

**“INDIA’S EMERGING ROLE IN INDO PACIFIC
REGION: CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN ECONOMY”**



MS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abbreviations

AIFTA	ASEAN-India Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia United Kingdom United States
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BRI	Belt Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil Russia India China South Africa
COMCASA	Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
FATF	The Financial Action Task Force
I2U2	India, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and the United States
ICET	The Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies
IMEC	India Middle-East Europe Corridor
INSTC	The International North-South Transport Corridor
IORA	The Indian Ocean Rim Association
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a growing spotlight on the Indo-Pacific region, which has become a hub of both strategic maneuvering and economic activity. India has stepped up its efforts to assert itself as a key player in shaping the future of this region with the help of great powers. As various powers both regional and global, vie for dominance in the Indo-Pacific, it is becoming increasingly clear that this region is poised to become a hotspot in the times ahead. With its geo-strategic location and growing influence, India has emerged as a pivotal state in this landscape, giving it significant leverage for rising in the Indo-Pacific region, as this study aims to critically examine the emerging role of India in Indo Pacific region through the lens of Structural Realism theory. However, amidst these dynamics, there are also significant challenges for neighboring Pakistan's economy to navigate. The focus of this study is on India's emerging role in the Indo-Pacific region. The primary objective is to conduct a critical examination of India's increasing influence in the region and to assess the challenges faced by the Pakistani economy because of India's rise. As India emerges as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific region and the fifth largest economy globally, it is becoming a key player in the broader regional dynamics. On the other side Pakistan despite possessing nuclear capabilities, struggles to carve out a substantial role in the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region. India's assertive and dominant approach presents significant obstacles to Pakistan's advancement by engaging with Major powers in the region. Additionally, with the active support and assistance of major regional and global powers, India has effectively solidified its position. Conversely, as Pakistan maintains a close alliance with China, it indirectly faces consequences of marginalization, also the complex power dynamics and regional interactions pose challenges to its stability and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Through the prism of structural realism, this study offers insights into the emerging influence of India in Indo Pacific region and its implications for Pakistan's Economy.

CHAPTER. 1

1. INTRODUCTION:

The world has witnessed the rise and fall of regional importance in various domains, such as economic influence and geopolitical significance. In the contemporary Era, the Indo-Pacific Region has emerged as the Centre of Global Politics. This region has played a very influential and crucial role in world politics in recent years, with India being widely regarded as a central and influential participant in this context. The increasing significance of the Indian and Pacific Oceans has revitalized the concept of the "Indo-Pacific" region as a geopolitical framework. This region has shaped the trajectory of global politics for most of the 21st century.¹

India being the world's biggest democracy and one of the rapidly growing major economies in South Asia, is going to be the third largest economy after the US and China by 2030 and has emerged as a dominant force in the Indo-Pacific region. To play a crucial role at the global level, India has initiated a proactive engagement² with small and major powers to shape the regional geopolitical and economic landscape, it also focuses on its economic integration with regional states and initiates bilateral and multilateral projects to foster its hegemony in the region. India's active engagement in regional economic projects and multilateral initiatives within the region contribute to the expansion of India in the region.

The United States supports India's Strategic position in the Indian Ocean and its outreach to the Pacific coast by designating India as the Net Security Provider, a state that plays a significant role in ensuring security and stability in cyberspace. India has also been included in the US National Security Strategy 2017 by the US in the Heart of its Policy recognizing it as the main state deserving of US security and defense agreement.³ "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific Advancing a Shared Vision" focuses on the United States collaborations with regional nations to uphold a free and open order. Emphasizing India's significance in this vision, the document highlighted joint

¹ Premesha Saha, "India Growing Strategic Footprint in The Indo-Pacific," *Observer Research Foundation*, Aug 15 2023,

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/Indias-growing-strategic-footprint-in-the-indo-pacific>

² Shasi Bushan, "PM Modi says 'New India' is moving with proactive policies," *DECCAN Chronicle*, April 13 2023, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/130423/prime-minister-narendra-modi-says-new-India-is-moving-with-proactive.html>

³ Yuki Tatsumi, "The US National Security Strategy: Implications for the Indo-Pacific," *The Diplomat*, December 21 2017

[The US National Security Strategy: Implications for the Indo-Pacific – The Diplomat](#)

efforts between the US and India to tackle both regional and global development challenges.⁴ The main reason the United States favors India in the region is to counterbalance China's rise and its increasing economic potential.

The competing ambitions of the US and China to establish strategic dominance in the Indo-Pacific Region are progressively coming into prominence, this competition has the potential to alter the Geopolitical scenario of the Indo-Pacific region. India's geopolitical significance, economic growth, multilateral engagement, military capabilities, strategic location, and diplomatic engagements elevate India to a prominent position in the region. The competition for vying influence, resources, and control in the Indo-Pacific region highlights how crucial it is for India, the United States, and the Major powers to band together to stop the increasing power of China.

The ongoing competition between Washington and Beijing has heightened the prevalence of bloc politics worldwide. China's ascent to global prominence and its formidable influence serve as evidence that it poses a challenge to the established hegemonic power and the prevailing world order dominated by the United States. The Belt and Road Initiative project, spearheaded by China, facilitates the development of regional connections and trade pathways. However, China's close alliance with Pakistan in these ambitions creates severe challenges in their path. The geopolitics and security dynamics in the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean are likely to change due to India's emerging influence in the region which would have significant consequences for South Asian Countries and especially for Pakistan.⁵

Furthermore, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) significantly amplifies India's role in the Indo-Pacific Region, and the participation of India in the Blue Dot Network (BDN) gives India an edge in regional dynamics. Participation of India provides them with a platform to engage diplomatically access advanced technologies and contribute to shaping the regional agenda, ultimately contributing to its economic growth, security, and influence in the region.⁶ To offset the increasing influence of China, the US has established alliances like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and Australia, the United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) in the Indo-

⁴ Cuiping Zhu, "The Strategic Game in Indo-Pacific Region and Its Impact on China Security," Annual report on the development of the Indian Ocean Region, *Springer Singapore*, September 2018, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-13-7693-1_1

⁵ Dr. Sidda Goud and Manisha Mookherjee, "*China In Indian Ocean Region*" (Allied Publishers, Vol. 1. (2015): 253), https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=b_6gCgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁶ Dr. Jagannath p. Panda, "India, the Blue Dot Network, and the "QUAD Plus" Calculus," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Air University Press, July 17 2020 <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2278057/India-the-blue-dot-network-and-the-QUAD-plus-calculus/>

Pacific region. Additionally, a new partnership between Europe, the Middle East, and India which is called the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), was introduced during the 2023 G20 summit in India.

The initiation of the IMEC corridor creates more competition in the Indo-Pacific region as this project is in direct competition with China's benchmark Project China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Both corridors aim to enhance trade connectivity and economic development in the Arabian Sea. At first, the IMEC corridor has the potential to complement the ambitious "Global Gateway initiatives" by the European Union, thereby facilitating the achievement of several regional objectives such as enhanced connectivity and sustainability. Secondly, the IMEC presents an opportunity to play a role in the concept of the gradual rebalancing of trade and economic relations between the EU and China.⁷ The third is to create an opportunity for India to bypass traditional routes and deploy Indian naval patrols in the Indo-Pacific region.

The major powers are vying for strategic and economic dominance in the Indo-Pacific region with India's influence in Asia and measures taken to restrain China's influence and the CPEC, which is a component of Belt Road Initiative (BRI). India has a crucial role in molding the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia. India's opposition to Chinese investments in Pakistan-administered Kashmir stems from concerns about territorial integrity, leading to heightened tensions in the region. In response to CPEC, India has strategically aligned itself with the US to counterbalance Chinese influence. India's growing power in the Indo-Pacific, in direct competition with China, presents major challenges for Pakistan due to its strong alliance with China. This situation creates numerous obstacles for Pakistan's economy and development amid changing regional dynamics.

The long-term tensions between India and Pakistan, rooted in differences over borders, politics, and beliefs have made their relationship complicated and often unstable. India's strong political and military stance has increased competition in South Asia, making it tough for Pakistan to find solid ground in diplomatic, economic, military, and security domains. Managing stability and growth for Pakistan in this complex situation is a difficult task given the ever-changing geopolitical dynamics in South Asia. The partnership of India with Iran involves bolstering ties to establish alternative connectivity routes, such as the Chabahar port, aiming to enhance regional

⁷ Tiziano Marino, "The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor in Europe's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *The Diplomat*, September 21 2023 <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/the-india-middle-east-europe-corridor-in-europes-indo-pacific-strategy/>

integration. However, the challenges for Pakistan are evident as the implementation of CPEC has tensed ties with the United States, primarily due to its close alliance with China.

This complex geopolitical environment raises questions about the long-term impact of CPEC on regional stability and the evolving dynamics between India, Pakistan, and the United States.⁸ Even though India and Pakistan occupy strategic positions within the Indo-Pacific region, the alignment of India with major Powers will significantly affect Pakistan. In this context, it is important to consider Pakistan's economic challenges and repercussions as well as how it would prioritize its strategic objectives in the face of India's emerging influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT:

India's Strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region and increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region is making India an emerging power. India is achieving its strategic role by making Alliances, Joint military operations, cooperation with small and major states, bilateral and multilateral engagements, naval presence in the seas, and trade routes. India's presence in Trade patterns, security dynamics, and political ties within the Indo-Pacific region had serious implications for Pakistan. This strategic and economic involvement of India has repercussions for Pakistan's economy.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To Critically examine the emerging influence of India in the Indo-Pacific Region.
- To evaluate Pakistan's economic challenges due to the Rise of India in the Indo-Pacific Region.
- To analyze the repercussions Pakistan faces in the Indo-Pacific Region.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How India is emerging as a great power in the Indo-Pacific region?
2. What are the Challenges Pakistan's Economy faces in the Indo-Pacific region due to the Rise of India?
3. What repercussions Pakistan faces in the Indo-Pacific Region?

⁸ Mehmood Hussain and Ahmed Bux Jamali, "Geo-Political Dynamics of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor: A New Great Game in South Asia," *Chinese Political Science Review*, vol.4, no. 3 (2019): 303–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-019-00128-y>

1.5. HYPOTHESIS:

India is a significant strategic player in the Indo-Pacific region that focuses on becoming an economic giant in the region; which presents serious economic challenges for Pakistan.

1.6. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE:

India is emerging as a key and prominent state in the region of Indo-Pacific. The growing geopolitics of India may have a significant impact on the Indo-Pacific region especially on Pakistan. This research investigates the economic and strategic involvement of India in the Indo-Pacific region with specific emphasis on the repercussions it has on Pakistan's economy. This study offers a comprehensive understanding of the regional dynamics of India, The Rise of India in the Indo-Pacific region provides a critical analysis of the region's importance, apart from that this research study holds a profound significance for the students of International Relations and social sciences as well as for the policy makers engaged in global affairs. This research also offers a vital resource for the students, enabling them to comprehend and analyze the complex geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region.

1.7. RESEARCH GAP:

India is an emerging state in Indo Pacific region which has complex implications for Pakistan's economy. India finds itself in an exceptional position with significant economic and strategic potential in the Indo-Pacific region. Pakistan is an important Actor in the Indo-Pacific region, but there is a lack of detailed exploration of how these challenges affect Pakistan's economy and what repercussions Pakistan has to face.

1.8. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY:

The study is structured into five chapters. The first chapter commences with an introduction encompassing the study background, research questions, the research significance, and its objectives. Chapter Two delves into an extensive literature review and theoretical framework. This section provides a selection of theories to substantiate the research. The third chapter mainly focuses on the research methodology. This chapter outlines the study methodology

and incorporates discussions on its philosophical foundations. Chapter Four centers on a comprehensive analysis and presentation of the study findings. Chapter Five revolves around the Conclusion and Recommendations. This section encompasses the examination and recommendations of the study findings, ultimately leading to a comprehensive conclusion to conclude the research.

CHAPTER. 2

Chapter two explores mainly two sections: the first literature review and the second theoretical framework. The literature review digs into India's emergence as a rising regional state and the challenges for Pakistan within the evolving international landscape. And repercussions Pakistan has to face. The emphasis is on comprehending the complex geopolitics within the region.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Information on this subject is found in various forms such as books, Journals, magazines, reports, websites, webinars, and reports. Examining existing literature can help us understand how India's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region affects Pakistan.

2.1.1. INDIA EMERGING AS A GREAT POWER:

Fatima Noor in her article discusses the US-Indo Pacific strategy and its implications for Pakistan. The main goal of the US strategy is to encircle China in the Indo-Pacific region and support India to become a hegemon in this area, which is a threat to Pakistan. Pakistan is focusing on external balancing as Pakistan is not stable internally due to a weak economy. Pakistan is moving to focus on external balancing with developing relationships with China and Russia. As it faces a serious threat from India, by stabilizing the external balance Pakistan can have a check on India. Pakistan has focused more on maritime issues and launched the 1st maritime doctrine in December 2018, which mainly focuses on maritime security and the blue economy.⁹

Majid Ali Noorani in his article argues that India emerges as a major player in the Indo-Pacific region in politics and economy and becoming a rising state in the Indo-Pacific region. The significance of India in the area has also been further emphasized by the US tilt towards them.

⁹ Fatima Noor, "Indo Pacific Strategy And Its Implications On Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 3 (2022), <https://www.pjia.com.pk/index.php/pjia/article/view/550>

This paper analyses India's policies to comprehend how India's policies and growing ties with Washington would affect the China-Pakistan relationship. India's continued hostility towards Pakistan affects the Pak-China partnership. India's growing policies and ties with the US give leverage to India's regional rise which has consequences for the Pak-China relationship.¹⁰

Sufiyan and Zeeshan Hayat contend in their article that India has assumed the role of "Net Security Provider" in the Indian Ocean with the support of the United States. This term encapsulates India's significant strategic position within the US strategy to influence the Indo-Pacific region and contain China. Through capacity building, military diplomacy, and support India is portrayed as a responsible actor capable of safeguarding its security while also enhancing the security of Indian Ocean Region states. The cooperation between India and the US aims to counter China and facilitate India's rise as a major power. However, this dynamic creates a security dilemma for countries like Pakistan and China, as their security interests are challenged by the Indo-US efforts to assert dominance in the region.¹¹

Ulrich Jochheim and Rita Barbosa Lobo stated in their article that the Indian Ocean plays a crucial role in connecting some of the world's fastest-growing economies with the Atlantic Ocean and the Asia-Pacific region, establishing the Indo-Pacific as an area of immense geostrategic significance. China has expanded its maritime presence and ambitions over the past three decades, and heightened tensions, particularly in the South China Sea and with Taiwan. India has voiced substantial concerns about China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean and its strengthened ties with Pakistan, prompting India to enhance its involvement in the United States-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). In response to these developments, India has adopted a new defensive strategy.¹²

Darshana stated in her article that the maritime domain has historically played a crucial contribution in shaping the influence of emerging powers and determining regional dynamics. India's role in the Indo-Pacific is deemed vital by countries like Australia, Japan, and the United

¹⁰ Majid Ali Noorani, Dr. M Ali Pasha, and Imran Ali Noorani, "India Role As A Regional Power: Implications For Pakistan-China Alliance," *Asia Pacific*, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Majid-Noonari-2/publication/343725385_India_Role_as_a_Regional_Power_Implications_for_Pakistan-China_Alliance/links/5f97d32892851c14bceac28f/Indias-Role-as-a-Regional-Power-Implications-for-Pakistan-China-Alliance.pdf (2017)

¹¹ Sufian Ullah and Zeeshan Hayat, "India as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific and Implications for the Region," *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability* 4, no.1 (January 2021): 26–39, <https://doi.org/10.37540/njips.v4i1.77>

¹² Ulrich Jochheim and Rita Barbosa Lobo, "Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Major Players' Strategic Perspectives," *European Parliamentary Research Service*, July 2023, <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/4430715/geopolitics-in-the-indo-pacific/5227474/>

States. This paper identifies three key aspects of India's Indo-Pacific strategy. Firstly, it sees the Indo-Pacific as an opportunity for India to extend its influence in the region. Secondly, partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region are central to India's Indo-Pacific interests, with collaborations with major powers and island nations shaping its role. Lastly, while the Indo-Pacific offers new opportunities for India's global ambitions, India's priorities and significant investments will remain in the Indian Ocean.¹³

Derek Grossman argues India is emerging as a strategic player in Southeast Asia, as evidenced by recent diplomatic activities. This includes an Arms deal with Vietnam, support for the Philippines against China in the South China Sea, and enhanced defense cooperation with Indonesia. India's engagements extend to Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, strengthening economic and defense partnerships. Overall, India's East policy aligns with the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy against China. The U.S. encourages and welcomes India's increasing role in Southeast Asia.¹⁴

India Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, predicts that by 2027, India will become the world's third-largest economy, surpassing Japan and Germany. Despite global challenges, India's economy is on a positive trajectory, expected to grow at nearly 7% in 2023. The India-Middle East-Europe Connectivity Corridor (IMEC) is highlighted as a promising project, fostering economic unity and sustainability. However, geopolitical challenges, such as the conflict in Israel and Gaza, pose concerns potentially hindering trade flows and infrastructure development, exacerbating regional tensions and economic uncertainties.¹⁵

Christopher S. Chivvisand Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner discuss in their article that India's relationship with China is intricate, increasingly aligning with the United States. They collaborate on defense, partaking in the QUAD to counterbalance China. In 2023, both nations signed agreements on technology, space, and mineral supply chains. Due to concerns about China, India leans toward the U.S. militarily, participating in joint exercises and defense dialogues. The QUAD is crucial for regional security. In technology, India collaborates with the U.S. through ICET, focusing on semiconductors, telecommunications, and AI. India shifted towards the West in trade,

¹³ Darshana M. Baruah, "India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30 2020 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/India-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>

¹⁴ Derek Grossman, "India Is Becoming a Power in Southeast Asia," *The Rand Blog*, July 10, 2023 <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/07/India-is-becoming-a-power-in-southeast-asia.html>

¹⁵ Madhusudan Saho, "India will be third largest GDP by 2027, says Nirmala", *Deccan Chronicle*, 2023 November 15, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/economy/151123/India-will-be-third-largest-gdp-by-2027-says-nirmala.html>

engaging to reduce reliance on Chinese supply chains. Despite limited commitment to QUAD security focus, India collaborates with China in BRICS and SCO, emphasizing its role as the "voice of the Global South," aiming for a more inclusive international system. While increasingly aligned with the U.S. on China, India asserts independence, avoiding the sole definition of other states.¹⁶

Muhammad Abbas Hassan discusses how India has made deals to control two key ports, Chabahar in Iran and Duqm in Oman. Chabahar, India gets operational control for 18 months and plans upgrades. Duqm provides logistical support, including maintenance for Indian military vessels. These agreements help India enhance its maritime presence, shorten trade routes, and avoid Pakistan's coast. This poses a challenge to Pakistan's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the success of Chabahar and Duqm port depends on a stable Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to boost its diplomatic and strategic efforts to stay competitive in the region.¹⁷

Shreya Upadhyay shares her views that India's active participation in international summits such as QUAD, SCO, BRICS, G7, and the Commonwealth underscores its commitment to a multi-aligned foreign policy. Minister Jaishankar emphasizes India's independent position, steering clear of strict alignment with the U.S. or China and asserting the nation's right to autonomous decision-making. In the context of a multipolar international order, India sees an opportunity to pursue diverse and flexible alignments based on economic and security interests. Participation in QUAD is aimed at counterbalancing China's influence in the Indo-Pacific and fostering a free regional environment, aligning with India's aspirations for regional leadership. Simultaneously, engagement in BRICS and other forums showcases India's strategy to enhance global economic partnerships and to contribute regional stability. This multifaceted foreign policy approach, while enhancing India's economic standing and attracting foreign investments in the Indo-Pacific region poses challenges for Pakistan's economy, especially if it struggles to keep pace with India's advancements. Additionally, India's strengthened diplomatic ties may make it more challenging for Pakistan to become isolated internationally, underscoring the need for proactive economic policies and regional cooperation in navigating complex geopolitical dynamics.¹⁸

¹⁶ Christopher S. Chivvis, Beatrix Geaghan Breiner, "India in the Emerging World Order," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 06, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/11/06/India-in-emerging-world-order-pub-90928>

¹⁷ Muhammad Abbas Hassan, "Indian Access to Chabahar And Duqm: Challenges For Pakistan", *Institute Of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, 2018

¹⁸ Shreya Upadhyay, "BRICS, QUAD, and India Multi-Alignment Strategy", *Stimson Asia and Indo Pacific*, July 12 2022 <https://www.stimson.org/2022/brics-QUAD-and-Indias-multi-alignment-strategy/>

White and Joshua T. discuss in their article that the defense and security partnership between the United States and India has strengthened due to shared concerns about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Both nations have formalized defense agreements, but challenges exist, such as India's economic limitations, ties with Russia, and internal political issues. The Biden administration aims to broaden the relationship beyond security issues. To move forward, the paper suggests focusing on key priorities: supporting India as a global leader, limiting Chinese coercion, and managing India's crises with Pakistan and China. The Indo-Pacific agenda includes situating defense ties in a broader context, enhancing defense planning, prioritizing joint exercises, supporting high-tech cooperation, institutionalizing intelligence sharing, and deepening consultations on cyber, space, and nuclear domains. The U.S. should invest steadily, be realistic about India's constraints, and engage at high levels to sustain progress in the defense relationship as part of its broader Indo-Pacific strategy.¹⁹

2.1.2. CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION:

Rabia Bashir discusses in her writings that the QUAD aims to ensure open sea lanes but could evolve into a military alliance against China. Australia's initial reluctance, influenced by its strong ties with China, diminished due to worsening relations. India leveraged this to invite Australia to join, marking the QUAD's formation in 2020. For Pakistan, the QUAD presents severe hurdles. India's enhanced naval capabilities may threaten Pakistan, potentially leading to economic consequences and nuclear risks. Indo-Chinese tensions could involve the QUAD, forcing Pakistan to align with China against India, impacting regional stability. Additionally, in a US-China Cold War scenario, Pakistan's ties with China may result in economic repercussions for Pakistan. To counter these developments, Pakistan should diversify relations with ASEAN countries and major powers, considering India's regional ambitions. Strengthening ties with Russia. As the QUAD transforms into a military alliance, Pakistan should avoid taking sides in the US-China Cold War and engage with global powers for conflict resolution with India, prioritizing economic and strategic relations with India.²⁰

¹⁹ White, Joshua T, "After the foundational agreements: An agenda for US-India defense and security cooperation", *Brookings Institution* (2021) https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FP_20210111_us_India_white.pdf

²⁰ Rabia Bashir, "QUADrilateral Security Dialogue: Challenges and Prospects for Pakistan," *Strategic Foresight for Asia*, December 22 2021 <https://strafasia.com/QUADrilateral-security-dialoguechallenges-and-prospects-for-Pakistan/>

Salman Bashir shared his views in the article that India has recently overtaken the United Kingdom to become the 5th largest global economy, with projections indicating it could secure the third spot by 2030, trailing behind only the US and China. India's economic growth is attributed to thriving manufacturing and service sectors, supported by a sizable, young, and English-speaking population. This ascension in economic status is anticipated to impact South Asia significantly, particularly Pakistan. As India becomes a major producer in the Industrial sector, its energy requirements are expected to rise, relying on the Middle East for supply. The competition between India and China will intensify in adjacent regions, potentially leading to closer cooperation between India and the US against China. The regional dynamics suggest that smaller South Asian nations may align with either India or China based on their interests. For Pakistan, heavily dependent on its strong relationship with China, options are limited. Efforts to improve relations with India, especially through trade, have faced challenges due to historical hostilities and limited export potential. The US factor, while influential through the Pakistani diaspora and remittances, may not outweigh the impact of India. Pakistan might face a dilemma between choosing closer ties with the US or China or attempting to maintain a balance. The country's ability to navigate this challenging scenario hinges on internal stability, with current indications suggesting a secondary role in the region due to high indebtedness and external dependency.²¹

Mishal Ashraf discusses in her article that the United States, through its Indo-Pacific Strategy, views this region as crucial for its future due to its economic importance and the rise of China. Key allies like Japan and India support this strategy, aiming to increase their influence. China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, U.S. China rivalry, and strategic alliances impact the region, with Pakistan facing opportunities and challenges, especially with the (CPEC). The U.S.-China rivalry dominates the Indo-Pacific region, with the U.S. aiming to contain China through its Indo-Pacific Strategy. Key elements include QUAD and AUKUS. The U.S. perceives China as a strategic rival, leading to the Indo-Pacific becoming the focal point of their rivalry. However, India's aggressive policies, nuclearization of the Indian Ocean, and military agreements with the U.S. and India pose challenges, particularly for Pakistan's strategic stability. Pakistan, despite having no direct stake, is affected by the U.S.-China rivalry. Pakistan faces challenges and

²¹ Salman Bashir, "The Rise of India and Implications for Pakistan", *Arab News*, September 24 2022, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2168566>

opportunities, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to navigate the changing geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.²²

Tom Miller in his book stated that the President of China, Xi Jinping aims to increase China's influence through economic diplomacy, emphasizing a 'community of shared destiny' in Asia. The book's eight chapters cover topics such as win-win cooperation, the BRI, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, economic and trade cooperation with neighboring countries, Myanmar relations, strategy in the Indian Ocean, and posture in the South China Sea. Miller argues that China utilizes the BRI as a means of enhancing regional influence through economic incentives, rather than harboring imperial ambitions.²³

Richard Javad in his article argues that Pakistan's strategic significance is underscored by its pivotal location and alliances. Its partnership with China through the CPEC bolsters economic and geopolitical ties, amplifying its regional influence. Concurrently, cooperation with the U.S. in counterterrorism efforts reflects a delicate balancing act, enhancing global security dynamics. The intricate web of alliances has the potential to reshape the regional power balance, with Pakistan navigating partnerships not only with China and the U.S. but also fostering ties with other regional actors. These choices exemplify Pakistan's role as a key player in the extensive competition for influence in such changing dynamics, shaping the destiny of the South Asian region.²⁴

Dr. Peter Horris in his paper emphasizes the significance of handling tense and competitive times between China and India as well as the need for the governments of India, China, and Pakistan to comprehend how their acts and relationships deeply influence one another. This article also mentions how uncertain the China, Pakistan, and India triangle future appears to be and for a peaceful neighborhood, a very great diplomatic effort is required. The article also emphasizes the importance of building partnerships and strengthening alliances.²⁵

Rackmawatie Lokman in his paper examines the tensions and disputes over religion and ethnicity between Pakistan and India and the establishment of the CPEC corridor in 2013, making it more intense. It argues that CPEC may intensify the rivalry among different powers in South

²² Mishal Ashraf, "Power Dynamics in Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan", *Modern Diplomacy*, February 20 2023

https://www.iaforum.org/Content/ViewInternal_Document.cfm?contenttype_id=5&ContentID=9496

²³ Tom Miller, *China Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road* (London: Zed Books, 2017)

²⁴ Richard Javad, "Asia's New Battlefield: The USA, China and the Struggle for the Western Pacific" (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing Inc, 2016).

²⁵ Dr. Peter Horris, "Indo Pacific Perspective," *Journal of Indo Pacific Affairs*, 2021,

<https://media.defense.gov/2021/Mar/31/2002611841/-1/-1/1/IPP%20-%20MARCH%202021.PDF>.

Asia, especially between Pakistan and India, leading to increased military-strategic tensions. The article discusses three main arguments: the escalation of Kashmir disputes by both countries to expand territorial hold, China's support for Pakistan and the US's support for India, which encourage assertive actions, and CPEC's role in deepening the Cold War division and serving as an economic-security nexus for the great powers.²⁶

Gurpreet S Khurana argues that the present state of the maritime ecosystem can be characterized as exhibiting instability, disruption, and unpredictability. While India and the United States are broadening their strategic naval and military partnership and signing scary mutually beneficial agreements like Logistics Exchange Compatibility and Security Agreements LEMOA, the Middle East is disintegrating due to the US-Iran rivalry. Geopolitical realignments are also occurring in the Indo-Pacific region. China is significantly expanding its presence in the Indian Ocean, a development that is likely to exacerbate prevailing conditions. In addition to the CPEC, China also has promised Iran billions of dollars to build permanent energy and infrastructure projects. Along with efforts by several nations to construct bases in the littoral states, there is competition for control over territories in the Indian Ocean. Among those receiving attention are the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Djibouti, and Duqm (Oman). It is also impossible to disregard the element of the development of Maritimes forces by both regional and non-regional powers in conjunction with the process of military nuclearization.²⁷

Lindsay Maizland stated in her article that the provision of nuclear submarines to Australia through the AUKUS accord intensifies the trend of militarization in the Indo-Pacific region. Due to this rise, Pakistan's strategic and financial objectives with China via CPEC are directly resisted by the Indo-US alliance. The departure of the NATO forces and the United States from Afghanistan, with a widely endorsed agreement on power-sharing and the suspension of \$9.5 billion in Afghan financial assets, has resulted in a notable security vacuum. This strategic move aims to impose pressure on the leadership of the Taliban. Pakistan has a vested interest in Afghanistan due to its geopolitical positioning and historical ties. border disputes, social ties, and cultural ties, which may also help Pakistan's impending Tehrik-e-Taliban threat. The strategic challenges posed by this security void would put pressure on CPEC, which Pakistan is unable to

²⁶ Rackmawatie Lokman, "India-Pakistan Rivalry: Military-Strategic Relationship, Great Power Proxies, And The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," *Res Militaris* 7628-7637 (2022), <https://resmilitaris.net/menu-script/index.php/resmilitaris/article/view/938/723>

²⁷ Gurpreet S Khurana "Indo-US Logistics Agreement LEMOA: An Assessment" (National Maritime Foundation ,New Delhi, 08-September 2016), <https://maritimeIndia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/AN-ASSESSMENT-OF-INDIA-USA-LOGISTICS-AGREEMENT-LEMOA.pdf>.

support. Moreover, tensions involving the US and Iran or stemming from the Abraham Accords between Israel and Iran will directly affect the northern Arabian Sea, which is of utmost interest to Pakistan.²⁸

2.1.3. REPERCUSSIONS PAKISTAN FACES DUE TO THE RISE OF INDIA:

Khadija in her writings discusses that the strategic convergence and competition between the China and US is transforming the geopolitical scenario of Southeast Asia. China, Russia, India, and Pakistan are expanding and reshaping their relations. India and Pakistan aim to achieve their strategic goals in contradiction. India receives strategic partner status from the US, while CPEC in Pakistan has become a Benchmark Project for China's BRI project. The competition among the states is probably going to directly affect South Asia's strategic landscape.²⁹

Iqtidar Hussain, Israr Hussain, Ke Guo, and Muhammadi discuss that the CPEC project has the power to change and mend the current hostile geopolitical environment in Indo Indo-Indo-Pacific region into a favorable one by developing a favorable geopolitical environment across the region. The study examines the theoretical range of Heartland and Rimland's geopolitical conceptions to examine the changing dynamics in regional geopolitics regarding the CPEC. It also emphasizes the necessity of improving relations between Pakistan and India and between Afghanistan and Pakistan as essential preconditions for the success of the CPEC. The CPEC initiative could transform the economically vulnerable and war-torn zone into an economic well-being, peace, and stable region.³⁰

Parag Khanna in his books illustrated that Pakistan has strategic significance in the Indo-Pacific region because of its extremely important location and its ties with China. CPEC is seen as a transformative force, potentially creating a new strategic axis in the region. The book also underscores the influence of Pakistan's relationship with India on the wider regional dynamics as both countries navigate their relationships with China and the United States. The book also sheds light on Pakistan's role in the evolving Indo-Pacific strategic landscape.³¹

²⁸ Lindsay Maizland "The Taliban in Afghanistan" (Council on Foreign Relations, September 15, 2021), <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

²⁹ Khadija Younus, "Strategic Convergence and Competition in the Indo Pacific Region," *Margalla Papers* 24, no. 1 (2020): 81–96, <https://doi.org/10.54690/margallapapers.24.1.39>

³⁰ Iqtidar Hussain, Israr Hussain, Ke Guo, and Muhammadi Muhammadi, "The Effects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on Regional Geopolitics," *فصلنامه بین المللی ژئوپلیٹیک* 17, no. 64 (2021): 206–30.

³¹ Parag Khanna, *The Future is Asian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

Andrew Small focused on the complexity and strategic partnership between China and Pakistan in his book. Small examines the historical context and the influence of external powers, highlighting the economic and military aspects of the alliance. The book argues that countering India's influence is a major motivation for China, with Pakistan serving as a crucial asset. It discusses the CPEC project and its implications for regional stability.³²

The book of Krishnan is a comprehensive analysis of the complex relationship between China and India. The book explores historical, political, economic, and strategic dimensions emphasizing India's domestic politics and foreign policy influenced by China's rise. Key themes include border disputes, trade, and regional security concerns. The book also touches on Pakistan's role as it seeks closer ties with China CPEC. The study also provides valuable insights into the region's dynamics and highlights the challenges and opportunities Pakistan faces in managing its relationships with India and China.³³

Misafir Kalem's article advocates for a 'hedging' strategy, emphasizing the need for Pakistan to navigate the changing global political landscape, especially with the rise of China. The US Indo-Pacific Strategy portrays China as a 'revisionist power' and Russia as a 'revitalized malign actor,' reflecting an ethnocentric viewpoint. The Indo-Pacific Strategy poses challenges for Pakistan as it intensifies the rivalry between the US and China. Pakistan's longstanding ties with China clash with the unpredictable nature of its relationship with the US. The US, aligning with India against China, is unlikely to support Pakistan's efforts to balance against India, its sole dependence on China presents a risk as American sanctions on China might come into play in the future making it difficult for Pakistan to procure arms. Despite the India-China rivalry, trade between them continues to grow. The article suggests that aligning with a major power against India would require power estrangement from India, which isn't evident in the current India-China relations. India, despite competition between the US and China, wants a policy of strategic autonomy. The article introduces the hedging option, a strategy involving a mix of cooperation and confrontation, allowing flexibility in alignment with major powers. Pakistan faces economic risks with the US but fears asymmetric interdependence with China. The article emphasizes the need for constructive economic engagement with both powers to maximize returns.³⁴

³² Andrew Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics* (Washington: Oxford University Press, 2015)

³³ Ananth Krishnan, *India China Challenge* (India: HarperCollins, 2020)

³⁴ Misafir Kalem, "American Indo-Pacific Strategy and Pakistan Foreign Policy", *South Asia Strategic Research Centre*, August 8 2022 <https://gasam.org.tr/american-indo-pacific-strategy-and-Pakistans-foreign-policy/>

The Centre for Public Policy and Governance organized a webinar on “the geopolitical transformations in the Indo-Pacific and their relevance for Pakistan”. Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot and Dr. Maleeha Lodhi shared their insights. Dr. Jaffrelot discussed the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept, linking it to China's rise and the Belt and Road Initiative. European countries, especially France and Germany, implemented the Indo-Pacific strategy in reaction to China's economic sway. The European approach varies, with France focusing on security and Germany on economic interests. Dr. Lodhi highlighted Pakistan's concerns amid the US-China rivalry, emphasizing the impact on its security dynamics and ties with China. The AUKUS and QUAD agreements, along with India's role, raise security issues for Pakistan. The webinar participants discussed the credibility of the Indo-Pacific concept, with some viewing it as a US strategy to counter China. Questions were raised about Pakistan's maritime strategy and its youth as an asset. Dr. Lodhi emphasized Pakistan's priority in its strategic relationship with China. Dr. Jaffrelot discussed China's economic ties with the EU, highlighting trade partnerships and climate diplomacy.³⁵

Syed Mohammad Ali's paper highlights Pakistani views on the China and United States rivalry and it also sheds light on the potential strategies that might be used to mitigate risks and maintain a balanced approach. The U.S. has invested in India to counterbalance China, while Pakistan has developed close ties with China. Pakistan faces the dilemma of maintaining relations with both the U.S. and China. Optimistic policymakers aim to relieve tensions between China and the United States, while practically it involves managing risks and diversifying partnerships. The article discusses the historical context of Pakistan's relationships with the U.S. and China, focusing on security, economic, and political aspects. It examines the deepening economic dependence on CPEC and suggests measures to reduce reliance on China, such as modifying CPEC projects. The influence of the China-US rivalry on Pakistan relations in the Middle East, emphasizes the need for Pakistan to balance its ties with U.S.-aligned Gulf states and China-backed alignments.³⁶

Shah Meer's article discusses how the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a battleground for global dominance. India and the US are allying to counterbalance China, leading to India's rapid rise in the Indo-Pacific region, which concerns Pakistan. The US is leveraging India to engage China on land and divert its attention from maritime expansion. India, in turn, is enhancing its

³⁵ Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot and Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, “Geo-political transformations in the Indo-Pacific and their relevance for Pakistan”, January 24 2022 <http://cppg.fccollege.edu.pk/events/geo-political-transformations-in-the-indo-pacific-and-their-relevance-for-Pakistan/>

³⁶ Syed Mohammad Ali, “The U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry and its Implications for Pakistan”, *Stimson Asia and Indo Pacific*, December 1 2020 <https://www.stimson.org/2020/the-u-s-china-strategic-rivalry-and-its-implications-for-Pakistan/>

military capabilities and engaging in regional collaborations to safeguard its interests. Pakistan faces challenges due to India's rise in the Indo-Pacific region, and its lack of a proactive policy, economic crisis, and internal instabilities could pose threats. To address these challenges, Pakistan needs a comprehensive maritime approach including collaboration with global powers and securing sea routes against piracy.³⁷

Bill Emmott's article discusses the QUAD, a strategic alliance comprising the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, comparing it to the BRICS summit involving Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. While the QUAD aims to counterbalance China's influence, the BRICS meetings continue with less attention. The author highlights India's membership in both groups' BRICS and QUAD, and the need for the QUAD to establish a clearer long-term purpose. The article suggests that the QUAD should emulate the BRICS framework by institutionalizing regular meetings and projects to build a habit of consultation. This approach may be more realistic, considering India's ties with China and Russia, aiming to prevent India from getting too close to these nations.³⁸

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Structural realism asserts that the dominant characteristic of international politics is the absence of a central authority, commonly referred to as anarchy.³⁹ Structural realism, also known as neo-realism stems from classical realism proposing that states like individuals, are inherently self-interested and power-driven due to their instincts. Instead of focusing on human nature, structural realism shifts attention to the presence of anarchy in the international system. Structural realism is divided into two main branches: offensive realism and defensive realism. Offensive realism focuses on seeking power and influence for security through domination and hegemony, while defensive realism argues that states should maintain a moderate level of power to ensure their security. Defensive realism highlights factors like the security dilemma, geography, and elite beliefs to explain conflicts.

³⁷Shah Meer, "The Geopolitics of Indo-Pacific: The Rise of India and the Possible Challenges for Pakistan", *World Geostrategic Insight*, April 22 2022

<https://www.wgi.world/the-geopolitics-of-indo-pacific-the-rise-of-India-and-the-possible-challenges-for-Pakistan/>

³⁸ Bill Emmott, "QUAD, BRICS and the battle to seduce India", *Asia times*, June 13 2022

<https://asiatimes.com/2022/06/QUAD-brics-and-the-battle-to-seducer-India/>

³⁹ John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patrica Owens, "The Globalization of World Politics", *Oxford University Press*, December 15 2022 <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-globalization-of-world-politics-9780192898142?cc=fr&lang=en&>

Structural realism is a prominent theory in international relations that emerged as a response to the limitations and criticisms of classical realism. It represents a shift in focus from individual state behavior to the international system's structure and constraints. The development of structural realism can be traced back to the mid-20th century, gaining prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. The way countries interact globally affects what they do. In the Cold War, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a country next to Pakistan.⁴⁰ If Pakistan hadn't teamed up with the United States, there was a big chance that it could have faced collapse or invasion by the Soviet Union. The disorderly nature of global politics pushed Pakistan to form connections with the United States to safeguard itself from such threats.⁴¹ Pakistan is not the only country that acts according to the rules of the system, other nations also follow structural demands and expectations. Therefore, by using structural realism, we examine the current changes in the region's structure and what they mean.

The roots of structural realism can be found in the broader realist tradition, which emphasizes power, security, and state-centric analysis in international relations. Classical realism is associated with scholars like Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr focused on the importance of human nature and the pursuit of power as key drivers of state behavior. However, this approach faced challenges in explaining systemic dynamics and changes in the international arena.

Structural Realism was primarily formulated by Kenneth Waltz, an American political scientist. In his seminal work, "Theory of International Politics" (1979), Waltz proposed a systemic perspective that shifted the focus from the internal characteristics of states to the distribution of power in the international system. Waltz argued that the anarchic nature of the international system compelled states to prioritize their survival, leading to a balance of power. Structural realism posits that the distribution of power among states is a fundamental determinant of their behavior. Unlike classical realism, which emphasizes the impact of human nature and individual leaders, structural realism argues that the structure of the international system shapes states' actions. The theory identifies the anarchic nature of the system, the absence of a higher authority, and the pursuit of self-interest as key factors influencing state behavior. Kenneth Waltz's work gained significant attention in the field of international relations and provided a theoretical framework that could account for the complexities of the global political landscape. Structural

⁴⁰Lubna Sunawar and Tatiana Coutto, "U.S. Pakistan Relations during the Cold War", *The Journal of International Relations, Peace Studies, and Development*, October 26 2015 <https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/agsjournal/vol1/iss1/6/>

⁴¹ Patrick James, "Structural Realism and the Causes of War", *Mershon International Studies*, Review 39, no. 2 (1995): 181-208, <https://doi.org/10.2307/222750>

realism became a foundational theory in the discipline and influenced subsequent generations of scholars and policymakers.

The theory also evolved, with scholars like John Mearsheimer further developing and refining its concepts. Mearsheimer, in his book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" (2001), expanded on Waltz's ideas and introduced the concept of offensive realism, emphasizing the role of states' inherent desire for power and security. While structural realism has had a lasting impact, it has not been without its critics. Some scholars have challenged its assumptions, arguing that it oversimplifies state behavior and neglects the role of non-state actors, ideas, and institutions in shaping international outcomes.

2.2.1. Application and Influence:

Structural realism has found application in various areas of international relations, including security studies, international political economy, and conflict analysis. Its focus on the distribution of power and systemic constraints has provided insights into state behavior during periods of stability and change. Scholars and policymakers have used structural realism to analyze geopolitical shifts, alliances, and the dynamics of great power politics. The theory's influence extends beyond academia, impacting the thinking of policymakers and diplomats. Its emphasis on the balance of power and the state's rational pursuit of security has shaped strategic thinking in international affairs. During the Cold War, structural realism provided a framework for understanding the dynamics between the United States and the Soviet Union.

2.2.2. Contemporary Relevance:

Structural realism remains relevant in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. As the international system undergoes changes and power dynamics shift, the theory continues to offer valuable insights. Scholars and analysts use structural realism to assess the behavior of emerging powers, such as China, and understand the implications of multi-polarity on global stability. Structural realists have outlined five key ideas about the international system to help explain why states desire power. These assumptions, when considered together, paint a picture of a world where states are in constant competition for security. However, these assumptions on their own don't directly argue that states must always seek more power than each other.

Structural Realism makes several key assumptions about the dynamics of international relations. Firstly, it posits that superpowers play a central role in global politics within an anarchic

structure, where no absolute power exists above them. This anarchic setting in contrast to hierarchical systems in domestic politics, does not imply a lack of tension or unrest in the international system. The second assumption asserts that all states inherently possess offensive capabilities, implying military strength that can impact the security and sovereignty of neighboring states. These military capabilities vary among states and evolve. The third assumption suggests that states harbor unclear intentions towards each other, indicating a lack of certainty about the motivations of other states. Superpowers are concerned about whether their counterparts aim to shift the balance of power or are content with the existing status quo. Determining these intentions is challenging as they reside not only in military capabilities but also in the minds of state leaders. The fourth assumption emphasizes that the fundamental goal of states is survival. States prioritize securing their sovereignty and addressing political, economic, cultural, and social objectives. Survival is crucial because, without it, a State cannot pursue its broader goals. The fifth assumption posits that states act as rational actors, formulating policies and strategies designed to ensure their survival. This perspective acknowledges that while states may occasionally make significant mistakes, they generally operate with the best available information in a complex world, avoiding misunderstandings during critical times. However, when considering all assumptions collectively, it implies that states are engaged in balancing power and ensuring their survival, leading them to seek power at the expense of other states.⁴²

2.2.3. STRUCTURAL REALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA EMERGING ROLE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN ECONOMY

India's Growing Role in the Indo-Pacific:

India's rise in the Indo-Pacific is a complex phenomenon, and one way to understand it is by using a theory called structural realism. This theory suggests that countries act in smart ways to keep themselves safe in a world that doesn't have a central authority. From an offensive realist perspective, India strategically utilizes its economic prowess to boost the region. For India, this means making careful decisions about its economy, military strength, and alliances in the region. India's strong economy is crucial to its success in the Indo-Pacific. This isn't just about having a mighty economy it's about using that economy to build a strong military.

⁴² Mearsheimer, John J. "Structural realism." *International relations theories: Discipline and diversity* 83 (2007): 72-74

India's economic strength significantly influences everything else in the Indo-Pacific. To stay safe, countries need a strong military. India is investing a lot in making its military more advanced. This isn't just to show off, it is a smart move to ensure nobody tries to harm India. This robust military also helps India be an important player in the Indo-Pacific. In this complicated world, countries team up with others to be safer. India is also engaging in this endeavor by forging alliances with other nations in the Indo-Pacific region, India can share resources and work together to address the challenges of becoming an aggressive player in the Indo-Pacific region. These alliances make India even more powerful in the region.

Challenges for Pakistan:

From a defensive realist perspective, Pakistan reacts to India's growing power by prioritizing its survival and security. Given the uneven power dynamics between the two countries, Pakistan adopts a defensive stance aimed at countering India's influence and minimizing potential threats to its economy. Pakistan perceives India as its main security concern, prompting it to take defensive actions to maintain a strong deterrent and safeguard its sovereignty. As India became more important in the Indo-Pacific, the relationship between India and Pakistan became more and more complex. Structural realism helps us understand this by looking at how countries act based on their safety concerns. For Pakistan, this means facing challenges in terms of military, economy, and strategy. When one country gets stronger, others might feel uneasy. This is called a security dilemma.

With India getting more powerful, Pakistan might feel threatened. This can lead to both countries trying to build up their militaries making things tense and risky. The economic side adds another layer. India's economic growth can change trade routes and partnerships affecting Pakistan's economy. But, there's a twist both countries need each other economically. So, there is a chance for them to work together for mutual benefit, even with security worries. Pakistan is in a tough spot. The security dilemma and economic changes make it hard for them to decide what to do. They need to think about military strategies, economic ties, and how to deal with India's growing influence. It's a challenging situation for Pakistan to navigate. Despite the difficulties, there's a chance for India and Pakistan to cooperate in South Asia. By focusing on economic collaboration and shared interests, they might find ways to ease tensions and work together for stability in the region.

Repercussion faced by Pakistan:

Understanding the relationship between India and Pakistan involves various factors. For Pakistan, challenges arise as India becomes more powerful, bringing historical, cultural, and economic factors into play. The historical tensions and disputes between them make this even trickier. Structural realism focuses on numbers and strategies, but the India-Pakistan story has more to it. The past, like the partition in 1947. The deep connection between people, history, and ideology shapes how these countries see each other going beyond what a theory might explain. Money is a big part of the equation. Even with security worries, India and Pakistan are economically connected. This shared interest in trade and stability could be a way for them to work together, despite the security challenges. To deal with the rise of India, Pakistan had to balance military concerns, historical baggage, and economic ties. It's like walking on a tightrope, trying to avoid conflict while finding ways to cooperate for the benefit of both nations in the region.

Conclusion

The evolving strategic landscape in South Asia, particularly in the context of the U.S.-India alliance, presents a complex interplay of geopolitical forces that resonate with the tenets of structural realism theory. The United States strategically aligns with India, positioning it as a key player in regional security dynamics. At the core of this transformation is the recognition of India as a net security provider in the region. The strategic partnership between India and the US not only reflects shared interests but also underscores India's growing significance in shaping America's broader regional policies. This recalibration of alliances is indicative of the structural realist principle that states act to maximize their security and influence in the international system. India's status as a nuclear state introduces a complex dimension to its regional influence.

The possession of nuclear capabilities provides India with a deterrent against potential adversaries and enhances its ability to respond to perceived threats. This solidification of India's hegemonic position, backed by major powers, adds a layer of complexity to the regional dynamic, particularly about historical tensions and strained relations with neighboring Pakistan. The ambiguity of India's intentions towards its neighbor, especially Pakistan, contributes to the intricate regional landscape. While India's nuclear capabilities grant it a formidable position, the delicate balance between deterrence and regional stability remains a critical aspect of the structural realist analysis. The potential for military force deployment, combined with historical animosities, creates a security dilemma that further complicates the geopolitical equation in South Asia. In its approach towards China, India adopts a multifaceted strategy that involves economic collaboration

alongside participation in the United States' encirclement policy against China in the Indo-Pacific region. This dynamic stance places India in a pivotal position, both as an economic powerhouse and a strategic player in the containment of China.

However, the ramifications of India's active role in the encirclement policy create a security dilemma for Pakistan, which maintains close ties with China, thereby amplifying regional tensions. Economic development emerges as a cornerstone of India's regional influence, amplifying its significance in the global arena. Simultaneously, India's proactive global stance, marked by a deliberate avoidance of alignment with specific blocs, distinguishes it from traditional bloc politics. This approach stands in stark contrast to Pakistan's dependence on China, providing India with a broader range of diplomatic and economic options and consolidating its status as a significant global player.

CHAPTER. 3

3.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The term "research" holds various meanings, with definitions varying among experts and disciplines. According to Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown, research is the exploration of an idea or topic for a specific purpose, enabling the extension of knowledge or theory exploration.⁴³ Methodology, on the other hand, guides how research questions were formulated, and the significance claims derived from them. In this study, we focus on India emerging as a major power in the Pacific region and the challenges for Pakistan due to India's rise. This research will be conducted under the title of “India's Emerging Role in Indo-Pacific Region: Challenges for Pakistan Economy”.

Research methodology is the plan for a research study, encompassing its design, philosophy, approach, and type of research. It involves the processes and methods used to collect, select, analyze, and assess data on a specific subject. In simpler terms, it's the way researchers go about their study, from how they choose their methods to how they analyze and evaluate information.⁴⁴ The objective of this section is to elucidate the methodology utilized to scrutinize and explore the topic “India's emerging role in Indo-Pacific Region: Challenges for Pakistan's Economy”. In this chapter, we delve into the world of research, focusing on key elements like philosophy, approach,

⁴³ Peter Clough, Cathy Nutbrown, *A student Guide to Methodology*, SAGE Publications Ltd, February 2012, 288 pages <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/a-students-guide-to-methodology/book237315>

⁴⁴ Al-Ababneh, M. M. “Linking ontology, epistemology and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8 (1), 75-91.” (2020)

how we gather data, analyze it, and other important factors. We'll walk you through the detailed steps of collecting and analyzing data while also touching on the ethical considerations in our research journey.

A. Research Design

A research design is like a road map for how researchers collect and study information. It outlines the steps they take to gather data, analyze it, and make suggestions based on their discoveries.⁴⁵ Research studies can employ various methodologies, such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approaches. Qualitative methodology explores people's emotions and experiences, while quantitative methodology analyzes statistical differences between variables. The mixed methodology combines both, investigating emotions and studying statistical differences among variables.⁴⁶ In this research, a qualitative approach was chosen because only secondary data was used. Qualitative research was employed to collect and analyze data through descriptive analysis. To gain the research objective “examining the emerging influence of India in the Indo-Pacific region and challenges Pakistan’s economy has to face”, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of geopolitical dynamics, economic interdependencies, and strategic alliances shaping the evolving landscape in the region. This research undertaking is categorized as descriptive, emphasizing a detailed examination and comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

B. Research Type

The term "research type" refers to the specific method used in a study. It describes the kind of research conducted, indicating whether it was an experimental, descriptive, or correlational study. This classification reveals the exact approach taken to examine relationships between variables to explore concepts⁴⁷. The main goal of the research is to thoroughly analyze India's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific Region and assess the economic difficulties confronted by Pakistan because of India's aggressive attitude in the area. The study utilized an exploratory research approach, aiming to delve into pertinent concepts and information related to the research objectives.

C. Research Philosophy

⁴⁵ Mackey, Alison, and Susan M. Gass. *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Routledge, 2015

⁴⁶ Kumar, Ranjit. “Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners.” *Research methodology* (2018): 1-528

⁴⁷ Patel, Mimansha, and Nitin Patel. “Exploring research methodology.” *International Journal of Research and Review* 6, no. 3 (2019): 49

Research philosophy involves a researcher's fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge. It guides the choice of research methods and methodologies, providing a perspective for understanding reality and generating knowledge. The researcher's viewpoint and assumptions about reality and knowledge shape their research approach. Positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory are among the various research philosophies that exist.⁴⁸ This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, emphasizing the belief that knowledge can be acquired through observation and the exploration of ideas. Interpretivism suggests that the social world can be investigated subjectively. Given the study's focus on analyzing India's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific Region and evaluating the economic challenges faced by Pakistan, the use of interpretivism was deemed suitable for this research.

D. Research Approach

The term "research approach" pertains to the overall strategy for investigating. It encompasses the entire plan for the study. The research approach outlines the general method for carrying out the research. The research employed diverse analytical techniques and theoretical frameworks. There are two main types of research approaches: inductive and deductive.⁴⁹ In this study, a deductive research approach is used to explore how India's growing role in the Indo-Pacific region affects Pakistan's economy. Deductive research involves testing existing theories from the literature to draw specific conclusions. I followed a structured research design, starting with a theoretical framework that guided my research questions and hypotheses. By collecting and analyzing data, I aimed to validate these hypotheses. This deductive approach helped me systematically examine the relationships between India's actions in the Indo-Pacific region and the economic challenges faced by Pakistan.

E. Data Collection

Gathering information for a study is known as the data collection process.⁵⁰ The information for this study was collected through a review of existing literature. Gathering research material is an essential part of carrying out a case study on "India's Emerging Role in the Indo-Pacific Region: Challenges for Pakistan." To answer the study questions and objectives, this procedure entails methodically obtaining pertinent data and evidence. This data serves as a

⁴⁸ Ibid., 53

⁴⁹ Mukherjee, Shyama Prasad. "A guide to research methodology: An overview of research problems, tasks and methods." (2019).

⁵⁰ Patel, Mimansha, and Nitin Patel. "Exploring research methodology." *International Journal of Research and Review* 6, no. 3 (2019): 48-55.

foundation for the analysis and interpretation of India's evolving role in the Indo-Pacific region and its implications for Pakistan. With the focus on India's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific, data collection was thorough, targeted, and methodologically sound to guarantee the validity and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions. Specific Keywords were used in the research process to gather relevant data. The analytical work was gathered thematically.

F. Data Analysis

The process of scrutinizing collected data is known as a data analysis technique. Various methods, such as systematic literature reviews, integrative literature reviews, thematic analysis, and content analysis can be employed for this purpose.⁵¹ The information collected for this study was analyzed using the content analysis method. Content analysis was used to explore the “India Emerging Role in Indo-Pacific Region: Challenges for Pakistan Economy”. By using the “Content Analysis” method India’s Emerging role in Indo Indo-Pacific region was explored as well and the challenges for the Pakistan Economy were also analyzed. The data was gathered according to research objectives and research questions.

G. Research Ethics

The principles that shape the way research is carried out are known as research ethics.⁵² Throughout the study, ethical considerations were carefully addressed. This included following appropriate citation protocols, safeguarding data confidentiality, and upholding intellectual property rights. A key focus was placed on respecting intellectual property rights, ensuring that no copyrighted data was utilized without proper authorization. The researcher also adhered to relevant citation standards to give due credit to information sourced from other studies and acknowledge the work of fellow scholars. By appropriately attributing sources, the researcher demonstrated honesty and transparency while recognizing the contributions of other authors. Additionally, the study complied with all applicable laws and regulations

⁵¹ Al-Ababneh, M. M. “Linking ontology, epistemology and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8 (1), 75-91.” (2020).

⁵² Babii, Andrii. “Important aspects of the experimental research methodology.” *Вісник Тернопільського національного технічного університету* 97, no. 1 (2020): 77-87

CHAPTER. 4

4.1. EMERGING INDIA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL DYNAMICS:

India Geopolitical Significance:

India's active role in the region of Indo-Pacific is profoundly anchored in its strategic geographical positioning, acting as a vital link between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. This significant location positions India at the crossroads of major global trade routes, making it an indispensable player in international maritime affairs. India as a Net Security Provider in the region by the US is giving momentum to India to rise. The Indian subcontinent's proximity to vital sea lanes, notably the strategically critical Strait of Malacca, further amplifies its role in facilitating the seamless movement of goods, energy resources, and people between key regions such as the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and beyond. The dominance that India asserts over the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea is a testament to its strategic advantage in the region. These maritime domains not only offer India vital naval bases and logistical support but also provide a platform for power projection and influence across the broader Indo-Pacific.

The Indian Navy's presence in these waters serves as a safeguard for regional stability and secures crucial sea routes that are lifelines for global commerce. In the realm of international relations, India's proactive approach to building strategic alliances contributes significantly to its economic and defense objectives. The partnerships and collaborations fostered by the Indian government are multifaceted, encompassing economic ties, defense cooperation, and diplomatic

engagement. These alliances not only enhance India's geopolitical standing but also serve as a counterbalance to potential assertiveness from other major players in the region, particularly China. The evolving landscape of geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific has prompted India to strengthen its ties with like-minded nations. Collaborative efforts with countries such as the United States, Japan, Australia, and members of the QUAD showcase India's commitment to fostering a rule-based international order. These partnerships, grounded in shared values and strategic interests, contribute to the development of a resilient network that can collectively address regional challenges, including maritime security, terrorism, and economic development.

Furthermore, these alliances serve as a deterrent against the growing influence of China in the area. India's proactive engagement with major powers aims to uphold the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific, countering any attempts at unilateral dominance or disregard for international norms. The strategic convergence among these nations bolsters the collective ability to respond to emerging security threats and challenges. India's active involvement in a spectrum of summits, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS), and The Group of Seven (G7), is indicative of its commitment to pursuing an internationalist foreign policy. This multifaceted participation underscores India's strategic emphasis on collaborative efforts and partnerships across diverse global platforms. By engaging in these summits, India aims not only to address regional and global challenges but also to showcase its proactive role and rising role in fostering diplomatic ties, shaping international discourse, and contributing to collective solutions. This broad-ranging participation serves as a testament to India's dedication to a cooperative and inclusive approach to addressing global issues and advancing shared interests within the international community. The QUAD reflects India's commitment to enhancing regional security and promoting a rule-based order in the region.

However, India's participation in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) highlights its role in shaping the global economic architecture and fostering cooperation among emerging economies. Joining the G7 meetings demonstrates India's aspiration to contribute to discussions on major global challenges, showcasing its willingness to engage with advanced industrialized nations. India's involvement in these summits signifies a proactive stance in global affairs, reinforcing its commitment to diplomacy, collaboration, and the pursuit of collective solutions to complex global issues. The nation's diplomatic endeavors underscore its aspiration to

play a significant role in shaping the evolving dynamics of the international order.⁵³ The ascent of India as a regional force provides an opportunity for the US to enhance its influence by providing military and economic assistance, thereby establishing a contender to counterbalance China in the area.⁵⁴

The Indian Ocean is central to India's geopolitical strategy, given its dependence on maritime trade. The majority of Indian trade, including crucial energy imports, is conducted via sea routes. As a result, ensuring the security and stability of the Indian Ocean is of paramount importance. India has actively pursued a maritime strategy that involves naval patrols, anti-piracy operations, and cooperative initiatives with regional partners to safeguard these vital waters. The South China Sea, although not directly under India's jurisdiction, is of strategic importance due to its impact on regional stability. India has expressed concerns about the militarization of the South China Sea⁵⁵ and supports the freedom of navigation and overflight in the region, emphasizing the adherence to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

India's rise in the region and geopolitical significance are also reflected in its participation in multilateral organizations and initiatives. As a founding member of the (IORA)⁵⁶, an active participant in the (BIMSTEC)⁵⁷, a member of the IMEC corridor project (IMEC)⁵⁸, India collaborates with neighboring countries to address shared challenges and promote regional development. Moreover, India's strategic partnerships with significant players in the region, such as Japan and Australia, underscore its commitment to shaping the region's geopolitical landscape. The evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region require India to leverage its position as a key player in shaping a free, open, and inclusive regional order. As India continues to assert its geopolitical influence, it remains an integral force in defining the contours of the Indo-Pacific in the 21st century.

⁵³ Shreya Upadhyay, "BRICS, QUAD, and India Multi-Alignment Strategy", *Stimson Asia and Indo Pacific*, July 12 2022 <https://www.stimson.org/2022/brics-QUAD-and-Indias-multi-alignment-strategy/>

⁵⁴ Majid Ali Noorani, Dr. M Ali Pasha, and Imran Ali Noorani, "INDIA ROLE as a REGIONAL POWER: IMPLICATIONS for PAKISTAN-CHINA ALLIANCE," *Asia Pacific*, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Majid-Noorani-2/publication/343725385_India_Role_as_a_Regional_Power_Implications_for_Pakistan-China_Alliance/links/5f97d32892851c14bceac28f/Indias-Role-as-a-Regional-Power-Implications-for-Pakistan-China-Alliance.pdf (2017).

⁵⁵ Anirban Bhaumik, "India slams China for militarisation of South China Sea", *DECCAN HERALD*, March 4 2023 <https://www.deccanherald.com/India/India-slams-China-for-militarisation-of-south-China-sea-1197094.html>

⁵⁶ "Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)," Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2021, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/Indian-ocean/iora/Indian-ocean-rim-association-iora>.

⁵⁷ <https://bimstec.org>

⁵⁸ Abdul Moiz Khan, "The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Too Little, Too Late?", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 12 2023 <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91214>

Economic Engagement of India:

India's economic engagement in the region is characterized by a proactive approach that leverages connectivity projects, trade agreements, and economic partnerships to boost regional development and become a hegemon in the region. By aligning its economic policies with its strategic goals, India aims to play a pivotal role in shaping the economic landscape of the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st century. India's economic engagement in the region is dynamic and is characterized by strategic initiatives, connectivity projects, and the pursuit of mutually beneficial partnerships. The region's economic vibrancy, coupled with India's growing economic capability has positioned India as a key player in fostering trade, investment, and regional connectivity.

India has successfully integrated into the global political and financial system. Currently, it holds the presidency of the G-20 countries, and it is a member of prominent groups such as BRICS, I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA), and SCO. Additionally, India has attained an elevated position in global economic institutions like the IMF and FATF. Despite not being a part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), India enjoys NPT-like benefits, securing a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and gaining access to the global technological market. Furthermore, India is actively advancing in various technological domains, including artificial intelligence (AI), hypersonic systems, Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems, aircraft carriers, and nuclear submarines.⁵⁹

A. Trade and Connectivity:

India's economic strategy in the Indo-Pacific region is underscored by a series of initiatives designed to fortify trade and connectivity, with the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)⁶⁰ emblematic of its dedication to enhancing economic linkages. The INSTC, a multimodal network connecting India to Russia through Iran, serves as a pivotal testament to India's commitment to fostering efficient and cost-effective trade routes. By providing a shorter and more streamlined transportation corridor, this initiative not only benefits the participating nations but also plays a crucial role in advancing the broader economic integration of the region. The INSTC's significance lies in its potential to significantly reduce transportation costs and transit times, thereby promoting increased trade activity among the nations involved.

⁵⁹ Joshua T. White, "After the Foundational Agreements: An Agenda for U.S.-India Defence and Security Cooperation," *Brookings Institution* (2021): 6 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/02/19/agenda-for-u.s.-India-defense-and-security-cooperation-event-7602>

⁶⁰ <https://www.clearias.com/international-north-south-transport-corridor-instc/>

Moreover, the corridor enhances connectivity, paving the way for collaborative economic ventures and fostering stronger diplomatic ties. India's proactive role in promoting the INSTC reflects its strategic vision for regional economic cooperation and underscores the nation's commitment to fostering stability and growth in the Indo-Pacific. As a catalyst for economic synergies, the INSTC exemplifies India's role as a key player in shaping the economic landscape of the region. The IMEC project⁶¹, designed to enhance trade, energy, and digital connectivity, is poised to become a significant geopolitical player. Notably, China's absence suggests a potential rival to its expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As IMEC aims to foster regional cooperation and development, it could present an alternative framework for countries seeking to diversify their economic partnerships. The project's scope and ambitions are anticipated to exert influence on global economic dynamics, as nations consider participation to either complement or challenge the strategic objectives of the BRI.

The evolving geopolitical landscape may witness increased competition and collaboration in shaping the future of international connectivity.⁶² India's Trade partnerships demonstrate the commitment to fostering economic integration in the Indo-Pacific. These initiatives contribute to the diversification of India's economic ties and strengthen its position as an economic hub in the region. Through trade agreements, investment facilitation, and infrastructure development, India seeks to create a web of economic interdependence that fosters regional stability. India's participation in regional economic forums, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)⁶³ and the East Asia Summit⁶⁴, provides platforms for economic collaboration. These forums facilitate discussions on trade policies, investment opportunities, and infrastructure development, allowing India to actively contribute to the region's economic discourse.

India's strategic interest in the trade dynamics of the Strait of Hormuz⁶⁵ is underscored by its pivotal geographical location, serving as a crucial maritime gateway connecting neighboring nations to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Historically, approximately 40% of the global

⁶¹ Abdul Moiz Khan, "The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Too Little, Too Late?", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 12 2023 <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91214>

⁶² Jagannath P. Panda, "Between Brics and G20: India&Global South Area are a Resolute Match!", *Institute for security and Development Policy*, September 2023 <https://isdip.eu/publication/between-brics-g20-India-global-south-are-a-resolute-match/>

⁶³ Suhasini Haidar, "How is the Indian Ocean Rim Association a key bloc for India? | Explained", *The Hindu News*, October 15 2023 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-is-the-Indian-ocean-rim-association-a-key-bloc-for-India-explained/article67421544.ece>

⁶⁴ "East Asia Summit (EAS)," *Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, 2017, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/eas/east-asia-summit-eas>

⁶⁵ "Why Is the Strait of Hormuz so Strategically Important?" *Al Jazeera*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/7/11/why-is-the-strait-of-hormuz-so-strategically-important>.

oil trade traversed this critical waterway⁶⁶, emphasizing its economic significance. As India asserts itself in the Indo-Pacific region, ensuring stability and safeguarding the unimpeded flow of goods through the strait becomes integral to its geopolitical agenda. A substantial presence in this vital maritime chokepoint not only fortifies India's economic interests but also enhances its overall influence in the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific.

B. Act East Policy:

The Act East Policy underscores India's commitment to deepening economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asian nations^{67,68}. Initially framed as the Look East Policy in the early 1990s, it has evolved to emphasize not only diplomatic and security engagements but also robust economic partnerships. Under the Act East Policy, India focuses on enhancing economic cooperation through trade, investments, and connectivity initiatives. Infrastructure projects, such as the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project⁶⁹ aim to improve connectivity between India and Southeast Asia, opening new avenues for economic collaboration. India's 'Look East Policy' leads India to integrate into the East Asian region while adhering to a policy of accommodation towards China. India's diplomatic relations based on the Look West policy are deepening with the Middle East. Indo-Israel relations are expanding in the economic and military domains.⁷⁰ The Act East Policy exemplifies India's proactive approach to economic engagement. This policy is not solely focused on traditional diplomacy but emphasizes building economic ties with Southeast Asian nations and beyond⁷¹.

India Security and Defense Cooperation:

India's role in security and defense cooperation within the region reflects a commitment to maintaining regional stability, addressing common security challenges, and fostering collaborative efforts with like-minded partners. The evolving security landscape has prompted India to actively engage in strategic dialogues, joint exercises, and partnerships to ensure the safety and security of

⁶⁶ "Strait of Hormuz -Factsheet," n.d., *International Energy Agency*, <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/203eb8eb-2147-4c99-af07-2d3804b8db3f/StraitofHormuzFactsheet.pdf>.

⁶⁷ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/Indias-act-east-policy-and-regional-cooperation-61375>

⁶⁸ Derek Grosman, "India is Becoming a Power in Southeast Asia", *The Rand Blog*, July 10 2023 <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/07/India-is-becoming-a-power-in-southeast-asia.html>

⁶⁹ http://www.mpa.gov.mm/development_projects/kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport-project/

⁷⁰ U.S. Emerges as India Biggest Trading Partner in FY23 at US\$128.55 Billion: China at Second Position," *The Hindu*, April 16, 2023 <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/us-emerges-as-Indias-biggest-trading-partner-in-fy23-at-12855-billion-china-at-second-position/article66743587.ece>

⁷¹ Amitendu Palit, India Act East Policy and Implications for South East Asia", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2016 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26466920>

vital maritime routes and shared interests. The United States has strategically positioned India as a key ally in the Indo-Pacific region, with a focus on bolstering collaborative efforts in defense. This commitment is evident in the strengthening of defense ties through various agreements. These include the General Security of Military Information Agreement, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement⁷². These agreements underscore the deepening partnership between the two nations and pave the way for enhanced coordination in defense-related matters.⁷³⁷⁴

This emboldening of India militarily by the US to counter China has posed a security dilemma for Pakistan. The country has fallen into the rival's faction because of intensified tensions with India specifically and with the US generally. There are implications for Pakistan's security ranging from the arms race in the region, and Indo-Pak rivalry vis-à-vis Kashmir dispute to security dilemmas for Pakistan and other regional countries in the wake of US-India cooperation, US-China rising tension, China-Pakistan cooperation, and Pakistan-India tension.

A. QUAD Partnership:

The QUAD was initiated by Shinzo Abe in 2007 with the idea of influencing or reshaping the grand stage of geopolitics, using joint military exercises between the four countries as a way to emphasize the QUAD's role as a counterweight in the Indo-Pacific against China's growing role.⁷⁵ At the forefront of India's security and defense strategy in the Indo-Pacific is its participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly known as the QUAD. This strategic forum brings together India, the United States, Japan, and Australia in a collaborative effort to address regional security concerns. The QUAD's primary objectives include upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific, promoting maritime security, and enhancing regional resilience. The QUAD facilitates regular consultations on security issues, joint military exercises, and cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, cyber security, and disaster response. By aligning with like-minded

⁷² Abhijit Singh, Aparna Pande, Jeff M. Smith, and Samir Saran, "The New India-US Partnership in the Indo-Pacific: Peace, Prosperity and Security," *Observer Research Foundation*, January 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332752374_The_new_India-US_partnership_in_the_Indo-Pacific_Peace_prosperity_and_security

⁷³ Joshua T. White, "After the Foundational Agreements: An Agenda for U.S.-India Defence and Security Cooperation," *Brookings Institution*, 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/02/19/agenda-for-u.s.-India-defence-and-security-cooperation-event-7602>

⁷⁴ Sonia Naz, "Indo-US communications compatibility and security agreement: implications for Pakistan", *Daily Times*, January 16 2024 <https://dailytimes.com.pk/303506/indo-us-communications-compatibility-and-security-agreement-implications-for-Pakistan/>

⁷⁵ Bill Emmott, "QUAD, BRICS and the battle to seduce India", *Asia times*, June 13 2022 <https://asiatimes.com/2022/06/QUAD-brics-and-the-battle-to-seducer-India/>

democracies, India seeks to contribute to a rules-based international order and deter potential security threats in the region. Thus, having this approach in the region makes India a regional power.

B. Military Exercises:

India's active participation in bilateral and multilateral military exercises underscores its commitment to building robust defense capabilities and fostering interoperability with partner nations. Exercises such as the Malabar series⁷⁶, conducted with the United States, Japan, and Australia, enhance the operational readiness of the Indian Navy and contribute to regional maritime security. These military exercises go beyond traditional security concerns, incorporating scenarios related to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. The collaborative nature of these exercises not only strengthens defense cooperation but also builds trust and confidence among participating nations. India's engagement in military exercises extends to regional partnerships with countries like Vietnam,⁷⁷ Singapore⁷⁸, France,⁷⁹ and Indonesia⁸⁰. These interactions contribute to the development of a collective security architecture, fostering regional stability and cooperation.

India Regional Partnerships:

India's approach to regional partnerships in the Indo-Pacific is also characterized by a multifaceted strategy that involves active diplomatic engagement, economic collaboration, and security cooperation. Building strong regional partnerships is crucial for India to address common challenges, promote economic growth, and contribute to the overall stability of the Indo-Pacific region and to have a hegemony in the region. India's economic and technological advancements, as showcased through its participation in events like the BRICS summit and its presidency of the G-20, have solidified its position as a key player on the global stage. Additionally, India's leadership in representing the interests of the Global South serves as a significant accomplishment. With its

⁷⁶ Malabar Naval Exercises, *Press Information Bureau Government of India*, February 2021 <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1696140>

⁷⁷ “Armies of India, Vietnam begin 11-day military exercise in Hanoi” *The Economic Times*, News, December 11 2023 <https://economictimes.Indiatimes.com/news/defence/armies-of-India-vietnam-begin-11-day-military-exercise-in-hanoi/articleshow/105901108.cms>

⁷⁸ “JOINT INDIA SINGAPORE EXERCISE ‘BOLD KURUKSHETRA’ CONCLUDES AT JODHPUR” *Government of India*, March 14 2023 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1906808>

⁷⁹ “Indo-France Joint Military Exercise Frinjex-2023 to commence at Thiruvananthapuram” *The Economic Times*, March 6 2023 <https://economictimes.Indiatimes.com/news/defence/indo-france-joint-military-exercise-frinjex-2023-to-commence-at-thiruvananthapuram/articleshow/98457823.cms>

⁸⁰ “INDIA-INDONESIA BILATERAL EXERCISE SAMUDRA SHAKTI – 23”, *Government of India*, May 14 2023 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1924058>

rapidly growing economy, a skilled and youthful workforce, notable achievements such as being the first to soft-land a spacecraft on the moon's south pole, and active involvement in initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, India effectively bridges the gap between the Western and Eastern spheres while advocating for the concerns of developing nations.⁸¹

A. **ASEAN Engagement:**

India's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a cornerstone of its regional partnerships. ASEAN, comprising ten Southeast Asian nations, is a key actor in the Indo-Pacific, and India's ties with the bloc extend across various dimensions. Diplomatically, India participates in the ASEAN-India Dialogue and Summit, fostering discussions on political, economic, and security issues. Economic cooperation is strengthened through initiatives like the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA)⁸², promoting trade and investment linkages. Cultural exchanges, academic collaborations, and people-to-people contacts contribute to building a deeper understanding between India and ASEAN member states.

B. **Bilateral Relations:**

Strengthening bilateral relations with major states in the region is a key aspect of India's regional partnership strategy. Notable bilateral relationships include those with Japan, Australia, South Korea, France, and Vietnam among others. These partnerships are characterized by diplomatic dialogues, trade agreements, and joint initiatives spanning economic, technological, and security domains. India's deepening ties with Japan, like the extent to economic collaborations, infrastructure projects, and strategic dialogues⁸³. With Australia, India engages in the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, encompassing defense cooperation, economic initiatives, and regional security discussions⁸⁴. With France, India have joint military exercises⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Jagannath P. Panda, "Between BRICS and G20: India & Global South Area are a Resolute Match!", *Institute for security and Development Policy*, September 2023 <https://isdpr.eu/publication/between-brics-g20-India-global-south-are-a-resolute-match/>

⁸² <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/October/outreach-document/Edited%20AIFTA.pdf>

⁸³ Arsh Shahid Khan, Aiysha Safdar, "Emerging Us-Japan Relations And Impact On East Asian Security", *Margalla Papers-2021 (Issue-II)*, December 2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360204093_EMERGING_US-JAPAN_RELATIONS_AND_IMPACT_ON_EAST_ASIAN_SECURITY

⁸⁴ Saha, Premesha Singh, Angad, "Securing two Oceans: bolstering India-Australia defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific", Observer Research Foundation New Delhi, 2022 https://www.zbw.eu/econis-archiv/bitstream/11159/8531/1/1800502249_0.pdf

⁸⁵ "Indo-France Joint Military Exercise Frinjex-2023 to commence at Thiruvananthapuram" *The Economic Times*, News, March 6 2023 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indo-france-joint-military-exercise-frinjex-2023-to-commence-at-thiruvananthapuram/articleshow/98457823.cms>

India's bilateral engagements are not limited to major powers but also extend to emerging players and traditional partners in the Indo-Pacific.

C. Multilateral Organizations:

Active participation in multilateral organizations contributes to India's regional partnerships. In addition to ASEAN, India has engagements with (IORA)⁸⁶ and (BIMSTEC)⁸⁷. These platforms facilitate discussions on regional challenges, economic integration, and cultural exchanges. India's involvement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) expands its regional footprint, fostering partnerships with Central Asian nations⁸⁸. India's multi-alignment approach allows it to navigate global uncertainties, safeguard national interests, and contribute meaningfully to international stability, leveraging its economic potential, cultural influence, and diplomatic strength independently.⁸⁹ India's Asia Pacific policy is aimed at making it a regional hegemon and global power by joining US-led alliances to counter China⁹⁰.

India Diplomatic Outreach:

India's diplomatic outreach in the Indo-Pacific involves active participation in regional forums, state identity, multilateral organizations, and bilateral engagements. Forums such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum provide platforms for India to articulate its perspectives on regional and global issues. India adopts a very exploratory foreign policy strategy, simultaneously hedging against potential challenges from China by cultivating a closer relationship with the United States while engaging in selective and deep partnerships with a range of global and regional powers. This dual approach aims to strike a balance in the geopolitical landscape. By fostering multiple alliances with countries such as Russia, Japan, Israel, and the European Union, India seeks to enhance its diplomatic flexibility and reduce dependency on any single power. Additionally, the strategy reflects a commitment to preserving autonomy and

⁸⁶ Anil Sooklal, "The IORA Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: building partnerships for mutual cooperation and sustainable development" *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, September 12 2023 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19480881.2023.2252189>

⁸⁷ "Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Initiative," *aric.adb.org*, n.d., <https://aric.adb.org/initiative/bay-of-bengal-initiative-for-multi-sectoral-technical-and-economic-cooperation>.

⁸⁸ Meena Singh Roy, "India Seeking New Role in the Eurasian Regional Mechanism", *IDSA Monograph Series No. 34*, February 2014 <https://idsa.in/system/files/monograph34.pdf>

⁸⁹ PTI, "U.S. Emerges as India Biggest Trading Partner in FY23 at \$128.55 Billion; China at Second Position," *The Hindu*, April 16, 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/us-emerges-as-Indias-biggest-trading-partner-in-fy23-at-12855-billion-China-at-second-position/article66743587.ece>

⁹⁰ Ye, Xiaodi, "Explaining China hedging to the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy", *China Review* 20, no. 3 (2020) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26928117>

pursuing an independent rise on the global stage.⁹¹ At GLOBESEC 2022 in Bratislava, Slovakia, India Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar, emphasized India's commitment to steering clear of bloc politics and maintaining its strategic autonomy, as evident from his remarks in these forums.,

“I don’t accept that India has to join either the U.S. axis or China axis. We are one-fifth of the world’s population, the fifth or sixth-largest economy in the world...we are entitled to weigh our side.”

This perspective of an Indo-centric specific multi-alignment underscores India's participation in multiple summits⁹² Interestingly, India on the one hand is playing a hedge against China⁹³ in the U.S.’s favor while on the other hand, it is pursuing a selective and deep engagement with global and regional powers thereby fostering its independent rise. India's ‘Look East Policy’ leads India to integrate into the East Asian region while adhering to a policy of accommodation towards China. India's diplomatic relations based on the Look West policy are deepening with the Middle East. Indo-Israel relations are expanding in the economic and military domains. India strategically navigates its foreign policy by concurrently joining the QUAD alliance system, a security forum with the United States, Japan, and Australia, and becoming a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), fostering ties with Russia and China.

Through active participation in trilateral meetings with China and Russia, India keeps communication channels open, showcasing a commitment to diplomatic dialogue and conflict resolution. Simultaneously, India maintains its status as China's largest trading partner⁹⁴, emphasizing its pragmatic approach to international relations. This dual engagement underscores India's pursuit of a balanced and multi-faceted foreign policy, aiming to secure strategic interests while fostering economic ties with key regional powers. Bilateral engagements with countries in the Indo-Pacific, both traditional partners and emerging players, are crucial components of India's diplomatic strategy. Through diplomatic dialogues, joint commissions, and high-level visits, India builds and strengthens diplomatic ties, addressing shared concerns and exploring opportunities for

⁹¹ PTI, “U.S. Emerges as India Biggest Trading Partner in FY23 at \$128.55 Billion; China at Second Position,” *The Hindu*, April 16, 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/us-emerges-as-Indias-biggest-trading-partner-in-fy23-at-12855-billion-China-at-second-position/article66743587.ece>

⁹² Shreya Upadhyay, “BRICS, QUAD, and India Multi-Alignment Strategy”, *Stimson Asia and Indo Pacific*, July 12 2022 <https://www.stimson.org/2022/brics-QUAD-and-Indias-multi-alignment-strategy/>

⁹³ Ye, Xiaodi, “Explaining China hedging to the United States’ Indo-Pacific strategy”, *China Review* 20, no. 3 (2020) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26928117>

⁹⁴ Shida, Wang, "The Current State, Dynamics and Future Trajectory of India Relations with the US-Led Western Counties", *China Int'l Stud.* 100, 2023 <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/chintersd100&div=7&id=&page=>

collaboration. India's diplomatic initiatives often extend to economic cooperation, security dialogues, and joint initiatives in areas such as infrastructure development, healthcare, and education.

By aligning diplomatic efforts with shared interests, India seeks to contribute to the formulation of regional policies that promote peace, stability, and inclusive development. The Indian diaspora, which is widespread across the Indo-Pacific, serves as a unique asset for India's soft power. By engaging with the diaspora and recognizing its contributions to host countries, India enhances its influence and fosters connections that transcend geographical boundaries. India perceives that aligning with the initiative would place China in a favorable position vis-à-vis itself in the South Asian region. India's approach towards managing the ascendant China appears to prioritize selective collaboration and rivalry. While it extends support and cooperation to China in forums such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank established by the BRICS nations, it vehemently opposes the Belt and Road Initiative. In opposition to the Chinese initiative, India is actively pursuing various other projects aimed at bolstering connectivity with neighboring states. For example, India backs the Russian International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which aims to reduce transport time between Mumbai and St. Petersburg from forty to twenty days in theory.

4.2. CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN:

The Challenge to Pakistan's Geopolitics:

From Pakistan's perspective, the notion of India positioning itself as a net security provider in South Asia is viewed with skepticism, seen as a guise for what it perceives as India's ambitious and hegemonic designs in the region. Pakistan adamantly rejects the idea, arguing that India lacks the credibility to assume the role of a net security provider due to strained relationships with all neighboring countries. The longstanding tensions between India and Pakistan, exacerbated by historical conflicts and territorial disputes, form a major impediment to any regional security cooperation. Moreover, Pakistan contends that India's policies, particularly its alleged support for separatist movements and efforts to destabilize Pakistan, further undermine any claims to be a responsible security actor. From Pakistan's vantage point, India's actions on both its Eastern and Western fronts contribute to regional instability rather than fostering a conducive environment for cooperative security measures. Consequently, Pakistan remains wary of any attempts by India to position itself as a net security provider in South Asia, asserting that genuine collaboration in the

region necessitates addressing underlying disputes and fostering trust among neighboring nations.⁹⁵

The strengthening of the Indian economy and extensive cooperation in the fields of science and technology by the US is motivated by several geostrategic, political, and economic considerations. Which ultimately creates challenges for Pakistan in terms of strategic balance, economic competition, regional influence, technological gap, and security concerns. India's rise as an economic power is expected to counter China's influence in the region. Supporting India's technological base and industry would open a major market for US products that is presently dominated by China. In consequence, Pakistan due to its dependence on China been marginalized in such developments. Indian leadership across the political spectrum supports and encourages close ties and linkages with the US but is opposed to any formal alliance that thwarts its preferences. India is a member of QUAD, a partnership with Australia, Japan, and the US that is supposed to strengthen ties between these countries.

A. Territorial Disputes and Contentious History:

One of the significant challenges for Pakistan stems from long-standing territorial disputes with India, particularly over the region of Kashmir. The historical animosities and unresolved conflicts make it challenging for Pakistan to assert its influence in the broader Indo-Pacific region, especially in areas where India plays a pivotal role. Trade barriers and limited economic cooperation between India and Pakistan may further isolate Pakistan from the economic growth and opportunities generated by India's engagements in the broader Indo-Pacific region and most of the consequences will be faced by Pakistan. India's emergence as a regional power is evident in its decision to revoke Article 370⁹⁶ of the Indian Constitution, altering the status of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan has strongly opposed India's actions, accusing it of attempting to change the demographic composition of Kashmir through the revocation and the subsequent lockdown since August 5, 2019. Despite concerns about India's treatment of minorities, its strategic allies, including the US and Western states, have largely overlooked these issues. Surprisingly, traditional partners of Pakistan in the Middle East have also been relatively quiet. Malaysia, China, and Turkey have openly supported Pakistan on this matter, indicating the growing importance of India's role in the region.

⁹⁵ Hashim A, "Pakistan in the crosshairs of Trump's Afghan strategy", *AlJazeera*. (2017)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/Pakistancrosshairs-trump-afghan-strategy-170824052758366.html>

⁹⁶ Kumar Aryal, Saroj, Sania Muneer, "Geopolitics, Conflict and Narratives: An Assessment of Kashmir Conflict after the Abrogation of Article 370", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2023

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00219096231192318>

B. Strategic Encirclement:

India's active involvement in regional forums, strategic alliances, and partnerships with key players like the United States, Japan, and Australia, creates a perception of strategic encirclement from the Pakistani perspective. This can lead to concerns about India's growing influence, potentially limiting Pakistan's strategic options in the Indo-Pacific region. India's active participation in summits like QUAD aims to encircle China's influence in the Area. With an implicit objective to confront China's escalating influence in the area, the strategy involves upholding robust naval deployments among these four nations and bolstering trade and interconnections with Australia and within the group. Additionally, the US aims to steer India clear of its ties with Russia⁹⁷.

The QUAD alliance, including the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, seeks to foster cooperation and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific. This has created challenges for Pakistan, a close ally of China, as it faces increased scrutiny in the region. The strategic alignment of QUAD nations is perceived as an effort to contain China's growing influence, impacting the dynamics in South Asia. Pakistan, closely tied to China through economic and diplomatic partnerships, finds itself navigating a complex geopolitical landscape. The region witnesses heightened tensions and realignments as countries respond to the evolving dynamics shaped by QUAD's efforts to limit China's influence. Although India's participation in such summits like BRICS, QUAD in which Pakistan is excluded, creates a dilemma for Pakistan. Pakistan could face significant strategic challenges due to the ongoing rivalry between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region, with potential repercussions for regional stability and security. Pakistan's economic and defense connections with China may expose it to adverse effects. Taking a pro-China stance could lead to direct economic consequences for Pakistan, including the possibility of facing economic sanctions and being denied financial assistance from international donor organizations. This situation underscores the complex interplay between geopolitical alliances and economic considerations, necessitating careful navigation for Pakistan to safeguard its interests.

C. Naval Presence and Maritime Security:

India's expanding naval capabilities and its emphasis on maritime security in the Indian Ocean is viewed by Pakistan as a challenge to its maritime interests. The Indian Navy's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean raises concerns about potential limitations on Pakistan's maritime

⁹⁷ Talat Masood, "Implications of expanding multi-faceted Indo-US ties", *The Express Tribune*, June 28 2023 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2423840/implications-of-expanding-multi-faceted-indo-us-ties>

activities and influence in the region. India's decision to partner with Iran in the construction of the Chabahar port in the Persian Gulf signifies its effort to bolster the presence of the Indian Navy in these vital waters while also seeking alternative routes. This move is perceived as a strategic response aimed at diminishing the importance of the Gwadar port, which is a collaboration between Pakistan and China.⁹⁸ India's pursuit of a Blue Water Navy, with its potential to enforce a naval blockade, amplifies the strategic challenges for Pakistan. The prospect of an economic chokehold adds a layer of complexity to the security calculus. The asymmetry in naval capabilities exacerbates Pakistan's security concerns, prompting a reevaluation of its defense strategies. India's strengthening naval capabilities not only heightens the immediate security concerns for Pakistan but also contributes to a broader regional security dilemma with potential ramifications that extend beyond conventional military strategies, encompassing economic and nuclear dimensions.

D. Alignment with Major Powers:

India's strategic alignment with major powers in the Indo-Pacific region has significantly altered the geopolitical landscape, presenting challenges for Pakistan to advance its interests. One pivotal factor contributing to this shift is the robust partnership between India and the US, solidified by the implementation of the US-India strategy. This strategic collaboration has not only strengthened diplomatic ties but has also enhanced military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and economic collaboration between the two nations. While the United States is not inherently a threat to Pakistan, the deepening alliance between the U.S. and India raises concerns in Islamabad⁹⁹. The strengthening ties between these two nations have the potential to create a geopolitical environment where Pakistan may feel marginalized or face challenges in promoting its regional interests. The alignment between the U.S. and India could potentially result in policies and initiatives that may not align with Pakistan's strategic objectives. Of concern for Pakistan is the perception of India as its primary regional threat. The historical tensions and longstanding conflicts between India and Pakistan have shaped the security dynamics in South Asia.

The geopolitical realignment in the Indo-Pacific, especially with the U.S. support towards India, serves as an alarming sign for Pakistan. The asymmetry in power and influence between India and Pakistan is further exacerbated by India's growing partnerships with other major players in the region. China, a key player in the Indo-Pacific, finds itself in a complex position as both the

⁹⁸ Sufian Ullah, Zeeshan Hayat, "India as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific and Implications for the Region," *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability*

⁹⁹ Saira Bano, "A Potential Flashpoint: South Asia in the US-China Great Power Competition", *Springer International Publishing*, October 15 2023 https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-37612-2_3

U.S. and India are perceived as potential threats. The strategic competition between the U.S., India, and China adds another layer of complexity to the regional dynamics with each major power vying for influence and asserting its interests. In 2017, a significant development occurred as Pakistan agreed with China to procure the 054 Jiangkai 2 frigate, considered a cornerstone of China's naval fleet. This marked the inaugural instance of China extending this sophisticated naval asset to Pakistan.¹⁰⁰

Challenges to Pakistan's Economic:

India's proactive economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific has undeniably had far-reaching implications, not just for its economic standing but also for its neighbors, particularly Pakistan. The robust connectivity projects and trade initiatives spearheaded by India in the region have inadvertently posed severe economic challenges for Pakistan, leading to concerns of potential marginalization in economic partnerships and initiatives. The perception that India is emerging as an economic hub¹⁰¹ in the Indo-Pacific region has amplified apprehensions within Pakistan about being sidelined in crucial economic collaborations. This sentiment is exacerbated by the absence of Pakistan in various regional economic summits and major forums, a phenomenon often attributed to India's perceived hegemonic attitude towards its neighbor. One glaring illustration of this economic asymmetry is evident in India's active participation and integration into key international forums and organizations.

India's inclusion in the G-20 summit, its membership in BRICS, QUAD, I2U2, and its pivotal role in the Corridor (IMEC) have positioned it as a significant player in shaping regional and global economic strategies. In stark contrast Pakistan, despite being a nuclear state finds itself on the periphery of such organizations, primarily due to the overarching influence of India and the resultant geopolitical dynamics. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a prime example of a connectivity initiative that has bypassed Pakistan, thereby facilitating trade routes between Iran, India, and Russia. The INSTC underscores India's proactive approach to fostering economic ties beyond its borders, leaving Pakistan at a disadvantage and reinforcing the economic disparities in the region.

Furthermore, the IMEC project, designed to connect India to Europe via the Middle East, promises extensive benefits in terms of trade, energy, and digital connectivity for participating

¹⁰⁰ Ghulam Ali, "China Pakistan maritime cooperation in the Indian ocean", *Issues and studies*, January 20 2019 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336308552_China-Pakistan_Maritime_Cooperation_in_the_Indian_Ocean

¹⁰¹ Chris Ogden, "Perceptions, Promotion and Pre-eminence: India Presidency of the G20", Sage Journals, *India Quarterly* 79, no. 4 467-475, November 5 2023 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09749284231203319>

regional states. India's active involvement in this project further underscores its expanding economic reach, leaving Pakistan sidelined and grappling with the consequences of its exclusion from vital regional corridors. The competition between the Chabahar Port, developed with Indian assistance, and Pakistan Gwadar Port is emblematic of the economic rivalry between the two neighbors. The Chabahar port's strategic location and Indian investments in its development have positioned it as a formidable competitor to Gwadar. Pakistan's absence in these crucial regional corridors raises concerns about its economic isolation, as neighboring countries increasingly align themselves with India's ambitious economic agenda.

A. Regional Economic Competition:

India's proactive economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific, including initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Act East Policy, may create economic competition for Pakistan. The development of trade routes, infrastructure projects, and economic partnerships could potentially marginalize Pakistan in the regional economic landscape. The establishment of India's presence in Chabahar poses a fresh challenge to Gwadar, as India and Iran aim to position the port as a competitor to Gwadar. Chabahar, located more than 100 kilometers from Gwadar, offers an alternative route for Kabul and other Central Asian Republics to gain access to warm waters. The economic integration fostered by Indian initiatives might result in the establishment of alternative trade corridors that bypass Pakistan like the IMEC project, which could impact Pakistan's role as a transit country and limit its economic opportunities in the broader Indo-Pacific trade networks.

In this scenario where India has ascended to a prominent global position, Pakistan grapples with a multifaceted array of challenges that demand strategic foresight and deft diplomatic maneuvering. As India assumes leadership roles in influential international organizations such as the G-20, BRICS, I2U2, and the SCO, Pakistan's diplomatic landscape undergoes a profound transformation. The heightened competition and potential influence wielded by India within global institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduce a new dimension to the challenges faced by Pakistan. The dynamics of economic cooperation and financial negotiations could be substantially influenced by India's commanding position, necessitating adept economic policies and diplomatic finesse on Pakistan's part.

Moreover, the growing technological disparity between the two nations poses a significant threat to Pakistan's competitiveness on the global stage. As India makes strides in technological advancements, Pakistan must invest heavily in research, development, and innovation to bridge the

gap and remain relevant in an increasingly tech-driven world. India's advancements in the nuclear domain¹⁰² also contribute to regional complexities, raising concerns among neighboring nations. Pakistan, in response, must carefully calibrate its strategic capabilities to maintain a delicate balance and ensure regional stability. The strengthened regional influence that India enjoys through groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) prompts a reassessment of diplomatic strategies for Pakistan.

In navigating this evolving geopolitical landscape, Pakistan must cultivate alliances, forge partnerships, and engage in nuanced diplomacy to safeguard its national interests. Trade imbalances, security collaborations, and competition for energy resources further compound the challenges faced by Pakistan. Proactive efforts are imperative to address these issues, fostering resilience and adaptability in the face of evolving geopolitical dynamics. The ability to navigate this intricate landscape will be crucial for Pakistan's sustained development and geopolitical relevance in a world where India has assumed a position of considerable global influence.

B. Strategic Alliances and Investment Flows:

India's strategic alliances with major powers and active participation in regional forums could potentially divert international attention and investments away from Pakistan, impacting its economic growth and development. The strategic partnerships India forms, especially in sectors such as technology, innovation, and manufacturing may attract foreign direct investment and contribute to the creation of regional economic hubs that could overshadow Pakistan's economic influence. India's strategic collaborations in manufacturing could lead to the establishment of industrial clusters and production hubs, creating a regional economic powerhouse that overshadows Pakistan's economic significance. These developments may attract multinational corporations and investors, intensifying competition and further marginalizing Pakistan in terms of economic importance. Despite being a nuclear state, Pakistan risks marginalization in the broader geopolitical and economic landscape if it fails to actively build strategic alliances and promote economic growth.

As India continues to strengthen global ties and economic capabilities, Pakistan's relative importance in the region could diminish, emphasizing the necessity for strategic initiatives to

¹⁰² Yogesh Joshi, Frank O'Donnell, and Harsh V. Pant, "India Evolving Nuclear Force and Its Implications for US Strategy in the Asia-Pacific", *Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press*, June 1 2016 <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1301&context=monographs>

maintain its international relevance. The globalization of India's technology-driven industries may lead to increased competition for skilled labor and technology-related investments, potentially hindering Pakistan's economic advancement in these sectors. In the current situation, there is a big strategic competition happening, aiming to strengthen its ties with countries, especially India. This has given rise to two main groups or blocs in the region.

On one side, there's a close partnership forming between the United States and India. On the other side, there's another bloc forming with China and Pakistan. This creates a sort of division in the region, with these two blocs standing out. This situation is reminiscent of historical events often referred to as "great games." These are times when major powers engage in intense competition each trying to expand its influence and secure its interests. In this case, the great game is happening in the Indo-Pacific region. India and Pakistan find themselves in distinct positions within this scenario. India is aligned with the United States, forming the US-India bloc. Pakistan, on the other hand, is closely cooperating with China, establishing the China-Pakistan bloc.

The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing a complex geopolitical situation with these two blocs competing for influence. This strategic competition has the potential to shape the future dynamics of the Indo-Pacific and the consequences of this great game are still unfolding. It's a scenario where countries are carefully positioning themselves, forming alliances, and navigating the challenges posed by this evolving geopolitical landscape.

C. Diversification of Economic Ties:

India's efforts to diversify its economic ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific could leave Pakistan isolated in terms of economic partnerships. The Act East Policy, which emphasizes economic collaboration with Southeast Asian nations, might exclude Pakistan from certain regional economic initiatives. Pakistan may face challenges in integrating into regional economic frameworks, trade agreements, and value chains that India actively participates in, limiting Pakistan's economic potential and growth opportunities.

Challenges to Security and Defense Cooperation:

A. QUAD Partnership and Regional Security Perceptions:

India's active participation in QUAD raises security concerns for Pakistan. The QUAD focuses on regional security, defense collaboration, and strategic alignment which is perceived as a potential threat by Pakistan. QUAD's main aim is to encircle China in the region and Pakistan being a close ally of China gets the same treatment. The QUAD emphasis on a free and open Indo-

Pacific, while not explicitly targeted at any country, may be interpreted as a security arrangement that challenges Pakistan's strategic positioning and engagement in the region.

B. Military Exercises and Strategic Alliances:

Joint military exercises, such as the Malabar series involving India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia, contribute to the enhancement of regional maritime capabilities. However, from Pakistan's perspective, these exercises may be viewed as part of a broader strategic alignment against its interests and create a security dilemma for Pakistan. India's growing defense collaborations and strategic alliances with major powers might create a regional security dilemma environment that limits Pakistan's options and potentially impacts its defense capabilities.

C. Strategic Balancing and Diplomatic Implications:

India's strategic balancing act, characterized by a growing alignment with major global powers for defense cooperation, holds significant diplomatic implications for its neighbor, Pakistan. The perception that India is fortifying its strategic alliances in the Indo-Pacific region might influence Pakistan's diplomatic outreach and partnerships in ways that could escalate tensions. Faced with the perceived bolstering of India's defense capabilities through collaboration with key players, Pakistan may feel compelled to respond to potential security threats, possibly sparking an arms race and contributing to regional destabilization. Such geopolitical developments have the potential to divert valuable resources away from essential areas like economic development and social welfare initiatives, as both nations may prioritize military expenditures to maintain strategic parity. The resultant competition for military dominance could hinder efforts to address pressing socio-economic challenges, hindering progress in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Moreover, the diplomatic repercussions of this strategic maneuvering may extend beyond the immediate region, affecting the broader balance of power in international relations. As India strengthens its ties with major players, it shapes not only its geopolitical landscape but also influences the dynamics of alliances and partnerships on a global scale. The United States views India as a pivotal player in countering the ascendance of China, seeking to establish a strategic balance and reshape the regional security order with American hegemonic backing. Recognizing India's significance, the U.S. aims to foster a robust partnership to navigate geopolitical challenges and promote stability in the dynamic Indo-Pacific region, ultimately

contributing to a redefined power landscape aligned with shared interests and values¹⁰³. India's strong support from the US gives a potential strategic environment in the region to rise.

Challenges to Regional Partnerships:

A. ASEAN Engagement and Marginalization:

India's deepening engagement with the (ASEAN) may pose challenges for Pakistan in terms of economic integration and diplomatic influence. Pakistan's historical and political dynamics may limit its ability to integrate with ASEAN, potentially leading to economic marginalization in comparison to India. India's participation in ASEAN-led initiatives and forums¹⁰⁴ strengthen its economic and diplomatic ties with Southeast Asian nations, leaving Pakistan with limited opportunities to foster meaningful regional partnerships. Organizations like ASEAN which focuses on economic development and promoting trade and investment linkages, the absence of Pakistan in these organizations deeply impacts the economy of Pakistan.

B. Bilateral Relations and Strategic Alliances:

India's bilateral relations with key players in the Indo-Pacific may potentially limit Pakistan's diplomatic options and influence in the region. The deepening ties between India and these nations may result in collaborative initiatives that exclude Pakistan, impacting its ability to actively participate in regional projects and strategic dialogues.

C. Multilateral Organizations and Inclusivity:

India's participation in multilateral organizations such as IORA, BIMSTEC, and IMEC corridor enhances its diplomatic influence and regional dominance in the region. Pakistan's participation in these forums may be influenced by historical conflicts and regional tensions. The inclusivity of India in regional organizations may contribute to the formulation of regional policies that align with India's interests, potentially sidelining Pakistan in key decision-making processes. The term "Indo-Pacific Strategy" underscores India's pivotal role in the U.S. containment approach towards China. Aligned with the Act East policy, India seeks to bolster ties with Southeast Asian nations, fostering regional stability. This strategic initiative reflects India's commitment to

¹⁰³ Cuiping Zhu, "The Strategic Game in Indo-Pacific Region and Its Impact on China Security", *Springer Singapore, Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region*, 2019 <https://www.springerprofessional.de/en/the-strategic-game-in-indo-pacific-region-and-its-impact-on-chin/16895798>

¹⁰⁴ Tommy Koh, Hernaikh Singh, and Moe Thuzar, "ASEAN and India: The Way Forward", *World Scientific*, 2022 <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/books/asean-and-india-the-way-forward/>

navigating geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region, solidifying its position as a key player in shaping regional security and economic cooperation.¹⁰⁵

Pakistani Diplomatic Challenges:

India's proactive participation in multilateral organizations allows it to advocate for its interests and contribute to the formulation of regional policies. Its diplomatic alliances, including those within the QUAD framework, shape the geopolitical landscape. Pakistan may face challenges in forming similar diplomatic alliances. Diplomatically, there's a risk of isolation for Pakistan as India actively engages in international forums, gaining support from major powers. India's dynamic and proactive diplomatic outreach poses significant challenges and marginalizes Pakistan, impacting its strategic position and influence in the region and leaving Pakistan behind with various diplomatic, economic, and security challenges. One of the primary ways in which India marginalizes Pakistan is through its active involvement in regional forums such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

India's presence in these forums strengthens its diplomatic standing and fosters collaborations with a range of global and regional powers, thereby overshadowing Pakistan's influence. India's adept strategy of engaging with major powers underscores its efforts to reduce dependency on any single power and enhance diplomatic flexibility. By fostering deep and selective partnerships, India has managed to create a strategic balance in the region, while Pakistan faces the challenge of navigating a more limited network of alliances. India's participation in the QUAD alliance system, a security forum with the United States, Japan, and Australia, further consolidates its position and presents challenges to Pakistan in terms of regional security dynamics. Moreover, India's simultaneous membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) alongside China and Russia showcases its commitment to maintaining open communication channels and pursuing diplomatic dialogue. Trilateral meetings with China and Russia reflect India's diplomatic finesse in managing relationships with key players, while also highlighting Pakistan's isolation in certain regional contexts.

The Indian government's emphasis on being outside bloc politics, as articulated by Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, reinforces India's determination to pursue an independent rise on the global stage, a stance that diverges from alignment with either the U.S. or China. Furthermore, India's engagement with its diaspora across the Indo-Pacific region adds another dimension to its

¹⁰⁵ Sufian Ullah, Zeeshan Hayat, "India as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific and Implications for the Region," NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability" Pg 30

soft power further marginalizing Pakistan in terms of public diplomacy and cultural outreach. Pakistan being dependent on China's investment leaves Pakistan way behind in diplomatic ways.

4.3. REPERCUSSIONS PAKISTAN FACES:

Overall Situation:

The South Asian region, characterized by diverse cultures, historical conflicts, and geopolitical complexities presents a myriad of challenges and opportunities. Despite its substantial population and economic growth potential, the lack of regional integration and sustainable development poses significant hurdles. Pakistan as a significant actor in the region struggles with a complex strategic environment. One of the important aspects of Pakistan's security calculus is its geographical location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. This strategic positioning makes Pakistan a vital player in regional geopolitics and influences its interactions with neighboring countries. The Indo-Pacific region holds immense significance for Pakistan due to its maritime interests. Pakistan's coastline plays a pivotal role in global oil trade and any disruption to its maritime security especially concerning its maritime border with India, becomes a major concern.

The evolving strategic competition between the United States and China significantly impacts Pakistan's security dynamics. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), spearheaded by China, includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship infrastructure project. The U.S. efforts to counterbalance China's influence in the Indo-Pacific, as exemplified by the QUAD alliance (comprising the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia), directly threaten Pakistan's economic and strategic interests tied to its partnership with China. The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan further creates hurdles for Pakistan. With historical and cultural ties to Afghanistan, Pakistan is sensitive to the implications of the shifting dynamics in its western neighbor. The potential for instability in Afghanistan and the influence of various actors in the post-withdrawal scenario add layers of complexity to Pakistan's security considerations. In the realm of great power competition, Pakistan emerges as a key player, particularly regarding China's encirclement by the U.S. and its allies. The China-Pakistan alliance extends beyond economic cooperation to include military collaboration with Pakistan serving as a potential alternative route for Chinese oil imports from Iran. This dynamic positions Pakistan at the intersection of global power struggles necessitating a delicate diplomatic balancing act.

The rise of India in the region introduces a dimension to Pakistan's economic challenges. India's efforts to enhance its naval capabilities amplify the existing power imbalances between the

two countries, creating a situation where Pakistan perceives a heightened sense of vulnerability. The naval arms race in the Indian Ocean region exacerbates tensions and raises concerns about the potential for maritime conflict. In the context of the evolving regional power dynamic, the specter of nuclear use in South Asia has become an increasingly pressing concern. Both Pakistan and India possess nuclear capabilities, and the dual nature of their nuclear arsenals adds an extra layer of urgency to diplomatic and strategic considerations. The security dilemma, fueled by mutual distrust and historical conflicts, further complicates efforts to maintain regional stability and prevent the escalation of hostilities to nuclear thresholds. As Pakistan navigates these intricate geopolitical challenges, effective diplomacy, regional cooperation, and strategic foresight become imperative. The country's ability to balance its relationships with key global players, manage internal security concerns, and contribute to regional stability has a pivotal role in shaping its future in the complex landscape of South Asian geopolitics, but on the other hand, India's rise in the region creates hurdles for the development of Pakistan.

Geopolitical Significance: An Exploratory Analysis

Geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region are witnessing a profound transformation, with India emerging as a pivotal player, and due to the rise of India, Pakistan is facing some serious repercussions. The multifaceted nature of India's influence has significant repercussions for the geopolitical positioning of neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. A decade ago, Pakistan's strategic significance stemmed from its position amidst India, China, Iran, and Afghanistan. During the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, Pakistan played a crucial role as a conduit, providing access to the landlocked country. Following the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan's pivotal role in supporting American endeavors in the region has ended shifting the focus and challenges to Pakistan itself. Iran, despite its regional influence, now faces isolation and sanctions, while economic and cultural advancements in the Middle East have largely overlooked it with the Gulf nations, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia actively seeking global recognition. With extensive maritime trade opportunities emerging for Middle Eastern countries, the strategic importance of Iran and Pakistan diminishes especially with the ongoing instability in Afghanistan and obstacles hindering the development of Pakistan Gwadar port. Additionally, the border shared by Pakistan and Iran, including the insurgency-plagued Baluchistan region, lacks connectivity and stability. These dynamics highlight India and China as significant considerations.

However, strained relations between India and Pakistan reduce the strategic value of Pakistan's location for India, which views Pakistan as a barrier to overcome. Notably, sea routes

dominate Indian trade, accounting for around 95% by volume. While China maintains a strong partnership with Pakistan, its population and economic activities are mainly concentrated in eastern China, utilizing the Pacific coast for trade. China's primary overland trade route with Europe and Central Asia passes through Kazakhstan and Russia, thereby constraining Pakistan's ability to derive significant benefits from China. India's strategic balancing act, fostering alliances with major powers creates a delicate geopolitical equilibrium, which ultimately creates problems for Pakistan. This equilibrium is further influenced by China's rivalry with the United States and its increasing influence in global forums. For Pakistan, this poses challenges in terms of diplomatic maneuverability and maintaining a balance between regional alliances with China and global partnerships.

The nuances of India's strategic balancing resonate in forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and bilateral dialogues with nations like Russia and China. As a key player in these forums, Pakistan must carefully assess the evolving geopolitical dynamics to safeguard its national interests amidst India's strategic outreach and China's growing influence, particularly through initiatives like CPEC. India and the U.S. harbor suspicions and hostility towards China Benchmark project CPEC. The Indian Navy's increasing presence in regional waters raises questions about the balance of maritime power and potentially serious damage to Pakistan's historical maritime influence. Simultaneously, China's expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean further complicates the maritime dynamics, adding another layer to the regional power struggle. One of the major concerns for India is the potential strategic advantage that China gains through its access to the Arabian Sea via Gwadar Port. This maritime route provides China with an alternative and shorter pathway for trade, reducing its dependence on the longer route through the Strait of Malacca. Gwadar Port's proximity to the Persian Gulf enhances China's energy security by providing a more direct route for oil imports. For India, the perceived threat lies in the strategic implications of a Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea, which is traditionally considered India's sphere of influence.

The development of Gwadar Port and the associated infrastructure as part of CPEC enables China to establish a maritime foothold in the region, potentially encircling India and challenging its dominance in the Indian Ocean. India, as a regional power with increasing support from the United States, has become a decisive player in the Indo-Pacific region through QUAD. In asserting its regional dominance, India actively works to suppress any threats to its position. The implications of India and China's maritime strategies go beyond military considerations; they extend to economic interests, trade routes, and regional stability. Pakistan, with its maritime

ambitions, faces the challenge of recalibrating its maritime policies to navigate a regional environment where both India and China's naval capabilities play defining roles.

Economic Repercussions

The evolving economic landscape of the Indo-Pacific is witnessing India's proactive engagement, introducing challenges for neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. As India asserts itself as a key economic player in the region, the multifaceted dimensions of its economic initiatives necessitate an in-depth exploration to understand the implications for Pakistan. India's focus on connectivity initiatives, exemplified by the INSTC and the development of the Chabahar Port, is reshaping trade routes in the Indo-Pacific. These projects, designed to enhance economic linkages, have the potential to redirect trade away from traditional routes involving Pakistan. Moreover, China BRI, especially the CPEC, the introduction of this element significantly alters the economic dynamics of the region. CPEC not only enhances connectivity but also positions Pakistan as a key player in China's broader economic ambitions. As a result, Pakistan finds itself at the crossroads of competing trade corridors, requiring strategic decisions to maximize its economic benefits. The neglecting of Pakistan's participation in connectivity initiatives like INSTC is India's hegemonic role in the Indo-Pacific region which doesn't let Pakistan participate in any of the connectivity projects which is the main reason behind CPEC, a trademark project of China. The shift in trade routes challenges Pakistan's historical role as a transit hub. Strategic reassessment of economic policies is essential for Pakistan to adapt to changing trade dynamics.

India Act East Policy underscores its commitment to deepening economic engagements, potentially sidelining Pakistan from emerging economic opportunities. Simultaneously, China's economic prowess and influence in the region, driven by the BRI, present a different set of considerations for Pakistan. The robust investments and infrastructure projects under CPEC are potentially counterbalancing India's initiatives, providing Pakistan with an alternative economic pathway and enhancing its geopolitical significance. Balancing economic priorities and fostering regional economic collaborations becomes crucial for Pakistan to navigate changing economic dynamics and remain a relevant player in the region. India's emphasis on technological advancements and innovation positions it as a technological hub in the Indo-Pacific, influencing global investments and collaborations. In this context, China's significant strides in technological innovation and its rivalry with the United States introduce a unique dimension. Pakistan, while navigating the technological landscape shaped by India, must also consider collaboration opportunities with China to leverage advancements under the BRI and CPEC, ensuring a

diversified and resilient technological foundation. Competing in an environment where India's technological capabilities gain recognition poses a challenge. Fostering innovation, research, and development is imperative for Pakistan's economic competitiveness. India's active participation in regional and global trade agreements enhances its economic diplomacy.

Meanwhile, China's economic rivalry with the United States and competition with India necessitate a nuanced approach for Pakistan in aligning its trade policies. Balancing between the economic spheres influenced by India and China becomes crucial for Pakistan to safeguard its economic interests and leverage the geopolitical dynamics to its advantage. Aligning trade policies with changing economic dynamics shaped by India's proactive participation in trade agreements is challenging. Strategic economic diplomacy becomes essential for Pakistan. India's infrastructure development initiatives attract significant investment flows, contributing to its emergence as an economic powerhouse. Simultaneously, China's heavy investment in Pakistan through CPEC reshapes the economic landscape. For Pakistan, navigating these contrasting forces requires strategic decisions on infrastructure projects, investment policies, and diplomatic engagement. Leveraging CPEC, Pakistan can enhance its economic resilience, ensuring that it remains competitive in the face of India's infrastructural advancements. Attracting comparable investments and fostering infrastructure development becomes a challenge. Strategic decisions on infrastructure projects and investment policies are crucial for Pakistan to remain competitive.

India's pursuit of connectivity projects, such as the (INSTC) and the development of the Chabahar Port, the IMEC corridor, amplifies its economic influence in the Indo-Pacific. These initiatives not only enhance India's trade routes but also position it as a key player in shaping economic corridors that bypass traditional routes involving Pakistan. The evolving patterns of trade routes pose serious hurdles to Pakistan's longstanding position as a pivotal transit hub. In light of these shifting dynamics, it becomes imperative for Pakistan to undergo a strategic reassessment of its economic policies. This reevaluation is crucial to ensure the country's adaptability to the changing landscape of international trade. As global commerce continues to transform, Pakistan must proactively realign its economic strategies to capitalize on emerging opportunities and address potential vulnerabilities. Embracing a forward-looking approach will enable Pakistan to navigate the complexities of evolving trade routes, thereby securing its role as a resilient and strategically positioned player in the global economic arena. However, China's investment in Pakistan through (CPEC) provides an economic network, offering Pakistan an avenue to diversify its economic partnerships. The prospect of being excluded from these emerging trade networks led by India could be mitigated by the economic ties forged through

CPEC, giving Pakistan more flexibility to navigate the changing economic landscape and potentially balancing India's economic hegemony.

Security and Defense Cooperation situation

QUAD collaboration aims to counterbalance China's increasing ascendancy in the region, introducing a dynamic where China's rising influence may be met with collective resistance. For Pakistan, this evolving alliance introduces a dynamic where its regional significance is eclipsed by QUAD. Pakistan has close relations with China and China's investment in Pakistan made Pakistan dependent on China, due to this Pakistan faces a lot of trouble in making its place in the region. The QUAD's emphasis on maritime security, defense cooperation, and a rules-based international order poses a challenge for Pakistan, which may find itself navigating a regional environment where the strategic priorities of QUAD nations and China take precedence. This dynamic introduces complexities for Pakistan's strategic choices, requiring careful diplomatic calculations to maintain regional relevance amidst competing interests. The defense and security dynamics in the region are undergoing significant transformations, largely influenced by India's active participation and collaborations.

An exploration of India's stance in security and defense cooperation unveils complexities that present both challenges and strategic considerations for Pakistan. India's integral role in the (QUAD) signifies a strategic alliance that aims to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific. While not explicitly aimed at any single nation, the QUAD collaborative efforts in areas of maritime security, defense cooperation, and strategic alignment raise security concerns for Pakistan. Additionally, the QUAD's strategic alignment reflects an evolving geopolitical landscape shaped by China's growing influence and rivalry with the United States. Navigating the regional security architecture becomes a challenge for Pakistan, as the QUAD influence may potentially alter power dynamics, driven in part by the competition US and China. The need to balance security considerations, maintain strategic autonomy, and foster diplomatic initiatives becomes imperative for Pakistan in this complex and dynamic landscape, considering both Indian and Chinese influences.

India's engagement in joint military exercises, such as the Malabar series with the United States, Japan, and Australia, underscores its commitment to enhancing regional maritime capabilities. These exercises contribute to the development of strategic alliances that may influence security perceptions in the Indo-Pacific. Simultaneously, China's military presence in the region, exemplified (BRI), adds another layer to the geopolitical landscape. For Pakistan, the strategic balancing act becomes even more intricate, requiring a nuanced approach to assess the

impact of both Indian and Chinese alliances on its security posture. The competition between China and the United States, coupled with China's heavy investment in Pakistan through (CPEC), further complicates Pakistan's strategic calculus.

India's strategic balancing act, aligning with major powers while maintaining diplomatic engagements with various regional actors, introduces a complex geopolitical landscape. The implications of this strategic alignment resonate in forums like the (SCO) and the bilateral dialogues, impacting the security calculus for Pakistan. China's role in these forums, as well as its rivalry with the United States, adds a layer of complexity. Pakistan must grapple with the diplomatic implications of both India's and China's strategic choices. The challenge lies in formulating a response that safeguards national interests, fosters diplomatic alliances, and maintains regional stability amidst evolving geopolitical dynamics and competition between major powers.

Ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, rooted in historical conflicts and territorial disputes, contribute to regional security complexities. The nuclear capabilities of both nations add a layer of sensitivity, influencing regional security dynamics and the decision-making processes of other Indo-Pacific countries. Additionally, the rivalry and competition between the US and China contribute to the overall regional security calculus. For Pakistan, managing bilateral tensions becomes integral to regional stability. The challenge lies in fostering conflict resolution mechanisms, maintaining a balance between deterrence and diplomacy, and preventing regional security concerns from escalating in the context of broader geopolitical rivalries.

India's emphasis on maritime security in the Indian Ocean introduces considerations related to territorial disputes and power projection. The potential impact on regional maritime dynamics could challenge Pakistan's historical maritime influence and necessitate a reassessment of its maritime security policies. Meanwhile, China's growing maritime presence, including its interests in the Arabian Sea through CPEC, adds a layer to the maritime security landscape. Navigating the intricacies of maritime security becomes a multifaceted challenge for Pakistan, requiring a comprehensive approach to address territorial concerns and ensure a balanced regional power dynamic amidst the competition and investments involving the US, China, and India.

Regional Partnerships implications

As the Indo-Pacific region witnesses a significant change in the geopolitical landscape, the nature of regional partnerships takes center stage. India's deepening engagements with various regional entities and nations introduce a landscape fraught with challenges and opportunities,

demanding meticulous exploration to discern the implications for neighboring Pakistan. In case of a confrontation involving India and China, Pakistan may feel compelled to align with China, while the U.S. is likely to support India. Consequently, a war between India and China could drag Pakistan into a regional conflict, posing significant threats to its security and economy. Additionally, such a conflict would have far-reaching implications for regional stability. India's growing engagement with (ASEAN) forms a cornerstone of its regional partnerships.

Through economic collaborations, diplomatic initiatives, and participation in forums, India aims to enhance its influence and contribute to economic integration in the Indo-Pacific. Pakistan faces the challenge of aligning its economic interests with evolving regional partnerships. The deepening ties between India and ASEAN may potentially marginalize Pakistan in economic frameworks, necessitating strategic recalibration. Furthermore, China Increasing dominancy in the region, particularly through (BRI) and (CPEC), adds another layer to the regional economic landscape. For Pakistan, strategic recalibration becomes imperative to navigate the economic dynamics shaped by both India and China, ensuring a balanced participation in the evolving regional economic order.

India's bilateral engagements with key players in the Indo-Pacific, including the US, Japan, and Australia contribute to the formation of strategic alliances. These alliances shape regional policies and dynamics, impacting the geopolitical balance. Maneuvering within a regional environment where India's strategic alliances gain prominence poses a challenge. Fostering diplomatic relationships and forging strategic partnerships becomes critical for Pakistan. In the backdrop of China's rivalry with America, the Indo-Pacific becomes a theater for geopolitical competition. Pakistan, while fostering diplomatic relationships, must also consider the strategic implications of the U.S.-China rivalry and ensure its alliances align with its national interests. India's active participation in multilateral organizations such as (IORA) and the (BIMSTEC) enhances its diplomatic influence.

The inclusivity of India in regional organizations contributes to the formulation of policies aligned with its interests. Participating in these forums presents a diplomatic challenge for Pakistan, given historical conflicts. Crafting an inclusive diplomatic approach is crucial to ensuring Pakistan's voice in key multilateral organizations China's presence in multilateral forums, coupled with its economic investments, adds complexity to Pakistan's diplomatic challenges. Navigating these forums requires a delicate balance between historical conflicts, regional tensions, and the need to ensure Pakistan's voice is heard amid the diverse interests of key players. Bilateral

conflicts, especially those between India and Pakistan, reverberate in the broader Indo-Pacific region. These conflicts may hinder regional collaborations, limit the potential for joint projects, and create divisions in regional forums. Navigating regional dynamics shaped by historical conflicts requires diplomatic finesse. Mitigating the impact of bilateral tensions on regional partnerships demands proactive conflict resolution measures.

China's role in mediating conflicts and its economic leverage, particularly through CPEC, introduces an additional dimension to the challenge faced by Pakistan. Skillful diplomacy is required to mitigate the impact of not only historical conflicts but also to harness the potential benefits of collaborative projects involving both India and China. India's strategic partnerships with major powers influence regional security dynamics. These partnerships contribute to a regional environment where security concerns take precedence, potentially limiting Pakistan's ability to forge alliances that align with its interests. Addressing the challenges posed by India's strategic partnerships is crucial. Balancing regional security concerns while safeguarding national interests requires a nuanced diplomatic strategy.

China's expanding role in regional security, driven by its economic investments and military presence, poses both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. Navigating this complex landscape necessitates a nuanced diplomatic strategy that considers the broader regional security dynamics influenced by both India and China. Pakistan remains vulnerable to economic coercion through international mechanisms such as FATF and IMF. Pakistan should develop look east policy and diversify options by building linkages with the BRICS, ASEAN, and Chinese-led forums in parallel to the existing dependence on IMF. ASEAN is a key model that offers Pakistan a lesson on adopting a balancing act between China and America by not siding one against the other.

CHAPTER. 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, this thesis highlights India's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, the challenges for Pakistan's economy, and how India's rising role has repercussions for Pakistan. The research underscores the need for Pakistan to navigate the changing regional

landscape by adopting strategic diplomacy and economic resilience. The Indo-Pacific region has picked up pace, driven by the rising influence of India and the United States' strategy to counter China, establishing India as a crucial security provider in the region. India now holds a central position in the United States National Security Policy reflecting the evolving dynamics and strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region. India has initiated pro-active engagement in the region due to the tilt of Major Powers towards them. The involvement of India in multilateral and bilateral projects has made it a rising Power.

Pakistan cannot fully leverage its geostrategic location when it maintains unfriendly relations with its neighbors, particularly those with whom it shares centuries of mutual history. India, as a powerful nation in the Indo-Pacific region with one of the World's largest democracies and one of South Asia's largest economies, is on the rise. The geopolitical landscape in South Asia is undergoing significant shifts and the relationships between India and Pakistan play a crucial role in shaping the region's dynamics. Pakistan's geostrategic position, substantial population, formidable military, and possession of nuclear weapons should ideally position it as a key player on the global stage. However, persistent unfriendly relations with neighboring countries, particularly India have hampered its ability to fully leverage these advantages. As an ally of China, Pakistan is heavily dependent on China and any threat to China may be perceived as a threat to Pakistan. India on the other hand, is experiencing a notable economic and military transformation that is poised to tip the balance of power in its favor within the next two decades. Increasing presence and impact within the region, along with strengthened ties with the United States signifies a shift in its foreign policy.

US and China rivalry has divided the world in bloc politics and India has fully utilized the opportunity in balancing between these two blocs. A net security provider and a member of QUAD has been awarded by the US to India and the complex approach towards China balancing vigilance with active economic engagement is reshaping regional dynamics. Being a member of QUAD amplifies India's position in the region to access advanced technologies. The IMEC project further amplifies India's role in the region. Membership in BRICS enables India to foster economic interdependence and flourish on the global stage. The persistent hostility between India and Pakistan stands as a profound tragedy in the realm of Asian politics. This enduring rivalry has not only hindered peace and prosperity across South Asia but has also impeded the economic progress of nearly one-fifth of the global population. While India's ascent is evident, Pakistan finds itself in harsh conditions with internal instability, political unrest, and an ongoing economic crisis, diminishing its capacity to engage effectively on the international stage.

The recent arrest of Pakistan's 22nd PM and the establishment of a caretaker government have provided a temporary respite, but questions remain about the military's influence and the timing of elections. This political uncertainty complicates foreign interactions, making it challenging for external entities to identify reliable partners within Pakistan. In contrast to India's stable democratic governance, Pakistan's internal factionalism and economic challenges contribute to its geopolitical stagnation. The need for a competent and stable government becomes apparent as Pakistan seeks to reverse its trend of diminishing influence. India's diplomatic leverage has grown, particularly in forums like the G-20 and BRICS, where it is recognized as a leading global power. Japan, the US, ASEAN EU, and India hold a unified perspective on the Indo-Pacific Region, in which Pakistan is marginalized due to China's encirclement strategy. The outdated perception of India and Pakistan as comparable powers is giving way to the reality of India's economic and military prowess.

However, India must navigate the complexities of the Kashmir issue and regional conflicts with caution, as any involvement in militancy could impact its standing. The South Asian region's complexity is expected to persist, with the India-China rivalry influencing smaller nations like Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka aim to maintain balanced relations with both India and China, while Pakistan, with strong ties to China, faces limited options like the marginalization of Pakistan in regional economic partnerships and regional developments. Efforts to improve relations with India have been challenging, but there is potential for positive change. In the face of India's expanding influence in the Middle East, Pakistan should consider proactive measures, such as involving Gulf nations in investment ventures and integrating them into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. This strategic move could rejuvenate Pakistan's economic landscape and transform the regional dynamics into a collaborative and mutually beneficial approach. In an era of growing interdependence, we view regional collaboration as the optimal platform for mitigating tension, resolving conflicts, and thriving in the competitive global markets within our interconnected community. The survival and prosperity of individual nation-states hinge on their seamless integration into regional cooperative frameworks. The primary reason for the minimal bilateral trade between Pakistan and India, despite being the two most significant economies in South Asia, stems from enduring border disputes and ongoing political tensions. These longstanding issues have hindered economic collaboration and mutual trade engagement between the two nations.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Adopt Strategic Diplomacy for Regional Engagement:

Pakistan needs to prioritize strategic diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on positive relations with neighbors like India through dialogue and confidence-building. Active participation in multilateral forums, alliances with key regional players, and adaptability to geopolitical shifts are emphasized to enhance Pakistan's global standing and contribute to regional stability. Additionally, investing in global public diplomacy campaigns through media and cultural exchanges is highlighted for shaping positive perceptions and fostering international support.

Promote Economic Resilience and Integration:

Pakistan should focus on diversifying economic partnerships, particularly with Gulf nations, to enhance resilience and sustainable development. Strengthening ties through initiatives like integrating Gulf nations into CPEC can attract significant financial investments in sectors like infrastructure, energy, and technology. To foster economic integration, Pakistan should streamline regulatory processes, create an investor-friendly environment, and engage in targeted economic diplomacy to showcase opportunities and build mutually beneficial collaborations.

Address Internal Instability and Political Uncertainty:

To enhance global engagement, Pakistan must prioritize internal stability through transparent governance, adherence to the rule of law, and peaceful resolution of political disputes. Emphasizing transparency in decision-making and resource allocation builds credibility, attracting reliable international partners. Investing in social and economic development, ensuring fair elections, and fostering inclusive political dialogue further strengthen Pakistan's position on the international stage.

Re-evaluate and Enhance Relations with India:

Considering evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, Pakistan should reassess its approach towards India, seeking improved bilateral ties. This involves diplomatic engagement, economic collaboration, and addressing historical disputes through international mediation. Fostering cultural exchanges and establishing mechanisms for conflict prevention can contribute to building trust and stability in the region.

Focus on Regional Collaborative Frameworks:

Pakistan should proactively engage in regional collaborative frameworks in the Indo-Pacific, prioritizing economic partnerships, trade agreements, and interdependence to contribute to stability and mutual growth. Active participation in diplomatic dialogues, conflict resolution efforts, and support for connectivity projects, including initiatives like the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor, are crucial for fostering regional collaboration. Advocating for a shared vision through diplomatic engagements and outreach efforts reinforces the idea that collaboration is mutually beneficial for the overall stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

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