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International conference on
**Southeast Asia and The Global South :
Evolving Security, Sustainability &
Strategic Dynamics In A Multipolar World**





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Amity Institute of International Studies

Amity University, Noida

in Collaboration with

**Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and
MGIMO University (Russia)**



International Conference

on

**Southeast Asia and the Global South:
Evolving Security, Sustainability, and Strategic
Dynamics in a Multipolar World**

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Contents

About the Conference	 iv
About the Institution	 v
Message from Founder President	 vi
Message from the Vice Chancellor's Desk	 vii
Message from the Convenor and Director & Head	 viii
Conference Collaborators	 ix
Knowledge Partners	 x
Publication Partner	 xi
About the Editors	 xii
Preface	 xiii
Acknowledgments	 xv
List of Abstracts	 xvii

About the Conference

The contemporary international system is witnessing a significant transformation marked by the gradual shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. In this evolving landscape, Southeast Asia and the Global South have emerged as pivotal regions influencing global political, economic, and strategic trajectories. Once perceived as peripheral actors, these regions are now central to discussions on global governance, sustainability, and security. Southeast Asia occupies a uniquely strategic position at the intersection of major maritime trade routes and geopolitical contestations. The region has increasingly become a focal point of great power engagement, particularly in the context of the Indo-Pacific, where competing visions of order coexist alongside regional aspirations for stability, autonomy, and development. At the same time, the broader Global South is asserting itself through collective platforms and South–South cooperation mechanisms, seeking to redefine global hierarchies and advocate for more equitable and inclusive governance structures.

Historically, global power dynamics were largely concentrated in the Atlantic region, dominated by Western economies and institutions. However, the rise of emerging economies across Asia, Africa, and Latin America has contributed to a redistribution of power, thereby reshaping global interactions. This transformation is accompanied by increasing interdependence in trade, investment, and technological exchange, as well as intensifying strategic competition. Beyond traditional geopolitical considerations, the discourse on security has expanded to include non-traditional dimensions such as climate change, environmental sustainability, food and water security, energy transitions, and digital governance. These issues are particularly significant for Southeast Asia and the Global South, where vulnerabilities are often more pronounced and require coordinated, multilateral responses. Cultural exchanges and people-to-people linkages further reinforce these evolving dynamics. Migration, diaspora networks, and transnational cultural flows contribute to shaping identities, perceptions, and diplomatic engagements across regions. In this context, understanding the intersection of security, sustainability, and strategic dynamics necessitates a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach.

The conference aims to critically examine these emerging trends by bringing together scholars, policymakers, diplomats, industry experts, and students to engage in meaningful dialogue. It seeks to provide a platform for analysing the challenges and opportunities that define Southeast Asia and the Global South in a rapidly changing international order, while also fostering collaborative approaches to address shared concerns. A significant highlight of this edition is the collaboration with MGIMO University as a Knowledge Partner, thereby enriching the discourse with a broader Eurasian perspective and strengthening international academic engagement.

About the Institution



About Amity Institute of International Studies (AIIS), Amity University

Amity Institute of International Studies (AIIS) at Amity University Uttar Pradesh is the fastest-growing institution offering specialized programs in International Relations. These programs provide students with extensive opportunities to explore the field and prepare for careers in Civil Services, international organizations, media, multinational corporations (MNCs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). AIIS is well-connected with renowned organizations globally, leveraging a network of key officials and academicians to design a relevant and current curriculum.

The institute draws on the expertise within Amity University, Noida, to deliver high-quality education. Programs at AIIS are supported by advanced pedagogical methods, including workshops, webinars, conferences, and interactions with experts. This ensures students gain practical insights and exposure to International Relations. The institute is led by a reputed Director and supported by Senior Professors, Assistant Professors, Distinguished Visiting Professors, Professors of Eminence, and administrative staff. AIIS provides a supportive environment with counselling, mentorship, and open access to higher authorities for addressing academic and non-academic issues, ensuring a comprehensive and enjoyable learning experience.

Message from Founder President

It is a matter of great pride that Amity Institute of International Studies (AIIS), Amity University Uttar Pradesh (AUUP), Noida is organizing 7th Edition of International Conference on Southeast Asia and the Global South: Evolving Security, Sustainability, and Strategic Dynamics in a Multipolar World (VIJIGISHU-2026) from Wednesday, 16th September to Friday, 18th September 2026.



The theme of VIJIGISHU-2026 is both timely and significant. In today's rapidly transforming geopolitical landscape, Southeast Asia and the Global South are not merely participating in, but are actively reshaping the contours of international relations, and emerging as powerful engines of global growth, development and strategic balance. The Viksit Bharat vision of being a 'Vishwa Bandhu', fostering an inclusive and democratic development role-model for the Global South, resonates deeply with the themes of this conference. This conference, therefore, assumes great relevance as a pivotal platform for in-depth academic discourse, insightful policy deliberation and meaningful strategic collaboration.

I extend a very warm and hearty welcome to the eminent diplomats, academicians, policy practitioners, strategic experts, young researchers and students from India and abroad, who are joining us for this prestigious congregation. The illuminating deliberation from the distinguished speakers and rigorous exchange of ideas will be highly inspiring, motivating and enriching for brilliant students, research scholars, Ph.D scholars, faculty members and other worthy participants. Such an interface will go a long way in forging lasting bonds, fostering mutual cooperation, and paving the way for joint research projects and publications for mutual benefit. I sincerely appreciate Indian Council of World Affairs and MGIMO University, Russia as well as all the distinguished Knowledge Partners for their enthusiastic participation in this prestigious conference which has added great stature to this conference.

My heartfelt compliments to the Conference Chair and Convener - Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman, Director, Amity Institute of International Studies (AIIS), AUUP, Noida and all other members of the organizing committee, dedicated faculty members, Ph.D scholars, brilliant students and staff, for meticulously planning the event under the able guidance of Dr. Balvinder Shukla, Vice Chancellor, AUUP. The most strategic and visionary leadership of Dr. Atul Chauhan Ji, Hon'ble Chancellor, AUUP & President, Ritnand Balved Education Foundation (RBEF), would lead to outcome based and result oriented success of the event.

I once again warmly welcome all participants and wish them a memorable and enriching experience that not only contributes to the objectives of VIJIGISHU-2026 but also leave a lasting and profound impact.

Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan

Founder President

Ritnand Balved Education Foundation (RBEF)

The Foundation of Amity Universities, Institutions & Amity International Schools

Message from the Vice Chancellor's Desk

It gives me great pleasure to extend my greetings on the occasion of **VIJIGISHU 2026**, the 7th edition of the International Conference organised by the Amity Institute of International Studies on the theme, “Southeast Asia and the Global South: Evolving Security, Sustainability, and Strategic Dynamics in a Multipolar World.” Such conferences are a result of the vision of our Founder President, Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan, who has always emphasized the importance of global engagement and cooperation. Guided by Hon’ble Chancellor Dr. Atul Chauhan, we remain committed to providing a platform where scholars, policymakers, and practitioners come together to contribute to the dialogue on global relations.



The changing global order has placed Southeast Asia and the Global South at the centre of important debates concerning regional security, sustainable development, economic resilience, technological transformation, connectivity, and international cooperation. Universities have a vital responsibility to create platforms where these complex developments can be examined through rigorous scholarship, interdisciplinary dialogue, and engagement with policymakers and practitioners.

VIJIGISHU 2026 reflects Amity University’s commitment to academic excellence, internationalisation, research, and policy-oriented learning. The participation of distinguished diplomats, academicians, strategic experts, policy practitioners, research scholars, and students from India and abroad lends depth and diversity to the conference deliberations.

As we march towards *Viksit Bharat @2047*, our vision for a developed India, international cooperation and partnerships will play a crucial role in shaping our future. The *Viksit Bharat* vision of being a ‘*Vishwa Bandhu*’ - fostering an inclusive and democratic development role-model for the Global South- resonates deeply with the themes of this conference. I appreciate the valuable collaboration of MGIMO University, Russia, and the Indian Council of World Affairs, as well as the support of all the Knowledge Partners associated with this conference. Such collaborations strengthen institutional relationships and create meaningful opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and ideas across national and disciplinary boundaries.

I congratulate Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman, Director & Head, Amity Institute of International Studies and Convenor of VIJIGISHU 2026, along with the faculty members, organising team, student volunteers, and all contributors, for their dedicated efforts in organising this important academic initiative. These proceedings will serve as a valuable academic resource and stimulate further research and dialogue on the emerging challenges and opportunities confronting Southeast Asia and the Global South. I extend my best wishes for the success of VIJIGISHU 2026 and for the continued growth of this distinguished academic platform.

Prof. (Dr.) Balvinder Shukla
Vice Chancellor
Amity University Uttar Pradesh

Message from the Convenor and Director & Head

It gives me immense pleasure to present the Conference Proceedings of VIJIGISHU 2026—the 7th edition of the flagship International Conference of the Amity Institute of International Studies—organised on the theme, “Southeast Asia and the Global South: Evolving Security, Sustainability, and Strategic Dynamics in a Multipolar World.”



As Director & Head of the Amity Institute of International Studies, it has been my constant endeavour to develop AIIS as a vibrant centre for international relations, diplomatic engagement, policy research, and interdisciplinary scholarship. VIJIGISHU represents an important expression of this institutional vision by bringing together diplomacy, academia, policy, and the student community on a common platform.

As Convenor of VIJIGISHU 2026, I am particularly pleased that the conference examines the growing strategic significance of Southeast Asia and the Global South at a time when the international order is undergoing profound geopolitical, economic, technological, and environmental transformation. The conference has been conceptualised to encourage informed dialogue on regional security, sustainability, maritime affairs, economic cooperation, connectivity, technology, diplomacy, and emerging strategic challenges in a multipolar world.

I am deeply grateful for the collaboration and support extended by MGIMO University, Russia, and the Indian Council of World Affairs, along with our distinguished Knowledge Partners. Their association has strengthened the international, interdisciplinary, and policy-oriented character of the conference. I extend my sincere appreciation to all the eminent dignitaries, diplomats, plenary speakers, session chairs, panelists, paper presenters, research scholars, and participants whose intellectual contributions constitute the foundation of these proceedings. The diversity of perspectives represented in this volume reflects the richness and relevance of the deliberations undertaken during the conference.

I place on record my heartfelt gratitude to our Hon'ble Founder President, Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan, for his visionary leadership and blessings, and to our Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Dr. Balvinder Shukla, for her continued encouragement, guidance, and institutional support. I also acknowledge the dedication of the faculty members, organising committees, staff, and student volunteers whose collective efforts have contributed to the successful organisation of VIJIGISHU 2026. I hope these proceedings will serve as a valuable academic resource, stimulate further research and policy dialogue, and contribute to enduring national and international academic collaborations. May VIJIGISHU continue to evolve as a meaningful platform for scholarship, diplomacy, and global engagement.

Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman
Convenor, VIJIGISHU 2026
Director & Head
Amity Institute of International Studies
Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida

Conference Collaborators

Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

The Indian Council of World Affairs was established in 1943 by a group of Indian intellectuals as a think tank. It was registered as a non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under the Registration of Societies Act 1860. By an Act of Parliament in 2001, the Indian Council of World Affairs has been declared an institution of national importance. The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA. It is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs. Historic international conferences like ‘Asian Relations Conference’ in 1947 under the leadership of freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu and ‘United Nations and the New World Order’ in 1994 have been held by this think tank in which world renowned dignitaries addressed huge gatherings of intellectuals. Scores of conferences, meetings and panel discussions have been organised by the Council in its elegant building called “Sapru House”.



MGIMO University, Russia

The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) was founded on 14 October 1944 by a Soviet Government decree, emerging from the School of International Relations at Moscow State University. Over the following decades, it expanded its academic scope to include International Law, International Economic Relations, Oriental Studies, Foreign Trade, Journalism, Political Science, and Public Administration. From the 1980s onward, MGIMO became increasingly international, welcoming students from Western countries and developing partnerships with universities worldwide. During the 2000s and 2010s, it further expanded into fields such as European studies, energy policy, economics, diplomacy, and global governance. Today, MGIMO is one of Russia’s leading institutions for the study of international relations, diplomacy, economics, law, and political science.



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About the Editors

Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman is Professor, Director and Head of the Amity Institute of International Studies (AIIS), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, which she has led since 2017. With a Ph.D. in Political Science and expertise in International Relations, she has over three decades of experience in teaching, research, academic administration and international collaboration. As Domain Coordinator for Social Sciences, she oversees five institutes and has contributed to implementing NEP 2020. She has published 70 research papers, including 7 Scopus 12 UGC CARE-listed and 51 peer-reviewed journal. Her contributions include 14 books, edited volumes, chapters and training manuals. She has undertaken seven funded national and international research projects and successfully guided ten doctoral scholars. A recipient of the Transformational Education Leader of the Year Award (2026), she has represented AIIS in Asia, Europe and Gulf. Her interests span International Relations, India's Foreign Policy, Public Administration, Research Methodology, Sustainable Development and allied domains.



Dr. Shubham Verma is Assistant Professor and PhD Coordinator at the Amity Institute of International Studies, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida, teaching IR Theory, European Politics, IR in the 20th & 21st Century, and Middle Powers in Global Governance. He holds a PhD in Canadian Studies from CCUSLAS, JNU, on Canada's security engagements with Chile and Mexico (2007–2019), and is UGC NET/JRF qualified in Political Science, IR, and Defence and Strategic Studies. His research spans Inter-American Studies, Canadian Defence and Security Policies, Immigration, Small Island Geopolitics, and India-Canada relations, published in Scopus-indexed and UGC-CARE journals. Previously at Delhi University and IGNOU, he also externally sets papers for North-East Christian University. He has coordinated JNU diplomatic events (Quebec Film Festival, Embassy of Peru exhibition), convened VIJIGISHU 2025, and consulted for Confluence Online Ventures on Indian diaspora media studies.



Preface

It gives me immense pleasure to present the Conference Proceedings of VIJIGISHU 2026, the seventh edition of the flagship International Conference of the Amity Institute of International Studies, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, being held from 16–18 September 2026.

Over the years, VIJIGISHU has evolved into an important academic platform that brings together diplomats, academicians, policymakers, strategic experts, research scholars, and students to discuss issues that are shaping the international order. For us at AIIS, the Conference is not merely an annual academic event. It represents our continuing effort to connect classroom learning with contemporary developments and to provide our students and scholars with an opportunity to engage directly with distinguished experts from India and abroad.

The theme of this edition, “Southeast Asia and the Global South: Evolving Security, Sustainability, and Strategic Dynamics in a Multipolar World,” has been selected with considerable thought. The international order is becoming increasingly multipolar, yet this transition is neither uniform nor free from uncertainty. Strategic competition, maritime security concerns, climate change, technological transformations, economic vulnerabilities, and developmental inequalities are influencing the choices available to states and regional institutions.

Within this changing environment, Southeast Asia occupies a position of considerable strategic importance. Located at the intersection of major maritime routes, competing strategic frameworks, and emerging economic partnerships, the region has become central to the evolving Indo-Pacific order. At the same time, the countries of the Global South are seeking greater representation, autonomy, and participation in decisions that directly affect their development and security.

Bringing Southeast Asia and the Global South within a common framework enables us to examine not only their shared concerns but also their diversity, agency, and growing contribution to global affairs. The theme, therefore, moves beyond a narrow geographical understanding. It provides space for discussing how regional institutions, emerging powers, developing countries, and new forms of cooperation are contributing to a more inclusive and balanced international order.

The Conference has been structured to encourage deliberations on traditional and non-traditional security, sustainability, maritime cooperation, regional connectivity, climate concerns, emerging technologies, strategic autonomy, and the role of multilateral and regional institutions. Particular emphasis has been placed on understanding how policy commitments can be translated into meaningful cooperation and practical outcomes.

Preface

VIJIGISHU 2026 is being organised in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs and MGIMO University, Russia, with the valued association of our national and international Knowledge Partners. Their participation has added intellectual depth and an important spirit of institutional cooperation to the Conference. Such partnerships reaffirm our belief that sustained academic engagement can build understanding across countries and contribute meaningfully to policy discussions.

The contributions included in this volume reflect a wide range of perspectives from academicians, researchers, practitioners, and young scholars. While their approaches may differ, they share a common concern with understanding the changes taking place in the regional and global order. It is particularly encouraging to see young researchers engaging with complex questions of security, sustainability, diplomacy, development, and international cooperation.

I sincerely hope that these proceedings will serve not only as an academic record of VIJIGISHU 2026 but also as a useful reference for students, researchers, academicians, and policymakers. More importantly, I hope that the ideas contained in this volume will encourage further research, constructive debate, and meaningful academic collaboration.

As Convener, it has been personally fulfilling to witness VIJIGISHU grow through its seven editions. Each edition has strengthened our commitment to creating an academic platform that is relevant, inclusive, and closely connected with the changing realities of international relations. I am confident that VIJIGISHU 2026 will carry this journey forward and contribute to a deeper understanding of Southeast Asia, the Global South, and their place in an evolving multipolar world.

Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman
Professor, Director & Head
Amity Institute of International Studies
Convener, VIJIGISHU 2026
Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida

Acknowledgments

The successful organisation of VIJIGISHU 2026 and the publication of these Conference Proceedings have been possible through the guidance, encouragement, and collective support of numerous individuals and institutions.

I express my deepest gratitude to our Hon'ble Founder President, Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan, whose visionary leadership and commitment to nation-building through education continue to inspire every academic endeavour at Amity University. His belief in nurturing globally competent and socially responsible scholars has provided the guiding foundation for VIJIGISHU.

I am profoundly grateful to Prof. (Dr.) Balvinder Shukla, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, for her constant motivation, valuable guidance, and institutional support. Her academic leadership has enabled the Amity Institute of International Studies to undertake meaningful initiatives that connect teaching and research with contemporary regional and global concerns.

We gratefully acknowledge the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) for its collaboration and financial support for the Conference. Its association has strengthened the academic and policy relevance of VIJIGISHU 2026. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to MGIMO University, Russia, for joining the Conference as an international collaborator and for facilitating the participation of its distinguished resource persons and student delegation.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to all our national and international Knowledge Partners, whose association and intellectual support have enhanced the stature and reach of the Conference. Their participation reflects a shared commitment to advancing informed dialogue on the strategic, developmental, and sustainability challenges confronting Southeast Asia and the Global South.

We are deeply honoured by the participation of distinguished diplomats, academicians, policymakers, strategic experts, session chairs, moderators, panellists, and invited speakers. Their experience and scholarly insights have enriched the Conference and provided invaluable learning opportunities for our students, research scholars, faculty members, and participants.

I warmly acknowledge all the authors and paper presenters whose research forms the intellectual foundation of these proceedings. Their scholarly engagement and diverse perspectives have enabled this volume to address a wide range of contemporary regional and global issues. I also thank the reviewers and members of the Editorial Committee for carefully examining the submissions and maintaining the academic quality of the publication.

Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation goes to the members of the Steering Committee and Organising Committee, faculty members, staff, research scholars, student coordinators, and volunteers of the Amity Institute of International Studies. Their dedication, teamwork, and attention to detail have been instrumental in coordinating the academic sessions, publication, hospitality, logistics, and numerous other responsibilities associated with a conference of this scale.

We are equally grateful to our publishing partner, Journal Press India, for its professional assistance in bringing these proceedings to their final form.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every individual and institution that has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of VIJIGISHU 2026.

Prof. (Dr.) Nagalaxmi M. Raman
Professor, Director & Head
Amity Institute of International Studies
Convener, VIJIGISHU 2026
Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida

List of Abstracts

1. Navigating Great Power Duopoly: India's Geopolitical Posture and Issue-Based Partnerships in a Contested Indo-Pacific
Shikha Singh ...1
2. ASEAN Centrality in the Midst of Rising Minilateralism – India's Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific Order (2014-2025)
Kuheli Bar ...2
3. The Strategic Role of India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in Shaping the Emerging Blue Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific
Shyam Manohar Prajapati ...3
4. ASEAN's Interregionalism in the Indian Ocean Region: An Expanding Agenda
S. Venkata Krishnan ...4
5. Great Power Competition and the Strategic Agency of the Global South: A Case Study of Southeast Asia
Zeynab Farhadi ...5
6. India's Multipolar Diplomacy and Strategic Autonomy in the Global South (2014-2026)
Avishesh Pradhan ...6
7. Reimagining Regional Order from a Global South Perspective: Public Diplomacy, Soft Power and India's Cultural Statecraft in Southeast Asia
Swati Awana ...7
8. Minilateralism: Middle Power adaptations in the Indo-Pacific
Vasudha Dwivedi ...8
9. BRICS – A Quest for the Multilateralism: A Global South Perspective
Suwa Lal Jangu ...9
10. From Missile Co-Development to Propulsion Sovereignty: The New Architecture of Russia-India Strategic-Technical Partnership
Tigran Adamyants ...10

List of Abstracts

11. Between Dragon and Elephant: India's Act East Policy to Balance Strategic Stakes and Regional Stability in Southeast Asia
Rachna Devi and Bagisha Suman ...11
12. China's Strategic Influence in Southeast Asia: Regional Responses and Emerging Alignments
Madhukar Shyam, Manya Singhal and Kanika Rawal ...12
13. Beyond the Belt and Road: China's New Strategy and Regional Diplomacy in Southeast Asia
Saranya Antony A. ...13
14. Redefining Regional Equilibrium: The Global South and Non-Traditional Security Realities in Southeast Asia
Namrata Yadav ...14
15. Chinese Government and People's Opinion about India in Light of India's Growing Interest in Southeast Asia
Brigadier Saminder Singh and Brigadier Anand Kumar Tewari ...15
16. China's Expanding Footprint in Southeast Asia: An Information Warfare Perspective, Regional Responses and India's Strategic Framework
Maj Sumeet Tokas ...17
17. Strategic Autonomy and Multi-Alignment in the Global South: India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Engagement with Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy
Manish Kumar Yadav and Suraj Yadav ...18
18. Managing Asymmetry: India's Hedging Doctrine toward China in the Indo-Pacific
Riya Sharma ...19
19. ASEAN Centrality and India's Indo-Pacific Vision: Assessing the Role of Act East Policy (2014–2025)
Kiratulan ...20

List of Abstracts

20. India, Australia and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific: Prospects for Strategic Trilateral Cooperation in a Multipolar World
Abhishek Chaudhary ...21
21. India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Southeast Asia: Assessing a Decade of Act East Policy
Sara Chaudhary ...22
22. India's Space Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: Strategic Opportunities in the Era of Chinese Space Expansion
Keshav Babu B. ...23
23. India's Maritime Security Strategy in the Multipolar World Order: Opportunities and Challenges
Shailja Singh Yadav ...24
24. Neo-Middle Power or Junior Partner? India's Indo-Pacific Vision and the Uncertain Future of QUAD
Sriyansh Mohanty ...25
25. Strengthening India-Asean Maritime Cooperation for a Sustainable Indo-Pacific
Adesh Chaudhary ...26
26. South Asian region in the Indo-Pacific Framework
Kamna Tiwary ...27
27. India's Act East Policy: Maritime Security and Green Infrastructure in ASEAN
Rishit Vinu ...28
28. Human Security in the Global South: Intersections of Health, Migration and Transnational Risks
Antima Gautam ...29
29. India's Evolving Security Architecture: Health as a National Security Problem
Aaqib Nazir Wagay and Nasir Mustafa ...30

List of Abstracts

30. The Role of Non-State Actor's in Global Conflicts: A Study of the Rise of Hezbollah
Prakash Jangid ...31
31. India–China Relations: Non-Traditional Security Challenges and Prospects in the Global South
Ambika Gupta and Nancy Puri ...32
32. Climate-Induced Migration and Human Security in South Asia: An Analysis of India and Bangladesh
Shivangi Dikshit and Nancy Puri ...33
33. Irregular Migration and Border Governance: Rethinking Security in the Global South
Punit and Nancy Puri ...34
34. Waves of Vulnerability: Climate Crisis, Environmental Governance, and the Undoing of Coastal Livelihoods in the Bakkhali Region, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal
Atrayee Banerjee and Indrila Guha ...36
35. When Hedging Fails: Climate Dependence and the Erosion of Strategic Autonomy among the Small Island States in the Indo-Pacific
Nihar Ranjan Mahapatro and Aradhana Sarma ...37
36. Gendered Vulnerabilities in Non-Traditional Security: Assessing Human Trafficking and Migration Corridors between South and Southeast Asia
Komal Karwa ...38
37. Hydro-Hegemony and Water Conflict in South Asia
Anupam Singh ...39
38. From Policy to Practice: Examining the Environmental Governance Implementation Gap in India
Venika Rana ...40
39. Role of Non-State Actors in Energy Security and Pipeline Diplomacy with Special Reference to the Red Sea Crisis
Gayathri Pramod Panamoottil ...41

List of Abstracts

40. Energy Security and Green Transitions in Emerging Economies: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global South
Deepika Verma ...42
41. The Blue-Green Frontier: Reconfiguring Regional Security and Financing in the New Global Order
Ashu Mehlawat ...43
42. Energy Security and Green Transitions in Emerging Economies: India's Leadership in Advancing Sustainable Energy Governance in the Global South
Niharika Gogoi ...44
43. Chokepoint Sovereignty: Southeast Asia's Maritime Vulnerabilities, India's SAGAR Initiative, and the Critical Minerals Weaponisation Dilemma in the Global South's Multipolar Transition
Shantanu Sharma ...45
44. The Maritime Digital Chokepoints: Security Vulnerabilities to Undersea Cables in Indo-Pacific region
Yash Seela ...46
45. Northeast India in the Indo-Pacific: Examining the Convergence of External Partnerships
Bagmita Borthakur ...47
46. Digital Arteries Under Threat: Undersea Cable Vulnerability, Hybrid Warfare, and the Architecture of Indo-Pacific Security Competition
Adithyan P. ...48
47. Leveraging Defence Research and Development for Strategic Autonomy: India's Path towards Self-Reliance in Defence Production
Col. Sunil Kumar Sharma ...49
48. The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and Strategic Autonomy in the Global South: ASEAN's Security Model in a Multipolar World
Khusboo Goel ...50

List of Abstracts

49. ASEAN-India FTA: Reasons to Navigate through ‘Commons’
Saheli Bose and Amit Kumar ...51
50. Act East Policy as an Instrument of Indian Economic Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific Region
Ramya Singh ...52
51. Indigenous Institutional Autonomy and Post-Colonial Governance within the Russian Nenets and Indian Sixth Schedule Frameworks
Sonam Chikara ...53
52. Urbanisation without Industrialisation: The Political Economy of Small Cities in North-East India
Nisha Sisodia ...54
53. Projecting Strategic Autonomy through Soft Power Diplomacy: India’s Re-engagement with Afghanistan under Taliban Rule
Amrutha C. G. ...55
54. From Tradition to Global: Dance as a Form of Cultural Diplomacy in the Global South
Pareza Noushad ...56
55. From Cultural Connectivity to Strategic Convergence: India’s Indo-Pacific Vision and the Act East Policy in Southeast Asia
Akash Chillar ...57
56. India’s Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in the Global South: Cultural Connectivity and Strategic Engagement (2014–2026)
Divashni Gandas ...58
57. India’s Notion of Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Cultural Connectivity in the Global South
Himani Atri ...59
58. Diplomatic & Academic Narrative
Suzanna Adamyants ...60

List of Abstracts

59. Huawei and the Politics of Digital Infrastructure Acceptance across ASEAN
Ajay M. Reje ...61
60. Interoperability Partnerships to Expand Strategic Footprints: How India is Emerging as the First Option of Support for Sustaining Russian-origin Military Hardware?
Barshan Karmakar ...62
61. BeiDou and Eyes in the Sky: China's Dual-Use Space Infrastructure as a Two-Track Coercive Architecture in Southeast Asia
Isha Singh and Col Kaushik Ray ...64
62. Harnessing Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) for Strategic Awareness in Southeast Asia and the Global South: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Multipolar Imperative
Vidushi Sehrawat and Brig. Anand Kumar Tewari ...65
63. Reconceptualization of India's Strategic Culture: Looking through the 4th Generation Lens
Jasveer Singh ...66
64. Technology Adoption Pathways for Global South Air Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges, Enablers and Strategic Choices
Air Vice Marshal Ajay Shukla ...67
65. Mapping Diasporic Infrastructure: A Comparative Case Study of India and China
Vanchinathan Y. and Nripan Babu ...68
66. India's ITEC Diplomacy and the Global South: Capacity Building, Knowledge Partnerships and India's Emerging Development Diplomacy
Syed Mahmood Faiyaz Mehdi ...69
67. The Global South in a Multipolar World: Power Redistribution and Emerging Hierarchies
Maria Ivanova ...70
68. Energy Transition as a Cooperation Space: Russia-India Partnership in Nuclear and Hydrogen Energy for Human Security in the Global South
Arefyev Pavel ...71

Navigating Great Power Duopoly: India's Geopolitical Posture and Issue-Based Partnerships in a Contested Indo-Pacific

*Shikha Singh**

ABSTRACT

In contemporary international order, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as the primary theater of structural competition, directly impacting how states execute independent foreign policy. This paper explores India's pursuit of 'Strategic Autonomy' within this highly contested maritime geography. It argues that New Delhi's contemporary external strategy is neither isolationist nor binary, but rather an active, pragmatic multi-alignment posture designed to maximise national interest amidst the competing systemic influences of the United States and China. Moving past broad generalisations, this study employs a qualitative case study approach, utilising discourse analysis of official foreign policy texts and recent diplomatic frameworks. The analysis centers on how India navigates the dual pressures of China's expanding regional footprint and the United States' networking initiatives. Specifically, the study evaluates how India leverages issue-based partnerships—most notably the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)—to counter systemic imbalances while consciously resisting formal military encapsulation by Western alliance structures. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates how India's individual pursuit of strategic autonomy acts as a vital structural anchor in the region, functioning to maintain an open, polycentric equilibrium, preserve regional stability, and resist hegemonic polarisation in the wider Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Strategic autonomy, India's foreign policy, Multi-alignment, Indo-Pacific architecture, Great power competition, Hegemonic balance.

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ASEAN Centrality in the Midst of Rising Minilateralism – India’s Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific Order (2014-2025)

*Kuheli Bar**

ABSTRACT

In the rising geopolitical turmoil in the Southeast Asian region, the informal, consensus-oriented ‘ASEAN Way’ is a major area of scholarly debate. The question of ASEAN centrality is under scrutiny, not only vis-à-vis its functioning capacity, but also its effectiveness in the midst of rising ‘minilateralism’¹. Given its slow and inefficient response in situations of crises, minilateral forums of converging interests have enabled flexible, issue-specific decision-making to arrive at ‘integrative solutions’². While ASEAN-led mechanisms like ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) further the central role of ASEAN, with the inception of minilateral arrangements like QUAD and AUKUS, and great power politics in Southeast Asia, the principle of ASEAN centrality seems to be under pressure³. India’s Act East Policy (2014) has been a landmark in the direction of its Indo-Pacific vision which is aligned with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). ASEAN not only serves as a gateway for India into trade engagements with Southeast Asian countries but also acts as a buffer in managing US-China rivalry. With the aim of strengthening its regional security landscape and circumvent bloc politics, India continues to support ASEAN centrality while simultaneously partnering with minilateral frameworks. This research work proposes to determine whether this balancing act of India reaffirms, erodes or maintains the centrality of ASEAN in Southeast Asia. This paper will use qualitative method relying on secondary sources like official policy documents, ASEAN declarations, Indian foreign policy statements and so on.

Keywords: ASEAN centrality, Minilateralism, Act East policy, Indo-Pacific, Regional security.

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The Strategic Role of India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation in Shaping the Emerging Blue Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific

*Shyam Manohar Prajapati**

ABSTRACT

India-ASEAN maritime cooperation is a critical pillar for maintaining a rule-based order, securing sea lanes of communication, and managing power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. It analyses the convergence between India's maritime vision, articulated through the SAGAR doctrine and the Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative, and ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. The study explores key areas of cooperation, including maritime security, maritime domain awareness, disaster management, sustainable fisheries, and Ocean-based development. The study concludes that strengthened India-ASEAN maritime collaboration is essential not only for regional security and economic prosperity but also for fostering sustainable and inclusive blue geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: India-ASEAN, Maritime cooperation, Blue geopolitics, SAGAR Doctrine, Indo-Pacific.

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ASEAN's Interregionalism in the Indian Ocean Region: An Expanding Agenda

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ABSTRACT

Interregionalism, relations between regions, in the literature of International Relations (IRs), has emerged in the 21st century. The European Union, the pioneer of inter-regionalism, has such relationships with many regional organisations (ROs) and countries in different parts of the world. There are numerous works related to the EU's interregionalism. ASEAN, another important regional organisation, has also established interregional relations. Except for EU- ASEAN, the attention to ASEAN's interregionalism is inadequate. In this background, this research is interested in studying ASEAN's interregionalism in the Indian Ocean region. This is because the Indian Ocean region has become an important arena for global politics and international trade. The first section of the work is an introduction, followed by a brief literature review. The next section discusses ASEAN's relations with the Asian region ROs and countries, and after that, the African region's ROs and countries. The paper concludes with observations about ASEAN's interregionalism. This qualitative study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Africa, ASEAN, Asia, Global South, Indian Ocean, Interregionalism, Regional Organisation.

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Great Power Competition and the Strategic Agency of the Global South: A Case Study of Southeast Asia

*Zeynab Farhadi**

ABSTRACT

The current architecture of international relations reveals that the intensifying competition between the United States and China has profoundly transformed the strategic dynamics of the Global South, with Southeast Asia emerging as a pivotal center of conflict and influence. This study examines two primary research inquiries: What is the perception of Southeast Asian governments toward great power competition in their subregion, and how have they reacted to the escalating Sino-American rivalry? The study used a qualitative, descriptive methodology to examine Southeast Asia's status within the Global South in relation to great power dynamics. It theoretically combines realist and constructivist perspectives to analyze the perceptual frameworks through which Southeast Asian actors understand power imbalances and develop adaptive tactics, thereby moving beyond simplistic notions of peripheral passivity. The analysis of specific cases, including the South China Sea territorial disputes, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and U.S.-led Indo-Pacific alliances, demonstrates that hedging strategies, security networking through the Minilateral institutions, and ASEAN-facilitated institution-building (ASEAN Centrality) are defining characteristics of endogenous resilience. This study is organized into five sections: (1) an introduction presenting the conceptual framework; (2) an exploration of great power competition in Southeast Asia; (3) an analysis of Southeast Asian perceptions regarding this competition; (4) an assessment of their strategic responses to U.S.-China dynamics; and (5) a concluding synthesis.

Keywords: Global South, ASEAN, Minilateralism, Sino-American rivalry.

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India's Multipolar Diplomacy and Strategic Autonomy in the Global South (2014-2026)

*Avishesh Pradhan**

ABSTRACT

India's foreign policy has increasingly emphasized the principle of strategic autonomy in response to the evolving dynamics of global power politics. In the context of intensifying rivalry between the United States and China, India has attempted to maintain a balanced approach that protects its national interests while strengthening its position within the Global South. This paper examines how India practices strategic autonomy through diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, security partnerships, and multilateral participation. It argues that India neither fully aligns with the United States nor openly confronts China, but instead follows a flexible and interest-driven foreign policy approach. The study explores India's participation in forums such as BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to understand how India balances competing geopolitical interests. It also analyzes India's leadership aspirations in the Global South through initiatives related to development cooperation, climate diplomacy, connectivity, and South-South cooperation. The paper uses a qualitative and analytical methodology based on secondary sources including policy documents, speeches, academic literature, and strategic reports. The paper concludes that strategic autonomy remains central to India's foreign policy identity and enables the country to navigate great power competition without compromising its sovereignty or developmental priorities. At the same time, emerging geopolitical tensions, border disputes, economic dependencies, and changing global alignments continue to challenge India's balancing strategy. The study highlights the importance of strategic autonomy as both a diplomatic tool and a framework for India's rising global role in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Strategic autonomy, India's foreign policy, India-US-China relations, Global South, Geopolitical balancing.

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Reimagining Regional Order from a Global South Perspective: Public Diplomacy, Soft Power and India's Cultural Statecraft in Southeast Asia

*Swati Awana**

ABSTRACT

The contemporary international order has witnessed a profound recalibration of power from predominantly material capabilities toward ideational, normative, and cultural resources. Within this evolving landscape, public diplomacy and soft power have emerged as critical instruments through which states cultivate legitimacy, influence transnational audiences, and shape regional architectures of cooperation. This study examines the intersection of public diplomacy, soft power, and cultural connectivity in the Global South, with particular emphasis on India's engagement with Southeast Asia. It argues that the Global South offers an alternative epistemic framework for understanding diplomacy—one that transcends conventional realist paradigms and foregrounds civilizational linkages, historical memory, cultural affinity, and people-to-people interactions as constitutive elements of international relations. Drawing upon constructivist and postcolonial approaches, the paper conceptualizes cultural connectivity as a multidimensional process through which shared identities, heritage networks, educational exchanges, religious traditions, diaspora communities, and digital communication platforms generate durable forms of regional solidarity. In the case of India, the transition from the "Look East" to the "Act East" policy signifies not merely a strategic realignment but also a sophisticated exercise in cultural statecraft. The analysis demonstrates that India's soft power derives less from coercive capabilities than from its capacity to project pluralistic values, democratic traditions, intellectual heritage, and shared historical experiences of colonialism and postcolonial development. Furthermore, the study contends that cultural connectivity between India and Southeast Asian countries functions as a form of relational power that complements economic integration and strategic cooperation. Such connectivity contributes to regional resilience, enhances mutual trust, and facilitates the construction of an inclusive Indo-Pacific order that is not exclusively defined by great-power competition.

Keywords: Global South, Regional Order, Act East, Southeast Asia.

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Minilateralism: Middle Power adaptations in the Indo-Pacific

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to analyse the rise of Minilateralism as a foreign policy tool for middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region, emerging in response to the inadequacies of asymmetrical bilateral and inconclusive multilateral security arrangements. Bilateral frameworks lead to power imbalances where major states often dominate subordinate weaker partners, while multilateral institutions struggle with consensus-building and slow decision-making. Against this backdrop, Minilateral; small, flexible, issue-specific groupings, has gained traction as a pragmatic alternative. Through the case studies of India and Australia, the paper explores how minilateral frameworks enable these states to navigate the prevailing security/economic disconnect in the region. Both nations while seek to sustain economic relations with China, simultaneously rely on the United States for security guarantees. Minilateralism provides a mechanism to balance these competing imperatives by fostering collective resilience, pooling resources, and mitigating vulnerabilities. The analysis highlights how minilateralism facilitates a shift from dependence to interdependence, offering middle powers greater strategic autonomy and flexibility. By engaging multiple partners simultaneously, India and Australia enhance their ability to safeguard national interests without overreliance on any single power. Ultimately, minilateralism emerges as a functional adaptation to the structural dilemmas of Indo-Pacific politics, enabling middle powers to recalibrate their foreign policy strategies in an era of intensifying great-power rivalry.

Keywords: Minilateralism, Indo-Pacific, India, Australia, Security/Economic disconnect.

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BRICS – A Quest for the Multilateralism: A Global South Perspective

*Suwa Lal Jangu**

ABSTRACT

BRICS, the group of emerging economies that now represent 55 percent of world population. It will get more strength as more economies from the Global South join it. BRICS is a coalition of shared interest-based economies. It is challenging the American International Order and providing a chance of multilateral platform to the Global South. BRICS is not an anti-American alliance but a multilateral forum of emerging economies. BRICS is an engine of the Global South economies and its true manifestation in form of multilateralism. The recent BRICS summits attempted to focus on less contentious issue but more on cooperation areas such as climate and development. In this multilateral world, cooperation is the core principle of determining the condition and direction of any emerging economy. There is no doubt that BRICS recent years risen counterweight to the America led order. Unfortunately, BRICS economies are on the American tariff radar. This America's trade tariff war is the major factor behind the expanding BRICS and evolving multilateral order in the Global South. Successes are still quite limited, but the BRICS has the potential to shape the multilateral world order and cooperation in the Global South. The main focus of BRICS is economic development, and to become a powerful voice of the Global South. Multilateralism is a value-based concept to international relations, offers a model for emerging economies. The global order is shifting towards the Global South; therefore, the BRICS expansion has become a hedge against future geopolitical shifts. The biggest challenge to BRICS is to enhance its bargaining power and diplomatic capability specially Brazil, India and South Africa. As BRICS is a shared platform of multilateral cooperation, therefore, its bargaining power and delivery capability must be shared also.

Keywords: BRICS, Multilateralism, American World Order, Global South.

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From Missile Co-Development to Propulsion Sovereignty: The New Architecture of Russia-India Strategic-Technical Partnership

*Tigran Adamyants**

ABSTRACT

The Russia-India defense relationship is undergoing a fundamental transition from a traditional buyer-seller framework toward deep industrial integration across both defense and space sectors. This dual-track partnership, reinforced by the December 2025 summit between President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been identified by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as a cornerstone of the “privileged strategic partnership,” with joint weapons production and intensified space collaboration as key pillars of the future roadmap. In the defense domain, the BrahMos Aerospace joint venture continues to serve as the preeminent model of successful co-development. Recent work includes modernization of supersonic cruise missiles and active development of hypersonic technologies, including a reusable hypersonic cruise missile concept capable of delivering a warhead at Mach 10 and returning to base. The BrahMos-II hypersonic missile program and compact missile variants are currently under joint development. In the space sector, a parallel and equally transformative partnership is emerging. The proposed acquisition and technology transfer of Russia’s RD-191M semi-cryogenic rocket engine to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) promises to nearly double the payload capacity of India’s LVM3 heavy-lift rocket from 4.2 to approximately 7 tonnes to Geostationary Transfer Orbit. This engine, which produces 192 tonnes of thrust, represents a mature, flight-proven system currently operational on Russia’s Angara launch vehicles. Critically, the deal reportedly includes 100% technology transfer, enabling domestic production in India under the “Make in India” framework—potentially through facilities operated by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in collaboration with ISRO. The paper argues that these parallel developments in defense and space are not merely coincidental but reflect a coherent Russian strategy: leveraging advanced propulsion technologies (whether for cruise missiles or launch vehicles) to maintain strategic relevance in India while supporting New Delhi’s quest for technological sovereignty. The BrahMos model of intellectual property co-ownership (Russia’s NPO Mashinostroyeniya and India’s DRDO) is now being replicated in the space domain, with discussions on joint human spaceflight programs and space station development already underway. This dual-ecosystem integration insulates the bilateral partnership from external sanctions pressure while creating mutual dependencies that extend well beyond traditional arms sales.

Keywords: BrahMos, ISRO, Propulsion Sovereignty, Russia-India.

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Between Dragon and Elephant: India's Act East Policy to Balance Strategic Stakes and Regional Stability in Southeast Asia

Rachna Devi and Bagisha Suman***

ABSTRACT

Ups and downs in the 21st century have affected the resilience of regional stability and peace across the world. So, the Global South is also having a hard time balancing with the nations. India and China are both nations deeply engaged with Southeast Asia in several areas, including trade, economy, technological expansion, maritime partnerships, and many other areas to grow their presence. But between the dragon (China) and elephant (India), the region has become a critical arena of geopolitical impugment. China is rapidly growing in the region and might have taken over all the markets and grown strategic and cultural engagements in a broad range. That's not a good sign for India, even though India itself has grown in multiple areas to work with the region through its Act East Policy. It is a big question in front of India: can India be an alternative for economic statecraft, as well as between China and the US? India could be a strategic competitor, with technological advancements, critical minerals, and even more. Myanmar crisis and Indo-Pacific through its Act East policy, which is reimagining to be a central place in Southeast Asia. The paper aims to examine India's presence in the region, truly developing to maintain a positive regional order and establish stability and peace in the future, even in the present. India is working hard to enhance its economic growth, technological advancement, and connectivity between South and Southeast Asia in the maritime sector and multiple areas, but India needs to see trade imbalance as an indispensable balancing power in the region. Although India is a better player in the region, its presence contributes to strategic diversification; the regional resilience paper argues that through the Act East Policy, India needs a broader vision in multiple areas, as noted.

Keywords: Act East Policy, China, India, Strategic balancing, Multipolarity.

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China's Strategic Influence in Southeast Asia: Regional Responses and Emerging Alignments

Madhukar Shyam, Manya Singhal** and Kanika Rawal****

ABSTRACT

Southeast Asia, comprising eleven countries with six maritime and five mainland states, occupies a strategically significant location within the Indo-Pacific region. China perceives this area as its natural domain of influence due to its close geography, long-standing historical connection and sharing its land border with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. This paper explores contemporary Sino-Southeast Asian relations reflects a complex interplay of economic interdependence, strategic rivalry, and historical context. The dispute in the South China Sea remains the most critical flashpoint as China's assertive maritime claims have intensified tensions with surrounding nations such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. As an answer to this issue, countries such as the United States, Japan, Australia, Canada and New Zealand expanded their involvement by enhancing freedom of navigation missions and deeper security partnership. The study examines three central questions: (1) How are external powers challenging China's regional ambitions in Southeast Asia? (2) How does China perceive and respond to the growing involvement of external powers in the region? (3) How are Southeast Asian countries responding to both China's growing assertiveness and the competing presence of external powers? Through qualitative analysis of state actions, bilateral relationships, and multilateral arrangements this paper argues that Southeast Asian nations neither fully trust nor completely fear China. Instead, they employ a pragmatic and flexible strategy maintaining economic and security partnerships with China while simultaneously engaging external powers. Findings from this research contribute to ongoing debates about changing global power dynamics, regional order, and the future role of ASEAN in the context of great power competition.

Keywords: ASEAN, China, South China sea, Maritime.

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Beyond the Belt and Road: China's New Strategy and Regional Diplomacy in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

China's engagement with Southeast Asia has expanded significantly beyond the traditional framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI initially emerged as a large-scale infrastructure and connectivity project; it has increasingly evolved into a multidimensional platform encompassing digital connectivity, health diplomacy, artificial intelligence cooperation, smart-city development, and technological partnerships. This transformation reflects China's broader strategy of extending its regional influence through non-traditional and innovation-driven mechanisms that complement its economic and geopolitical objectives. This paper examines how China is repositioning its regional engagement in Southeast Asia through emerging instruments such as the Digital Silk Road, vaccine and health diplomacy, AI governance initiatives, and smart-city collaborations. It argues that these initiatives represent an adaptive form of regional engagement that moves beyond physical infrastructure to shape digital ecosystems, governance practices, and development models across Southeast Asia. By analysing the interaction between China's expanding footprint and regional responses, the study highlights the growing significance of digital governance, technological cooperation, and soft-power instruments in shaping contemporary regional order. It concludes that China's influence in Southeast Asia is increasingly being exercised through networks of connectivity, innovation, and institutional collaboration, signalling a new phase in China's regional diplomacy beyond the conventional BRI paradigm.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Digital silk road, Southeast Asia, China's foreign policy, Health diplomacy, Artificial Intelligence, Smart cities, Regional connectivity, Soft power, Digital governance, Regional responses.

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Redefining Regional Equilibrium: The Global South and Non-Traditional Security Realities in Southeast Asia

*Namrata Yadav**

ABSTRACT

The contemporary shift toward fragmented global architecture requires a fundamental reevaluation of security dynamics beyond conventional military parameters. This paper investigates how developing nations across Southeast Asia navigate intersecting non-traditional security crises while fostering systemic resilience. Operating at a vital crossroads of the Global South, these states must actively reconcile domestic development goals with external geopolitical pressures in an increasingly polarized international landscape. Utilizing an analytical framework centered on human security and cooperative multilateralism, this study evaluates the collective institutional responses of regional actors to structural instabilities, climate vulnerability, and resource distribution challenges. The core thesis posits that enduring strategic stability cannot be realized through traditional defense paradigms alone; rather, it hinges on sustainable, bottom-up diplomatic networks that prioritize human and ecological well-being. Ultimately, this research offers insights into how emerging actors within the Global South are systematically de-centering major-power rivalries to cultivate a more balanced, multi-dimensional regional equilibrium.

Keywords: Non-traditional security, Human security, Regional equilibrium, Global South, Cooperative multilateralism.

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Chinese Government and People's Opinion about India in Light of India's Growing Interest in Southeast Asia

Brigadier Saminder Singh and Brigadier Anand Kumar Tewari***

ABSTRACT

Background and Research Problem: As neighbouring civilizations with unique historical and geopolitical journeys, China and India share cultural commonalities but maintain distinct perceptions of one another. While modern China undergoes national rejuvenation, its perception of India is increasingly shaped by its own socio-political lens. There is a critical need to appreciate the Chinese psyche, across political, military, and social hierarchies, to facilitate enhanced diplomatic, economic, and military interactions.

Objectives and Scope: The primary objective of this research is to analyze how the Chinese hierarchical structure perceives the Indian political system, economy, social framework, and military capabilities. The scope focuses on contemporary views offered by the Chinese government, social circles, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), compiled from open-source data, official statements, and social media platforms like Baidu and Jiefangjun Bao.

Methodology: This study employs comprehensive research design incorporating co-relative, evaluative, exploratory and confirmatory methodologies. Data will be gathered through the correlation of open-source information, evaluation of expert opinions from "China watchers," and exploratory research to confirm previously expressed assessments by regional think tanks and scholars.

Key Findings: The research, so far, reveals following multifaceted Chinese perceptions:

- **Political:** The Communist Party of China (CPC) views Indian democracy as slow and inefficient in decision-making, though it recognizes India's constitutional protections.
- **Economic:** Analysts acknowledge India's rapid growth and market potential but remain wary of bureaucracy, corruption, and a persistent trade deficit.
- **Social:** The Chinese public views the Indian caste system as a barrier to social mobility while simultaneously admiring Indian cultural exports like Bollywood and yoga.
- **Military:** The PLA respects India's conventional warfare capabilities (artillery and infantry) but identifies critical weaknesses in logistics, cyber warfare, and technological gaps. Additionally, China remains wary of India's "Act East" interests and its growing strategic partnerships with the U.S., Japan, and Australia.

Conclusion and Significance: The study concludes that there is a “gradual erosion” of mutual confidence as Chinese social opinion increasingly aligns with official state biases, particularly following recent border tensions. Understanding these perceptions is vital for Indian policymakers to develop a “suitably tailored” response mechanism aligned with national interests.

Keywords: Sino-Indian relations, CPC, PLA, Southeast Asia, Political perception, Military modernization, Social hierarchy, Act East policy.

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China's Expanding Footprint in Southeast Asia: An Information Warfare Perspective, Regional Responses and India's Strategic Framework

*Maj Sumeet Tokas**

ABSTRACT

China's strategic competition in Southeast Asia increasingly relies on information warfare (IW) rather than conventional force, aiming to shape perceptions, fracture institutional cohesion, and erode sovereign decision-making below the threshold of armed conflict. This paper argues that Beijing's approach forms a coherent whole-of-government strategy rooted in the "Three Warfares" doctrine (public opinion, psychological, and legal warfare) and operationalised through the broader logic of unrestricted warfare. It maps China's IW toolkit across four vectors: state media penetration via CGTN and Xinhua; covert social media manipulation in the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia; economic leverage through the Digital Silk Road; and elite capture via philanthropy, Confucius Institutes, and cultivated political networks. Collectively, this constitutes cognitive domain warfare contesting the epistemological basis of strategic judgement in target states. The paper surveys national countermeasures (Singapore's FICA, the Philippines' information resilience efforts, Vietnam's Cybersecurity Law, Indonesia's digital sovereignty rules) and ASEAN's structural limits, given its consensus-based, non-interference norms. It also examines external balancing by the US, EU, and Quad. Central to the paper is an original analysis of India's response across three levels: doctrinal (IEO doctrine, Integrated Theatre Command, Defence Cyber Agency), diplomatic-strategic (Act East Policy, Quad Information Integrity, DPI exports), and narrative/soft power (ICCR, G20 Global South leadership, diaspora networks). It concludes India offers the most coherent non-Western response, though gaps remain in attribution and offensive IW doctrine, and proposes a five-pillar Graduated Multi-Domain Resilience Framework with India as a natural leader.

Keywords: Information warfare, China, ASEAN, Act East policy, Cognitive domain warfare.

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Strategic Autonomy and Multi-Alignment in the Global South: India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Engagement with Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy

Manish Kumar Yadav and Suraj Yadav***

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a central geopolitical arena has intensified debates concerning strategic autonomy, alignment strategies, and partnership models among states of the Global South. Through its Act East Policy, India has deepened engagement with Southeast Asia while maintaining policy independence amid growing strategic competition between the United States and China. While existing scholarship has largely examined India's Indo-Pacific strategy through the lenses of balancing China, ASEAN centrality, maritime security, and Quad cooperation, comparatively little attention has been paid to how strategic autonomy and multi-alignment function together as an integrated framework guiding India's relations with Southeast Asia. This paper addresses this gap by examining the relationship between these concepts and their role in shaping India's contemporary regional engagement. This study examines India's foreign policy evolution from non-alignment to multi-alignment, assessing how the Indo-Pacific vision shapes engagement with Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy. It asks whether India's approach offers Global South states a viable model for preserving policy autonomy amid great-power competition, hypothesizing that India's regional strategy expands diplomatic, economic, and security partnerships while safeguarding decision-making independence. Using qualitative methodology grounded in strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, and complex interdependence frameworks, the study combines doctrinal analysis with case studies of India-ASEAN relations, Quad participation, maritime cooperation, and connectivity projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway.

Keywords: Strategic autonomy, Multi-alignment, Global South, Indo-Pacific, Act East policy.

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Managing Asymmetry: India's Hedging Doctrine toward China in the Indo-Pacific

*Riya Sharma**

ABSTRACT

In the light of the shifting great power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, India faces a profound power asymmetry that threatens its regional dominance. India adopted a hedging doctrine to manage asymmetry- the structural imbalance between China's overwhelming capabilities and India's comparative limitations while preserving strategic autonomy and maintaining its status in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. It has adopted mutually counteracting "return-maximizing" and "risk-contingency" measures to mitigate the harm of each strategic choice in an era of shifting geopolitical dynamics. As a rising power with its own ambitions to carve out a strategic space, India's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific seeks to retain a free, open and inclusive regional order. Framed through a hybrid theoretical lens combining realism and constructivism, the study critically evaluates India's evolving role in the Indo-Pacific through its engagement in strategic groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and bilateral partnerships with Japan, Australia, ASEAN, and the United States. The paper interrogates India's attempt to balance power while upholding regional inclusivity, democratic norms, and multilateralism. This study adopts qualitative research design based on secondary sources, case study approach and comparative analysis. This study concludes that India's hedging doctrine operates through three interconnected means to offset China primacy, first, diplomatic hedging strengthens relations with the United States and Quad members while maintain engagement with China through BRICS, SCO and G20. Second, economic hedging by pursuing selective decoupling- restricting Chinese investment in sensitive sectors while pursuing supply chain diversification. Third, security hedging involves soft-balancing coalitions and limited hard-balancing relationships with Washington including defense technology transfers, intelligence sharing and maritime coordination without formal alliance commitments that would trigger Chinese retaliation or Russian estrangement. This approach enables India to maintain great power aspiration in the twenty-first century multipolar order while managing the existential threat posed by China's geoeconomics assertiveness.

Keywords: Strategic hedging, Asymmetry management, Strategic autonomy, Decoupling, Return-maximizing, Risk-contingency, Indian Ocean region.

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ASEAN Centrality and India's Indo-Pacific Vision: Assessing the Role of Act East Policy (2014–2025)

*Kiratulan**

ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as one of the most significant geopolitical and economic regions of the twenty-first century, bringing renewed attention to the role of regional institutions and strategic partnerships. Within this evolving landscape, ASEAN has continued to promote the principle of centrality as a means of maintaining regional stability, dialogue, and cooperation among major and middle powers. At the same time, India has sought to expand its engagement with Southeast Asia through the Act East Policy, launched in 2014, which marked a shift from a primarily economic approach to a broader strategic and security-oriented engagement with the region. This study examines the relationship between ASEAN centrality and India's Indo-Pacific vision by assessing the role of the Act East Policy between 2014 and 2025. It explores how India has positioned ASEAN at the core of its regional strategy and evaluates the extent to which its policies and initiatives have contributed to strengthening ASEAN-led mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific. The paper analyzes key areas of cooperation, including maritime security, connectivity, trade, regional institutions, and diplomatic engagement. It also considers the influence of emerging geopolitical developments, particularly the growing strategic competition among major powers, and their implications for India–ASEAN relations. Drawing on official policy documents, speeches, regional declarations, and secondary literature, the study argues that ASEAN centrality remains an essential pillar of India's Indo-Pacific approach. While significant progress has been made in political and strategic cooperation, challenges persist in areas such as economic integration, infrastructure connectivity, and the implementation of regional initiatives. The findings suggest that the success of India's Indo-Pacific vision depends largely on its ability to support ASEAN-led frameworks while balancing broader strategic interests. The study concludes that the Act East Policy has played a crucial role in deepening India–ASEAN relations and reinforcing ASEAN's relevance in shaping an inclusive, stable, and cooperative Indo-Pacific order.

Keywords: ASEAN centrality, India–ASEAN relations, Act East policy, Indo-Pacific, Regional cooperation.

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India, Australia and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific: Prospects for Strategic Trilateral Cooperation in a Multipolar World

*Abhishek Chaudhary**

ABSTRACT

The Indo Pacific has become a central geopolitical and geoeconomical theatre which is defined by shifting power dynamics, rising security concerns, and importance of sustainable development and regional cooperation. In response, India, Australia and ASEAN have significantly enhanced their bilateral partnerships, cooperating in various dimensions of maritime security, economic connectivity, resilient supply chains, and regional governance. While the convergence in strategic thinking is evident, the research has been mainly focused on the bilateral aspects of the partnerships and is limited in its examination of the potential of a strategic trilateral partnership. This paper explores prospects for strategic trilateral cooperation between these Indo Pacific players by evaluating if convergence at the bilateral level set the foundation for more regional security and governance cooperation in the Indo Pacific, it examines such opportunities and challenges for cooperation in the areas of regional security and development, preparedness for sustainable trade, economy, maritime regional order and how these Indo Pacific actors are responding to new and emerging strategic issues of concern. The study follows a qualitative research design using content analysis of academic literature, policy papers, official statements and reports published by both government as well as leading policy institutions. It evaluates the scope for strategic convergence between India, Australia and ASEAN, and opportunities for the strengthening of partnership, while also identifying existing potential roadblocks for a trilateral partnership in the political, institutional and geopolitical domains. The paper is an attempt to contribute to the growing discourse on Indo Pacific regionalism and provides a holistic view of the scope of India Australia ASEAN strategic cooperation in the future. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discussions around regional security, sustainability, and cooperative governance in the Indo Pacific.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, India, Australia, ASEAN.

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India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Southeast Asia: Assessing a Decade of Act East Policy

*Sara Chaudhary**

ABSTRACT

India's Act East Policy (AEP) which was launched in 2014 as a successor to the Look East Policy, marks a significant shift in how India engages with the Indo-Pacific region. Over the past decade, the policy has sought to deepen India's strategic, economic, and cultural ties with Southeast Asian nations, positioning the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a central pillar of India's broader Indo-Pacific vision. This paper assesses the outcomes of a decade of AEP implementation, focusing on its impact on India's relationship with Southeast Asia. The study examines three key dimensions: trade and connectivity, security cooperation, and diplomatic engagement. Drawing on policy documents, bilateral agreements, and regional security frameworks, the paper evaluates how effectively India has translated its Indo-Pacific aspirations into concrete regional outcomes. It further explores the challenges that have limited the Act East Policy's full potential, including gaps in infrastructure investment, asymmetric trade relations, and the competitive presence of China in the region. The paper argues that while the Act East Policy has succeeded in elevating India's political and strategic visibility in Southeast Asia, significant gaps remain between policy intent and implementation outcomes. Strengthening multimodal connectivity, expanding defence partnerships, and aligning India's initiatives with ASEAN's centrality are identified as critical priorities for the next phase of engagement. This study contributes to the growing literature on India's Indo-Pacific strategy and offers policy-relevant insights for scholars and practitioners working on regional security and international relations in Asia.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia, Act East policy, ASEAN.

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India's Space Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: Strategic Opportunities in the Era of Chinese Space Expansion

*Keshav Babu B. **

ABSTRACT

Space cooperation has emerged as a new and consequential dimension of geopolitical competition in Southeast Asia. China has systematically institutionalised its space presence across the region through BeiDou, satellite launches for ASEAN member states, remote sensing partnerships, and Digital Silk Road initiatives, deepening strategic dependencies with significant implications for regional autonomy. India, despite possessing sufficient space capabilities and an established ASEAN partnership, has not institutionalised space diplomacy as a coherent instrument of its Act East Policy. This absence forms the central research gap this paper addresses. This paper argues that India possesses the technical capacity, strategic motivation, and diplomatic foundation to employ space diplomacy as a meaningful counter to China's growing regional footprint, but this potential remains unrealised due to the absence of a systematic and institutionalised framework for ASEAN-focused space engagement. The study employs Neoclassical Realism as its theoretical framework because it explains not only the structural incentives that should compel India to respond to China's space expansion in Southeast Asia, but also why India has not fully done so, through domestic-level variables including institutional fragmentation and the absence of a coherent space diplomacy strategy at the policy level. This paper asks three research questions. First, how has China's expanding space presence altered the strategic environment of Southeast Asia? Second, to what extent do India's space capabilities and strategic objectives position it to engage Southeast Asia through space diplomacy? Third, how can India's space diplomacy be employed as a strategic response to the evolving space dynamics in Southeast Asia?

Keywords: Space diplomacy, Space cooperation, Southeast Asia, Chinese space expansion, ASEAN.

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India's Maritime Security Strategy in the Multipolar World Order: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary geopolitical tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz reaffirm Alfred Thayer Mahan's famous observation that "Whoever rules the waves rules the world." As one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints, disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have highlighted the strategic importance of maritime security for global trade, energy flows, and economic stability. More broadly, the maritime domain has historically played a crucial role in shaping the rise and decline of great powers. From colonial expansion through maritime trade routes to contemporary geopolitical competition, control over the seas has remained a key determinant of national power. For India, maritime security has gained increasing significance due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), growing economic dependence on sea-borne trade, and emerging security challenges. Events such as the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks highlighted vulnerabilities in India's maritime security architecture and underscored the need for comprehensive maritime governance. In the contemporary multipolar world, maritime security extends beyond traditional military threats to include non-traditional challenges such as piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, trafficking, climate change, and cyber threats to maritime infrastructure. This paper examines India's evolving maritime security strategy and analyses its efforts to address both traditional and non-traditional security concerns. It further explores the opportunities and challenges arising from increasing geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific region, the rise of China, and India's growing role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean. The study argues that effective maritime security is essential not only for safeguarding India's sovereignty and economic interests but also for enhancing its strategic influence in an evolving global order. By providing an Indian perspective on maritime geopolitics, the paper contributes to the broader discourse on maritime security in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Maritime security, Geopolitics, Multipolar world, Traditional and non-traditional security threats.

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Neo-Middle Power or Junior Partner? India's Indo-Pacific Vision and the Uncertain Future of QUAD

*Sriyansh Mohanty**

ABSTRACT

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), comprising the United States, Japan, Australia and India, has emerged as a central pillar of the Indo-Pacific security architecture. Yet New Delhi's role remains theoretically ambiguous within the grouping. The paper questions whether New Delhi exercises proactive diplomacy as a neo-middle power through the use of lobbying, insulating, and rule-making. Or has Washington progressively eroded its strategic autonomy by making it a junior partner in an American-led containment strategy, a framing used by China? This paper adjudicates between these two competing framings. The paper is further driven by two research questions. Firstly, determining the extent to which India's strategic behaviour within the QUAD aligns with the neo-middle power framework as developed from Southeast Asian cases. Secondly, contextualising the specific constraints, be it structural, bilateral, or normative, pushes New Delhi away from neo-middle agency and toward junior partnership? Drawing on evidence from QUAD summits, joint statements, maritime exercises, and tech cooperation, the paper argues that India currently occupies an unstable middle ground. In functional domains like disaster relief, vaccine diplomacy, and climate resilience, New Delhi exhibits neo-middle power behaviour, shaping agendas while retaining autonomy. However, in high-stakes security domains like intelligence sharing, naval patrols, and Chinese contingency plans, New Delhi's ties with Washington demonstrably constrain its actions. The paper argues that India's capability to insulate enough strategic space to remain a neo-middle power or to further Washington's expectations that reduce it to a junior partner status will determine the future of the QUAD. The former preserves the QUAD as a flexible coalition, while the latter risks transforming the grouping into a formalised alliance India ultimately cannot accept.

Keywords: Neo-middle power diplomacy, India, QUAD, Indo-Pacific, Strategic autonomy, US-China competition.

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Strengthening India-Asean Maritime Cooperation for a Sustainable Indo-Pacific

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important strategic regions in the world today is the Indo-Pacific that connects major economies through vital sea routes. Various maritime issues are increasingly shaping the regional stability and development, although some challenges like security issues, environmental predicaments and governance complications still persist in the changing global structure. Amidst the present scenario, cooperation between India and ASEAN has gained prominence in enhancing sustainable maritime governance. This research paper broadly investigates the ways in which India and ASEAN are cooperating to address the prevalent maritime concerns and contributing to an inclusive, secure, and sustainable Indo-Pacific region through their major initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and ASEAN's vision outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). This study uses a qualitative methodology and analytical approach on the basis of primary sources such as government reports and official policy documents along with relevant secondary literature. The paper asserts that both India and ASEAN share a powerful commitment to ensure freedom of navigation, protection of marine ecosystems, and promoting viable use of ocean resources. Simultaneously the study recognizes the difficulties that affect regional cooperation, including maritime disputes and geopolitical rivalries. In spite of these impediments, joint initiatives by India and ASEAN continue to strengthen regional resilience by offering various opportunities including maritime domain awareness, climate adaptation, sustainable fisheries, and marine scientific research. The paper wraps up with tracing the evolution of India-ASEAN maritime cooperation that has grown beyond conventional security concerns. Today, both partners are well positioned to play an encouraging role in shaping a stable and prosperous future for the Indo-Pacific by inculcating shared developmental priorities with strategic interests.

Keywords: India, ASEAN, Indo-Pacific, Maritime cooperation, Sustainability.

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South Asian region in the Indo-Pacific Framework

*Kamna Tiwary**

ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific region especially propounded by Japan and including Australia, India and USA aims to give a greater say to the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region mainly posing a challenge to China in this region. India aims to play an active role in this regional bloc mainly because of China's dominance. China has been successful in establishing a strong dominance over the Asian region and enjoys extensively good relations with the South Asian region countries especially the member countries of the ASEAN. One of the reasons why China remains very strong in this region is because of her trade surpluses. My paper will explore the problems of Chinese influence in the Southeast Asian countries and the ways and responses developed by India to handle this. Further, India's inclusion in the QUAD group of nations has also been viewed suspiciously by China. This paper will evaluate the position of the Southeast Asian nations from the perspective of India and the challenges associated with it.

Keywords: South Asia, Indo-Pacific, China, QUAD.

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India's Act East Policy: Maritime Security and Green Infrastructure in ASEAN

*Rishit Vinu**

ABSTRACT

India's Act East Policy (AEP) has shifted from expansive diplomatic engagement to a dual-track ASEAN approach, where the first track is concerned with maritime security and the second track is concerned with green infrastructure and blue economy. The pillar of maritime security persists as highly institutionalised through arrangements like CORPAT (Indonesia), SIMBEX (Singapore), PASSEX (Malaysia), and ADMM-Plus forums. The paper examines the emerging and pivotal parallel pillar of green infrastructure and blue economy. India features a 11,098.81 km coastline and 1,389 islands and its maritime statecraft increasingly recognises environmental robustness as a foundation for geopolitical security in a rivalrous Indo-Pacific. The methods relied on are qualitative content and thematic analysis and the sources reviewed are official announcements, policy frameworks, and institutional databases. The research explores the systemic disconnect between entrenched hard-power footprint and capital-heavy soft-power projects. The results identify that naval coordination could offset South China Sea assertiveness among aligned partners like Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam etc. However, ASEAN's security unanimity stays disjointed, due to economic reliance majorly. Also, Southeast Asia endures a long-term infrastructure investment deficit. The study contends that green infrastructure could serve as a strategic balancing tool against regional frictions. The focal domains of this are low-carbon grid connectivity, such as One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG), marine renewables, and climate-proof ports. However, the impediments against this are regulatory inconsistency and scarcity of scalable and bankable project proposals. The research endorses a vital blueprint for India-ASEAN sustainable maritime corridors and mixed-finance models. Thereby, the objective is to recast sustainable infrastructure from being passive developmental support to active institutional capacity enhancement.

Keywords: Act East Policy (AEP), ASEAN-India relations, Blue economy, Green infrastructure, Maritime security.

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Human Security in the Global South: Intersections of Health, Migration and Transnational Risks

*Antima Gautam**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolving paradigm of human security within the Global South, shifting the analytical focus from traditional state-centric military frameworks to the interconnected, everyday vulnerabilities faced by populations. By examining the critical intersections of public health crises, forced migration, and transnational risks, this study illuminates how localized vulnerabilities rapidly escalate into systemic, cross-border challenges. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines comparative case studies from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia with macro-level socio-economic data, the research analyzes how contemporary threats compound one another. The findings reveal that structural deficiencies in healthcare infrastructure do not merely trigger localized medical emergencies; rather, they serve as potent catalysts for mass displacement. Conversely, precarious migration pathways exacerbate regional health vulnerabilities, exposing mobile populations to heightened disease transmission, exploitation, and institutional neglect. Furthermore, the paper investigates how these dynamics are amplified by compounding transnational risks, most notably climate change-induced resource scarcity and the rise of illicit cross-border networks. These intersecting crises disproportionately strain the fragile governance structures characteristic of many Global South nations. Ultimately, this study argues that the conventional, siloed approaches to managing health, border control, and environmental policy are fundamentally inadequate for addressing the complex, overlapping realities of modern crises. The paper concludes by proposing a comprehensive, multilateral policy framework rooted in 'Cooperative Human Security'. This model prioritizes regional health integration, human rights-centered migration governance, and proactive risk-sharing mechanisms designed to build resilience from ground up rather than relying on reactive, top-down interventions.

Keywords: Human security, Global South, Public health, Migration governance, Climate displacement.

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India's Evolving Security Architecture: Health as a National Security Problem

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary conceptualisation of security has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from a sole focus on the state to a broader focus on human security. Traditionally, the state was the only object of reference and the only thing to be secured and protected. But such thinking is now outmoded and no longer dominates the security discourse. This change has been driven mainly by two factors: globalisation and the efforts of scholars from the deepening and widening school, among them Barry Buzan and Ole Waever are very prominent. These scholars protested against what they referred to as the narrower conceptualisation of security, which limits its referent objects to the military and the state. They called for the inclusion of various newly emerging issues- the non-traditional security threats- into mainstream security discourse, such as drug-trafficking, illegal immigration, food insecurity, terrorism, and health (in)security. This paper argues that, in addition to the traditional security challenges like war, India faces an unprecedented security risk from various non-traditional security threats as well, ranging from environmental degradation, terrorism, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, cybercrime, health and food insecurity. Taking health as the subject of enquiry, this paper argues that health insecurity is a major non-traditional security threat to India and thus constitutes a national security problem. In doing so, it advances the case for bringing public health into the mainstream security discourse within the framework of human security. The paper further looks at the historical conceptualisation of India's security, which was state-centric and military-oriented. In opposition to such a narrow definition of security, we argue that India must rethink its security policies and prioritise emerging non-traditional security threats, not least public health.

Keywords: Non-traditional security, Health security, India.

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The Role of Non-State Actor's in Global Conflicts: A Study of the Rise of Hezbollah

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ABSTRACT

Global conflict in the 21st century has moved beyond traditional state forces, with non-state actors (NSAs) taking on a prominent role. This paper focuses on one such NSA: Hezbollah in Lebanon. Far more than just a designated terrorist organization, Hezbollah occupies a central position in the Lebanese parliament. Tracing its origin from 1982 to the present, this study analyzes Hezbollah's pivotal role in the security architecture of the Middle East. It further investigates the organizational internal hierarchy, the domestic power it wields within Lebanon and its role as a proxy for Iran in regional power dynamics.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Middle-East, Non-state actor.

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India–China Relations: Non-Traditional Security Challenges and Prospects in the Global South

Ambika Gupta and Nancy Puri***

ABSTRACT

India–China relations have gradually moved towards addressing non-traditional security challenges confronting the broader Global South, such as climate change, cyber-attacks, pandemics, energy insecurity, and transnational risks, which have now become more significant for bilateral relations than traditional military issues. The introduction of this study emphasizes the importance of these new challenges that demand cooperation instead of competition. The study seeks to examine the implications of non-traditional security issues for India–China relations and the potential for cooperation within regional and South–South cooperation frameworks. It also seeks to understand the implications of their responses for developing countries that are dependent on stable regional dynamics. The methodology used is qualitative and analytical based on secondary sources such as academic literature, government documents, international reports and policy analysis. A comparative approach is applied to examine India’s and China’s strategies in addressing non-traditional security concerns. The background of the study shows that both countries face shared vulnerabilities: extreme weather events, water scarcity, digital insecurity, public-health emergencies, and energy dependence. But geopolitical mistrust, border tensions and competing regional ambitions often get in the way of cooperation in the face of these common challenges. Platforms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation offer structured opportunities for dialogue and joint action. The conclusion underscores that despite structural tensions, there is still a large amount of scope for India and China to work together on climate adaptation, disaster management, renewable energy, cyber governance, and public health preparedness, and that such cooperation would be beneficial to regional stability and sustainable development in the Global South.

Keywords: India–China security, Global South dynamics, Climate risks, Cyber threats, Energy vulnerabilities, Health emergencies, Regional cooperation.

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Climate-Induced Migration and Human Security in South Asia: An Analysis of India and Bangladesh

Shivangi Dikshit and Nancy Puri***

ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, climate change has emerged as one of the most significant drivers of migration. The South Asian region experiences some of the highest levels of climate-induced migration. Within the region, countries such as India and Bangladesh are increasingly facing issues of rising sea-level, riverbank erosion, drought and extreme heat as well as natural disasters including floods. These phenomena have devastating impact on human security of the people living in vulnerable regions. The climate-induced migration impacts the livelihoods, food, health, housing and access to essential services. This study argues that climate-induced migration must be viewed as a multidimensional human security challenge that requires an integrated policy response. Therefore, this paper examines the relationship between climate-induced migration and human security in India and Bangladesh. This study will adopt a qualitative and descriptive approach. By studying India and Bangladesh together, the paper will contribute to the growing discourse in climate mobility in South Asia and highlights the need for a pro-active people-centred strategies. The study will analyse how climate-related environmental changes influence migration decisions and assesses the resulting socio-economic and humanitarian challenges. It will further evaluate the adequacy of the existing policy response. This will help the study to identify the gaps in the existing policies.

Keywords: India, Bangladesh, Climate change, Migration, Human security.

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Irregular Migration and Border Governance: Rethinking Security in the Global South

Punit and Nancy Puri***

ABSTRACT

Irregular migration has become one of the most pertinent non-traditional security threats facing the Global South, challenging traditional notions of sovereignty, border management and human security. Increased armed violence, political unrest, economic disparities, forced migration due to climate change, and transnational criminal networks have intensified cross-border movements which have tested the efficacy of the old security paradigm of the state. Increasingly, governments have used securitizing language to describe irregular migration, but the securitizing response often goes beyond identifying structural drivers of migration and ignores the humanitarian responsibilities towards displaced populations. This paper proposes that (border) governance should go beyond enforcement and embrace a holistic approach that combines the need for security with human rights considerations, border partnership and sustainable development. The study follows the qualitative and comparative research approach, looking at selected migration corridors in the Global South, as in South Asia and the Mediterranean region, to understand the different reactions of states to irregular migration, both in terms of border management policies and the development of legal frameworks and international cooperation. The paper uses the theoretical frameworks of Human Security and Securitization Theory to critically examine the dynamic link between the management of migration and national security. It also delves into the contributions of international bodies, regional and bilateral arrangements, and how international engagement with migrants is managed to protect the rights and dignity of migrants. It argues that the consistent securitization of migration has led to fragmented and reactive policy responses which have failed to stop migration in an irregular pattern and have not been helpful for protecting vulnerable groups. Rather, it calls for a multi-dimensional governance approach, which will acknowledge the complex nature of migration as a political, economic, environmental, and humanitarian issue and call for coordinated regional action. The paper reframes the notion of border governance from a non-traditional security perspective and is relevant to the current political science literature on migration, state sovereignty and regional governance.

It also provides policy advice to enhance cooperative border management and inclusive, rights-based and resilient migration governance in the Global South.

Keywords: Migration governance, Border governance, Human security, State sovereignty, Transnational security.

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Waves of Vulnerability: Climate Crisis, Environmental Governance, and the Undoing of Coastal Livelihoods in the Bakkhali Region, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The coastal communities across the Global South are sitting on the edge of climate crisis. They contribute the least to factors that degrade the ecosystem, but act as a sponge absorbing the maximum ecological shocks. This paper examines the overlapping socio-economic vulnerabilities of the fishing communities in the Bakkhali region of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal. It seeks to understand their precarity within the broader framework of environmental governance, infrastructure failure, ecological inequality, and the political hegemony of climate resilience across Southeast Asia and the Global South. Bakkhali is situated at the confluence of the Sunderbans mangrove delta and the Bay of Bengal and represents a paradigmatic example of multi-dimensional climate stress. The marginalised fishermen of the region have historically depended on the tidal waterways and the marine ecosystem to sustain their livelihoods. Thus, an increase in sea-surface temperature, cyclonic frequency (post-Amphan and Yaas), saltwater intrusion, and rapid degradation of the buffer mangrove have resulted in livelihood loss, crop failure, restricted fishing seasons, decline in fish catch (specifically the type that fetches handsome revenue), and a collective shrinkage in household income. The intersection of the collapse of fishing and compounding agricultural stress has emerged as the main factor behind distress-induced internal migration of working-class men to informal labour markets in Kolkata and other cities. The paper further documents the precipitous decline of coastal tourism due to recurrent storms, beach erosion, and environmental degradation. An integrated mixed-method approach of primary and secondary data has been adopted for data collection and analysis. The paper advocates a paradigm shift towards participatory environmental governance and sustainable infrastructure through regional co-operation across Southeast Asia and the Global South.

Keywords: Climate change, Ecological shocks, Internal migration, Coastal tourism, Agricultural loss.

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When Hedging Fails: Climate Dependence and the Erosion of Strategic Autonomy among the Small Island States in the Indo-Pacific

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ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific is an emerging arena of geopolitical contestation. Small Island States (SISs) have successfully adopted strategic hedging, i.e., multi-state alignment, to preserve their strategic autonomy amidst growing hegemonic war among major powers. But as climate change induces a whole new kind of dependency, the traditional hedging strategies face severe compromises in shaping foreign policies. Climate-induced extreme weather conditions have amplified the vulnerability of these states and compelled them to secure financial assistance from major powers. This in turn generates a new kind of dependency that systematically narrows their bargaining power. This paper examines the reshaping of hedging strategies of SISs in the event of increased climate dependence. This study focuses on a central question: How and to what extent does climate dependence force SISs to erode their flexibility in hedging strategies in engaging with dominant actors in the Indo-Pacific region? To address this question, the study draws from the classical Dependency Theory, Evelyn Goh's idea of "Omni-enmeshment" and Cheng-Chwee Kuik's hedging typologies. Methodologically, the study employs a comparative case study approach. Further, using content analysis, the study looks at the actual data of how much climate aid each of these countries receives and from whom. This study proposes a Climate-Security Hedging Index (CSHI), a quantitative-qualitative framework that analyses the relationship among climate vulnerability, policy flexibility, and dependency on external climate finance of a state. At the end, the study recommends that these states should diversify their climate finance sources through utilising the CSHI framework and audit their strategic autonomy, in addition to creating a collective bargaining framework to reinstate their hedging competencies in the Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: Strategic hedging, Indo-Pacific, Small Island states, Climate dependence, Climate-Security Hedging Index (CSHI).

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Gendered Vulnerabilities in Non-Traditional Security: Assessing Human Trafficking and Migration Corridors between South and Southeast Asia

*Komal Karwa**

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary Global South, many countries are striving to reform their political and social systems to ensure a freer and fairer landscape for women. Informed by the Sustainable Development Goals, these countries are taking a range of actions to spotlight and address deep-rooted gender inequalities. But at the grassroots, the implementation of such changes to gender governance remains an uphill battle. This study provides a comparative analysis of the strategies adopted by various countries of the Global South to combat these entrenched inequalities and points to specific structural and cultural obstacles to the inclusion of women and real democracy. The research concludes that top-down government intervention is insufficient to drive sustained progress on gender issues. While statutory bodies and public policies are critical, old patriarchal societal norms consistently restrain women's independence and their capacity for personal decision-making. To counter this precarity, this paper shifts the focus toward the vital, collaborative role played by local communities and grassroots social movements in influencing the political course of action. Through a multi-sited lens, this study exhibits an empirical comparison between different government schemes, analyzing the specific operational environments and identifying which programmatic interventions work better in practice. Ultimately, the paper elaborates on why the formal inclusion of women alone is insufficient to address systemic gender disparities. It points to the vital necessity of incorporating grassroots community activism, economic self-sufficiency and physical safety into public policy for the dismantling of the traditional barriers that limit women's autonomy. This study provides a humanistic perspective to achieve genuine institutional reform and sustainable gender governance in the Global South by providing context-specific policy recommendations.

Keywords: Women's inclusion, Public policy, Institutional reform, Global South, Gender governance.

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Hydro-Hegemony and Water Conflict in South Asia

*Anupam Singh**

ABSTRACT

The article looks into the politics surrounding water in South Asia and how China, an upper riparian nation, is in charge of water dynamics. In this research, we will examine the potential of water power as a hydrokinetic weapon in the twenty-first century. The Chinese government's plan to build massive dams on important rivers like the Yarlung Tsangpo and Mekong rivers in the Tibet region is impeding the economies of South Asian countries. Although some limited steps have been taken to allay South Asian concerns, an increasing number of political commentators are interested in creating institutional frameworks for managing trans-boundary rivers agreements. However, given China's dam rush and refusal to cooperate, a final settlement or cooperative relationship will be challenging.

Keywords: Hydro-hegemony, Dam rush, Territorial, Sovereignty, Water, Stress.

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From Policy to Practice: Examining the Environmental Governance Implementation Gap in India

*Venika Rana**

ABSTRACT

In India, climate change, mitigation, and emissions are regulated through a comprehensive structure of environmental laws, amendment acts, and specialized frameworks. The Environment (Protection) Act serves as the master “umbrella” legislation, while sector-specific laws such as the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act empower State Pollution Control Boards to inspect, monitor, and act against polluting industries. On paper, this gives the state wide-ranging authority to control emissions, restrict industrial siting, and manage hazardous waste. Yet despite this vast legislative and policy framework, a persistent gap between law and enforcement continues to enable environmentally harmful industrial activity. This is where the central question of the paper lies: if the laws already exist, why does industrial pollution endure? Many existing studies have extensively discussed India’s environmental laws and governance framework, but comparatively less attention has been given to how governance and implementation failures continue to expose vulnerable communities to the consequences of industrial pollution despite the existence of strong environmental regulations. This research departs from that view. Its contribution is to reframe the problem as a governance and implementation failure rather than a legislative one, and to trace systematically the institutional, economic, and accountability factors that cause well-written laws to break down at the point of enforcement. This paper therefore argues that the continuation of industrial pollution in India is not primarily due to a lack of environmental legislation, but to governance challenges such as weak enforcement mechanisms, institutional fragmentation, economic pressures, and limited accountability. To investigate these factors, the study adopts a qualitative policy-analysis approach, tracing environmental legislation, government reports, and documented case studies of industrial pollution in India.

Keywords: Climate change, Environmental governance, Environmental legislation, Governance challenges.

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Role of Non-State Actors in Energy Security and Pipeline Diplomacy with Special Reference to the Red Sea Crisis

*Gayathri Pramod Panamoottil**

ABSTRACT

The paper titled Role of Non-State Actors in Energy Security and Pipeline Diplomacy with Special Reference to the Red Sea Crisis critically examines the role of non-state actors and proxy warfare in the disruptions and sabotaging of energy pipelines, which embody the assurance for safe and secure energy transfer. Since the past four years, the world has recurrently experienced adverse and unpredicted shortcomings due to the recurrent attacks sponsored by terrorist groups against major energy pipelines, which act as the bedrock of the world's energy transit routes and which indirectly affect the peace and security of the world. The frequent disruptions and sabotaging of ships and pipelines, and the hijacking of ships in the Red Sea, have caused unprecedented challenges to the world supply chain. Funded by Iran for securing and placing their footprint in the region, and for proclaiming their domination and power for becoming a regional hegemon, the war of power struggle between Iran, Israel, and the United States has led to a devastating impact across all major energy transit routes and security. This paper focuses on the geopolitical relevance of pipeline diplomacy and energy security at times of crisis, and how energy security — particularly oil, petroleum, and gas — as the archetype of power, influences the big power nations, and the role of the EU, Russia, and, last but not the least, the future course of actions that need to be taken under such situations. The paper further investigates how major transit routes have been bombarded by non-state actors such as the Houthi rebels, funded and directed by Iran, and how these disruptions reverberate across the world economy, generating cascading consequences for global trade, energy markets, and international security.

Keywords: Pipeline diplomacy, Energy security, Red Sea crisis, Proxy warfare, World supply chain.

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Energy Security and Green Transitions in Emerging Economies: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global South

*Deepika Verma**

ABSTRACT

Energy security and green transition have emerged as two of the most significant, interconnected, critical and major policy challenges facing emerging economies in the Global South. Emerging economies such as India, China, Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia face rapidly increasing energy demand due to rapid economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, and rising energy demand. Emerging economies face the dual challenge of ensuring energy security while simultaneously pursuing cleaner and more sustainable development pathways. The paper examines the evolving relationship between energy security and green transitions in emerging economies, focusing on the opportunities, challenges, and policy implications of balancing economic growth, development and environmental goals. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels to support economic growth and provide energy access to their populations. However, dependence on imported energy resources exposes these economies to supply disruptions, geopolitical risks, and price volatility. This study adopts a qualitative and comparative analytical approach to examine energy security challenges and green transition strategies in selected emerging economies based on the analysis of secondary data. Particular attention is given to renewable energy adoption, energy diversification, climate commitments, and policy frameworks. The collected data are analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying key themes such as energy access, energy affordability, renewable energy development, climate finance, technology transfer, and sustainable development. Furthermore, the paper explores the role of international cooperation and multilateral forums in supporting energy transitions in emerging economies. By synthesizing existing literature and policy documents, the study evaluates how emerging economies seek to balance developmental priorities with environmental sustainability. The findings are interpreted within the broader context of sustainable development and global climate governance to assess opportunities, challenges, and future policy directions.

Keywords: Energy security, Global South, Green transitions, Sustainable development, Renewable energy.

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The Blue-Green Frontier: Reconfiguring Regional Security and Financing in the New Global Order

*Ashu Mehlawat**

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly divided multipolar world, this study looks at the structural realignment of Southeast Asia and the larger Global South. Southeast Asia has evolved from a peripheral geopolitical battlefield to a primary anchor of strategic, economic, and ecological contestation as the Atlantic region's historical supremacy gives way to a more decentralized global architecture. This paper examines how member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their allies operationalize strategic autonomy and hedging to manage the intensifying rivalry between the United States and China by analyzing twelve fundamental sub-themes of current regional dynamics. In contrast to India's growing Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, it examines the dual-edged economic and security impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The complex convergence of classic and non-traditional security concerns, such as marine "Blue Security" threats, transnational criminal scam hubs, and severe regional climate governance constraints, is further evaluated in the paper. This study offers a thorough, multifaceted analysis of the strategic trajectories defining the Global South by assessing the structural barriers to the green transition, such as a crucial \$1.455 trillion funding gap, and the role of soft power and decolonial paradigms in reshaping global hierarchies.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, Strategic autonomy, Global South, Geopolitical rivalry, Regional security.

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Energy Security and Green Transitions in Emerging Economies: India's Leadership in Advancing Sustainable Energy Governance in the Global South

*Niharika Gogoi**

ABSTRACT

The global transition towards low-carbon energy systems has fundamentally reshaped the discourse on energy security, particularly in emerging economies where developmental priorities coexist with climate commitments, economic growth, and rising energy demand. Although existing scholarship has extensively examined renewable energy transitions in developed economies, comparatively limited attention has been paid to how emerging economies integrate energy security, sustainable development, and climate governance within a unified policy framework. Moreover, the literature remains fragmented in explaining how countries of the Global South can exercise leadership in promoting equitable and development-oriented energy transitions. Addressing this research gap, the present study examines India's evolving role as a strategic leader in advancing sustainable energy governance and green transitions across the Global South. Specifically, the study aims to analyse the relationship between energy security and green transition in emerging economies, evaluate India's renewable energy policies and climate diplomacy as instruments of energy security, and assess how India's model can contribute to sustainable and inclusive energy transitions in developing countries. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on comparative policy analysis and documentary research. It draws upon secondary data from Government of India policy documents, reports published by international organisations, including the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the World Bank, and the United Nations, together with peer-reviewed academic literature. Thematic content analysis is employed to examine India's renewable energy policies, institutional reforms, technological initiatives, and international partnerships within the broader framework of energy security and sustainable development. The originality of this study lies in proposing the concept of Developmental Energy Leadership, which conceptualises India not merely as a successful renewable energy adopter but as a strategic leader integrating energy security, sustainable development, environmental governance, and South–South cooperation into a coherent policy framework.

Keywords: Energy security, Green energy transition, India, Global South, Sustainable energy governance.

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Chokepoint Sovereignty: Southeast Asia's Maritime Vulnerabilities, India's SAGAR Initiative, and the Critical Minerals Weaponisation Dilemma in the Global South's Multipolar Transition

*Shantanu Sharma**

ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the central arena of 21st-century geopolitical contestation, with maritime security and critical mineral supply chains increasingly intertwined with great power competition. While extant scholarship extensively examines US-China strategic rivalry and separately analyses critical mineral geopolitics, the nexus between maritime chokepoint vulnerabilities, resource dependency, and the Global South's strategic autonomy remains critically underexplored. The paper addresses this lacuna by examining how Southeast Asia's maritime chokepoint vulnerabilities intersect with critical mineral supply chain dependencies and by evaluating India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for ALL in the Region) initiative as an alternative security architecture for the Global South's strategic autonomy. Employing qualitative case study analysis, this research examines three ASEAN states: Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which simultaneously face South China Sea maritime disputes, possess critical mineral resources, and seek strategic partnerships with India. The study utilises securitisation theory (Copenhagen School) extended to supply chain security, complemented by critical geopolitics and postcolonial IR frameworks. The analysis reveals that Southeast Asian states face a strategic trilemma: 1) maritime security threats from China's grey-zone tactics; 2) critical mineral dependency on Chinese processing infrastructure (85-90% rare earth elements, 60% lithium refining); and 3) green energy transition requirements that necessitate these minerals. The critical minerals-maritime security nexus represents a neglected dimension of multipolarity, where Global South agency manifests through strategic hedging rather than passive alignment. Policy implications include accelerating the implementation of the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative, expanding ASEAN maritime domain awareness sharing, and developing rare earth elements processing capacity through partnerships with Vietnam.

Keywords: Critical minerals, Maritime security, SAGAR, ASEAN, Chokepoint, Indo-Pacific.

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The Maritime Digital Chokepoints: Security Vulnerabilities to Undersea Cables in Indo-Pacific region

*Yash Seela**

ABSTRACT

With increasing data flows and deeper internet penetration in the Indo-Pacific region, it becomes important to analyze the communications lines under the sea. Geo-spatial mapping of the Indo-Pacific region brings out certain maritime digital chokepoints vulnerable to natural and manmade threat. This research will majorly focus on vulnerability assessment of non-routine manmade threat from sources such as espionage and sabotage. Some of the notable digital chokepoints in the region include Strait of Malacca, Luzon Strait and Guam base which is a US-strategic cable hub, important for US Military communication. While maritime security in Indo-Pacific has been widely studied, the security implications of concentrated submarine cable infrastructure remain under-examined. The concentration of submarine cables in several digital chokepoints may create strategic vulnerabilities that could be exploited during geopolitical crises, yet this dimension remains insufficiently explored in existing scholarships. Espionage and sabotage may occur on an onshore landing station, on the physical seabed and at the network level by means of packet mirroring and Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) hijack. The paper attempts to answer these questions through geospatial mapping of undersea cables and landing stations, vulnerability assessment and risks emanating from shipping traffic, seabed depth, and infrastructure concentration.

Keywords: Digital chokepoints, Submarine Cable, Espionage, Sabotage, Critical infrastructure.

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Northeast India in the Indo-Pacific: Examining the Convergence of External Partnerships

*Bagmita Borthakur**

ABSTRACT

Northeast India has long been identified as India's gateway to Southeast Asia, a framing that has shaped both policy and academic discourses. Consequently, much of the existing scholarship has focused on the region's geostrategic location and its position within the Act East Policy. However, recent years have witnessed growing engagement in the Northeast by external partners such as Japan, the European Union, and South Korea. These engagements reflect a broader pattern that has received limited scholarly attention. This paper addresses this gap by examining the increasing interest of multiple external partners in Northeast India and investigates the nature of this convergence. The study employs qualitative content analysis of bilateral archives, joint statements, official policy documents, and annual reports of India's Ministry of External Affairs. It employs computational textual analysis through Voyant Tools to trace the recurring priorities shaping these partnerships in the region. The paper argues that connectivity has emerged as the dominant theme linking these engagements, with infrastructure development as a primary objective. The findings of the study suggest that this shift extends beyond developmental priorities and converges with broader strategic interests associated with the Indo-Pacific. The paper demonstrates that Northeast India can no longer be viewed solely as a gateway to Southeast Asia but is repositioned within the Indo-Pacific architecture. This shift holds significant implications for India's partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Northeast India, Indo-Pacific, Connectivity, Japan, EU, South-Korea.

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Digital Arteries Under Threat: Undersea Cable Vulnerability, Hybrid Warfare, and the Architecture of Indo-Pacific Security Competition

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ABSTRACT

Undersea cables carry approximately 95 percent of the world's intercontinental data traffic, making them one of the most critical yet often overlooked components of the global digital economy. As strategic competition between the United States, China, and their respective partners intensifies across the Indo-Pacific, these submarine cable networks have increasingly become a strategic domain where geoeconomic interests, military competition, and concerns over digital sovereignty intersect. This paper examines the evolving architecture of Indo-Pacific cable geopolitics through three analytical lenses: the weaponisation of connectivity through China's Digital Silk Road and HMN Technologies' cable deployment strategy; the construction of allied counter-infrastructure frameworks encompassing QUAD's Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative and AUKUS Pillar II's autonomous undersea systems programme; and the growing salience of hybrid warfare targeting cable infrastructure, as evidenced by the Taiwan Strait Matsu incidents and Baltic Sea sabotage cases. Drawing on a two-tier deterrence framework that distinguishes information-layer responses from operational-layer countermeasures, the paper argues that Indo-Pacific cable security has transcended technical management and become a frontline of great power competition demanding coordinated multilateral governance.

Keywords: Undersea cable geopolitics, Indo-Pacific security, Hybrid warfare, Digital silk road, AUKUS pillar II, QUAD, Maritime domain awareness, Critical infrastructure protection, Great power competition, Digital sovereignty.

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Leveraging Defence Research and Development for Strategic Autonomy: India's Path towards Self-Reliance in Defence Production

*Col. Sunil Kumar Sharma**

ABSTRACT

Strategic autonomy has emerged as a critical policy objective for countries of the Global South seeking to safeguard their sovereignty, security interests and independent decision-making capacity. India's aerospace and defence industry is at a decisive turning point, with defence research and development (R&D) emerging as the key driver of transformation. While the sector has historically relied on imports, it is now increasingly harnessing indigenous innovation to meet global standards and operational self-sufficiency. Defence R&D underpins progress in aeronautics, unmanned platforms, space systems, and cyber defence, while simultaneously reinforcing national security. Initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence provide a structured framework that encourages collaboration among government laboratories, private enterprises, and academic institutions. This study traces the evolution of defence R&D in India, budget allocation over the years, public-private partnerships that accelerate innovation, and industrial growth. Beyond its strategic role, defence R&D is also a catalyst for aerospace and defence industrial growth and exports. Through forward-looking policies and sustained investment in innovation, India is building a modern aerospace and defence ecosystem that strengthens national autonomy while positioning itself as an emerging global defence leader. The paper is an attempt to make a few key findings such as, the Strategic Role of DRDO, as has been central to India's defence innovation ecosystem since its inception, driving indigenous technology development and reducing reliance on imports. The paper also highlights that strategic autonomy does not imply isolation but requires a balanced approach combining indigenous capacity building with selective and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Keywords: Strategic autonomy, DRDO, Make-in-India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Defence sector.

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The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and Strategic Autonomy in the Global South: ASEAN's Security Model in a Multipolar World

*Khusboo Goel**

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly multipolar world, strategic autonomy has become an important objective for many countries of the Global South. While discussions on strategic autonomy often focus on military strength, alliances and power politics, this paper examines an alternative approach through the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). Established in 1995 under the framework of ASEAN, the treaty aims to keep Southeast Asia free from nuclear weapons and promote regional peace, stability and cooperation. The paper argues that SEANWFZ represents an important example of how regional organisations can exercise strategic autonomy through collective norms and institutional mechanisms rather than military power alone. By creating a nuclear weapon-free region, ASEAN has sought to reduce the influence of great-power rivalries and strengthen its role in regional security governance. The paper further explores how the treaty contributes to ASEAN's efforts to maintain neutrality and preserve regional stability amid growing geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific. The SEANWFZ also sends a broader message that peace, cooperation and collective restraint can remain effective tools for regional security even in an era of increasing strategic competition. The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including academic literature, policy reports, official ASEAN documents, treaty texts and studies on nuclear strategy and strategic autonomy. Through an examination of ASEAN's security practices and regional diplomacy, the paper highlights the significance of normative approaches to security in the Global South. The paper concludes that the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone is not merely a disarmament initiative but also a reflection of ASEAN's strategic autonomy. The treaty demonstrates how smaller states can collectively shape regional security, maintain their agency and promote a vision of peace and cooperation in a rapidly changing global order.

Keywords: Strategic autonomy, Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), ASEAN, Global South, Multipolarity.

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ASEAN-India FTA: Reasons to Navigate through ‘Commons’

Saheli Bose and Amit Kumar***

ABSTRACT

As an era of protectionism and unpredictable tariff unfolds, regional and trans-regional trade agreements will be crucial for improved trade relation. The ASEAN-India FTA(AIFTA) had come under scrutiny due to India’s rising trade deficit with ASEAN members. However, the long-pending review also presents an important opportunity for India to move beyond its “deficit syndrome”. For a country like India, the real opportunity lies in using FTAs as a leverage to shape the future rules of global trading system. ASEAN-India FTA(AIFTA) should serve as guide to modernize domestic capabilities, align with international standards, and influence multilateral rule-making thereby navigating through the common gains. Therefore this paper will analyse the AIFTA in light of the above configuration and try to locate why it is essential for the India and ASEAN to broaden the scope of the FTA, buff its rough edges and re-evolve in light of the situation of global trade volatility. India and ASEAN both affected by disruptive actions on open and free multilateral global trade system should stay relevant to each other and fix their ‘common’ commitments in the new world equation.

Keywords: Free Trade Agreement, ASEAN, India.

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Act East Policy as an Instrument of Indian Economic Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific Region

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary international relations, the Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a significant center of global geopolitics and geo-economics, shaping regional economic architectures and strategic interactions and within this emerging regional context, India has increasingly utilized economic diplomacy as a significant instrument for advancing its various strategic and economic interests. The Act East Policy has evolved as a major component of India's engagement with Southeast Asia, East Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region by strengthening trade and economic cooperation, connectivity, and regional partnerships. While existing studies largely revolve around the strategic and security dimension of this policy, relatively limited attention has been given to analysing the policy through the perspective of Indian economic diplomacy, creating a gap in understanding its economic role and implications. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the Act East Policy as an instrument of India's economic diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region and analysing its contribution to advancing India's economic interests and regional engagement. Moreover, by adopting a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical methodology, the study further aims to analyse the various economic tools, instruments and mechanisms employed under it and examines how these have shaped and influenced the implementation of the Policy. Overall, this study aims to help policymakers, administrators, academicians, researchers and students in understanding the various dynamics of Act East policy as an instrument of India's economic diplomacy and its growing role in shaping regional engagement and architecture.

Keywords: Act East policy, Indian Economic diplomacy, Indo-Pacific, Regional economic architecture.

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Indigenous institutional Autonomy and Post-Colonial Governance within the Russian Nenets and Indian Sixth Schedule Frameworks

*Sonam Chikara**

ABSTRACT

The resurgence of the Global South is reshaping the Asia-Pacific regional order while simultaneously raising new questions about governance within historically marginalised regions. In this context, indigenous institutional autonomy emerges as a critical site of tension between constitutional recognition and state-led developmental agendas. This paper examines these tensions through a comparative analysis of Russia's "Indigenous small-numbered peoples" framework in relation to the Nenets and India's Sixth Schedule system. In Russia, the research finds that centralised federal control and the prioritisation of extractive industries in the Arctic have increasingly reduced indigenous legal protections to a symbolic status. India's Sixth Schedule offers a model of post-colonial governance built on de facto and de jure asymmetry, providing a structured sanctuary for tribal self-determination through Autonomous District Councils. By examining these divergent trajectories, this study argues that true institutional autonomy is not merely a formal legal status, but a reflection of a state's willingness to share power with its historically marginalised communities. This suggests that the stability of the emerging regional order depends on the ability of rising powers to balance national unity with the protection of distinct cultural and political identities.

Keywords: Indigenous autonomy, Post-colonial governance, Nenets, Sixth schedule, Human security.

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Urbanisation without Industrialisation: The Political Economy of Small Cities in North-East India

*Nisha Sisodia**

ABSTRACT

The contemporary urban trajectory of Northeast India (NEI) presents a profound paradox for the regional political economy which is a rapid demographic shift toward urban centers disconnected from the structural transformation associated with industrialisation. Unlike the manufacturing led urbanisation witnessed in Western paradigms or the services led growth of South Indian metropolises, NEI's urban transition is characterised by "urbanisation without industrialisation." This article examines the political economy of small and intermediate cities, specifically Guwahati, Shillong, and Imphal which serve as the primary channel for this transition. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach that synthesises Census of India longitudinal data, National Sample Survey (NSS) employment statistics and reports from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The study investigates the drivers of this abnormal growth. It suggests that urban expansion in the region is propelled not by labor intensive industrial productivity but by a combination of prolonged agrarian distress, state-led infrastructure spending and the proliferation of informal tertiary sectors. These cities function as administrative and consumption hubs rather than production centers which leads to a precarious "informal-hyper-urbanisation." The research argues that the unique geopolitical position of the North-East, characterized by the "Look East/Act East" policy framework has prioritized connectivity over local value-addition, further entrenching the region as a peripheral market. This analysis concludes that without a strategic shift toward localized manufacturing and regenerative urban planning, the region risks a "low-level equilibrium trap," where urban growth exacerbates socioeconomic inequalities rather than fostering sustainable development.

Keywords: North-east India, Urbanisation, Industrialisation, Political Economy, Sustainable development.

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Projecting Strategic Autonomy through Soft Power Diplomacy: India's Re-engagement with Afghanistan under Taliban Rule

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ABSTRACT

The withdrawal of United States from Afghanistan in August 2021 and the subsequent return of Taliban marked a major geopolitical shift in both South Asia and Central Asia. The fall of western backed Afghan government created a complex dilemma for regional geopolitics, especially for India, which had supported the democratic system in the country. This article examines Afghanistan's post-conflict recovery after the U.S. withdrawal, the implications of the Taliban takeover, and India's evolving policy responses with a de facto regime that does not formally recognize. The study primarily seeks to analyse, to what extent India can sustain its influence in Afghanistan through soft power diplomacy by maintaining its strategic autonomy within the chaotic political environment. In the absence of viable hard power options and direct political influence under the Taliban regime, India has increasingly relied on soft power diplomacy to maintain its presence and protect the regional interests. This research draws upon the theoretical framework of strategic autonomy and soft power to interpret India's foreign policy behaviour. Methodologically, the study adopts qualitative and analytical approaches by using secondary sources, including government statements, policy reports, scholarly articles and books.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban, Strategic autonomy, Soft power.

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From Tradition to Global: Dance as a Form of Cultural Diplomacy in the Global South

*Pareza Noushad**

ABSTRACT

The study examines the emergence of cultural diplomacy as a major dimension within the concept of soft power and in the workings of international relations, focusing majorly on the global south. Among the broader discourses on cultural diplomacy the paper primarily highlights dance as prominent medium of cultural diplomacy and soft power in the global south. Dance is an art and art is a creative form to express oneself. It is a nonverbal communication that allows portraying of one's culture, heritage and emotions. At the international relations level though dance does not guarantee conflict resolution but it does form community strength. International Relations and its complex workings allow nations to work together and handle global concerns. To build this mutual trust and friendship countries at the global level embark on various diplomatic and cooperative measures such as soft power diplomacy, cultural exchange etc. The study thus, tends to explore how countries majorly in the Global South are now utilizing dance as a significant instrument of cultural diplomacy, in international festivals and digital media platforms to convey cultural influence and cultivate people to people relations on the international level. Cultural diplomacy explores and exchanges ideas and traditions influential to the heritage of a particular nation, and it is becoming a huge and noticeable part of international relations and foreign policy. Like, India incorporated Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), and China uses institutes like Confucius Institute to spread Chinese cultural influence. The paper throws light on how dance has emerged itself as a part of global politics and tool for nation branding. The paper also delves into the challenges of dance as a form of cultural diplomacy and the future it holds in the South-South cultural cooperation.

Keywords: Dance, Global South, Cultural diplomacy, Soft power.

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From Cultural Connectivity to Strategic Convergence: India's Indo-Pacific Vision and the Act East Policy in Southeast Asia

*Akash Chillar**

ABSTRACT

India and Southeast Asia share centuries-old civilizational, cultural, religious, and maritime linkages that have historically connected the two regions through trade networks, the spread of Buddhism and Hinduism, and enduring people-to-people exchanges. In the contemporary era, these historical ties have acquired renewed strategic significance amid the shift of global geopolitics toward the Indo-Pacific, intensifying great-power competition, maritime security challenges, and growing concerns over supply chain resilience. Against this backdrop, India's Indo-Pacific Vision and the Act East Policy (AEP) have emerged as two distinct yet closely intertwined strategic frameworks shaping New Delhi's engagement with Southeast Asia. While the Indo-Pacific Vision provides a broad geopolitical and maritime framework emphasising a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based regional order, the Act East Policy serves as the principal instrument for translating this vision into concrete political, economic, and strategic partnerships with Southeast Asian states. By adopting a qualitative and analytical approach based on the examination of official policy documents, government statements, strategic reports, and relevant academic literature, this paper examines the convergence between these frameworks against the backdrop of rapidly evolving geopolitical dynamics. It seeks to examine how Southeast Asia's position in India's regional strategy functions as both a geographic bridge and a strategic partner in maintaining a stable and multipolar Indo-Pacific order. Simultaneously, initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, reflecting India's efforts to strengthen connectivity, maritime cooperation, and economic resilience, will be analysed. Finally, it will attempt to comprehend the increasing pertinence of the synergy between the Indo-Pacific Vision and the Act East Policy, which has become increasingly significant in addressing contemporary regional challenges and advancing India's role as a leading stakeholder in the evolving Indo-Pacific order.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific Vision; Act East Policy (AEP); ASEAN; Geopolitical rivalry; Maritime security.

India's Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in the Global South: Cultural Connectivity and Strategic Engagement (2014–2026)

*Divashni Gandas**

ABSTRACT

In the evolving multipolar international order, public diplomacy and soft power have emerged as significant instruments of foreign policy and international engagement. The Global South, particularly Southeast Asia, has become an important arena where states increasingly employ cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, digital outreach, and civilizational linkages to strengthen strategic partnerships and regional cooperation. India, through its “Act East Policy” and Indo-Pacific vision, has expanded its diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asian nations by promoting cultural connectivity, democratic values, heritage diplomacy, and people-to-people interactions. This paper examines India's use of public diplomacy and soft power in the Global South between 2014 and 2026, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia. It analyses how India has utilized cultural institutions, language promotion, digital diplomacy, educational cooperation, diaspora engagement, and developmental partnerships to enhance its regional influence and strategic presence. The study also explores the role of yoga diplomacy, Buddhist heritage, academic collaborations, and digital platforms in strengthening India's image as a responsible and inclusive global actor. The paper argues that India's soft power strategy has become an essential component of its foreign policy framework in the Indo-Pacific region, especially amid growing geopolitical competition and China's expanding regional footprint. By emphasizing shared historical ties, cultural affinity, and cooperative development, India seeks to build trust-based partnerships within the Global South. The study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach using secondary sources, policy documents, official statements, and contemporary scholarly literature. The research contributes to the broader discourse on public diplomacy, cultural connectivity, and strategic dynamics in the Global South by highlighting the increasing relevance of non-coercive instruments in international relations and regional diplomacy.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Soft power, Global South, Cultural connectivity.

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India's Notion of Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Cultural Connectivity in the Global South

*Himani Atri**

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary international system, public diplomacy, soft power, and cultural connectivity have emerged as significant instruments for fostering cooperation, mutual understanding, and influence among nations. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which primarily focuses on government-to-government interactions, public diplomacy emphasizes engagement with foreign publics, civil society organizations, academic institutions, media, and cultural communities. In the context of the Global South, these tools have become increasingly important as developing countries seek to enhance their international standing, strengthen regional partnerships, and promote alternative narratives in global governance. The concept of soft power, introduced by Joseph S. Nye Jr., refers to the ability of a country to influence others through attraction rather than coercion or economic inducements. Cultural connectivity serves as a crucial bridge in this process by facilitating the exchange of ideas, traditions, languages, and values among societies. Shared historical experiences of colonialism, struggles for independence, and aspirations for sustainable development create a strong foundation for cooperation within the Global South. Regional organizations, cultural exchanges, media platforms, and digital technologies further enhance these connections by enabling broader participation and interaction among diverse communities. Such engagements contribute to mutual trust, regional solidarity, and collective identity formation. This study examines the interrelationship between public diplomacy, soft power, and cultural connectivity in the Global South. It argues that these instruments not only enhance national image and international influence but also contribute to South–South cooperation and a more inclusive global order. By analyzing various cultural and diplomatic initiatives undertaken by emerging powers and developing nations, the study highlights how cultural resources can be transformed into strategic assets for international engagement. Furthermore, it explores the challenges posed by resource constraints, digital divides, geopolitical competition, and unequal representation in global communication networks.

Keywords: Soft power, Public diplomacy, Cultural connectivity, Global South.

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Diplomatic & Academic Narrative

*Suzanna Adamyants**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Russia-India strategic partnership as a durable, non-transient alliance offering Southeast Asia a credible alternative to great-power binary alignment. Moving beyond conventional security analysis, it argues that the relationship's resilience stems from a "legacy of trust" built across four decades—from the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation to contemporary RIC and SCO coordination—which has consistently defended sovereign equality and shielded Global South states from unilateral sanctions. The study identifies defence co-development (exemplified by the Brahmos missile system), academic and scientific cooperation (MGIMO-JNU programmes, IIT Bombay's Indian-Russian research centre), and soft power institutions (Russian Days, language chairs, ballet and yoga diplomacy) as the pillars sustaining this civilisational partnership. It then projects the relationship's evolution from bilateral to trilateral engagement, proposing concrete mechanisms for ASEAN benefit: a Maritime Coordination Cell for the Malacca and Lombok Straits, a Chennai-Vladivostok corridor linking the Northern Sea Route with India's INSTC, joint GLONASS-NavIC satellite systems, an ASEAN Epidemic Response Reserve leveraging Sputnik and Indian pharmaceutical capacity, and expanded educational diplomacy through dedicated Southeast Asian Strategic Studies chairs. The paper further proposes institutionalising generational continuity via a Russia-India-ASEAN Youth Research Fellowship and a jointly hosted Digital Museum of the partnership's history. It concludes that the Russia-India axis functions not as a Cold War relic but as a laboratory for post-Western international law, offering Southeast Asia both material and cognitive alternatives to unipolar dependency—provided the legacy is deliberately institutionalised rather than assumed.

Keywords: Russia-India partnership, Strategic autonomy, ASEAN centrality, Global South, Multipolarity.

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Huawei and the Politics of Digital Infrastructure Acceptance across ASEAN

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ABSTRACT

Huawei's presence across Southeast Asia has become one of the most consequential and least theorised dimensions of the US-China technological contest of the emerging multipolar order. Existing scholarship treats ASEAN states primarily as reactive while studying China's digital footprint in the region. It tends to concentrate on the security implications of 5G adoption or the economic logic of infrastructure dependence. This research argues that such framing misreads the politics at work. ASEAN governments are not merely accepting or rejecting Huawei; instead, they are actively constructing sovereign narratives that legitimise their infrastructural choices. This research draws on comparative analysis of Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. The study maps the distinctive discursive strategies through which ASEAN states have narrated their engagement with Huawei's infrastructure. Malaysia frames its embrace through a postcolonial register, and Cambodia's narration of Huawei becomes an instrument of modernisation that legitimises regime performance. Vietnam, since 2025, quietly reversed its stance, long positioned as the region's most resolute holdout, awarding contracts to Huawei and ZTE while the Philippines sustains a condition of deliberate narrative incoherence. Indonesia manages Huawei through the language of multivendor diversification. Singapore exercises technocratic neutrality by subjecting Huawei to regulatory processes that depoliticise the choice without ever resolving it. Across these cases, this paper identifies a common structural logic, i.e. each narrative, however distinct in its political idiom, performs the same function of rendering Chinese infrastructural embeddedness domestically legible. It is within this context that the paper engages the strategic narratives literature to explain the role of recipient-state narration in consolidating the communicative power of infrastructural geopolitics. The paper's central contribution is to reframe digital infrastructure acceptance not as a strategic outcome to be explained, but as a discursive process to be interpreted.

Keywords: Huawei, ASEAN, Infrastructural geopolitics, Strategic narratives, Political communication.

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Interoperability Partnerships to Expand Strategic Footprints: How India is Emerging as the First Option of Support for Sustaining Russian-origin Military Hardware?

*Barshan Karmakar**

ABSTRACT

The changing geopolitical environment following the Russia-Ukraine war has significantly disrupted the global defence supply chains. It has particularly affected the countries which are attached to Russia in order to meet its defence needs. Among these countries, India has occupied a unique position due to its decades-long defence partnerships with Russia and its extensive inventory of Russian-origin military hardware operated by the Army, Air Force and Navy. Starting from the Sukhoi Su-30 MKI, the remaining units of MiG-29 fighter jets, T-72 and T-90 tanks, S-400 Air Defence Systems, naval guns, and AK-series rifles, etc., keep India among the world's largest operators of Russian military hardware. Instances of sanctions, logistical disruptions, production bottlenecks, and Moscow's wartime priorities have accelerated the need to create alternative sustainment and maintenance frameworks. In this strategic landscape, India is also increasingly emerging not just as a customer of acquiring Russian military hardware, but as a critical interoperability and maintenance hub capable of supporting, upgrading, and sustaining Russian-origin military hardware for itself and potentially for other nations. India's rise in this domain has been closely tied to its policy push under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, which emphasises indigenous production, technology absorption and defence industrial self-reliance. The evolution of joint ventures such as BrahMos Aerospace and the Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL) demonstrates a transition from a buyer-seller dynamic to a collaborative defence manufacturing and long-term lifecycle support model. The AK-203 rifle project, license manufacturing of Su-30 Mki aircraft, T-90 tanks and other agreements of joint production of spares and components that reflect India's expanding capability to localise sustainment of ecosystems for Russian-origin systems. This paper also looks forward to arguing that the need for interoperability partnerships is no longer confined to operational military cooperation, which now includes industrial interoperability, logistics integration, technology adaptation, and life sustainment networks. India's defence-industrial ecosystem is led by entities like HAL, Bharat Electronics Limited, DRDO and emerging private sector defence manufacturers are gradually positioning themselves as a strategic bridge between Russian technology and global operational requirements. This capability is particularly significant for countries that operate Russian-origin systems facing difficulties in obtaining timely

upgrades, spare parts or technical support due to sanctions and geopolitical constraints. However, rising discussions surrounding the export, upgrade and modernisation of platforms like Su-30 Mki further indicate India's growing relevance as an alternative support architecture for Russian-origin defence equipment. This study looks into evaluating the limitations of this emerging role. Dependence on incomplete technology transfer, challenges in supply-chain localisation, leading to delays in modernisation programs and geopolitical pressures from Western sanctions continue to constrain India's ambitions. Moreover, India needs to carefully balance its strategic autonomy while simultaneously deepening ties with Western defence partners and sustaining its long-standing defence cooperation with Russia. This paper also contends that India's expanding role in sustaining Russian-origin military hardware represents more than a logistical necessity. India is becoming a strategic instrument for expanding India's geopolitical influence, defence diplomacy, and industrial footprint across the Global South and the Indo-Pacific. By transforming itself into a centre for interoperability, maintenance, modernisation and joint-development, India is positioning itself as an indispensable actor in the future architecture of global defence sustainment networks.

Keywords: Russia, India, Aatmanirbhar Bharat Initiative, Russia-Ukraine War, BrahMos Aerospace.

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BeiDou and Eyes in the Sky: China's Dual-Use Space Infrastructure as a Two-Track Coercive Architecture in Southeast Asia

Isha Singh and Col Kaushik Ray***

ABSTRACT

China's Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) strategy has transformed its space programme from a developmental instrument into a mechanism of strategic coercion. This paper argues that China's dual-use space infrastructure, specifically its BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BNS) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) constellation, operates as a two-track coercive architecture in Southeast Asia. The first track, dependency entrapment, functions through the progressive integration of BeiDou into ASEAN states' civilian and maritime infrastructure, creating technological lock-in that MCF converts into latent strategic leverage. The second track, compellence through denial, operates via China's expanding ISR network over the South China Sea, which generates asymmetric situational awareness that structurally disadvantages maritime claimant states during periods of strategic competition. Crucially, these two tracks are not parallel but recursive: BeiDou-dependent states simultaneously face ISR-enabled surveillance of their own maritime activity, producing a coercive feedback loop in which dependency and informational disadvantage reinforce each other. Drawing on MCF doctrine, Chinese space white papers, and PLA doctrinal publications, this paper demonstrates that what ASEAN states receive as civilian navigational infrastructure is, under MCF logic, inseparable from the warfighting and power projection functions it enables. The paper concludes by examining the implications for India's Indo-Pacific posture, arguing that China's dual-use space coercion in Southeast Asia constitutes a strategic template with direct relevance for the India-China asymmetry in the broader Indo-Pacific theatre.

Keywords: Military-Civil fusion, BeiDou, ISR, Strategic coercion, Southeast Asia, South China Sea, Dual-use space, Indo-Pacific.

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Harnessing Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) for Strategic Awareness in Southeast Asia and the Global South: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Multipolar Imperative

Vidushi Sehrawat and Brig. Anand Kumar Tewari***

ABSTRACT

In an era defined by information abundance and geopolitical flux, Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) has emerged as a transformative methodology for understanding strategic dynamics across Southeast Asia and the Global South. As the international order transitions toward multipolarity, state and non-state actors alike are increasingly leveraging publicly available data - drawn from social media platforms, satellite imagery, maritime tracking systems, digital news archives, and geospatial tools - to assess security threats, monitor territorial developments, and inform foreign policy decisions. This paper presents a comprehensive examination of how mixed-source OSINT frameworks can be applied to the evolving security and sustainability challenges of the Indo-Pacific and Global South. Specifically, it explores OSINT's utility across three critical domains: (i) security monitoring, including grey-zone military activities, maritime disputes in the South China Sea, and cross-border conflict tracking; (ii) environmental and sustainability surveillance, such as deforestation mapping, illegal fishing detection, and climate vulnerability assessment; and (iii) disinformation detection and influence operation attribution in politically sensitive regional contexts. The paper further analyses the structural limitations faced by Global South nations in building OSINT capacity - including digital infrastructure gaps, linguistic barriers, and data sovereignty concerns - proposes a multilateral OSINT cooperation framework tailored to ASEAN and South Asian institutional architectures. Drawing on publicly documented case studies from the region, the study argues that institutionalising OSINT as a strategic tool is no longer optional but essential for middle and smaller powers seeking autonomous decision-making in a contested multipolar order. The paper concludes by offering policy-relevant recommendations aimed at strengthening information resilience and reinforcing OSINT as an integral component of strategic governance in Southeast Asia and the Global South, aligned with the broader imperatives of a secure and sustainable multipolar world order.

Keywords: Open-Source Intelligence, OSINT, Southeast Asia, Global South, Strategic awareness, Multipolarity, Maritime security, Disinformation, Indo-Pacific.

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Reconceptualization of India's Strategic Culture: Looking through the 4th Generation Lens

*Jasveer Singh**

ABSTRACT

While India's strategic culture has been thoroughly examined through various academic lenses over the years, existing literature largely overlooks the fourth generation of strategic culture theory—specifically, the framework of subcultures. This study addresses that gap by analyzing Indian strategic culture through the dynamic inclusion of these distinct subcultures. In a nation as pluralistic and diverse as India, relying on a singular, monolithic narrative is no longer sufficient. Instead, a more prudent and comprehensive approach requires us to map out various regional, institutional, and political subcultures to understand how they interact with, challenge, or reinforce the country's dominant strategic outlook. Beyond just identifying these factions, this research aims to deeply examine the tangible influence these distinct strategic subcultures exert on Indian decision-makers and the policy-formulation process. By looking at foreign policy and national security through this multi-layered framework, the study provides a more nuanced, realistic portrait of how India navigates its geopolitical challenges. Ultimately, this shifts the discourse away from rigid, top-down generalizations and moves toward a fluid understanding of how competing domestic perspectives actively shape India's modern grand strategy on the global stage.

Keywords: Indian strategic culture, Strategic subcultures, Foreign policy, National security, Grand strategy.

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Technology Adoption Pathways for Global South Air Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges, Enablers and Strategic Choices

*Air Vice Marshal Ajay Shukla**

ABSTRACT

The rapid emergence of disruptive military technologies, including AI, autonomous systems, advanced communications, cyber capabilities, cloud-enabled command and control, and human-machine teaming, is reshaping air power in the Indo-Pacific. While technologically advanced militaries are rapidly integrating these capabilities, many Global South air forces continue to face significant barriers to their adoption and operationalisation. These challenges extend beyond financial constraints to include institutional inertia, technological dependence, fragmented industrial ecosystems, limited indigenous research and development, and the absence of coherent long-term innovation strategies. Existing scholarship has largely focussed on technological advances in major powers, with comparatively limited attention to how resource-constrained air forces can effectively adopt and integrate emerging technologies. This paper examines the strategic, institutional, technological, and industrial factors influencing technology adoption pathways for Global South air forces in the Indo-Pacific. It seeks to identify the principal barriers to technology adoption, analyse the key enablers of successful capability development, and propose a conceptual framework for sustainable military modernisation. Specifically, the study addresses four research questions: (i) What barriers impede the adoption of emerging military technologies? (ii) Which institutional, technological, industrial, and strategic enablers most significantly influence successful technology adoption? (iii) How do geopolitical competition and international defence partnerships shape technology adoption pathways in the Indo-Pacific? and (iv) What strategic model best supports long-term technological transformation in resource-constrained air forces? The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on a systematic review of academic literature, defence policy documents, and selected comparative case studies from the Indo-Pacific. Drawing on theories of innovation diffusion, defence capability development, and organisational transformation, the paper proposes a Technology Adoption Pathway Framework comprising five interrelated dimensions: strategic vision, institutional readiness, technological infrastructure, industrial and partnership ecosystems, and operational integration.

Keywords: Global South, Air Force, Disruptive Military Technologies.

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Mapping Diasporic Infrastructure: A Comparative Case Study of India and China

Vanchinathan Y. and Nripan Babu***

ABSTRACT

India and China have each built extensive but structurally distinct systems for engaging their overseas populations, yet these systems are rarely examined side by side as instruments of state power. This paper maps and compares the diasporic infrastructure of both states across four dimensions: institutional architecture (India's Ministry of External Affairs Diaspora Division and OCI framework against China's Overseas Chinese Affairs apparatus, now folded into the United Front Work Department); legal and citizenship instruments; economic engagement tools, including diaspora bonds and skilled-migrant registries; and the conversion of diaspora goodwill into strategic leverage in Southeast Asia specifically. The analysis draws on a comparative methodology grounded in the principle of selective adoption rather than direct institutional replication, recognizing that India's constitutional structure, demographic scale, and citizenship norms diverge too sharply from any single external model to permit wholesale transplantation. Applied to China, this principle highlights a structural contrast: where China's centralized, single-citizenship apparatus achieves scale and coordination, India's more decentralized, dual-status-friendly system offers a flexibility that a wholesale institutional transplant would undermine. The paper closes with policy recommendations for Indian diaspora infrastructure in Southeast Asia, extending two proposals: a Pravasi Professional Registry to formalize skilled-diaspora engagement, and a regional adaptation of the Know India Journey Foundation model for community-level cultural connectivity. These recommendations are positioned within India's stated diaspora framework of 4Cs (Care, Connect, Celebrate & Contribute). This keeps the paper's proposals grounded in existing policy language rather than introducing a parallel vocabulary.

Keywords: Diasporic infrastructure, Cultural diplomacy, India-China comparative politics, Soft power, Southeast Asia.

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India's ITEC Diplomacy and the Global South: Capacity Building, Knowledge Partnerships and India's Emerging Development Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

India's engagement with the Global South is increasingly extending beyond conventional diplomatic and economic partnerships towards knowledge sharing, institutional capacity building and human-centred development cooperation. This paper examines the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme as an instrument of India's development diplomacy and Global South engagement. Drawing on observations from ITEC training programmes conducted at the Dr. MCR HRD Institute, Government of Telangana, including interactions with participants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and other partner countries, the paper explores how professional training and knowledge exchange can contribute to long-term diplomatic relationships. It argues that ITEC operates not merely as a technical assistance mechanism, but as a platform for people-to-people diplomacy, institutional networking and mutual learning among developing countries. The paper further examines how such initiatives can strengthen India's role as a knowledge partner while supporting the principles of partnership, capacity building and strategic autonomy within the Global South. By connecting training diplomacy with broader questions of South-South cooperation, the study seeks to assess the potential of ITEC as a contemporary instrument of India's foreign policy and its wider engagement with an increasingly multipolar international order.

Keywords: India–Global South relations, ITEC, South–South cooperation, Capacity building, Public diplomacy, Knowledge diplomacy.

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The Global South in a Multipolar World: Power Redistribution and Emerging Hierarchies

*Maria Ivanova**

ABSTRACT

1. Emerging hierarchies: the criteria of the new status: In the bipolar world, status was determined by military power and ideology. In a multipolar world, it is determined by the capacity to provide «public goods» for the Global South:
 - alternative payment systems (India's UPI, Russia's SPFS);
 - independent communication and information channels;
 - technological standards (telecom, AI, green technologies).
2. Multipolarity does not imply hierarchies: the rise of new centers of power: The world is transitioning not to a horizontal network of equal states, but to stratified multipolarity. The Global South is not a unitary bloc but rather an arena of competition among several regional leaders - India, China, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia.
3. Development institutions as «soft power instruments» and redistributive mechanisms: As the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank) weaken, alternative development institutions come to the fore: the New Development Bank (NDB, BRICS), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development.
4. The role of India and Russia in reassembling the Global South: India possesses a unique advantage: it is perceived as both a «non-Western democracy» and a member of BRICS, the SCO, and the G20. This allows it to act as a bridge between different poles. Russia, despite current constraints, retains key competencies in nuclear technology, space, and military-technical cooperation - highly demanded «public goods» for many Global South countries.
5. Implications for public administration in the Global South: To successfully adapt to the new power configuration, national governments need to:
 - move from passively receiving aid to actively designing institutions
 - invest in digital identity and transparency of public services as a basis for trust in alternative payment systems;
 - develop coordination mechanisms within the Global South.

Keywords: Global South, Power, Multipolar, India-Russia cooperation.

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Energy Transition as a Cooperation Space: Russia-India Partnership in Nuclear and Hydrogen Energy for Human Security in the Global South

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ABSTRACT

The global energy transition constitutes one of the principal structural challenges confronting the contemporary international order. For states of the Global South, it simultaneously presents new opportunities and exposes accumulated vulnerabilities: energy poverty, technological dependence, insufficient investment in infrastructure, and unequal access to advanced energy solutions impose persistent constraints on sustainable development of human security. The aim of the study is to analyze the Russian-Indian partnership in nuclear and hydrogen energy as a mechanism for advancing human security and a just energy transition in developing countries. The methodological foundation of the study comprises: A qualitative analysis of official intergovernmental documents, statements by senior officials, and energy development strategies of both countries; a comparative analysis of Russia's Energy Strategy to 2035 and Indian policy documents in the energy sector; and case studies of completed and prospective Russian-Indian projects in the nuclear and hydrogen industries. The theoretical framework is provided by the concept of human security in its energy dimension, supplemented by the analytical apparatus of technological sovereignty and the just energy transition. The analysis yields four principal findings. First, the Russian Indian partnership in nuclear and hydrogen energy represents an integral model of structural technological. Second, the primary mechanism for advancing human security is the transfer of technology and localization of production. Third, the institutional consolidation of this corporation within BRICS documents – most notably the Roadmap to 2030. Fourth, the study identifies systematic constraints: asymmetries in the pace of localization, sanctions pressure, and intensifying competition from the Gulf states.

Keywords: Energy transition, Russian–Indian cooperation, Nuclear energy, Hydrogen energy, Human security, Global South

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