



The Transitioning Security Order in the Indo-Pacific

Furthering India-EU & Triangular Collaboration

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy & Richard Ghiasy



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Authors

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, India
Richard Ghiasy, Leiden Asia Centre, Leiden University, The Netherlands

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Authors

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi. Until recently, she served as IPCS' deputy director, simultaneously managing its Centre for Internal and Regional Security vertical. Her research covers policy-relevant dynamics at the intersection of international security, geopolitics, and the rule of law, with a primary focus on Southern Asia. Concurrently, she works on the interpretation and implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 2250 in the South Asian context. Emerging technologies' impact on (non)traditional security is of particular interest. Independently, she consults on international security sector initiatives, and has ongoing professional engagements in humanitarian settings. She can be reached at rajeshwari@ipcs.org

Richard Ghiasy is an advisor and researcher on Asian geopolitics. He is a Senior Fellow at Leiden University's Leiden Asia Centre, and an Expert with the Dutch Government's China Knowledge Network. Richard also sits on the Advisory Board of the *Asian Journal of International Affairs*. His research examines issues in international security, with an increasing interest in the conceptual and empirical aspects of security order and ordering. In his 17-year career, he has advised EU bodies, including the European External Action Service, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, as well as the OSCE, the OECD, and various national ministries in Europe and Asia. Often, his work is of a conflict preventive nature. He can be reached at ghiasy@leidenasiacentre.nl

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Any flaws in this work are ours.

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy & Richard Ghiasy

Executive Summary

The 'Indo-Pacific' simultaneously represents a geography, a concept, a process, and an outcome. Yet, how the construct influences security order and the ordering process in the region has received limited attention, thus encouraging this topic's expansion. Moreover, there is no definitional consensus on what a 'security order' entails. The polysemic nature of the term 'order'—and by extension, 'security order'—typically also confounds more than it clarifies.

Meanwhile, the construct's operationalisation is inducing an ecosystem-level transition across the wider region, and faint contours of a networked security order seem to be emerging. Thus far, the US and its hub-and-spokes alliance system have been the most potent conduits for this proto-order's evolution. Paradoxically, this transition is strengthening and diffusing the US' security role in the wider region. Equally, patterns discernible in these transitions demonstrate a quest for ecosystem-level agility.

However, the construct's genesis and *raison d'être*—deterring and absorbing China's unchecked influence—also has the potential to kick the Asian security ordering can down the road. But China is a geographical reality and currently the nucleus of the Asian economic order. Therefore, 're-ordering' pursued via the 'Indo-Pacific' will need to move beyond mere power balancing at some point.

Regional stakeholders' actions reflect this calculus. For instance, what is underway is not a linear power-balancing effort involving a collective of entities working in concert merely to deter China. On the contrary, regional stakeholders are steering the process in directions they find manageable, reasonable, and beneficial to their respective national interests.

So where does the India-EU partnership figure in this matrix?

Indian and EU capabilities to produce a de-escalatory effect on Sino-US contestation are limited and are likely remain so for the foreseeable future. However, the construct provides valuable impetus to the India-EU politico-security partnership and a compelling opportunity to collaboratively temper the ordering process as co-shapers rather than passive participants. The two are uniquely positioned to foster a third way based on cooperative, consultative approaches as an alternative to the US' more binarily-inclined strategies and China's opaque security visions. Crucially, both are well-placed to engage proponents and critics.

Based on these considerations, this policy report does three things:

Traces how the construct induces transitions in the security order/s of the Indo-Pacific

Contextualises how these transitions interact with Indian and EU security interests

Offers 10 simple but actionable ways to optimise India-EU collaboration for a cooperative security community in the Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

In the relatively short time since the Indo-Pacific construct entered the contemporary (geo)political lexicon, it has rapidly evolved into an instrument for structuring bilateral and multilateral relations. Catalysed by the construct—in which various stakeholder concerns and aspirations have found utterance—political and security arrangements are being fortified and diversified. Nevertheless, varied (non)competing visions, norms, and priorities are also at play. They are informed by a shared sense of the need to manage China's unchecked influence and an equally unchecked Sino-US showdown.

Both policy-oriented and academic debates accompanying these developments have highlighted the construct's wide-ranging practical, conceptual, and strategic dimensions. Nevertheless, how the construct influences security order-ing in the region and vice versa has received relatively limited attention. Moreover, concepts like 'security order', 'security architecture', and 'security complex' are often used interchangeably, typically without clarifications of terminological scope. This inadvertently conflates the terms' interpretations and connotations.

However, terminological clarity and consistency are crucial to managing expectations associated with cooperation pursued under this rubric. For India and the EU, this will prove beneficial as they pursue greater synergy in their partnership to achieve shared goals on bilateral, regional, and systemic levels. For instance, some in Europe have interpreted security 'order' as being synonymous with a security 'architecture' that takes a legal/treaty-institutional form. In comparison, many in Asia, Africa, and Oceania do not necessarily or entirely subscribe to this interpretation. Moreover, China is a major geographical and economic reality for several regional countries, warranting the consideration of regional security complexes as well.

Orders are neither autogenous nor self-sustaining—they are shaped by purposeful and/or inadvertent actions. Problematically, consensus among policy practitioners or scholars as to the definition of 'order' has remained elusive. By extension, one could argue that there is no real consensus on the term 'security order' either. Empirically speaking, even interpretations of 'security' vary. An exhaustive theoretical investigation of this matter is not in the scope of this report but is still material. Therefore, concepts and parameters used to bridge the conceptual and the practical are discussed in Annexure 1, which also briefly summarises the multi-dimensional debate on 'orders'.

Beyond its value for conceptual evolution and theory-building, a consideration of the process-relevant aspects of security order has substantial benefits for all Indo-Pacific stakeholders. For India and the EU, this is useful as they are yet to articulate a tailored, collaborative strategy to tackle their core Indo-Pacific goals, outside their Strategic Partnership frameworks, because these frameworks are not designed for this task.

Therefore, sections 1-3 trace how the construct is inducing transitions in the Indo-Pacific's security order/s, followed by a discussion on their interplay with Indian and EU security interests in sections 4 and 5. Ideally, security order and the process of ordering ought to enable inclusive, positive-sum, stable, and predictable patterns of relations. To that end, the report concludes with 10 simple but actionable recommendations to optimise India-EU collaboration for a cooperative security community in the Indo-Pacific.

1

The Construct in Context

This chapter briefly contextualises the Indo-Pacific construct's rationale from temporal, geopolitical, and geographical considerations, followed by a discussion on four security orders in the region.

Key Findings

- The Indo-Pacific construct (geo)politically weaves two vast strategic spaces—the Indo-Pacific and the Transatlantic
- Operationalising the Indo-Pacific construct requires meaningful entry points to interweave four orders: the US-led hub-and-spokes alliance system; the China-led 'invisible' order; the ASEAN-led multilateralist order; and the Pan-African security community
- The operative features of these security orders demonstrate why standardising 'order' and 'security' is not viable in practice
- The ASEAN is 'indispensable yet inadequate' for Indo-Pacific security ordering: it helps conceptualise Indo-Pacific visions but is constrained in its ability to operationalise them.

1.1 Multi-Pronged Rationales

From a conceptual vantage point, (geo)politically welding two or more oceans—the Indian and the Pacific in this case—is consistent with the interconnected physical geographic reality.¹ Indeed, an ‘Indo-Atlantic’ construct would also make ample sense. The same goes for a continental-level fusion; Eurasia is an example. Moreover, unlike the EU, India’s core security priorities pertain to securing both its continental and maritime flanks. Thus, for New Delhi, the Indo-Pacific construct’s strategic value on land and sea are interconnected.

The construct also reconceptualises the world’s geopolitical map, with Asia, particularly maritime Asia, as its vortex. It responds to the recalibration of the world’s most pivotal economic, industrial, and strategic spaces by (geo)politically yoking the Transatlantic and the Indo-Pacific to each other. It also bears shades of a status quo that had prevailed until the 18th century.²

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At present, Asia alone (Russia included) is home to over 4.7 billion people—nearly five times the aggregate population of Europe and North America combined. Moreover, Asia is currently the world’s largest continental economy, both in its share of global nominal GDP (38%) and purchasing power parity (43%), with ample space for further growth.³ Leading Asian technology economies, particularly China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, are at the forefront of the fourth industrial revolution and are advancing rapidly in the global digital order.⁴ Thus, the construct’s contemporary (non)security rationales for placing Asia at the centre are self-evident.

In its narrative(s), the Indo-Pacific construct may seem like a shift away from the ‘Asia-Pacific’ construct. But it is also easily possible to view the Indo-Pacific construct as an evolution or extension of the Asia-Pacific construct to include its natural neighbourhoods. In their applications so far, both constructs place Asia, great power competition, and security ordering at the centre. But the Indo-Pacific construct is intended to induce a key additional effect: multi-dimensional, transcontinental, operational linkages and harmonisation for cooperative security⁵ outcomes. In this regard, the Indo-Pacific construct inherits a wide variety of security orders, architectures, and complexes that dot the vast Indo-Pacific space.

1.2 Cardinal Security Orders in the Indo-Pacific

Views on security orders in the Indo-Pacific vary starkly. Some observers claim there is no security order in the Indo-Pacific.⁶ Some see two distinct but interconnected US-dominated security orders in the West Pacific and Indian Ocean.⁷ Others see a plurality of security orders led by different actors.⁸ These interpretations are indicative of:

- The geographic scope and numbers of stakeholders in the vast Indo-Pacific space
- Complex, unfolding patterns and layers of simultaneous (dis)integration, cooperation, and competition across security and economic orders⁹
- The lack of consensus on the constitutive components of 'security order'.¹⁰

Taking cognisance of these aspects, and based on the parameters outlined in Annexure 1, this section situates the strategic relevance of four¹ extant security orders of consequence for Indian and EU Indo-Pacific agendas.

The US-led Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System

The US is at the apex of security order/s in East and Southeast Asia. It wields considerable influence and is reinforced by the San Francisco System, a structurally hybrid, networked security architecture also known as the so-called hub-and-spokes (HAS) alliance system, which it operationally leads. In Asia, the HAS alliance system is arguably the most powerful formal military alliance framework. Unlike the multilateral, treaty-based collective defence alliance (i.e., NATO) the US continues to prefer in Europe, the HAS alliance system is structured mostly as bilateral arrangements,¹¹ but also features some multi-partner and transcontinental ones.¹²

The US has been able to sustain the core of this order throughout and beyond the Cold War. Regional stakeholders' alliances and collaboration with the US are sustained by the potent mix of US military power and the deficit of viable regional alternatives. Its endurance stems from regional stakeholders' perspectives on the US' power and value.¹³ For instance, the HAS alliance system is also a key security subset of the US-led, so-called 'liberal international order'. This alliance system maintains a strong focus on traditional security. It is increasingly working to regain the status quo: by fortifying US primacy to offset China's power and influence projection capabilities across the Indo-Pacific.

The HAS alliance system's 'spokes' extend into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as well, but not identically. For instance, collectively, the operational theatre of the US' Indo-Pacific Command, Central Command, and Africa Command already span the entire Indo-Pacific geography even in the latter's broadest scope. This is already also supplemented by other arrangements such as the multi-layered US-UK defence relationship. This includes their joint use of the Diego Garcia military base and the US' military installations in Oceania, East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, West Asia/Middle East, and Africa.¹⁴

Considered collectively, both the 'hub' and (some) 'spokes' extend into the IOR as well. Here too, the US is a dominant actor in military and political terms, with others like India and China competing for security and influence. Due to the HAS system's exclusive nature, US military preponderance, and lack of attention to non-traditional security (NTS) and socio-economic development, Beijing has sought to create an alternative terrestrial-cum-maritime security

¹This Report is not an exhaustive study. Therefore, its prioritisation of these four orders is not a comment on the significance of other orders and complexes that exist in the wider Indo-Pacific region.

order by tapping developmentalism as its entry point. This approach has begun to deliver some results for China.

The China-led ‘Invisible’ Order

Lacking in comparative value and power considerations, Beijing does not enjoy a ‘social compact’ (a so-called legitimacy) capable of sustaining a security order that is more China-led than US-driven, be it in its own neighbourhood or elsewhere in the world. In practice, China’s formal security ordering activities are more visible at the continental level, as are Russia’s, such as through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), respectively. But Beijing engages actors in the maritime space as well, such as through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Like the HAS, this China-led order is also predominantly bilaterally structured. But it is much more fluid, able to exhibit inclusivity, and features formal and informal engagements. Typically, Beijing uses (socio)economic development and NTS as the narrative basis for security cooperation. Its point of departure—national security—shares similarities with that of the US’ HAS alliance system but its emphasis, processes, and norms are considerably different. In some respects, the China-led developmentalist ‘invisible’ order is not necessarily a security order. It features few traditional security elements, continues in a non-institutionalised, mostly bilateral manner, and has few formal rules. However, it bears hallmarks of a security order in the making, which are also discernible in Beijing’s recently announced Global Security Initiative.¹⁵

In its operationalisation, China seeks and often successfully finds multilateral political consensus on the need for economic development—a powerful common denominator—stressing in its rhetoric that development is a prerequisite for (domestic) peace and security.ⁱⁱ Through and alongside its burgeoning bilateral trade, and participation in most Asian and African economic frameworks, China is indeed paving the ground for a parallel politico-security order. This is also based on its top spot in the Asian economic order—a position the US held for many decades post World War II. China often backdoors it through developmental partnerships, occasional decoupling of the letter and spirit of international law, and in some cases, militaristic belligerence. While security ambitions are typical of growing powers, there are severe incompatibilities between some of China’s socio-political worldviews and those of its neighbours and others, including India, the EU, and the US. This in turn feeds into the allure and legitimisation of the Indo-Pacific construct and the HAS alliance system.

**The China-led
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ⁱⁱ China fosters agreements—often under the BRI framework since 2013—and non-binding norms on development coordination. Simultaneously, in its rhetoric, it projects an aspiration to minimise inter- and intra-state armed conflict by facilitating a more economically egalitarian international community and the operational agency of developing countries. In practice, however, the frameworks through which it engages the developing world also engenders a degree of strategic dependence on China, even as it delivers some developmental benefits to the recipient countries.

Indeed, China's growing military capability to injure US strategic interests in East and Southeast Asia may already be sufficient to change the regional order's dynamics.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Beijing does not presently appear to possess the required influence or aggregate power to garner sufficient regional consensus or take over the US' security role. In fact, since 2002, China has attemptedⁱⁱⁱ to convince the region of an alternative normative security ordering vision based on political consensus rather than legally binding agreements, but to little avail.¹⁷ Even as a conflict mediator, China has yet to demonstrate a capability for inducing compromises necessary for conflict resolution; at best, it has been able to keep negotiation processes alive.¹⁸

ASEAN-led Multilateralism

At a scale much smaller than those of the US-led HAS alliance system and the China-led developmentalist security order, is the ASEAN-led security order in Southeast Asia, underpinned by ASEAN-led multilateralism. Beyond its emphasis on the principles of ASEAN centrality, respect for mutual sovereignty, non-interference, no use of force, and consensus among all regional countries on major security affairs, ASEAN does not have a common foreign and/or defence policy. Nor was it intended to offer one. Beyond its strategic geographical salience, however, ASEAN is a strong contender in providing a normative hinge for security ordering via the Indo-Pacific construct due to at least three factors:

- The ASEAN Charter prioritises multilateralism and peace-oriented community-building
- The evolution of the ASEAN Peace & Security Community Blueprint
- A wide spectrum of (extra)regional Indo-Pacific stakeholders participate in ASEAN structures across various levels.

This said, apart from its ASEAN centrality principle and relative receptiveness to extra-regional powers partaking in regional security ordering, the ASEAN approach to security ordering is not too dissimilar to China's consultative co-development approach. It lacks, however, China's financial and operational power for proactive security cooperation. Thus, ASEAN has been regionally-oriented and security order-adjacent—prioritising consensus and formalising non-intervention in internal affairs. But it also engages with countries and multilateral organisations from other regions. For example, the ASEAN Regional Forum enables it to build political-level engagement with non-ASEAN members on shared security concerns. It also has cooperation agreements with regional organisations like the SCO.

However, ASEAN's structural and political features hamstring its ability to function as a central or regulative security 'architecture' of the Indo-Pacific. This makes it simultaneously "inadequate

The ASEAN exhibits more features of a security complex than those of security orders or architectures

ⁱⁱⁱ These include the 'New Security Concept' (beginning in the late 1990s), the 'New Asian Security Concept' (2014), and the 'Global Security Initiative' (2022).

but indispensable¹⁹ for operationalising Indo-Pacific agendas because while it helps conceptualise Indo-Pacific visions, its operationalisation ability is constrained.

The Pan-African Security Community

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, across the expanse of the Indo-Pacific region, the African Union (AU) arguably represents the most comprehensive, regional-level multilateral architecture for political integration and cooperative security community-building in the Indo-Pacific. A continental union of 55 African states, it features a variety of political, economic, scientific, judicial, and security-related bodies in its structures.²⁰ The AU's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has various sub-structures like the AU Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, and (an operationally constrained) African Standby Force.

The AU's creation and evolution embody a meaningful, continent-wide political consensus on human security priorities, norms, actor agency, and operational coordination to address traditional and NTS concerns. Importantly, the AU and its APSA do not necessarily seem to conceive distribution of military power and cognate capabilities as the prime method to achieve security outcomes. Rather, they exhibit an inclination for holistic approaches to security outcomes. 'Hard' security capabilities are designed to supplement and not replace social, political, and economic actions to address security threats. That said, despite a mandate that spans the entire continent, a demonstrable track record in peace support operations, and its longstanding cooperation with relevant UN bodies, significant structural and operational challenges remain.²¹

The AU features the most comprehensive, multilateral politico-security architecture, in the Indo-Pacific

Of these four security orders, the HAS and the APSA exhibit multiple features of security order and architecture. The China-led developmentalist order is more 'invisible' but holds potential to influence. ASEAN exhibits more features of a security complex than that of a security order or architecture. None of these security orders and complexes are static or operate in a vacuum. They represent components of a wider ecosystem. Depending on the context, they are influenced by each other and by extant political and economic orders, and can even be unaffected by each other.

The next section discusses how security ordering induced by the Indo-Pacific construct is playing out in practice, before situating how it affects these four orders, in section 3.



CHINA-LED ORDER

- Developmentalism Often its Entry Point
- 'Invisible' Order, Mostly Continentally Oriented
- Hallmarks of a Security Order in the Making

US-LED ORDER

- Apex of the (East) Asian Security Order
- US Power & Value(s) Mostly Welcomed
- Currently No Viable Regional Alternatives

ASEAN-LED ORDER

- More a Security Complex than an Order
- Offers a Normative Hinge for Security Ordering
- 'Indispensable but Inadequate'

AU-LED ORDER

- Comprehensive Multilateral Architecture
- Holistic Approaches to Security
- Structural & Operational Challenges

2

Nimble Steering

This section contextualises how stakeholders' calculi shape and are shaped by security ordering pursued under the Indo-Pacific rubric.

Key Findings

- The Indo-Pacific construct simultaneously represents a geography, concept, process, and an outcome
- Bit by bit, non-great powers are steadily and nimbly steering the operationalisation of the Indo-Pacific construct in directions they find beneficial, manageable, and reasonable
- The ongoing transitions are not replacing prevailing power hierarchies. Rather, they are recalibrating the degree of agency that actors are able to exercise within these hierarchies
- The Non-Aligned Movement's operative principles not only complement the Indo-Pacific endeavour but also explain policy recalibration while maintaining narrative continuity.

Power Balancing with a Twist

The Indo-Pacific construct simultaneously represents a geography, a concept, a process, and an outcome. At present, competing as well as non-competing visions and norms are at play. There is a shared sense of the need to manage China's unchecked influence, and an equally unchecked Sino-US showdown. Diversification of partnerships and enhanced resilience are two routes to pursue this goal.²² The construct is thus a product of the changing geopolitical circumstances, but in its applied form, it also produces changes. Indeed, catalysed by the construct—in which stakeholder concerns and aspirations have found utterance—existing security arrangements are being fortified and diversified.

Nevertheless, these emerging changes are not replacing prevailing power hierarchies. Rather, they are recalibrating the degree of agency that various actors, big and small, are able to exercise within these hierarchies. Bit by bit, 'non-great' powers are steadily and nimbly steering the Indo-Pacific construct's operationalisation in directions they find reasonable, manageable, and beneficial to their own interests.²³

Even as regional and extra-regional Indo-Pacific actors emphasise rules-based order and inclusive, constructive, cooperation as the primary objective, they are also actively enhancing security sector engagement, in terms of material capabilities and political fellowship. Whether this approach engenders greater stability and/or greater compliance with international law and norms remains to be seen.

But a growing power does not a silent spectator make.

Beijing has characterised the Indo-Pacific construct as a framework that can “provoke trouble, put together closed and exclusive small circles or groups, and get the region off course toward fragmentation and bloc-based division.”²⁴ It has also argued²⁵ that the Indo-Pacific construct is merely a rebranding of US attempts to entrench its primacy in the region through a so-called ‘5-4-3-2-1’ model,²⁶ in which ‘5’ represents the Five Eyes alliance, ‘4’ the Quad, ‘3’ AUKUS, ‘2’ the US’ mostly bilateral HAS alliance system, and ‘1’ the US as the region’s primary security actor.

In an interesting turn, Beijing has begun taking a more positive tone towards non-US Indo-Pacific frameworks. It appears to have taken note that sans the power balancing element,¹ what remains of this construct is a patchwork of development cooperation arrangements among Global North and some Global South countries, one for which such a transcontinental framework is not a prerequisite.

Indeed, although power balancing is a core pillar of the construct, stakeholders’ motivations converge and diverge. For instance, the priority in the US’ outlook vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific pertains to securing its primacy in the Asia-Pacific by using the construct to mobilise India and others in a China balancing coalition. US interest in the IOR is also driven considerably by its relevance for balancing China.²⁷ For the EU, collaborating with regional and extra-regional actors under the Indo-Pacific construct offers both an option

Beijing has begun taking a more positive tone towards non-US Indo-Pacific frameworks

¹ Which is inherently connected to security partnerships, military capabilities, and overall resilience, especially when big powers are involved.

for addressing its security concerns, and a gateway for diversifying partnerships and influence.²⁸

In this regard, the security ordering element of the Indo-Pacific has opened doors for two-way politico-economic relationship-building, including securing energy and supply lines and market access.²⁹ For regional countries, engaging the Indo-Pacific construct offers benefits in the form of alternatives and support, but doing so also allows them to temper, to an extent, the fallouts of big power contestation at their doorstep, and unilateralism—be it China's or the US'.

Balancing Risk & Reward

The Indo-Pacific construct represents much more than mere power balancing, especially for Global South countries in the region. It also represents possibilities and opportunities for political fellowship and agency. For example, contrary to its surface appearance, what is underway in the Indo-Pacific region is not a linear power-balancing effort wherein a singular entity—China—is being balanced by one or more entities working in concert. Rather, even as regional actors engage each other and extra-regional powers in this balancing process, the former are also actively shaping the process. Regional actors are thus treating regional power balancing as a two-way street, and harnessing this moment's potential to enhance the prospects of their own agency in regional and global affairs. The 'ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific' is a useful example of this phenomenon. For example, it envisages "...ASEAN Centrality as the underlying principle for promoting cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region."³⁰

Thus, the Indo-Pacific construct is symptomatic of shared security concerns engendered by China's disproportionate³¹ and growing ability to project power and influence. Equally, the factors that shape its operationalisation—i.e., the Indo-Pacific 'endeavour'—are emblematic of the intersections between the converging and competing strategic priorities of major, middle, and smaller powers.

However, most countries in the Indo-Pacific have limited leverage and disproportionate economic dependence on China, and all but one of their options involve considerably more risk than reward. Unease arising from such an imbalance could have been relatively less, or perhaps more conveniently managed, had it not been for Beijing's disregard for its neighbours' sovereignty. This is evidenced in its strong-arming on land and at sea;³¹ tendency to decouple the letter and spirit of international law;³² and incessant harassment of neighbours via so-called "gray zone coercion."³³ The resultant fatigue is palpable among (extra)regional countries.

Nonetheless, most regional countries have continued to strike a careful balance between taking proactive measures to improve their security prospects under the Indo-Pacific construct, and antagonising China. Part of this tightrope walk can be discerned³⁴ from what countries, minilateral groupings, and/or multilateral bodies in the region prefer to take a neutral stand on. These patterns reveal how even as the regional order has begun to exhibit shades of bipolarity, most countries in the Indo-Pacific prefer not to binarily align with either the US or China. Equally, they are clear on what they do not want, be it vulnerability to Beijing's impulses or anyone else's, or big power rivalry. The

³¹ In this context, not relative to its landmass, population, and economic prowess, but to those of its neighbours.

tactful balancing in their responses to the Indo-Pacific construct is partly reminiscent of a feature of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)—i.e., multi-alignment.

However, there is an emerging tendency in the contemporary discourse to segregate the logic of strategic autonomy from any association with NAM or to argue that NAM is no longer relevant. Yet, multi-alignment and strategic autonomy were very much a feature of NAM members' choices during the Cold War. Moreover, NAM's principles never eschewed or proscribed engagement with big powers; and in practice, its members' stances have largely embodied the pursuit of strategic autonomy.³⁵ In essence, NAM's name is a misnomer because NAM did not interpret 'non-alignment' as 'neutrality', even during the Cold War. Rather, it endorsed collective efforts for defence and security even with big powers. The operative caveat to its endorsement only proscribed doing so "*to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers*"³⁶ [emphasis added].

NAM's name is a misnomer. NAM did not interpret 'non-alignment' as 'neutrality', even during the Cold War

As security ordering via the Indo-Pacific rubric demonstrates, regional countries have not deviated radically from their NAM principles. On the contrary, they are operationalising those components of NAM principles that are applicable to the current geopolitical and security environment in their neighbourhoods. And their interests and those of big powers like the US share considerable common ground. Thus, NAM's operative principles not only complement the Indo-Pacific endeavour but can also do something equally valuable—offer a cognitive bridge³⁷ to explain policy recalibration while maintaining narrative continuity.

With this canvas in mind, the next section contextualises how the Indo Pacific construct and associated agendas propel security ordering in the region and how resulting transitions interact with the four security orders discussed above.

3

The Indo-Pacific Security Ordering Arc

This section maps the timeline of the Indo-Pacific security ordering process and contextualises the nature and significance of the transitions it has induced so far.

Key Findings

- Of the four security orders discussed in section 1.2, thus far, the Indo-Pacific security ordering arc has delivered most value for the HAS alliance system
- A singular umbrella security architecture in the Indo-Pacific is neither a realistic goal nor will it be both effective and sustainable, at least at this juncture; and power balancing alone is inadequate to sustain peace
- Elements of a networked, transcontinental proto security order seem to be emerging. At this juncture, they seem to complement and help diffuse the US' security managing role
- Transitions induced by the Indo-Pacific construct reflect an ecosystem-level evolution, and a quest for agility.

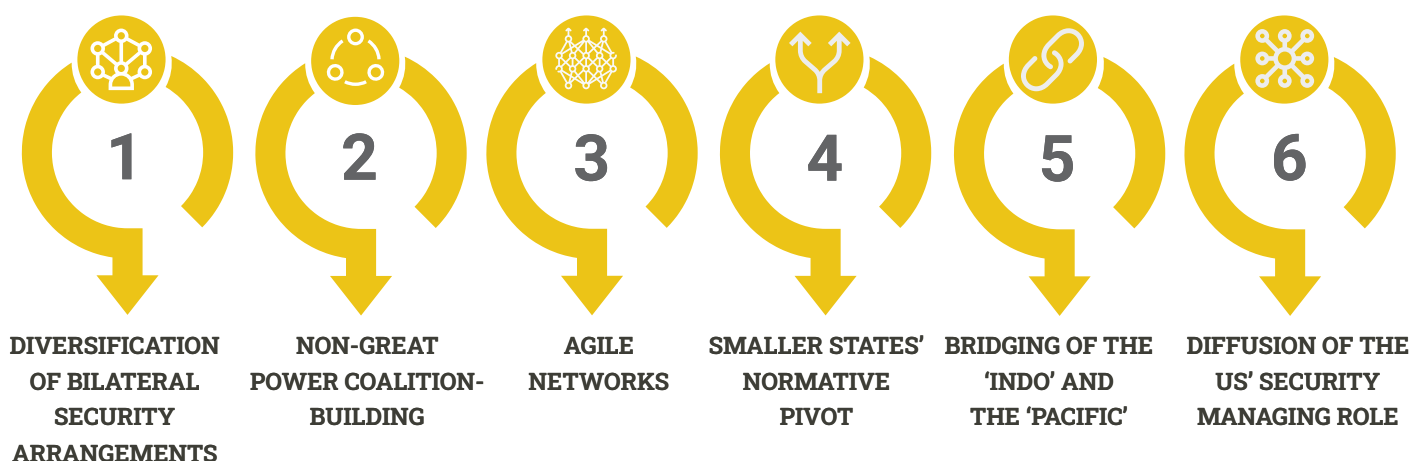
3.1 Where is the Security Order Transitioning Towards?

Given how it has come to symbolise the Indo-Pacific construct, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue's (Quad) timeline of evolution provides a useful point of reference to chart transitions in the Indo-Pacific's security order/s. Based on this timeline, related trends can be classified into three broad phases:

- **Phase 1** (2004-2008)
- **Phase 2** (2009-2016)
- **Phase 3** (2017-present)

This report situates Phase 1 as beginning in 2004, when the then future Quad countries collaborated extensivelyⁱ as part of a core group coordinating rescue and disaster relief work in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami in Asia.³⁸ Quad was then formally instituted in 2007 but ended shortly after Australia withdrew in 2008, although other factors also contributed to its stagnation.³⁹ This report situates Phase 2 as the interim period during which the remaining Quad members slowly but steadily expanded security relationships while also exploring alternative possibilities, including by engaging Australia, for example in the India-Australia AUSINDEX naval exercises that began in 2015. Finally, this report situates Phase 3 as beginning from Quad's revival in 2017 (i.e., 'Quad 2.0'), when a more coordinated, consistent approach emerged.

One way to discern the process related dimensions of the Indo-Pacific security ordering arc is by mapping these trends in relation to the three phases. The Quad timeline offers a useful point of reference not merely because it has come to symbolise the Indo-Pacific construct. It is also because the circumstances and trajectory of its evolution share causal and correlational links with all activities relevant to security ordering under this construct. Based on this, at least six trends can be discerned:



ⁱ See Marc Grossman's essay (Endnote 38) for his first-hand account of leading the task force's coordination and reflections on its future value.

Diversification of Bilateral Security Arrangements

PHASES 2 & 3

Phases 2 and 3 have witnessed a marked rise in the expansion and/or diversification of bilateral arrangements between Indo-Pacific stakeholders on matters of security, with Phase 3 seeing more, proportional to the timeframe. For instance, Australia-Japan bilateral security ties have been steadily growing since 2007, a recent example of which is the 2022 Australia-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA).⁴⁰ A similar UK-Japan RAA was finalised in principle in 2022.⁴¹ Another example is the 2020 India-Australia Arrangement Concerning Mutual Logistics Support, which allows access to each other's defence facilities.⁴²

Between 2016 and 2020—following years of Indian reluctance—New Delhi and Washington signed the remaining three of four US 'foundational agreements': the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016; the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018; and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in 2020.⁴³ The Industrial Security Agreementⁱⁱ (ISA) was signed in 2019.⁴⁴

Agreements like these do not radically transform bilateral security commitments but they nonetheless do something valuable: they make it easier to collaborate in practice by reducing and/or removing technical barriers such as legal or logistical incompatibilities.⁴⁵ This feature is key for operational agility. The India-US LEMOA and COMCASA are India-specific adapted variants⁴⁶ of the 'foundational agreements'. This is not a unique outcome of the Indo-Pacific. Past agreements and concessions, such as the Indo-US civil nuclear deal (2004) and the Nuclear Security Group waiver for India (2008) speak to the 'special' relationship between these two countries, which predates the current geopolitical environment.

Non-great Power Coalition-building

PHASE 3

The Indo-Pacific construct is enabling a steady rise of minilaterals among non-great powers (i.e., major and middle powers) including but not limited to India, Japan, Australia, and the EU. Most such minilaterals—often platforms for both effective dialogue and issue-specific cooperation—are aimed at security collaboration or include it within their scope. Although several stakeholders like Japan and Australia already share pre-existing security arrangements with the US, the coalescing underway among these non-great powers themselves is witnessing an upward trend. An example is the India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue instituted in 2020,⁴⁷ which was briefly disrupted when AUKUS was announced in 2021.

Another example is the commencement of the India-EU Security and Defence Consultations in 2022.⁴⁸ This round of consultations entailed discussions on increasing cooperation on maritime security issues and possibilities for co-

ⁱⁱ The ISA is part of the fourth foundational agreement, the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which the two sides signed in 2002.

development and co-production of defence equipment. Interestingly, the prospects of India's participation in the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework were also discussed, although it is premature to estimate its prospects. A similar trajectory is visible in the 2022 joint statement, titled 'Strengthening trust in the digital environment,'⁴⁹ on privacy and protection of personal data, issued by the EU, India, Australia, Comoros, Japan, Mauritius, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

Agile Networks

PHASES 2 & 3

Bilateral and minilateral arrangements help forge closer ties and/or cooperation on specific security or governance concerns. With agile design, a cluster of minilaterals can produce asymmetric outcomes that are greater than the sum of their parts. Though this began in Phase 2, the pattern emerged in a clearer, deliberate fashion in the Phase 3 years. The intersection of Quad⁵⁰ and the Malabar [naval] Exerciseⁱⁱⁱ is an example⁵¹ of security partnerships and their networks beginning to exhibit such agility. Japan joined as a permanent partner in 2015.⁵² After a 13-year gap,^{iv} Australia has annually participated in the Malabar Exercises since 2020, with its 2020 participation coming shortly after the Australia-India-France Trilateral Dialogue was inaugurated the same year. Thus, although Australia is not a permanent partner,⁵³ the 2020, 2021, and 2022 iterations of the Malabar Exercise have featured all Quad countries, outside the Quad umbrella. Similarly, in 2021, India participated in France's recently launched La Pérouse naval exercise in the Indian Ocean that also featured the US, Australia, and Japan,⁵⁴ thus featuring the Quad and France in a joint naval exercise.

These developments demonstrate how the Quad's flexibility and recalibration as well as its catalysing capabilities can be seen more through the Malabar Exercises (i.e., outside the Quad framework) than within the Quad platform itself. Another example is the 2022 launch of the 'I2U2' grouping, featuring Israel, India, US, and the UAE.⁵⁵ Currently, the I2U2's focus pertains to NTS and technology, and does not include defence cooperation per se. However, this does not preclude a possible link-up with groupings like Quad. For India, this initiative also falls within its 'Look West Policy'.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the timeline of these developments somewhat corresponds to that of a reduction in references made to 'hard' security cooperation in Quad documents.⁵⁷ Quad could well evolve into a structure capable of collectively engaging in dialogue with China, but the prospects of such a scenario will depend on the AUKUS's future trajectory, among other factors.

ⁱⁱⁱ It began in 1992 as a New Delhi-led India-US bilateral naval exercise. Currently, it features the US, India, and Japan as permanent partners.

^{iv} Caused in part by Australia's policy choices and India's strategic apprehensions stemming from its concerns regarding Canberra's strategic calculus in relation to China, at the time.

Smaller States' Normative Pivot

PHASES 2 & 3

Smaller states in the region find themselves in a paradox. They are both vulnerable to the effects of big power contestation and facing a potential opportunity to bargain their way to greater insulation from these effects as well as other strategic concerns. Hedging by smaller states is neither new nor a unique effect of Indo-Pacific security ordering. However, in the context of this construct's operationalisation, smaller states are hedging more deliberately, steadily exercising greater agency in the process. The flurry of diplomatic activity⁵⁸ by China, the US, and other actors to institutionalise security partnerships with Pacific Island Countries (PIC) in 2022 and the PICs' responses⁵⁹ is an example of how smaller states are harnessing the Indo-Pacific construct for traditional hedging with newer features.⁶⁰ In doing so, they are strategically pivoting the discourse to how 'security' and 'rules-based order' are conceived and addressed. Particularly, island states have increased efforts vis-à-vis (re)framing the international understanding of strategically pressing security concerns and priorities.⁶¹

For instance, even as they seek to strike a balance between big powers on 'hard' security issues, island states across the Indo-Pacific like the Maldives, Kiribati, Mauritius, and Fiji have placed a high priority on climate change, overfishing, and similar issues. Typically categorised in bigger power interests as NTS matters, these issues are existential security concerns for small island states.⁶² Equally, there is a stronger call for compliance with the rules of the rules-based order, with attention drawn to the need for Western/bigger powers' compliance with those rules. The Mauritius-UK territorial dispute case over the Chagos Archipelago (home of the UK-US Diego Garcia military base) is a relevant example.⁶³

Bridging of the 'Indo' & the 'Pacific'

PHASES 2 & 3

Thus far, developments relevant to the Indo-Pacific security ordering process are more ubiquitous in the Pacific Ocean Region (POR) as compared to the IOR. The China rationale in the Indo-Pacific explains this pattern to an extent, but it also begs the question as to where the 'Indo'—especially the southern and western regions—figures in the calculus. Nonetheless, the past decade has witnessed some substantive developments which contribute to this bridging. The I2U2 grouping and the US' 2022 Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy are some recent examples. Similar developments relevant for EU-India security cooperation include the 2022 EU-AU 'Joint Vision for 2030'⁶⁴ and the EU's 2022 decisions on three aspects:

- Extending the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) of EU member state navies to the north west IOR
- Deepening existing engagement under the Enhancing Security Cooperation in and With Asia (ESIWA) framework; and
- Exploring the prospects for extending the Critical Maritime Route Wider Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO) project to the POR.

These developments complement those on logistics—a linchpin for security cooperation on a practical level. For instance, to tackle piracy threats, a variety of Indo-Pacific stakeholders have established overseas military bases in Djibouti over the past decade.⁶⁵ In 2018, India established the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) to function as an information-sharing hub for the region.⁶⁶ Based in India, the IFC-IOR also hosts liaison officers from several Indo-Pacific countries, including the US, Japan, Australia, France, the Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Seychelles. New Delhi has also actively expanded its engagement with island states in the IOR (e.g., the Seychelles, Mauritius) and the POR (e.g., Tonga, Tuvalu) by synergising its approach to development cooperation and security engagement through smaller, context-responsive ways.

Though not large-scale, such engagement spans humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; operational collaboration for maritime security, such as patrols and maritime domain awareness; enhanced bilateral politico-diplomatic contact (including technical assistance for elections); and multilateral engagement through specialised platforms like the Forum for India-Pacific Island Countries Summits and the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference, to name a few.⁶⁷ This engagement has delivered some results for India, including as endorsements^v for India's candidature at various international fora.⁶⁸

New Delhi's 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) doctrine and Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) are also relevant for bridging the Indo and the Pacific. The SAGAR doctrine offers a useful window into India's Indo-Pacific strategy, through which it "plans to support the building of a rules-based regional architecture resting on seven [IPOI] pillars."⁶⁹ This is supplemented by India's increasing engagement for security cooperation with counterparts in Africa, evidenced in the specifics of the 2015 India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation⁷⁰ and those in the 2020 'Lucknow Declaration,'⁷¹ among others.

Diffusion of the US' Security Managing Role

PHASES 2 & 3

The five trends explored in this section complement and help diffuse the US' security managing role in the Indo-Pacific. Indo-Pacific stakeholders exhibit clear cognisance of the US' value as the region's principal security provider, at least for the time being. The policy attention given to the construct by most of the world's major and 'non-major' actors substantiate this to a large extent. Trends also indicate a strengthening of the US-led HAS alliance system (discussed in section 3.2).

The Indo-Pacific construct also has a demonstrated potential to catalyse the agency of a wide range of stakeholders, albeit at the state-to-state and

^v Recent examples include elections to the International Law Commission (2023-2027 term), INTERPOL Executive Committee (2021-2024 term), the 40-member Council of the International Maritime Organization (2018-19 term, Category 'B'), Non-permanent Seat at the UN Security Council (2021-2022 term), Membership of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Seas (2017-2026 term), and Membership of the International Court of Justice (2018-2027 term).

not institution-to-institution level (yet). This could potentially erode the US' centrality as a security manager, but not erase it. Operationally, the construct's scope is so vast that the US military cannot operate at full strength in both the IOR and the Asia-Pacific/POR. Particularly in the IOR, the US seems to be angling for reliable partners for greater burden-sharing, which would enable it to better focus on deterring China in the South and East China Seas. Finally, under the Indo-Pacific rubric, the US encourages militarisation. To what extent this will diffuse and/or empower the US' central role in Asian security ordering in the medium to long-term remains to be seen.

So, how do these six trends impact the four security orders discussed in section 1.2?

3.2 The Arc's Impact on the Four Cardinal Orders

Of the four orders discussed in section 1.2, the Indo-Pacific construct has delivered most value for the HAS alliance system. At least on paper, it has fortified it with an expanded network of arrangements across a wider geography. This may aid the pursuit of power balancing efforts vis-à-vis China, but a balance of power alone does not necessarily promote and/or sustain peace.⁷²

The impact on the AU-managed security order is much less discernible. However, an intermeshing of the pan-African security community and the current and emerging ones in the Western and Central IOR could be expected under certain conditions. This will depend on political consensus on the Indo-Pacific's geographic scope and stakeholders in Africa being engaged more substantively on an operational level. Interest in ASEAN centrality and its normative aspects among key stakeholders like the EU and India gives political impetus to ASEAN's role. Likewise, the US' 2022 Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy and the 2022 AU-EU 'Joint Vision' draw attention to the AU's salience. If the Indo-Pacific rhetoric on development, resilience, diversification, and NTS cooperation translates into meaningful action, it could also help offset the limiting effects of the China-led 'invisible' order.

The trends discussed in section 3.1 are indicative of the opportunities and challenges various stakeholders see, even as diverse visions for the international order fuel power shifts in the Indo-Pacific. Not every development constitutes a new security order. However, when viewed collectively and in relation to cognate developments, the contours of a potential proto structure of the emerging security order seem to be discernible. Irrespective of whether they represent such a proto structure, the trends reflect a clear turn towards a networked security order with ecosystem-level agility, one which has neither an overarching umbrella architecture under which these arrangements can be organised, and nor may it need one. In fact, the USP of these flexible arrangements—which the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy⁷³ also calls for—lies in the absence of an umbrella architecture. The relative formlessness (or hybridity) aids adaptability to differences in priorities and capabilities, while simultaneously improving the prospects for collective resilience. These patterns of developments thus represent an ecosystem-level transition.

The Indo-Pacific construct has delivered most value for the HAS alliance system

Simultaneously, the Indo-Pacific construct has managed to bring the Global North's geopolitical and geoeconomic attention—and corresponding resources—to the Indo-Pacific region. Despite variations in orientation towards the construct among major stakeholders, there is widespread political consensus on its relevance. There is greater political compatibility, with democracies of varying shades and authoritarian states setting aside some differences in the interest of managing China's unchecked rise (and big power contestation) through security cooperation.

The construct also draws military power from Europe and North America to the Asia-Pacific, although not so much in the Indian Ocean yet. To what extent it reorganises global military power distribution and what its practical effects might be merit further inquiry. Whether the churning catalysed by the construct results in greater stability and/or rule of law remains to be seen. This is also where India and the EU can play a meaningful role—i.e., by engaging not merely as passive participants, but by taking and diffusing ownership of the transition. The next two sections discuss the context and actionable ways to do so.

4

Implications for Indian & EU Security Interests

This section considers the Indo-Pacific construct's implications for Indian and EU security interests and contextualises strengths and limitations on their ability to co-shape security ordering in the wider region.

Key Findings

- Although the construct was not the trigger for the ongoing expansion in India-EU security collaboration, it has nonetheless given it valuable impetus
- India and the EU will benefit from articulating a joint vision and action plan tailored for security collaboration on shared Indo-Pacific goals. Roadmap 2025 is inadequate for this purpose
- The construct complements the India-EU partnership's goals through an emphasis on multilateralism, pragmatism, and maritime security and ocean governance cooperation, among others
- The bigger questions are not merely about what to harmonise in the Indo-Pacific and how, but also about where and when to invest efforts, and why.

4.1 Security Interests & Compatibility in Context

The logic of the Indo-Pacific construct and its normative purchase have two straightforward, fundamental anchors—partnership diversification and enhanced resilience. In this regard, Indian and EU security interests share meaningful overlaps across traditional and non-traditional spheres of concern. A rules-based international order has been a core focus of the partnership for over three decades.⁷⁴ Since then, the two sides have taken a series of actions that have laid the foundations for the compatibility visible in their contemporary partnership. These features are particularly relevant to the core objectives of the Indo-Pacific construct, such as rules-based international order and multilateralism.

Although the Indo-Pacific construct was not the trigger for the ongoing expansion in India-EU security collaboration, it has nonetheless given a potent impetus for engagement. Whereas the 2004 India-EU Strategic Partnership set the tone for future engagement on security and the 2005 EU-India Joint Action Plan (JAP) provided the framework for operationalising the Strategic Partnership, the 2008 update to the JAP integrated NTS threats⁷⁵ into their operational focus. 12 years on, against the backdrop of the Indo-Pacific construct gathering momentum, the two sides endorsed the 'India-EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025' (hereinafter, 'Roadmap 2025'), to guide the partnership and better tackle changing geopolitics. Though these developments signal greater political will and interest in enhancing security cooperation, some pitfalls remain, as the Indian and EU Indo-Pacific strategies are yet to align operationally.

4.2 India-EU Security Collaboration: Inclination Vs. Compatibility

Since 2020, Roadmap 2025 has become a key point of reference to analyse India-EU collaboration (or the lack of it) on security. This is in addition to other documents, including the various Indo-Pacific strategies and guidelines. Given how this security partnership has been intensifying alongside and in relation to the Indo-Pacific construct, a nascent pattern of India-EU collaboration vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific being conflated with the India-EU Strategic Partnership can be discerned.

This produces two odd effects. One, expectations associated with one of these get transposed on to the other (and vice versa). Two, this transposition engenders impatience and scatters agendas, pulling the relationship in multiple directions simultaneously. This risks setting unrealistic goals and expectations for what is still a work in progress.

The EU's maritime security activities in the western Indian Ocean offer a useful (albeit inexact) example. The EU's Atalanta, CRIMARIO (I), and MASE operations contributed to humanitarian activities as well as regional maritime capacity-building. But these same projects are now being expected to deliver on Indo-Pacific objectives related to maritime security, without⁷⁶ sufficient calibration of policies or operational strategies for that purpose.⁷⁷ Merely repackaging missions designed for capacity-building or

anti-piracy activities will not suffice if the goal is to tackle strategic contestation with China. That requires tactical and strategic versatility on both operational and policy levels.

Moreover, the fact that the EU is not a country but a supranational entity of which 27 countries are independent, constitutive components adds another layer of complexity, be it in the EU's own operations or as part of EU-India collaboration. What could be expected of a bilateral relationship between two countries is also risked being expected of the India-EU relationship.

India-EU Indo-Pacific security cooperation needs a tailored strategy and action plan based on each party's specific priorities

That said, Indo-Pacific agendas and the India-EU Strategic Partnership are neither mutually exclusive nor incompatible. On the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing. There are immense overlaps across the India-EU Strategic Partnership's goals and their respective Indo-Pacific priorities. This includes cooperation on maritime security and ocean governance, rule of law, effective multilateralism, climate change mitigation, science and technology collaboration, and development cooperation.

Importantly, the India-EU Strategic Partnership is also a positive sum agenda envisioned to have a long shelf life. For instance, core objectives associated with the Indo-Pacific construct (at least for most stakeholders) are minimising risk and maximising resilience in the short and long-terms, with the immediate threat/risk primarily seen as originating from Beijing. In comparison, the India-EU Strategic Partnership transcends geography and takes a big picture approach, and whose *raison d'être* is not limited to a single source of threat, risk, or injustice.

Thus, the bigger question here is not about what to harmonise and how, but where and when to invest these efforts, and why.

If all stakeholders direct the bulk of their resources to all economic, political, security, and developmental concerns in all the regions of the Indo-Pacific, those resources are unlikely to be optimally utilised. They are thus unlikely to deliver intended outcomes. Indeed, the POR does require greater emphasis because the Indo-Pacific construct emerged as a response to China's actions and the US' interest in preserving its regional primacy. Still, the degree of imbalance in the attention paid to the Pacific as compared to the 'Indo' must be checked.

So, in what ways have the Indo-Pacific construct, associated priorities, and Indian and EU security interests and partnership interacted? How do they shape each other and the security ordering process in the wider region? A brief review of the construct's salience for the India-EU security partnership is a useful precursor to examining its impact. Therefore, what follows is a snapshot of key areas of shared interest where the Indo-Pacific construct directly intersects with the India-EU partnership and has produced some effects:

A Multilateralism Multiplier (?)

The Indo-Pacific construct enables multilateralism—a core pillar of the India-EU relationship and goals. Although India and the EU are yet to jointly establish new multilateral groupings, there has been some independent and state-to-state movement, particularly on ‘minilaterals’. Examples include the Quad, Australia-India-France, and the I2U2. However, the existence/creation of minilateral or multilateral platforms may not be sufficient impetus for the ‘effective multilateralism’ pillar of the India-EU Strategic Partnership, or for their security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

For instance, despite sharing substantial commonalities, India and the EU do not approach multilateralism identically. The EU seeks to strengthen international institutions “to establish”⁷⁸ a rule-based international order, whereas India does not limit itself to the scope of this interpretation. New Delhi also seeks to reform multilateral institutions to make them more equitable and to “pursue its national interests.”⁷⁹ The EU prefers greater structure, formality, and institutionalisation in multilateral frameworks, whereas India is comfortable operating within both (in)formal and semi-formal arrangements.

Even though the Indo-Pacific construct has not produced new multilateral organisations yet, it has proved valuable for strengthening existing ones. For instance, most Indo-Pacific stakeholders, including India and the EU, have prioritised the comprehensive implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) as an ordering principle of their Indo-Pacific visions. Contrast this with the fact that the US—a primary proponent of the Indo-Pacific construct—is not a party to the UNCLOS but China, the main trigger for the construct and an UNCLOS violator, is.

Injecting Pragmatism

The Indo-Pacific construct has incentivised the EU and certain member states to pragmatically manage expectations vis-à-vis their partnership with India, particularly on cooperation relevant for regional and international security and global governance. A useful example of this recalibration is India and the EU agreeing to launch the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) during European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s April 2022 visit to New Delhi. This occurred weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine and India’s reluctance to publicly condemn Moscow caused widespread consternation in European capitals.

In her remarks at the Raisina Dialogue during the visit, von der Leyen expressed her displeasure,⁸⁰ highlighting how Russia’s actions would have a bearing on Indo-Pacific security. Yet, the agreement on the TTC was reached during the same visit. And less than three months later, India and the EU not only held the first round of their Security and Defence Consultations but also resumed negotiations on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that commenced in 2007 and stalled in 2013. Incidentally, the 2022 Consultations also featured discussions on India’s participation in the EU’s PESCO.

New Delhi's strategic concerns regarding Beijing are exacerbated by India's long-time partner Russia's growing proximity to China, and those of other complicated neighbours, including Pakistan and the Taliban, who also share strong ties with Beijing. Thus, the agreement on the TTC, the Consultations, and resumption of FTA negotiations suggest that the Indo-Pacific construct has injected a degree of pragmatism in the relationship. It remains to be seen whether this is a temporary adjustment to EU policy, or a longer-term turn in which the frontloading of values is done on a case-by-case basis.

Nonetheless, for both India and the EU, the other side of the calculus is that if Russia ever needs to reduce the likelihood of becoming China's vassal, it will need viable partners—a scenario in which New Delhi's role will become important.⁸¹

Maritime Security and Ocean Governance

The Indo-Pacific construct is a natural complement to the maritime security and ocean governance pillars of Indian and EU security interests. The construct geopolitically reconceptualises two oceans as a single strategic space and places an emphasis on UNCLOS and freedom of navigation. Moreover, India's SAGAR and IPOI projects, as well as the Indian Navy's 2015 Maritime Security Strategy⁸² share considerable overlaps with the EU's 2018 Action Plan⁸³ for its 2014 Maritime Security Strategy.⁸⁴

If organised smartly, the EU's structural features can also prove beneficial for India-EU collaboration in the maritime security and ocean governance aspects of Indo-Pacific security. For instance, the EU as a supra-national entity offers multi-layer and multi-dimensional opportunities for exploring and implementing collaborative ventures. A recent example is the 2022 meeting between India, France, and the UAE to explore trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁵ These features could also aid in calibrating joint India-EU outreach to partner with AU member states for Indo-Pacific security goals.

The problem, however, is that those very beneficial aspects of the EU's structural peculiarities also pose operational hurdles to enhancing India-EU action on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. For instance, the EU and its member states do not yet have consensus on engagement that can address strategic contestation. As such, the Indo-Pacific construct has been more beneficial for enhancing minilateral cooperation for maritime security involving select EU members like France rather than for India-EU coordinated action as it pertains to their respective Indo-Pacific priorities.

The construct is a natural complement to the maritime security and ocean governance pillars of India-EU interests

Indeed, cooperation in other areas such as emerging technologies, securing global digital commons, and NTS are also directly relevant. But the India-EU Strategic Partnership and Roadmap 2025 are not a reasonable replacement

for a coordinated, joint Indo-Pacific security cooperation strategy. The latter needs a more tailored strategy and action plan based on specific priorities and the Indo-Pacific construct's purpose for each party. The 2018 Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region⁸⁶ and the 2015 US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region could offer useful ideas for a starting point,⁸⁷ as could India-Australia (2020) and India-Indonesia (2018) 'shared vision' documents for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Building on these considerations, the following section explores how Indian and EU interests and capabilities interact with the Indo-Pacific construct and the transitioning security order in the region.

5

India-EU & the Transitioning Security Order

This section considers the interplay between the Indo-Pacific construct and the India-EU partnership in relation to the transitioning security order in the wider region.

Key Findings

- India and the EU do not have the capability, financial resources, or appetite to provide and sustain hard power in the POR
- An optimised India-EU security partnership in the Indo-Pacific will at best complement and at worst, not contradict, the US-led HAS alliance system's strategic capabilities
- The Indo-Pacific security ordering arc, the trends it has induced, the India-EU security partnership, and extant security orders in the Indo-Pacific interact in consequential ways
- On a practical level, organising and effectively operationalising broad-based cooperation between India and the EU may not be as straightforward as it seems on paper.

It was against the backdrop of the Indo-Pacific construct's rising relevance that the European Council granted legal sanction⁸⁸ to include non-EU countries in EU security architectures via PESCO, albeit with some caveats. Induced in part by the changing nature of transatlantic relations during then US President Donald Trump's administration, PESCO was established only as recently as 2017. It is both a product and an instrument of a seriesⁱ of EU security policy calibrations (2016 through 2022), and is directly relevant to the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁹ This includes the policy calibration from 'effective multilateralism' as conceived in the EU's 2003 European Security Strategy, to 'multilateral cooperation' as conceived⁹⁰ in its 2016 Global Strategy. This calibration also reflects an evolution in the EU's policy thinking towards more agile, proactive, comprehensive engagement with the rest of the world to address global governance and security concerns. It has in turn expanded the possibilities for greater collaboration and interoperability between India and the EU on security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Indeed, given the broad scope of the JAP and Roadmap 2025 and Indian and EU political interest in upgrading their security partnership in the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi's engagement under the PESCO framework would be a substantive step towards India's partnership with the EU's security architecture, which is a multilateral structure. In the context of Indian and EU security interests in the Indo-Pacific, such a scenario could potentially offer India greater possibilities to enhance its defence capabilities. This could provide the EU with a more resilient partner in the region. Their individual and collective 'hard' power projection capabilities are still modest and geographically constrained. But it might not pose a barrier given how the two sides have largely tended to take a 'cooperation not confrontation' approach as their preferred primary strategy, even as they seek to augment their 'hard' power capabilities.

5.1 Interplay with the Security Ordering Arc

Indian and EU approaches to security ordering in the Indo-Pacific exhibit more measured positions as compared to the US' hard power projection-oriented one. Nonetheless, India shedding some of its strategic ambivalence has catalysed its security cooperation networks, which is steadily feeding into existing security orders in the Indo-Pacific. For instance, in 2015, India and the US announced a 'Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region', which was followed by the 'Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region in 2018'. The latter augments the already strong New Delhi-Paris security partnership.

Meanwhile, as a direct outcome of the India-US LEMOA, in September 2020, the Indian Navy frigate INS Talwar refuelled from the US Navy Fleet Tanker USNS Yukon in the northern Arabian Sea. Earlier that year, India had introduced the High Flash High Speed Diesel (HFHSD-IN 512), thereby upgrading its naval fuel specifications to meet "international and NATO standards."⁹¹ Logistics is a crucial dimension of military operations. This episode thus speaks to interoperability, and as the Indian Navy characterised,⁹² "enables presence for enhancing maritime security." Further, its significance lies not just in geopolitical signalling but also in INS Talwar being on a 'mission-based deployment' in

ⁱ Including but not limited to the 2016 Global Strategy, and its 2016 Implementation Plan on Security and Defence; the 2017 establishment of the European Defence Fund; the 2017 White Paper on the Future of Europe; the 2018 EU Security Cooperation in and With Asia; the 2018 EU-India Strategy; the 2019 EU-China Strategic Outlook; the 2022 EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific; and the 2022 Strategic Compass.

that region—i.e., the refuelling not taking place as part of a bilateral naval exercise or simulation. Similarly, a few days later, in October 2020, the US Navy's P-8 Poseidon, a long-range, anti-submarine warfare and maritime surveillance aircraft, carried out its first refuelling from India's strategic military base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands,⁹³ against the backdrop of rising Sino-Indian tensions.

Given the existing EU-US interoperability by virtue of their NATO partnership, at least in theory, greater India-US military interoperability could boost the prospects for interoperability and coordination between India and EU member states. An exploration into the prospects of India's participation in the EU's PESCO has already become viable enough to even merit consideration. Developments like these suggest that the diversification of bilateral security arrangements is engendering viable circumstances to foster agile networks.

5.2 Interplay with the Four Cardinal Security Orders

An optimised India-EU security partnership in the Indo-Pacific will at best complement, and at worst, not contradict, the US-led HAS alliance system's strategic capabilities. This is due to a diversification in the levels of intersection between security networks, and operational agility, which facilitate burden-sharing and better utilisation of capabilities and resources. India and the EU do not have the capability, financial resources, or appetite to provide and sustain 'hard' power in the Eastern Pacific. Here, their involvement will prove more useful on the developmental front. The IOR is where they can better foster public interest security outcomes jointly. This is not solely because both have operational experience in the IOR's maritime and littoral spaces. It is also because:

- India's geography offers an advantage by virtue of its 7,516.6 km peninsular coastline and island chains that straddle two strategic maritime zones in the Indo-Pacific
- China is not yet as entrenched a resident actor in the IOR as in its immediate neighbourhood in the POR
- Meaningful engagement and/or frameworks for such engagement already exist in the region. These include the IORA and India's SAGAR, IPOI, and Sagarmalaⁱⁱ projects.⁹⁴

Such an approach would be feasible and highly compatible with each other's visions, as well as with the ASEAN centrality principle that India and the EU have endorsed. This is precisely also the level at which the burgeoning strategic contestation in the IOR ought to be addressed, one which is engendered in part by Beijing's security ordering through a web of strategic developmental relationship networks. The China-led 'invisible' order is not a security order per se, yet. But it has the makings of a future ('traditional') security order, built and weaved through Beijing's activities in and with other countries. Viewed collectively, it exhibits elements of a 'networked security order' that does not have a clear form but has some capability to influence regional security orders and their dynamics.

ⁱⁱ Sagarmala is a national-level initiative. It is not yet a regional-level initiative but has immense regional potential, which New Delhi has also acknowledged and highlighted.

Beijing has been able to achieve this by addressing the gaps that recipient countries seek to fill— i.e., developmental needs such as infrastructure, financial aid, etc. China’s strategy and goal for security ordering and order is formless by design because that gives it a better chance of achieving some of its goals. And this has worked so far precisely also because China tends to compartmentalise its priorities in its negotiations. By engaging countries that have limited options, Beijing has been able to cultivate and access relationships and capabilities that have helped influence some security outcomes in those regions.

Additionally, security ordering is co-dependent on the economic order. Mature economies such as the US, EU, and other like-minded partners do not yet offer a viable economic alternative to China. The US and the EU are not even part of the two major Asian economic instruments—the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Moreover, the US’ share of Asian trade has been in structural decline since the 1990s and this has mostly benefited China.

Meanwhile, Africa’s stakes have received relatively limited attention in the Indo-Pacific discourse, even though the continent is the region’s eastern flank. However, some changes seem to be afoot, and the Indo-Pacific security ordering arc may be inducing some policy reconsideration. For example, the US’ 2022 ‘Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy’⁹⁵ sets a more earnest, comprehensive tone for engagement, placing African centrality and a partnership of equals at its core, at least in rhetoric. This could partly also reflect the change in the US approach, from a more combative stance under the Trump administration to the slightly more positive sum rhetoric that seems to be emerging under the Biden administration.

Nonetheless, engagement must be pursued with clarity of purpose and not merely for engagement’s sake. There is no African involvement or ownership in the Indo-Pacific construct and associated agendas. India and the EU⁹⁶—perhaps together with Japan—could help begin addressing this imbalance by exploring partnerships with AU member states like Mozambique, South Africa, the Seychelles, and Mauritius, among others. This could ideally also include support at international fora, including tribunals. Importantly, Africa’s island states and their continental counterparts should be engaged in tandem⁹⁷ because maritime security issues tend to not get the same level of APSA attention, which prioritises land-based security concerns.

The EU, the AU, and several of their respective member states already share long-standing institutional relationships, including on security matters. India-Africa engagements are also multi-pronged and multi-level. Additionally, over the past seven years, New Delhi has taken proactive measures to cultivate defence and security partnerships with the AU and a range of its member states.ⁱⁱⁱ These

Security ordering is co-dependent on the economic order

ⁱⁱⁱ Including but not limited to the India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation (2015), the AFINDEX (instituted in 2019), and the India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave (launched in 2020) that resulted in the ‘Lucknow Declaration’.

engagements span bilateral and multi-partner formats, including new mechanisms like the India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave and the Africa-India Field Training Exercise featuring military personnel from India and 17 African states.⁹⁸ India and the EU's multi-partner and multi-format relationships with the AU and its member states offer meaningful avenues to sound out interest/s, priorities, and expectations.

5.3 Practical Hurdles

On paper, there is immense scope for India and the EU to collaborate; jointly work with interested partners across the Indo-Pacific; and team-up with other stakeholders like Japan to pool resources and offer viable alternatives. However, organising and operationalising such broad-based cooperation between India and the EU may not be as straightforward in practice as it may seem on paper.

The EU's core Indo-Pacific interests are not very clear, not even after it announced its Indo-Pacific strategy. For instance, the EU's interests in the Indo-Pacific region seem to pertain more to maritime security and trade, but Brussels also appears to view these as already being addressed via extant cooperative activities⁹⁹ like CRIMARIO and the CMP. Conversely, for India, the Indo-Pacific construct's strategic utility is not limited to the maritime space. Geography demands that New Delhi prioritise securing India's security on two flanks: maritime and continental. A focus on land is equally relevant for the EU—Eurasia flanks its doorstep as much as India's. Thus, any effort to harmonise an India-EU partnership to co-shape security ordering in the Indo-Pacific will need to take place through and beyond India's engagement with EU institutions, on both land and sea.

A productive Indo-Pacific-oriented India-EU security partnership in the near-to-medium-terms will require optimising and expanding bilateral security cooperation between India and individual EU member states like France. This is due to both structural dissimilarities between India and the EU and overall interest within EU structures and members to collaborate so expansively.¹⁰⁰ The EU's institutional interest in such collaboration is shaped heavily by each of its individual member states' interests—and such cooperation

with India is (logically) not high priority for several EU states. Consequently, bilateral engagement between India and individual EU member states offers a speedier, more practical alternative.

Africa's island states and their continental counterparts should be engaged in tandem

There may¹⁰¹ be a silver lining, however. From India's vantage point, the Indo-Pacific construct represents a viable framework to draw China into a cooperative order in Asia, and to make it co-exist as an equal in the region. To that extent, the EU seems interested in security ordering via the Indo-Pacific construct, because if China can be drawn and integrated into such an order in Asia, such an outcome could perhaps be replicated elsewhere, too.

The Indo-Pacific security ordering arc, the trends it has induced, the India-EU security partnership, and the four cardinal security orders in the Indo-Pacific interact in consequential ways. The India-EU partnership also has potential for more substantive security cooperation.

So, how can India and the EU collaborate with each other and other partners in the Indo-Pacific for a cooperative security order in the region? The next section presents 10 simple but actionable recommendations to optimise the process.

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations articulated below address the optimal utilisation of Indian and EU strengths—individual and collective—by placing inclusive security cooperation as the ideal outcome. A substantial portion of the overlaps across Indian and EU security interests, capabilities, and cooperation are non-military in nature. But sustainably producing Indo-Pacific security outcomes necessitates a degree of conventional security cooperation as well. Therefore, these recommendations are also intended to help synergise military and non-military security interests and capabilities.

1



MANAGE EXPECTATIONS & SET CLEAR GOALS

Identify respective core and non-core Indo-Pacific priorities and corresponding strengths. Develop an action plan tailored to tackle them

2



SET A REALISTIC GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Prioritise traditional security cooperation in the IOR and NTS cooperation in the IOR and POR

3



GET CLARITY

Cultivate conceptual clarity on security orders and ordering, and what it means in practical terms for each other and for other Indo-Pacific stakeholders

4



INCLUDE & ENGAGE

Commence a broad-based Indo-Pacific Dialogue on a Track 1.5 level for multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral practical insight; include China and Russia

5



REMEMBER LAND

Focus on both land and sea for security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The continental dimension has implications not just for India but also the EU

6



OPTIMISE & INNOVATE

Optimise projects like Sagarmala to achieve tangible Indo-Pacific goals

7



BUILD OPERATIONAL SYNERGIES

Jointly foster partnerships with the AU and its member states to co-shape security outcomes in the IOR and at global multilateral fora

8



PRACTICALLY REINFORCE MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

Jointly carry out some traditional and mostly NTS cooperation with partners through extant regional organisations, wherever possible

9



EMPOWER & FUTURE-PROOF PRACTICALLY

Develop a scalable cooperation model for critical infrastructure security and digitalisation with partners, designed to reduce dependencies

10



PRIORITISE UNSC REFORM

Facilitate system-level reinforcement for security ordering by remedying system-level imbalance

Policy Recommendations

Manage Expectations & Set Clear Goals

Identify respective core and non-core Indo-Pacific priorities and corresponding strengths—individual and collective. Develop an action plan designed specifically to address those priorities. Roadmap 2025, ‘Enhancing Security Cooperation in and With Asia’, and related instruments are compatible with broader Indo-Pacific goals, but they do not represent a ‘roadmap’ for producing Indo-Pacific security outcomes. Nor were they designed for it. Set clear tasks and measurable outcomes. Organise associated expectations according to levels of priority, complexity, and timeframes. Aim big, but also focus on low-hanging fruit. Modest expectations of the scale and pace of cooperation is logical. Think laterally to identify practicable ways to reduce and/or overcome structural delays. Consider the merits of an informal intra-EU minilateral featuring Germany, France, and the Netherlands for issue-specific national-level coordination with India in the IOR.

Set a Realistic Geographical Scope

For traditional security actions, focus on the IOR. Non-traditional security cooperation can be carried out in both the IOR and POR. India and the EU do not possess the requisite capabilities or resources to contribute to East Asia's military balance of power. Across the Indo-Pacific, India and the EU are at best soft powers. The IOR is geographically closer and strategically less complex than East Asia, and is farther from the primary theatre of Sino-US contestation—it will prove more cost-efficient. The IOR is also a key conduit for EU eastbound and all Indian maritime trade. Therefore, for India and the EU, the IOR is strategically as significant as the Asia-Pacific, if not more.

Get Clarity

Cultivate conceptual clarity on ‘security order’ and ‘ordering’, and what this means in practical terms for each other and for other Indo-Pacific stakeholders. Indian and EU Indo-Pacific strategies must exhibit cogency on: a) a conceptual understanding of the intricacies of security ordering; and b) how they interact with Asian and African geographic, politico-economic, socio-economic, and politico-cultural realities. Devoid of this, any joint Indo-Pacific policies might end up nourishing security dilemmas and kicking sustainable security ordering down the road. Narrative basis also will benefit from a shift away from an ‘against something’ thrust to a ‘for something’ thrust that revolves around just and equitable cooperative security ordering.

Include & Engage

Institute a broad-based Indo-Pacific Dialogue on a Track 1.5 level to garner multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral insight for conceptual and operational clarity. Include China and Russia. This can be structured on both Track 2 and Track 1.5 levels, but the latter will help knowledge-sharing geared to deliver greater practical value. Variations in understanding geographic scope lead to operational incoherence and frustrate coordination and expectation management. Therefore, initial engagement could include deliberations on frameworks of security ordering processes that will and will not work for the IOR and POR, the operative elements of those processes, geographic scope, and order of priorities. Importantly, the AU and African states should be proactively engaged as key stakeholders in a substantive manner and beyond rhetoric.

Remember Land

Focus on both land and sea for Indo-Pacific security cooperation. The continental dimension has direct politico-security implications not only for New Delhi but also Brussels. For India, security priorities emanate from both its maritime and continental flanks, which cannot be understood independently of each other. Security dynamics in Eurasia have a direct bearing on Indian and EU security interests. Ironing some wrinkles out of their security partnership will benefit from an understanding of where and how the continental dimension features in New Delhi's national security calculus—India's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a case-in-point. Doing so could also offer a template to understand other regional Indo-Pacific stakeholders' security calculi.

Optimise & Innovate

New initiatives may not always be needed. Therefore, wherever feasible, rather than reinvent the wheel, innovate to derive cost-efficient solutions by harnessing existing options. For example, India's Sagarmala Project is a national framework to enhance domestic connectivity by improving maritime logistical infrastructure. Although it is not (yet) a regional initiative, scaling it up for regional connectivity could offer substantial value addition for India and the region, especially if it is conceptually and operationally linked to its SAGAR and IPOI verticals.

Build Operational Synergies

Jointly foster partnerships with AU member states like Mozambique, South Africa and others along the Indian Ocean Rim to collaboratively shape the Indo-Pacific security ordering process. Proactively engage partner countries to facilitate co-ownership of the process. Focus not only on capacity-building of partners but also on operational synergies with them. In doing so, engage both continental and island states. Take a consultative approach to co-shape security outcomes in the IOR; supplement with collaboration at global multilateral fora, too.

Practically Reinforce Multilateral Institutions

As far as possible, jointly carry out some traditional security cooperation actions and mostly NTS cooperation actions with partners through regional organisations like IORA, AU, and the Pacific Islands Forum. The peculiarities of many problems and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific are (sub)region-specific. Therefore, a focus on issue-based operational synergies with and via regional organisations is crucial. Doing so will give an impetus to multilateralism and strengthen the efficacy of institutional architectures. At the conceptual and diplomatic levels, act across the Indo-Pacific. On an operational level, prioritise the IOR, which offers much more space to manoeuvre for bilateral and triangular cooperation. Prioritise actions that strengthen the letter and spirit of international legal instruments like the UNCLOS.

Empower & Future-proof Practically

Develop a scalable cooperation model for critical infrastructure security and digitalisation, including with partner countries; design to reduce dependencies. Cybersecurity is a critical need but so is the affordability of associated infrastructure and capabilities. Help reduce dependencies by strengthening domestic capacity and empowering partners to become more self-reliant. With the global digital order increasingly becoming the theatre of strategic contestation, India and the EU have an opportunity to collaboratively assist with technological standards setting, digitalisation, ICT development, and cyber governance. Granted, there are disparities between Indian and EU in capacities to deliver in these domains. But there is also complementarity that can be harnessed for mutual, regional, and global benefit. For instance, where the EU is technologically stronger, India tends to innovate with cost-efficiency and value for money. The Indian Space Research Organisation's Mars mission is an example. Some of these actions can be executed in conjunction with other partners like Japan and South Korea. Crucially, take a consultative approach, and engage all partners as equals and not as donors-recipients.

Prioritise UNSC Reform

Actively work to enable system-level reinforcement for security ordering by reducing system-level imbalance. This is a tall order goal but has significant value. India and the EU must make UN Security Council (UNSC) reform a priority, especially the composition of its permanent members. The entire continents of Africa and South America are unrepresented among the permanent members, and yet, the P5 includes three Global North countries (two of whom are European), Russia, and China. Moreover, if the goal is to uphold a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, part of this (re)ordering needs to take place at an international system-level. In the absence of equal (and equitable) representation among the permanent members of the UNSC, there is very little the Indo-Pacific region will be able to do in practice beyond a point, no matter how much resources are flung at it, or small-scale arrangements made. Remedying system-level imbalance for security ordering will benefit system-level reinforcement.

ANNEXURE 1

On Order & Security Order

Key Findings

- The terms 'security order' and 'security architecture' cannot be used interchangeably.
- The polysemic nature of the term 'order' inherently allows semantic and syntactic ambiguity when used to explain or refer to system-level features in international relations
- 'Formal' and 'informal' structures may differ in legal sanction but both types can exhibit permissive and/or prohibitive influence, depending on the context
- 'Order' does not necessarily or exclusively denote legal or popular recognition, a discernible structure, or even orderliness
- Security orders' structural dimensions cannot be molded and categorised uniformly.

Order

The polysemic nature of the word ‘order’ inherently allows semantic and syntactic ambiguity when used to explain or refer to system-level features in international relations. Consequently, ‘order’ does not necessarily or exclusively denote legal or popular recognition, a discernible structure, or even ‘orderliness’.¹⁰² Moreover, international relations is neither static nor unidimensional in practice or experience. Irrespective of one’s point of departure, the term does not preclude formality, semi-formality, absolute informality, nestedness, or a combination of formats—each of which can easily be substantiated as valid features of an international or security ‘order’.¹⁰³ ‘Formal’ and ‘informal’ structures may differ in legal sanction but both types can exhibit permissive and/or prohibitive influence, depending on the context.

Features relevant to political or security orders may include codified laws, (non) binding rules and/or norms, as well as bilateral or multilateral arrangements featuring mutually agreed upon terms of engagement. However, given the scale of diversity and international political hierarchies in the world, the presence and/or absence of these features can best be measured in degrees and in relation to each other.¹⁰⁴ Importantly, orders are neither autogenous nor self-sustaining—they are shaped by purposeful and/or inadvertent actions.¹⁰⁵

Taking cognisance of these dynamics, our Report chooses to view ‘order’ through some of its more commonly discernible features, i.e., the degree of cooperation and/or compatibility among states to achieve greater predictability within a given geographic, thematic, and/or temporal context.ⁱ This characterisation offers a ballpark of what one might discern in an ‘order’. However, because this Report examines a transition that is underway, and because orders are seldom static, we prioritise ‘security ordering’—i.e., the process¹⁰⁶—along with ‘security order’, as a phenomenon and products of these processes and/or transitions.

In doing so, a combination of perspectives informs our interpretation of how the ‘5Ws and 1H’ⁱⁱ produce, constitute, and/or emerge from an ‘order’. For instance, our Report agrees with Foot and Walter’s (2010) view that order can be understood as being “dynamic and as a matter of degree.”¹⁰⁷ It marries this characterisation with Acharya’s (2014) articulation of order as being “the absence of system-destroying conflict, such as major power war, rather than absence of competition among nations per se.”¹⁰⁸ Not viewing an order as a static, unidimensional object allows us to factor in a variety of vantage points simultaneously.¹⁰⁹

Security Order

For states—i.e., key units in the global political system—at its core, security is about survival.¹¹⁰ Revolving around this are notions of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the protection of national interests more broadly. In modus operandi terms, ensuring security boils down to minimising risk and maximising resilience and opportunity.

ⁱ We do not propose this as the most appropriate characterisation of ‘order’. However, we have found that it affords valuable agility and navigability within the concept as it relates to this Report.

ⁱⁱ Who, Where, When, Why, What, and How

Thus, a ‘security order’, traditional and non-traditional, offers an indication of the degree to which states may (and/or are able to) take measures to protect their individual and, when preferred, collective security interests. That said, although political consensus and/or compatibility, shared norms, formal institutions, and military power distribution may be features of a security order, they are not necessarily exclusively or always its determinants.

Security Architecture

Security orders can be fluid. The likelihood of individual states’ inclination and/or ability to take cooperative, cohesive action to achieve their security objectives— independently or with one or more security partners—can vary depending on the context. In contrast, security architectures involve clearer sets of obligations, commitments, and possibly even privileges, arising from and governed by treaty-institutional foundations and implications. On a global level, NATO is a prime example of a security architecture. In the Indo-Pacific region, the AU’s APSA is a limited but relevant example.

Thus, in this Report, we use the following parameters to bridge the conceptual and the practical:

Security Order: We articulate ‘security order’ as featuring the interplay of political consensus and/or compatibility, agency of actors, (in)formal arrangements, (non)binding norms, and military power distribution among states within a geographically and temporally defined scope¹¹¹

Transitions & Temporality: As a point of reference to analyse transition, we situate our primary starting point in 2007, when Japan revived the Indo-Pacific construct during Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s visit to India

Indo-Pacific: We consider the scope of the Indo-Pacific region from a geographical vantage point, and do not limit it to maritime areas or littorals.¹¹² Thus, in this Report, the Indo-Pacific region stretches longitudinally from the East-Pacific to the East African rims, and latitudinally from the southern shores of New Zealand to the Bering Strait.¹¹³ However, since the Report is not intended as an exhaustive study, it primarily examines key geographies in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, given their strategic salience for the EU, India, and the construct itself.¹¹⁴

Limitations & Points of Departure

Part of the problem in inquiries into ‘security order’ is the tendency to seek ways to categorise its structural dimensions uniformly, often along the lines of (but not limited to) formal, semi-formal, or informal. The value of these inquiries for conceptual clarity should not be overlooked. However, the task of categorising something as multifaceted as ‘order’ often requires a high degree of generalisation and/or abstraction.¹¹⁵ This report does not offer a solution for this dilemma but is mindful of limitations that may arise from the authors’ interpretation of the term ‘order’.

¹¹⁵ This tends to benefit theoretical evolution more than practical application.

Endnotes

- [1] The Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans together comprise a single, interconnected 'world ocean'. Waters encircling Antarctica that fall within the Antarctic Convergence are sometimes classified as a fifth ocean, i.e., the Southern Ocean.
- [2] European cartographers and strategic planners 'divided' the Indian and Pacific oceans during the colonisation of Asia. The conceptual delineation between the two oceans became more pronounced when the 'Asia-Pacific' construct emerged during the Cold War. During the Cold War, the US sought to contain the Soviet Union and communism in both the West Pacific and the Indian Ocean, but the former was prioritised relatively more. Democracies of the Atlantic, and East Asia's emerging economies and fledgling democracies were more critical to the US' interests and those of its allies.
- [3] World Bank API. (n.d.). GDP (current US\$). Retrieved from: <https://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?downloadformat=csv>; World Bank API. (n.d.). GDP, PPP (current international \$). Retrieved from: <https://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?downloadformat=csv>
- [4] Ghiasy, R. and Krishnamurthy, R. (2020). China's Digital Silk Road: Strategic Implications for the EU and India. [online] Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies and Leiden Asia Centre. Available at: http://ipcs.org/issue_briefs/issue_brief_pdf/sr208_august2020_china%E2%80%99s%20digital%20silk%20road-strategic%20implications%20for%20the%20eu%20and%20india_final.pdf; and Ghiasy, R. and Krishnamurthy, R. (2021). Acting on China's Digital Silk Road – Prospects for EU-India Cooperation. [online] Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies and Leiden Asia Centre. Available at: <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/LAC-IPCS-DSR-Policy-Paper-Feb-2021-1.pdf>
- [5] For a useful definition of cooperative security, see: Tow, W. (2008). Tangled webs: Security architectures in Asia. [online] Australian Strategic Policy Institute. p.9. Available at: https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/import/Tangled_webs.pdf?VersionId=qNx_KPd.kgUKKNXH_WvPvFxtDXM2F6O8.
- [6] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, Paris and Brussels, May-June 2022.
- [7] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, April-May 2022
- [8] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, May-June 2022. Also see: Biscop, S. (2021). Grand strategy in 10 words: a guide to great power politics in the 21st century. Bristol: Bristol University Press.; Mearsheimer, J.J. (2001). The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. New York: WW Norton & Co Inc. Both Biscop and Mearsheimer highlight and critique great powers' outsized role in shaping the world order.
- [9] There is a growing securitisation across all means of policy. For example, pessimism about economic interdependence translates into selective multilateralism and competitive economic statecraft.
- [10] For elaboration, see Annexure 1
- [11] Beyond the containment of the Soviet Union and the spread communism, a secondary rationale was to constrain what Cha (2009) calls "rogue allies," such as "rabidly anticommunist dictators who might start wars for reasons of domestic legitimacy and entrap the United States in an unwanted larger war." For this purpose, bilateral alliances were thought to be more effective than multilateral alliances. Regional countries also tended to prefer bilateral arrangements. See: Cha, V.D. (2009). Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia. *International Security*, 34(3), pp.158–196.
- [12] Such as the Five Eyes (US, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand) and AUKUS (US, UK, Australia). The trilateral ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, US) mutual/collective defence pact is another example. Though the ANZUS agreement has not yet been formally abrogated, since the 1980s, it has operated as a combination of Australia-New Zealand and Australia-US bilateral agreements following the US-New Zealand difference of opinion.
- [13] Goh, E. (2013). *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- [95] U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa. (2022). The White House. [online] Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/U.S.-Strategy-Toward-Sub-Saharan-Africa-FINAL.pdf>.
- [96] It will help if the EU remedies its problematic policy change (2021) in its financing model for the AU. Due to the change, the EU now has the option to move beyond its role as a donor who strengthens the AU's capacity to shape African security outcomes, to become a shaper of African security operations and outcomes by potentially undercutting the AU's agency. See: Africa-Europe peace and security partnership at a crossroads. (2022). Institute for Security Studies. [online] 5 Apr. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/africa-europe-peace-and-security-partnership-at-a-crossroads>; and The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support. (2018). [online] European Court of Auditors. Available at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SRI8_20/SR_APSA_EN.pdf.
- [97] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, August-September 2022
- [98] For example, in 2015, India signed the India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation with African heads of state and the heads of the African Union, committing to multi-dimensional cooperation, including but not limited to non-traditional security, cybersecurity, and UN Security Council reform, among other matters. 2019 saw the first iteration of the Africa-India Field Training Exercise, featuring military personnel from India and 17 African countries. At the first India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave in 2020, participating representatives issued the 'Lucknow Declaration', calling for "deeper cooperation in the domain of defence industry including through investment, joint ventures in defence equipment software, digital defence, research & development, provisioning of defence equipment, spares and their maintenance on sustainable and mutually beneficial terms." See: India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation. (2015). Ministry of External Affairs, India. [online] 29 Oct. Available at: http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/25981_framework.pdf; Opening ceremony: Africa-India Field Training Exercise-2019. (2019). Press Information Bureau, Government of India. [online] 18 Mar. Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=189450>; Lucknow Declaration: 1st India Africa Defence Ministers Conclave, 2020. (2020). Ministry of External Affairs, India. [online] 6 Feb. Available at: <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32378>.
- [99] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, and in Berlin, Paris, and Brussels May-August 2022
- [100] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, and in Berlin, Paris, and Brussels May-August 2022
- [101] Interviewees in conversation with the authors, online, and in Berlin, Paris, and Brussels May-September 2022
- [102] The ongoing debate on the so-called 'Liberal International Order' offers valuable insights into the structural and normative aspects of order and ordering, particularly in the global context.
- [103] For example, see Mazarr (2018). Also see: Holzer, B. (2015). The Two Faces of World Society: Formal Structures and Institutionalized Informality. In: B. Holzer, F. Kastner and T. Werron, eds., *From Globalization to World Society*. Routledge: London, pp.37–60.
- [104] Mazarr (2018). Also see: Foot, R. and Walter, A. (2010). *China, the United States, and Global Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.2.
- [105] Haass, R. (2018). *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*. New York: Penguin Books, pp.28, 287.
- [106] A change process's nature, sequence, and effects vary depending on the context in which the change occurs. Studies on the process level dimensions of change can be found in a variety of disciplines, most notably in the broader interdisciplinary field of organisational studies. In the context of security orders, Christian Bueger and Timothy Edmunds's five-stage model is a useful framework for conceptualising the process of change. See: Bueger, C. and Edmunds, T. (2021). Pragmatic ordering: Informality, experimentation, and the maritime security agenda. *Review of International Studies*, 47(2), pp.171–191.
- [107] Ibid. Foot and Walter (2010). p.2
- [108] Acharya, A. (2013). Power Shift or Paradigm Shift? China's Rise and Asia's Emerging Security Order. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58(1), p.159.
- [109] Such as but not limited to perspectives put forth by Ikenberry, Walt, and Acharya, among others.
- [110] Inasmuch as it pertains to this report, we do not limit ourselves by favouring realism over constructivism or vice versa. We believe that the two are not only compatible but that each remedies the other's limitation/s. Collectively, the two approaches offer valuable clarity that is greater than the sum of what each approach affords, particularly to understand foreign and/or security policy decision making. In this regard, we find compatibility with Barkin's theory

of realist constructivism. See: J Samuel Barkin (2010). *Realist Constructivism Rethinking International Relations Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- [111] This report attempts to evidence transitions underway in the security order in the Indo-Pacific geography by tracing changes to these factors. It does not delve into the nitty-gritties of military power but does not exclude consideration of intent and capabilities of relevant actors either.
- [112] We rely on the current 'Limits of Oceans and Seas' as defined by the International Hydrographic Organization to situate the maritime area the Indo-Pacific encompasses. See: *Limits of Oceans and Seas (Edition 3)*. (1953). [online] Monte Carlo: International Hydrographic Organization. Available at: https://iho.int/uploads/user/pubs/standards/s-23/S-23_Ed3_1953_EN.pdf.
- [113] We do not categorically include or exclude the Arctic or Antarctic region in this scope.
- [114] Based on factors like general trends in security, territorial and physical geographic considerations, degrees of relevance for international trade and energy supply lines, proximity to key economic centres, distance to middle and major power territories, and middle and major powers' security calculi to name a few.

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