

## GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDO-PACIFIC CONCEPT: POWER SHIFTS, ALLIANCES, AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

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### ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the second decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Indo-Pacific region is in extreme limelight due to reshaping international politics. China is rising as a potential hegemon in the region, and the US is already considering China as a threat. China is bidding for regional hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region, and many states in the area are already facing security dilemmas. There are at least three dominant features forecasting in the region's geopolitical outlook; the rise of China as a regional hegemon, the US self-image as a sole surviving super power in Pacific, and the regional states adopting a "balance of threat". This diverse nature of regional politics is shaping a new security architecture and ever new security alliances are emerging in the region. The present study applies a thematic analysis methodology of the collected qualitative data, and attempts to explore the pitfalls associated with the Indo-Pacific region politics in the paradigm of "Power Transition Theory". It suggests that the increasing power of China and reciprocal measures from the US (internal & external balancing) can consequently lead to regional instability.

**Keywords:** Indo-Pacific Concept, Hegemony, Power Transition, Balance of Threat.

### INTRODUCTION

It was back in 2007 during a speech in New Delhi, the former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (assassinated in 2022) paved the term "Indo-Pacific" in modern geopolitical discourse by claiming that "Asia-Pacific" had botched to acknowledge and embrace the worth of Indo-Pacific. Other leaders set up this geopolitical inclusion compelling, and ever since then, more states have used the Indo-Pacific framework to channel their regional and international relations. China, however, disagrees with the Indo-Pacific thought and sees it as a Western-led attempt to hold back Chinese ascendancy (Nath & Klingebiel, 2023).

The Indo-Pacific, also known as Indo-Western Pacific or Indo-Pacific is a biogeographically maritime area which consists of tropical waters of Indian Ocean as well as western

and central Pacific Oceans. It also comprises the seas which fasten it with the general area of Indonesia. It denies access to moderate and Polar regions situated in the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Equivalently, the humid eastern Pacific off the shore of the Americas also absent in the Indo-Pacific.

In the international framework of parameter, the Indo-Pacific region is naturally a new term. It indicates the littoral interests of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, benevolent the area's included federal system authority. The definition of the Indo-Pacific region is critical to considerate inquiries about the region between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A huge portion of the world's population—roughly 35.7% of the total—resides in the Indian Ocean region, be composed of 20% of the planet's ocean face. It is the third-largest Ocean subsequent to the

Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The northwest part of the Indian Ocean Region borders the Indian subcontinent, the Arab, and the coast of Africa. The eastern portion is bordered by Indonesia, North-West Australia, and Thailand. The south portion shares boundaries with Antarctica and the coasts of Australia. In addition to that, almost 38 coastal states share sea borders with the region of the Indian Ocean (Ali & Kamraju, 2019).

Because the Indo-Pacific region is so huge, there are countless diverse types of climate, natural environment, topography, and terrain, as well as mountainous locations, tropical to Polar Regions, Himalayan ranges, and coral reefs. In addition, it can be found in linguistic and cultural customs, as well as in the political and economic evolution of history. The environment is reasonably important, and it includes areas that are both tropical and temperate, the highest mountain ranges, and the deep sea, in addition to predominate maritime habitat (Ejaz & Javaid, 2018).

But a more important question to answer here is that why the US is so obsessed with this region? There surely are many dimensions that need understanding in the first place. The “Indo-Pacific” arose in 2010 as a regional scaffold for US strategic dialogue under the Obama government, and by 2017, under the Trump administration, it had turn out to be a crucial regional term for official US discourse. This topical change in strategic lingo has two causes: one is geopolitical and the other is geo-economics. The major reason of geo-economic swing is larger volume trade primarily include energy transfers between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The augment of China and India in the area is what has caused the geopolitical turmoil. Since 1945, the US has dominated the Pacific, and since the 1980s, it has dominated the Indian Ocean. In the Western Pacific, China is now asserting itself, whereas in the Indian Ocean, the US and an additional important mounting power, India, are dealing with an expanding Chinese occurrence. Unsurprisingly, the US has prepared an Indo-Pacific strategy in response to this Chinese confront (Scott, 2018).

The political geography of the region is also very complex due to various factors. Approximately half of the population of the globe resides in the Indo-Pacific, which also encompasses the resource-rich and rarely unstable Middle East and Africa as well as the dynamic subregions of Northeast and Southeast Asia. The Straits of Malacca, which over a quarter of

global trade goes through and is possibly the most important as the channel of the global economy, is one of the most important choke points for intercontinental trade that are part of the included area. It serves as the transport route for not only the majority of Chinese trade but also for all eastward-bound mercantile traffic, as well as oil and gas supplies from Europe and the Middle East (Singh, 2014).

According to the report issued by the Allied Command Transformation (Military Command in NATO) in 2022, the Indo-Pacific region is momentous because it serves as the core of international monetary and strategic interests. It is the largely economically dynamic region in the world and is home to resources that can support both advanced and rising economies. Maritime security in this area is likely to play a considerable function in the improvement of abundant nations. In the next 20 years, the Indo-Pacific has the potential to outshine all other regions of the world in terms of geostrategic, wealth, and development (NATO Report, 2022). Looking back over the last few centuries, the "economic-monde," or the canter of gravity of the global economy, has shifted from various regions. For example, in the 16th century, the economy was cantered around Antwerp; in the 17th, it was Amsterdam; in the 19th, it was London; and in the 20th, it was New York. According to predictions, the Asia Pacific area will overtake New York as the economic hub of the world in the twenty-first century. Due to the fact that the whole world's wealth is headquartered in this area, the change is recognized as the Asian Century. As a end result, the geopolitics and strategy of the region are enthusiastically evolving (Ejaz & Javaid, 2018).

US is a familiar and hegemonic actor in this region. Washington claimed that we are part of the Indo-Pacific not a foreigner. US has the foremost and greatest maritime border as well strong allies in the Indo-Pacific region. In pacific and also across, US is the dominant power. Permanent aircraft carrier, more than 50 ships and 20,000 personnel of US are present at San Diego. Furthermore the Hawaii base currently called US Indo-Pacific Command (USIPCOM) is under US military, formerly identified as Indo-Pacific Command (IPCOM). It is spread from San Diego to Diego Grcia, also include pacific and Eastern India Ocean.US held Rimpac exercises at Hawaii in 2018 which were the world largest International maritime exercise, joined by nations

who value free and open Indo-Pacific. As Indo-Pacific gained popularity, the US changed focus from Pacific to mainly Indo-Pacific. During Barack Obama's first administration, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued that we are mounting work and coalition with India and Australia in Indo-Pacific, because we understand it is extremely significant (Scott, 2018).

In the contemporary world, Indo-Pacific is the on the whole central and vital region. It can be judged from first to last by the quote supposed by Pan in the past: the one who dominate the Indo-Pacific will rule in future (Pan, 2014). Indo-Pacific is the only area where presence marvellous economic opportunities as well frightening security challenges not only for regional countries but also for the rest of the world (Kuo, 2018). Due to its importance both strategically and economically, vast rivalries present in the region among states. "Economic statistics articulate by themselves; almost two thirds of the international trade passed through the Indo-Pacific region, that's why the west has dramatic interest in this region" (NATO Report, 2022).

China is pursuing global hegemony and superpower status as a result of its regionalization program in the Indo-Pacific. Due to China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, Deep Pocket policy, and enhanced naval capabilities, many big powers, including the US, have focused on the Indian Ocean (IO). Meanwhile, China is attempting to acquire regional primacy in Asia through its soft power manipulate in the region. Due to China's growing might, many regional states are increasingly working jointly with China to uphold peace and end conflict in the region (Ejaz & Javaid, 2018).

China is increasing military, diplomatic, and economic growth through ASEAN. This is undeviating threat to US domination and her allies in the region. Contrary to the Washington revelation, ASEAN pursue its own idea to set up regional order in Indo-Pacific. Connections between China and some ASEAN nations were severely harmed by the South China Sea mediation dispute, between China and the Philippines, but the arbitration's 2016 conclusion offers a chance for the parties to mend those connections. Artificial reefs in the South China Sea enhanced china hegemony in the region; the constant intensification of regional territorial disputes is not advantageous for China's self interests. In order to actively improve relations with ASEAN countries, facilitate negotiations with

ASEAN on a code of conduct (COC), and stabilize the condition in the South China Sea, China has therefore modified its attitude toward the South China Sea issue (Liu, 2020).

Much is known about the political geography of the region in the existing literature, although the regional politics is in a constant flux and new horizons are constantly opening for critical evaluation. US, the sole super power in the Indo-Pacific Region from as early as 1890 and victorious over Japan in the Pacific War during WW2 historically established a position of "Pacific hegemon". This unchallenged hegemony which lasted for more than one hundred years, now challenged with the rise of another potential hegemon in the region, China. And to counter "China's threat", authors and strategic thinkers in the US and the West adopted the "Indo-Pacific Concept". The US Indo-Pacific plan hold three procedure; China augment power "power transition" threat to US, US retort to China's augment power by "balancing" via self (internal balancing) and through alliance (external balancing), and "balance of threat not exclusively for US but also for regional powers like Japan, Australia and India.

The present study attempts to critically analyse the alliance system and security design in the Indo-Pacific region. Adopting thematic analysis as methodology, the study develops two themes that suggest a deep relationship between two factors. First, to cognitively discuss the rationale and need of developing the Indo-Pacific concept from the US, while the second is the rise of new alliance system and security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region. The cause and effects relationship in the above themes rigorously discuss the ambitious China's bid for regional and global hegemony, the unease and reciprocal attempts from the US to maintain its superior position in the region adopting various realist approaches, and more importantly to focus on the nature and goals of new alliances and security architecture in the region. Ultimately the cost and stake for both competing rivals is too high in the region, and the reshaping regional politics will have a greater impact on international political outlook in the future. The region has a potential to influence not only new strategic thinking and security architectures in terms of emerging alliance systems in the region, but international peace as well which has never been so fragile as it is on this day. As Mearsheimer suggested about the rising China, will it react no

differently from all great powers when they were on the rise and will go offensive against regional allies of the US in Indo-Pacific region? Is US committed to the cause of maintain a rule-based order in international system, and the same rules applies everywhere including the Indo-Pacific region? These questions about the consequences of reshaping Indo-Pacific politics certainly needs cognitive answers, and possible solutions and ways out to avoid conflicts. The present study is an attempt to suggests about all the possible consequences in the paradigm of Power Transition Theory.

In the existing literature, it has been revealed that the Indo-Pacific region has been identified as a crucial area for economic and strategic considerations in the contemporary world. With China's increasing power and influence, the area has become a major concern for not only Indo-Pacific countries but also the United States' hegemony in the region. To counteract this threat, countries in the area have formed alliances such as QUAD and AUKUS to prevent China's expansion and maintain stability in the region. Given that the Indo-Pacific region is vital for both trade and security, countries in the area are working diligently to safeguard and pursue their interests, ensuring that their respective economic and strategic objectives are met with utmost efficiency. It is clearly evident in the history that the rise of alliances to balance hegemony between contesting rivals poses serious consequences and threats to international peace, and drastically influence international political outlook. The present study is an attempt to thoroughly investigate the rise of alliances in the Indo-Pacific region, the potential consequences of emerging power shifts and the rise of China, and the rationale and objectives of a new security architecture in the region from the US.

Reciprocal to the said strategic shifts in the rise of alliances and a new security architecture in the region, there is a limitation in the current study and that is based on other scholarly literature from liberals. These sources suggest that although the Indo-Pacific region has faced with an arm race primarily due to security dilemmas and the anarchic international order, China has been actively seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts with its neighbouring states while simultaneously disrupting the alliance system of the US. This has been accompanied by a momentous increase in China's soft power, which the US may not be readily willing to accept. Despite these developments, it is significant to reminder that

the dominance and arms race in the region could potentially lead to regional conflicts and even escalate to war.

### **US's Containment of China: The emergence of Alliances**

As a great power, the United States places a high priority on preserving or ornamental global alliances and stability. The United States prioritizes conflict prevention, particularly in the Indo-Pacific area, as the South China Sea conflict develops. According to the U.S. mission to ASEAN, it is our aim to make and support an Indo-Pacific region that is free and open (FOIP), the region contains most prevailing countries. In order to pursue the vision of a free and prosperous Indo-Pacific, the U.S. administration concentrated on three pillars: economics, governance, and security (Novita, 2022). To protect its hegemony from the emergence of regional powers is America's main strategic goal (Liu, 2020). The US is a reputable Indo-Pacific player (Liu, 2020). The US is a recognized player in the Indo-Pacific region. As an Indo-Pacific country ourselves, Washington claims that it is a member of the region and not an alien. The area we refer to as the Indo-Pacific is beginning with the US west station and end with the Bay of Bengal (Scott, 2018).

The two primary purposes of the alliance are defence, which calls for allies to stand by one another in the event of military aggression, and deterrence, which aims to deter potential attackers by signalling readiness for military action on behalf of one another. However, alliances are expensive because of the state's loss of strategic autonomy (in exchange for another state's security protection) and the allies' financial and legal commitments to one another (Cornelis, 2020). From the perspective discussed here, there are many state's who consider China an existential threat in the Indo-Pacific region, and ultimately turning towards the US for a more sustainable "balance of threat".

A recent change in the policies of both competing powers has brought a new system of alliances in the region. Some Asian countries who were historically considered to be friends of the United States have become disloyal as a result of President Trump's America First strategy on one side and President Xi's Deep Pockets policy from China on the other. They are reorienting their alliance away from the United States, as well as their diplomatic and commercial ties with that country, and moving

closer to China in terms of those ties. In a broader sense, President Xi's Deep Pockets strategy in China has invited numerous Asian nations to cooperate with China. One notable example is the Philippines, which, while having certain historical disputes with China, changed its policies and formed an alliance with it. Both nations have now ratified bilateral agreements. China is assisting the Philippines militarily in its fight against extremist militants (Ejaz & Javaid, 2018).

There are two tendencies used by PACOM Commander, Admiral Samuel Locklear internal balancing and external balancing when it comes to counter China. America will adopt it. Internal balancing referred to US might. US will further improved force towards Indo-Pacific. America's military is the firm actor in the Indo-Pacific security circumstances and it will be onwards. External balancing is related to relationships and alliance with regional countries. US is already has well alliance system not only in the Indo-Pacific but all over world but we will still expanding and mounting cooperation with India, Australia, Japan and other regional countries. Indonesia is the decisive state in Indo-Pacific region (Scott, 2018).

But there are some countries that are tilting towards the US to counter a more assertive China. For example, India under Prime Minister Modi's administration has increased India's geopolitical assertiveness reciprocal to China. India has adopted a new Indo-Pacific strategy and that is that the Indo-Pacific area would be liberated, unfasten, comprehensive, and governed by international laws. Although there are multiple layers of the strategy, the fundamental aim of the strategy is to counterbalance China's dominance in the region. India uses a variety of tools to engage under the newly adopted strategy in international politics, including economic, defence, and diplomacy to achieve the desired goals of national interests. One of the developments under this new strategy is India's participation in the QUAD. Through the Quad security dialogues, four nations i.e. India, United States, Australia, and Japan have improved cooperation and coordination in place now (Nath & Klingebiel, 2023).

In 2007, Abe Shinzo, the prime minister of Japan, initiated Quad 1.0 with the support of Dick Cheney, the vice president of the United States, along with the John Howard, the prime minister of Australia, and Manmohan Singh, the prime minister of India. The conversation distorted instantly but was

revitalized in 2017 and recently promoted to the ministerial level. Quad 2.0 is the gradational implementation of FOIP. It is the diplomatic equivalent of joint military drills involving two, three, or all four nations, such as the Malabar exercise entertained by India and the Quad's counterterrorism table top exercise. The Quad remained under discussion but it is important because it signify the escalating order of the Indo-Pacific; the post-US hegemonic situation in Asia whereby informal security networks and diplomatic communities' unite to offset Chinese endeavour to disrupt the regional order of the status quo. The basic aim of QUAD is to build free and open Indo-Pacific, also to promote stability, and peace in the area (Kliem, 2020).

Since the Indo-Pacific concept gained popularity in the early 2010s, proclamations by India's top political figures suggest that New Delhi has seen assure in the concept, including its justification and goals, to advance India's national safety in its comprehensive eastern oceanic neighbours. Geo-economic interests, maritime law and order, and freedom of navigation are only a few of them. New Delhi also aims to create a more credible strategic anticipation against China given that India's geostrategic boundary with regard to China is progressively spreading eastward from the Indian Ocean (Kuo, 2018). In order to counterbalance China in the Indo-Pacific, Western nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and the European Union are enthusiastically in quest of alliances with India in the areas of trade, security, and improvement. (Nath & Klingebiel, 2023).

When Australia, India, Japan, and the United States first created the Quad in 2007–2008, it was known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Although it is still at regular intervals used by some member nations, usually unofficially, it is no longer used as a official classification. Quad members have emphasised a softer goal for the partnership rather than a security one. They have stressed the group's potential to offer solutions to regional issues like the COVID-19 crisis and climate change while concurrently downplaying or denying the group's security component.

In 2017, the Quad made a reappear due to Beijing's growing assertiveness, notably in the Indo-Pacific. Concerns over China's goals, mounting power and collision, and the region's vulnerabilities

were developing in each member state. Furthermore, none of these nations could have taken on the China confront by themselves for strategic, economic, or political reasons. In addition, the U.S.'s bilateral and regional partnerships and international organizations were inadequate to convene the issue since the regional security architecture was immature and ill-equipped for it. Furthermore, not all of the United States' allies mutual their fears or enthusiasm to take risks relating to China, and those associated through a hub-and-spoke alliance system kept each partner in close contact with the US but not necessarily with one another (Madan, 2022).

In order to make certain a lasting balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), the United States, India, Japan, and member states of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have shaped numerous bilateral and multilateral alliances, predominantly in response to new self-assured Chinese declaration in the South China Sea (Kumar et al, 2020). They consider China as their major threat. An alliance with Australia, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan is required for security reasons. And cooperation with economically stable nations at the regional level is highly impressive for securing and advancing commercial ties. Maintaining positive relations with China, in particular, will benefit the economies of other governments since it is an emerging economy in the region (Ejaz & Javaid, 2018).

According to the report issued by the Allied Command Transformation (Military Command in NATO) in 2022, NATO, a Euro-Atlantic alliance tasked with defending its partners, will face several threats and systematic competition from assertive and authoritarian states over the next two decades. These issues demand a comprehensive strategy that extends outside of the Euro-Atlantic region. China will continue to have an impact on the transatlantic landscape as one of the region's forceful and autocratic countries, remotely creating both some issues coming from this important and strategic Indo-Pacific region as well as some possibilities globally. The Brussels Summit Communiqué (June 2021) emphasized that "China's increasing impact and international policies may pose difficulties that -we- need to tackle together as an Alliance" in order to address the significance of overcoming such obstacles. In order to protect the Alliance's security interests, we will engage China (NATO Report, 2022).

Australia, India, Japan, and the United States are the four Indo-Pacific democracies that make up The Quad. They last met in late 2017 after an earlier attempt to form a cooperative organization had failed (Tow, 2019). In contrast to the other three partners, India's pattern of involvement with the Quad indicates divergent political and strategic ideas of a liberal order in the Indo-Pacific. India has undoubtedly changed since 2017, going from cautious involvement with the Quad to embracing parts of its institutionalization, such as summit level meetings and working groups (Estrada, 2023). The immediate cause of the diplomatic and military agreements between the Quad members is the PRC's rising economic and military might and the US's corresponding relative decrease in strength (Kliem, 2020). According to a very wide definition of security, analysts generally agree that the coalition is not an alliance but rather is focused on collaboration across areas of mutual interest (Estrada, 2023).

U.S. President Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson revealed their trilateral security cooperation, known as AUKUS. The key aim of AUKUS is to supply Australia with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines. The words said by Scott Morrison during the AUKUS announcement, "The new alliance will be safeguarding common interest and mount security and affluence in the Indo-Pacific region." AUKUS will barely stress on advance integrating in defence-related science, technology, industries, and supply chains, chiefly stress on cyber potential, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and latest submarine capabilities. AUKUS aims to reinforce ambassadorial, defence, and security assistance among the three states (Novita, 2022).

Under the banner of AUKUS, a significant security agreement was released On September 15, 2021. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have formed a strategic alliance to exchange cutting-edge defence expertise and provide Australian forces with nuclear-powered submarines. Concerns about the partnership's long-term goals and potential effects on other nations are growing. Due to the scuttled agreement, France uttered its annoyance at losing out on the profitable submarine business. China sees itself as the new grouping's planned victim. Despite varying responses, ASEAN believes that the region's geopolitical situation has worsened due to the proclamation of AUKUS (Cheng, 2022).

The armed forces of the three nations will be more able to assist and share information thanks to this alliance. The decision to provide nuclear-powered submarines to Australia is an extraordinary technology transfer from nuclear-armed nations to non-nuclear-armed nations, highlighting the value the United States places on its alliance. Additionally, it will be the first time in 50 years that the United States discloses its submarine technology to anyone other than the United Kingdom. Patricia O'Brien claims that this alliance will boost up Australia's military power, bring its friends together, and establish a global network of security pacts to counter China's immense and quick global expansion (Novita, 2022).

### **Recent Trends (Consequences)**

Three maritime powers China, India, and the US are simultaneously gaining influence, and this is the new dynamic in the area. Even if the US continues to be the world's most powerful country in terms of both military might and economic might, the situation is quickly shifting as a result of China's expanding comprehensive national strength. The strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific is best described by Robert Kaplan, a well-known US security analyst, as one "where the competition between the United States and China intertwine with the regional contention between China and India, also with America's fight in opposition to Islamic terrorism in the Middle East, which comprises America's effort to hold Iran." The Indo-Pacific region has grown into a vital strategic area and a battleground for big powers. Along with conventional conflicts over maritime territory, sovereignty, and resources, the area saw the emergence of new dangers. Piracy, terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal fishing, human and drug trafficking, climate change, global warming, and natural catastrophes are some of the challenges to maritime security in the area. Significantly, the maritime risks are transnational in character, affecting different parts of the system simultaneously, necessitating the development of strategic alliances (Singh, 2014).

The main reason of concern for the Alliance is the region's growing militarization, which opens the door to direct conflict with grave geopolitical and economic ramifications. Growing maritime capabilities, particularly for China, pose a threat to freedom of navigation. Increased chances of threat, boom, and still direct or indirect clash will result

from the militarization of conflicted islands, nuclear proliferation (India, Pakistan, China, and numerous rest states are expected to cross the nuclear doorsill), use of cyber, space, and cognitive warfare, and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Prior to that, the Indo-Pacific will become the world's most militarized region as a result of expanding defence spending and the number of defence cooperation. With the ongoing Indo-Pacific arms race come worries about nuclear proliferation. Global military spending grew again in 2021, surpassing \$2 trillion for the first time, demonstrating that it has been rising steadily in recent years. The 0.7% increase in worldwide military spending in 2021 occurred as the international economy was beginning to recover and nations were prioritizing addressing the COVID-19 pandemic's economic effects. Defence expenses in Asia and Oceania increased 3.5% in 2021 compared to 2020, maintaining a steady growing trend that dates back at least to 1989. The rise in military spending in China and India was the main cause of the increase in 2021 (NATO Report, 2022).

A credible framework for governance and dispute resolution has yet to be established by multilateral governance organizations due to the intense diplomatic and military manoeuvring for maritime zones and island territories. In light of this, East Asian nations have started to strengthen their naval forces. Regional navies, from Vietnam to the Philippines, Indonesia to Japan, are all aiming to increase their maritime offensive and defensive capabilities. A lot of of these nations have uttered concern over China's expanding blue water aptitude and its hegemony over the islands in the South China Sea. Additionally, they have backed India's desire for naval outreach in South East Asia (Singh, 2014). In the Indo-Pacific, tensions continued to rise. The need for improved coordination in the Indo-Pacific region has grown as a result of China's rise and, more specifically, President Xi Jinping's administration's unprecedented assertiveness, including during the COVID-19 dispute and the deadly border confrontations on the India-China boundary (Grare, 2020). Maritime boundary conflicts make the Indo-Pacific's security situation more difficult. The determination of maritime boundaries has evolved into a significant source of international conflict as energy security has grown in importance for nations. Although there are abundant oil and gas reserves within national maritime zones, they cannot be used

as long as there are hundreds of overlapping offshore boundary claims that are unresolved.

In the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), China's development and growing assertiveness pose a serious structural threat. A number of states have endorsed the "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) in an effort to maintain the status quo. Operational mechanisms—most significantly, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)—have developed in support of FOIP. In this informal setting, the United States, Japan, Australia, and India have come together to discuss current security concerns and coordinate their strategic actions. Beijing has committed to investing billions of dollars under the BRI umbrella in the industrial and infrastructure sectors throughout Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific. Undoubtedly, such a massive investment will substantially impact geo-strategically substantial geopolitical impact in areas where geopolitical rivalries between China and other major powers, especially the United States, are already intensifying. Washington is adamant about supporting the "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) strategy in order to fight the BRI. Beijing rarely refers to the Indo-Pacific in its own formal policy declarations as it is concerned that this US-dominated strategy may limit China's influence and hinder the BRI. These two cross-regional methods are to be fiercely competitive with one another (Li, 2020).

### **Theoretically Speaking**

The Power Transition Theory is a well-known concept in the field of international relations that delves into the connection between power and war. It was first presented by A.F.K. Organski, a renowned political scientist, in his book "World Politics" back in 1958. The theory suggests that the likelihood of war increases as a rising power challenges an existing dominant power, leading to a power shift and a struggle for control. Organski and Kugler contend that power transition theory views the international system as more orderly than anarchic to set itself spaced out from realists. This results from the dominating power's capability to force its preferences on subordinate players. The essential issue that causes the intact system roughly inevitably to veer toward war is the inequality in growth rates among the major powers, and, of particular meaning, the disparity between the dominant country and the challenger that allows the latter to overtake the former in terms of power. This

leapfrogging is what makes the system unstable (Lebow & Valentino, 2009).

The US Indo-Pacific strategy is the result of three interrelated processes. The first is that the US faces a "power transition" challenge as a result of China's rise. Secondly US is trying through "balancing" to dissuade that confront, mutually by way of mounting its own power ("internal balancing") and by revitalizing its alliances and considered joint venture ("external balancing"). Third, for balancing, Japan, Australia, and India are also subject to "balance of threat" considerations in relation to China, in addition to the US. This puts two related theories of international relations—the "power transition" theory and the "balance of threat" theory—in particular focus, and they are what Mearsheimer had in mind. "Fundamental shifts in world power - power transition" is the topic of the first theory. According to the notion of power transitions, a well-known hegemon delivers hegemonic stability but is afterwards dared by a new, ascendant antagonist. Earlier than a new hegemon presumes power, there is a time of strife during which the probability of conflict is maximum. During this time, if a reputable hegemon feels in danger of extinction, it might attempt to overthrow its challenger while it still has the supremacy. It is not surprising that Lemke and Tammen believed that "today only China seemed an impending pretender to the United States" at the turn of the century. This assessment was amply represented in the Pentagon's 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review, which identified China as the primary peer rival challenging the US (Lemke & Tammen, 2001). The "counter-strategy" consists of the US increasing its own military power ("internal balancing") and looking for allies and partners ("external balancing") throughout the Indo Pacific.

Stephen Walt (1985) proposed the "balance of threat" hypothesis as an alternative to "power transition theory." This is a development of Kenneth Waltz's (2010) "balance of power" (structural realism) theory, which claimed that a dominant state will inevitably confront countervailing alliances with comparatively weaker nations. Japan and India would be rebalancing with Beijing against the US, according to Waltz's argument. Within the confines of their own hedging techniques, they have chosen to balance the US against China in the opposite direction. As a result, the US Indo-Pacific policy can and does make use of regional perceptions of China as a threat. When he stated that the majority of



Beijing's neighbours "will fasten together with the United States to control Chinese power," John Mearsheimer (offensive realism) was making a reference to this (Mearsheimer, 2014). This is the rationale for the US Indo-Pacific policy, which entails both overt and covert strategic relationships to restrain China (Scott, 2018).

### **Data Analysis and Finding**

After conducting a thorough analysis of the variable at hand, with a primary focus on the causal relationship between alliances and the effects of arms race and security dilemma, the present study concludes that the Indo-Pacific region is of immense significance in the contemporary world, particularly in terms of both economic and military dominance. This region serves as a major hub for global trade, with China and the United States both competing for control. In recent years, China has emerged as a formidable challenger to the US's hegemony, with both nations utilizing alliances as a strategic tool to advance their interests. As such, the Indo-Pacific region has become a key battleground for these two superpowers, with both sides seeking to gain an advantage over the other in this crucial area.

The present study found that, QUAD, which refers to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, has implemented a strategy aimed at advancing a vision of an Indo-Pacific region that is both free and open (FOIP). This approach is intended to serve as a countermeasure to the increasing presence and influence of China within the region. QUAD has adopted a policy of promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region in order to counter the growing influence of China in the area. The main goal of the Chinese government is to assert its power and influence within the surrounding geographical area and establish itself as the dominant force in the region. China's goal is to dominate the region.

New findings have emerged from present study that reveal a growing trend towards the emergence of arms races among countries located in the Indo-Pacific region. This phenomenon arises as a consequence of the formation of alliances and the subsequent emergence of security dilemmas, which engender feelings of insecurity and vulnerability among these states. As a result, these nations are compelled to make significant investments in military weaponry and equipment to safeguard their interests and deter potential threats. This trend highlights the need for countries in the region to

pursue strategic diplomatic initiatives that can alleviate tensions and promote cooperation, thereby reducing the likelihood of future arms races.

The present study found that, there has been a notable shift in the strategic priorities of the United States, with a move away from a focus on the Asia-Pacific region and towards a greater emphasis on the Indo-Pacific area. The matter of China's increasing presence in the Indo-Pacific region has raised considerable concern. This is mainly attributed to the perceived importance of their actions and the potential risk they may pose to the region's stability and security.

The present study found that, the United States' allies are shifting their focus towards China due to the implementation of Trump's American First policy and the increasing attraction towards China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As China continues to expand its economic and military prowess, it has emerged as a formidable global power. Currently, China is prioritizing the development of positive and mutually beneficial relationships with other countries through the use of soft power strategies.

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