eastern Africa, including many concerns (Abbondanza, 2022). This divide obviously affects cooperation endeavors, as Washington focuses on combating Beijing's expanding influence in East Asia, while New Delhi prioritizes the protection of maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the mitigation of China's growing influence near South Asia (Ashraf et al., 2023). However, there is potential to develop integrated solutions that incorporate different viewpoints and improve mutual understanding over minor differences to promote cooperation on challenges endangering Asian stability provided open-mindedness and respect for each party's unique perspectives are maintained. The differing goals demonstrate India's desire, motivated by domestic political considerations, to avoid unnecessarily upsetting China, as Neoclassical Realism explains (Hu, 2021).

### **India's Strategic Autonomy and Multi-Alignment (Neoclassical Realism)**

While seeking its own influence, India recognizes the strategic benefits of cooperation and carefully maintains its independence in international affairs. Benefits accrue from enhanced security ties with the US, while India retains independence in dealings with other superpowers, such as China and Russia. This equilibrium seeks to avoid constraints imposed by major power rivalries or dependency, maintaining a nonaligned stance essential to New Delhi's historical strategy (Chaulia, 2018).

Neorealist perspectives on national interests clarify this judicious approach, as leadership balances increasing ties with the United States against the need for stable relations in its vicinity. Any action must include local needs, given the proximity of China and the longstanding cooperation with Russia, particularly in weaponry. The continuous acquisition of Russian military equipment, such as the S-400 missile defense system, creates tension with the United States while simultaneously addressing India's security requirements and political considerations (Arduino & Shuja, 2021).

### **Economic Barriers and Trade Disputes (Goeconomics)**

Although economic cooperation has been a key pillar of the partnership, trade barriers and disputes over tariffs, market access, and data protection have occasionally strained relations. These issues

reflect the protectionist tendencies within both countries, as each seeks to protect domestic industries while pursuing strategic economic ties (Klotz & Sharma, 2023).

Addressing these disputes is crucial for the long-term success of the partnership. The integration of geoeconomic strategies through initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework provides an opportunity for both nations to enhance their trade relationship while promoting a transparent and rules-based economic order in the region (Jiang, 2023).

### **China's Strategic Countermeasures (Power Transition Theory)**

China's perception of the US-India partnership as part of a broader containment strategy has prompted Beijing to adopt countermeasures aimed at neutralizing its impact. This includes expanding China's military presence in the Indian Ocean, strengthening its economic ties with South Asian countries, and increasing its engagement with Pakistan through projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Zulfaqar et al., 2023). Power Transition Theory helps explain China's behavior, as it views the partnership as a direct challenge to its rise and seeks to reshape the regional order in ways that favor its interests. China's strategic maneuvers add complexity to the US-India partnership, testing its ability to respond cohesively to Beijing's influence (Zhang & James, 2022). To improve the flow between the theoretical framework and the policy recommendations sections, the transition can be enhanced by clearly linking the theories discussed to practical policy actions. Here's how the transition could be structured:

#### **Policy Recommendations:**

To strengthen the U.S.-India partnership and enhance regional stability, the following recommendations can be streamlined to avoid redundancy:

**Enhance Military Cooperation (Realism):** That would strengthen maritime security and ensure a counterweight to China's ambitions, especially across the concerted water regions, like the South China Sea.

**Deepen Economic Collaboration (Geoeconomics):** Solve trade tensions through creating partnerships for sectors in technology, green industries, manufacturing, etc. Promote and fund high-standard infrastructure projects via such programs as the Blue Dot Network and provide regional countries with a more reasonable option compared to the BRI.

**Align Strategic Priorities (Neoclassical Realism):** It should be noted that the heads of state maintain a high-level strategic dialogue on Indo-Pacific cooperation, the differences of views on which have emerged, such as India's focus on the Indian Ocean region while the US prioritizes East Asia. This will ensure that the partnership remains intact despite divergent geographical priorities.

**Strengthen Technological Cooperation (Constructivism):** Focus on fostering practical cooperation through scientific-technological collaborations in AI and cybersecurity, while promoting democratic principles such as data liberalization and openness. Support liberal policies like the US-India Strategic Energy Partnership to counteract authoritarianism, exemplified by China's technological advancements.

**Engage ASEAN and Broaden Multilateral Partnerships (Constructivism):** Encourage more bilateral engagements with ASEAN partners to foster discussion and resolution of regional issues like climate change, cyber security threats, and health risks. Accredited ASEAN for its role as a middleman in the region, helping foster stability without necessarily provoking nations into taking sides.

**Offer Economic Counterparts to BRI by China (Goeconomics):** Finance and design high-quality infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region cooperating with Japan, Australia, as well as the EU. Ensure that ASEAN and other regional investors choose debt-free investment models to counter China's debt trap diplomacy.

**Manage China's Rise through Diplomatic Channels (Power Transition Theory):** Eliminating China's influence within regions is part of the policy to confront it, but maintaining diplomatic relations with the country is crucial to prevent tensions from increasing. Discuss stability issues with China to prevent misconceptions, especially in sensitive areas of the globe, such as the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

### **Implications for Regional Actors**

This became a preferential building of a strategic partnership between the US and India for large-scale impacts to the Indo-Pacific region. This emerging intimacy 'grows,' in terms of size and strength, to transform the international system structures and configurations and such fundamental structural transformations require or at least merit different strategic contemplations among kin and distant neighbors alike. Using the conceptual model developed here serves to offer a multiple perspective understanding of these implications. It cannot be a questioned fact that security dynamics between two or more rival nation states are contested and couched in realist and power transition frameworks, as presented above. But commercial interdependence brought by the rapidly growing trade and investment relations, that goeconomic theory postulates, also significantly affects regional dynamics. On the other hand, constructivism assists in explaining how democratic ideals and reasonable behavioral pattern fashion the bargained friendly stance assumed by like-minded countries. Last of all, neoclassical realism provides suggestions about how the domestic political and economic contexts in each affected country make up the exact nature and timing of their adaptation to such a shift in the strategic environment. Both Japan and Australia being members of the Quad have been actively promoting the deep strategic bilateral relations between the United States and India. But due to the more assertive China in recent years, both countries feel that closer cooperation between the US and India is very important to balance power in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Japan and Australia: Reinforcing the Quad (Constructivism & Realism)**

As major participants of the Quad, Japan and Australia have aggressively supported the strong strategic partnership between United States and India. Particularly in response to China's growing aggressiveness, both nations believe that closer US-India collaboration is very essential to maintain a power balance in the Indo-Pacific. From a Realist theoretical perspective, especially with relation to maritime security and freedom of navigation, Japan and Australia see the Quad as a strategic instrument to protect their national goals. Both countries have expanded their contribution towards standardized joint operations including the complicated and politically aligned Malabar naval exercises thus enhancing interaction with the US and India. Japan also knows that the deep partnership of Washington and New Delhi can offset China and possibly reduce risks of confrontation. In addition, Australia recognizes that to challenge or deter further usage of early resort to unilateral changes of the status quo in the South China Sea and beyond will require collaborative effort with regional actors who are equally interested in upholding open international order.

Even though each of these nations is motivated by the desire to uphold shared security interests, it is perhaps only when democracies coalesce that they do so. Policies, freedom, transparency, and internationally recognized principles hold Japan and Australia accountability that are key to paving stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Consequently, the strategic cooperation strengthens a

multifaceted view of the world justice. But varying situations demand that each seeks to regulate reply, whether demanding discussion or asserting defiance against aggression. The complex interlocutors propose not a restraint, but an advocacy for free choice, permission, the rule of law to foster the peace of planet Earth.

### **ASEAN: A Delicate Balancing Act (Neoclassical Realism & Geoeconomics)**

The US-India partnership has called for diverse reactions that ASEAN nations put forward that shows the nature of interaction of the region. Vietnam and the Philippines, two of the South China Sea claimants, have endorsed the coalition as an attempt to check the Chinese aggression in the SCS and other territories. Indonesia and Malaysia are good examples of ASEAN nations that have opted to play it safe, waiting on the fence to see which superpower will come out on top. Thai intends to remain neutral while in territorial disputes nevertheless would want to reap big from the association. The complex relationship aims at a delicate balancing act of non-alignment with ASEAN's numerous sensitive interest and security cooperation.

Neoclassical Realists believe that domestic issues have a significant influence on reactions. Reactions for certain ASEAN nations are shaped by their dependency on Chinese economic investments and their need to preserve domestic political stability. These countries exercise caution in order to avoid upsetting China, which is still a crucial economic partner, particularly with the Belt and Road initiative. Geoeconomics is important here because many ASEAN nations depend on Chinese infrastructure and trade, making full support of US-India cooperation risky without facing possible financial consequences. Different state policies in the varied ASEAN area are shaped by local geopolitical circumstances and reliance on Chinese funding.

Strategic concerns of ASEAN also reflect a desire to maintain regional leadership. ASEAN seeks to establish itself as an unbiased player proficient at facilitating amid conflicting groups as a regional alliance. ASEAN's capacity to uphold its stance is undermined by the growing influence of outside regional powers such the United States, India, and China, therefore maybe endangering its role in regional diplomacy. Although ASEAN keeps trying to mediate disputes and promote cooperation among its members in the face of external geopolitical rivalry for influence, the growing economic and military might of major powers outside Southeast Asia makes ASEAN's position as the principal regional organization more difficult to maintain. China: Reversing the US-India Alliance.

### **China: Counterbalancing the US-India Partnership (Power Transition Theory & Geoeconomics)**

China views the extensive US-India strategic alliance as a comprehensive containment plan devised by Washington and its principal allies. This viewpoint has been shaped by Beijing's belief that the alliance aims to restrict its economic and military advancement, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. Influence Transition Theory elucidates China's reaction to this challenge, as it endeavors to reformulate the regional order and counterbalance the US-led coalition.

Beijing's geopolitical reaction has had two components. First, it has elevated its military posture in the Indian Sea and boosted its naval capabilities, especially with regard to creating the military facilities and large-scale infrastructure projects at the crucial maritime strategic straits. This spread is part of a more elaborate strategy to taunt beyond and counterbalance the US and Indian might within East Asia. On the other hand, China has also resorted to economic diplomacy, using economic power in the form of big selling and buying, to open new relations with countries across Asia, Africa MDG the Middle East and the world at large. This so-called Belt and Road Initiative, therefore, has strategic purposes when it builds goodwill with developing states and cements new sources of economic power and influence at nodes that negate the current US-led order.

Second, through activities such as CPEC and BRI, China is reshaping the world economy according to its benefit. Multibillion-dollar connectivity projects in Pakistan, Bangladesh and other places are interconnecting transport and power grids as well as strengthening connections in Beijing. All these ventures improve China's economic power due to the fact that state's credit and contracts create reliance. However, China's aim is not just economic; their investment plans effectively offset the deals others make by developing friends who are equally dedicated to its Asian perspective. While China is meeting these gaps with funding, it is also consolidating power -power is channeled through ties of mutual economic need and/or reciprocity. For neighboring countries, the dynamics works both ways, as it fosters prosperity, but at the same time exerts pressure on them to side with China on matters that are anathema to the nation's interest.

### **Pakistan: Strengthening Ties with China (Neoclassical Realism & Power Transition Theory)**

The paper focuses on the analysis of the Neoclassical realism and Power Transition theory in relation to the US attempt at restoring the relationship with China. In the case of Pakistan, the emerging partnership between America and India is threatening to their national security and regional programs of geostrategic advancement. Earlier the nation of Pakistan saw itself relying on its relations with America to balance the influence of regional power and neighbor, India. However, with the warm relations which are developing between Washington and New Delhi, Islamabad has gradually or has over the years resorting to Beijing as a strategic ally.

Neoclassical realism lays understanding the reasons for Pakistan's decision to deepen entanglement with China, as domestic political constraints imposed by Pakistan – its enduring military enmity with India and its desperate need for foreign capital for economic development – has shaped its strategic decisions on the international level. This relationship has become stronger due to the CPEC agreement with China, through which Beijing has provided infrastructural development and military support which are inarguably the foundation and power of Pakistan.

Power Transition Theory goes further to put Pakistan's intimate relationship with China into perspective as part of. more general change of the balance of power in the South. As China rises to challenge the US-led order, Pakistan sees its relationship with China as essential for balancing India's growing influence, both militarily and economically. The China-Pakistan nexus serves as a counterweight to the US-India alliance, intensifying the geopolitical rivalry in South Asia

### **Implications for the Future of the Indo-Pacific Order**

The US-India strategic partnership is poised to play a significant role in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific. As great-power competition intensifies in the region, the partnership will have broad implications for regional security, economic development, and the maintenance of a rules-based order. The following key factors will influence the trajectory of the Indo-Pacific order:

### **Strengthening of the Quad (Constructivism & Realism)**

From a Constructivist standpoint, democratic principles like transparency, freedom of navigation, and good governance must guide the Quad's regional involvement. However, Realism maintains the necessity for strengthened military cooperation and strategic synchronization to offset Chinese clout.

The Quad's future achievement relies on broadening focus beyond traditional security issues. By prioritizing emerging threats such as climate change, cybersecurity, and pandemic preparedness, the Quad can function as a comprehensive framework for regional administration, drawing wider backing from ASEAN and other regional players.

### **Economic Alternatives to China's BRI (Goeconomics)**

As the Indo-Pacific continues its economic progression, the success of the US-India alliance will depend on offering viable options matching China's Belt and Road Initiative. Diverse projects promoting ethical trade networks, green infrastructure development, and public health infrastructure could engage regional partners and demonstrate democratic values as alternatives to the BRI's top-down approach and debt traps.

However, the challenge will be in securing the necessary financial resources and political will to scale these projects to the level of China's BRI. The US and India must work closely with partners like Japan, Australia, and the European Union to ensure that infrastructure investments in the Indo-Pacific are both competitive and sustainable.

### **Managing China's Rise (Power Transition Theory)**

China's rise remains the central factor influencing the future of the Indo-Pacific order. Power Transition Theory suggests that as China continues to challenge the US-led order, periods of instability and potential conflict may arise. The US-India partnership, along with the broader Quad framework, serves as a balancing mechanism to manage this transition and prevent China from unilaterally reshaping the regional order.

To mitigate the risks of conflict, diplomatic engagement with China will be essential. While the US-India partnership is focused on countering China's influence, maintaining open channels of communication and diplomatic engagement will be critical for managing tensions, particularly in contested areas like the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

### **ASEAN's Role in Regional Diplomacy (Neoclassical Realism)**

ASEAN's ability to maintain its centrality in regional diplomacy will be tested as great-power competition intensifies. Domestic political considerations, economic dependencies, and strategic interests will shape ASEAN's response to the evolving power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN's challenge will be to balance its relationships with the US, India, and China while maintaining its neutral stance and promoting regional unity.

For the US-India partnership, engaging ASEAN in a way that respects its centrality while offering concrete support—whether through economic partnerships, security assistance, or capacity-building initiatives—will be key to ensuring that ASEAN remains a stabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Conclusion**

Given the emergence of great power rivalries, the strategic relations between the US and India play a crucial role in shaping the affairs of South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. Founded on the principles of democracy and security interests, the partnership offers a measured response to China through diplomacy, economic security, and military might. The long-term performance of the alliance will be determined by how adaptable the alliance's assumptions are to the issue of strategic autonomy or emerging differences in geographic priorities, as argued in the Indian case. The future studies should trace these changes and describe the future role of ASEAN and the Quad, as well as the future of regional governance in the multipolar world.

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