

**CO-EXISTENCE OF MULTIPLE ORDERS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC:
IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA, 2007-2017**

**Dissertation is submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2018



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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Co-existence of Multiple Orders in the Indo-Pacific: Implications for India, 2007-2017**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to heartily thank my supervisor Prof. Shankari Sundararaman without whom this endeavour was impossible. Whenever I had any query, she made sure that it was resolved as quickly as possible. In one particular instance, Prof. Sundararaman made me read aloud a part of an article, after which she cleared my doubt in no time. Her immense knowledge of the subject greatly helped me in this venture. Not only her academic support but also her emotional support at different stages played a key role during the entire journey. Thank you, ma'am, for always being there to support.

Apart from Prof. Sundararaman, I gained insights into the Indo-Pacific region from Prof. Naidu, Prof. Kaul and Prof. Das during my first year of MPhil. I sincerely thank them all.

I am also grateful to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Library staff as well as Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) Library staff for their cooperation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAGC	Asia-Africa Growth Corridor
ADMM+	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus
AEP	Act East Policy
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Cooperation
BIMSTEC	The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India, China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CISMOA	Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DTTI	Defense Technology and Trade Initiative
EAS	East Asia Summit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INC	Indian National Congress
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
LPG	Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation
LSA	Logistics Support Agreement
MGC	Mekong–Ganga Cooperation
MNC	Multinational Companies

NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDB	New Development Bank
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSG	Nuclear Supplier Group
Quad	Quadrilateral
SCS	South China Sea
SLOC	Sea Lanes of Communication
The UN	The United Nations
The US	The United States
UPA	United Progressive Alliance

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Amid perceptions of Chinese ascent and the relative decline of the US in material terms, the Indo-Pacific is witnessing a strategic flux. Scholars are debating whether the descent of the US is congruous to the descent of the US-led order in the region and whether it will be replaced by the Sino-centric order. However, a closer look at the region tells a more complicated story about the existence of multiple orders in the region. The prevailing US-led order is pretty obvious, and so is the emerging Sino-centric order. Another order that exists in the region is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-conceived order. The ASEAN-conceived order is mostly convergent with the US-led order, and therefore, there is an anxiety in the region regarding the emerging Sino-centric order, touted as an alternative order derived from the historic “Middle Kingdom” system. The middle powers are trying to cope up with the emerging flux by employing balancing and hedging strategies through multilateral meetings among themselves and other like-minded countries.

The end of the Cold War allowed the US to dominate the region without any challenge. Thus, the unflinching US-led order emerged after 1991. The US could dominate the geopolitical expanse both in economic and military terms because of two reasons—one, its superior material power and two, acceptance by the regional states. ASEAN became a ten-member grouping, as it is today, in the year 1999. After its expansion, it ensured the presence of multiple powers in the region through a carefully-crafted policy. The policy led to an ASEAN-conceived regional order which helped to maintain the US supremacy as well as accommodated other powers in the hierarchy below the US. Thus, by the first decade of the 21st century, the ASEAN-conceived order was entirely at play. However, China, which had a strong sense of historical pride, was never comfortable with the notion of US supremacy. It was always a revisionist power and had its conception about the regional order where it remained at the top, and other states paid tribute to it in return for a security guarantee. As China became more relevant in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis it got the opportunity to make its presence felt. Moreover, it started asserting itself. The Chinese policy circles began contemplating a China-led world order. Thus., although the origins of Sino-centric order are in the history; it began to manifest itself only after 2008.

Doubts over the US commitment to the region in the wake of antithetical policies of Great power condominium (G-2) and 'Pivot' to Asia made the regional players realise that they needed to take more responsibility to handle the security of the region. Such a realisation made them think seriously about the "quadrilateral" formulation, first proposed by Japan in 2007 and then considered a failure due to various reasons. However, the bilateral and trilateral dialogues among like-minded nations, up-gradation of the low level bureaucratic meetings to the ministerial and summit-level meetings, vigorous bilateral and minilateral maritime and other exercises and an idea of 'quadrilateral' re-proposed by Japan in 2017 were all ways to deal effectively with the uncertainty espoused by the emergence of China at the world stage.

To better understand the current state of affairs in the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis the current flux in the region, a look at history will be helpful. As was evident elsewhere in the world, during the Cold War era, East Asia was also characterised by the bipolarity between the US-dominated capitalist bloc and Soviet-dominated communist bloc. Five founding members of ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and Australia were part of the capitalist bloc while the former Indochina countries were part of the communist bloc. "China moved from being a close ally of the Soviet Union in the early 1950s to become its most implacable adversary by the end of the 1960s". (Yahuda, 1996:36) Although the region was devoid of any superpower conflict at the systemic level, the inter-state conflicts at the regional level were permitted "to let off steam which helped to cool the temperature around the core issues which were directly relevant and considered vital to the central balance and, therefore to the international system". (Ayoob, 1986:14) The Vietnam War which ended in 1975 and the border conflict between Vietnam and China in 1979 were manifestations of the bipolar superpower rivalry.

The mainstay of the regional order during these years was the 'hub-and-spoke' system led by the US. It had formal alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. In addition to the bilateral alliances, pro-US Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines played a significant role in resisting the spread of communism in these countries, helping the US to maintain an upper hand in the security matters of the region. Thus, East Asian order during the Cold War was dominated by the intense cold-war and ideological rivalry.

In the Indian Ocean Region, the primary aim of the US was to limit the influence of the Soviet Union and keep the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) open. With the smooth handover of the Diego Garcia islands by the British in the late 1960s, the US was in full control of the Indian Ocean Region in military terms while the Soviet Union was trying to balance the ‘Washington-Islamabad-Beijing axis’ by extending a hand of friendship to ‘non-aligned’ India. India was always uncomfortable with US presence in its backyard. When India sensed an increased western presence in the Indian Ocean in the form of military bases during the mid-1960s, it supported Sri Lanka- and Tanzania-sponsored Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZOP) in the United Nations in 1971. The IOZOP defined “the zone of peace not as one where there was an absence of war or a state of peace and tranquillity, but specifically [it was] about the great powers halting and eliminating all bases, military installations and logistical facilities, and the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. It also envisaged universal collective security in the region without military alliances”. (Sreenivasan, 2014) Moreover, India’s decisive role in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 and its intervention in Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the late 1980s established India’s supremacy in regional affairs. Thus, the subcontinental order was dominated by India during the entire cold war era.

With the end of the Cold War era, the world witnessed a transition from bipolarity to unipolarity. In the East Asian theatre, initially, there was uncertainty regarding American commitment to the region. However, the US continued with the ‘hub-and-spoke’ system, a relic of the Cold War. On the one hand, it restrained an emerging China, and on the other hand, it prevented its ‘spokes’ from attempting any adventurism. The security umbrella provided by the US allowed East Asian states to concentrate on their economic growth instead of worrying about the issues of security. Such an order was not a bad proposition even for an emerging China as it was still an ardent adherent of the famous mantra given by Deng Xiaoping: ‘Hide your strength, bide your time.’ On the contrary, it was in China’s interest to have a US-led order in the region. China could take advantage of the “US-provided public goods, especially the US guarantee to keep sea lanes open for trade”. (Wright, 2015) The US alliance with Japan and South Korea lessened the possibility of conflict in the region. Cha (2009) has shown that US’ alliance with East Asian countries was “designed to exert maximum control over the smaller ally’s actions” to avoid an “aggressive behaviour (by them) against adversaries that could entrap the United States in an unwanted larger war”. However, it created a hierarchy with

the US at the top followed by other states in the region. Such a regime was desirable by ASEAN as well which made sure that the US remains at the top in the regional hierarchy.

With the end of the Cold War, India liberalised its economy which ushered a new era in its foreign policy orientation. For the first time after independence, India's strategic thinking went beyond the subcontinent. The rise in trade volumes made India 'Look East' through the narrow strait of Malacca. Expansion in India's naval capabilities complemented this ambitious vision. The 1990s saw India conducting multilateral naval exercises, participating in UN-led anti-piracy operations and assisting countries in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations.

While India was eyeing the Pacific Ocean; China was worried about the possible smothering of Malacca Strait by its adversaries in the event of a war. Since the pronouncement of the 'Malacca Dilemma' by the then-Chinese premier Hu Jintao in 2003, China started putting efforts to mitigate the same. The efforts increased the Chinese sphere of influence beyond its East Asian strategic theatre into the Indian Ocean Region. Chinese forays in the Indian Ocean became evident through the so-called 'String of Pearls' strategy, the CPEC and direct pipelines to the Chinese territory via Indian littorals such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. Such activities were accompanied by the rapid modernisation of the Chinese Navy and increased presence of Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean. Thus, both China and India began looking beyond their traditional strategic theatres into each other's spheres.

The succeeding years saw increased assertiveness of China vis-à-vis its neighbours about the territorial matters of the SCS. By then, Chinese scholars began talking about the China-led world order. (Pillsbury, 2015:17) Since almost all the Indo-Pacific states were dependent on SLOC for their energy security, they got worried about the aggressive behaviour of China. As a result, these countries started contemplating ways to manage the aggressiveness of China. Amid rising China and rogue North Korea, the Japanese started a serious debate about the status of Article 9 in their constitution. They also kicked off efforts to work with like-minded countries in the region. Similarly, Australia was also concerned about the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific. Its concerns were bluntly pronounced in its Defence White Paper, 2016 where the term 'rules-based global order' appeared 56 times. In this way, the Indo-Pacific — first uttered publicly at a seminar in Australia in 1964 (Doyle, 2014: 16-

17) — became a common meeting point of India's 'Act East', Japan's 'Confluence of the Two Seas' and China's 'core interests'. The middle powers got together to form minilateral formations to deal with the influx of orders and India was part of the most of the minilaterals including trilaterals and quadrilaterals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The order in international relations is an abstract concept, and there is no single definition for it. Alagappa (2003:34) calls order "a slippery concept". However, he defines order as "a formal or informal arrangement that sustains rule-governed interaction among sovereign states in their pursuit of individual and collective goals". (Alagappa, 2003:39) He considers the order as "a matter of degree" which may span from total disorder to the rule of law. Acharya (2007) argues that the concept of order is used in two ways in the international relations literature. First, the way Ayoob (Ayoob, 1986:4) has described it "as a description of particular status quo"; and second, it indicates increased stability and predictability in the system. Ayoob's definition explains the nature of the inter-state relations in a particular system at a given point of time, while Acharya's second observation indicates that the order corresponds to certain rules in the system that most of the members agree upon. Ikenberry (2001:23) defines order as "the "governing" arrangements among a group of states, including its fundamental rules, principles, and institutions." His definition focuses on underlying principles, rules, institutions that have the potential to make or break a given order. Lake and Morgan (1997:9) view regional orders as a mode of conflict management which is influenced by various factors like "the regional system structure, the domestic politics of states in the region, and the interaction between the region and the global system".

The Indo-Pacific Orders

The US-led order is the default order in the Indo-Pacific region. However, it is supported by the ASEAN-conceived order. The Sino-centric order is still in the buds. Alagappa (2003:72) proposes three conceptions of possible orders in Asia. These include hegemony with liberal features, strategic condominium/ balance of power and institutionalism. The first two orders find their roots in the instrumentalist conception of order while institutionalism possesses

features of normative-contractual conception. Thus, based on the survey of the literature regarding the orders in the Indo-Pacific region, the available work is classified as follows -

- The US-led order
- Sino-centric order
- ASEAN-conceived order

To deal with the multiplicity of the orders, the middle powers including India has formed minilateral groups. Further, India has tried to deal adeptly with the order flux in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, the survey also looks at the literature regarding minilateral formations and India's response to the churning in the region.

- **The US-led Order**

Alagappa's 'hegemony with liberal features' reflects the US vision for maintaining primacy in the region and "expand the international order rooted in Western values to make it a truly global order under its leadership". (Alagappa, 2003:72-74) However, of late, there have been multiple accounts describing the relative decline of the US. Yahuda (2014:296) contends that it would be unfair to measure the US decline "by simple projections of current economic trends". According to him, US primacy in the region rests on seven pillars — "the dynamism of its society and cultural influence (soft power), its scientific inventiveness and technological resourcefulness, its universities, the prowess of its economy, and the superior capabilities of its military" (Yahuda, *Looking Ahead: A New Asian Order?*, 2014:296) which are too resilient to be easily subdued. "The United States also has the advantage of being the only major power that does not have territorial disputes with others in the region". (Yahuda, *Looking Ahead: A New Asian Order?*, 2014:295) Sutter (2014) does not see the US' importance in the region getting subdued due to the rise of other powers. According to him, there is no power in the Indo-Pacific which has the ability and willingness to provide economic, public goods and guarantee security in the region.

Evelyn Goh (Goh, *Hierarchy and the Role of the United States in the East Asian Security Order*, 2008)) contends that "the United States is the central force in constituting regional stability and order". The US lead the hierarchy in the region and China, Japan and other powers follow it. She further argues that "the nature of American dominance in East Asia, like US global preponderance, is neither imperial nor hegemonic. On the one hand, there is relative acceptance

of (or at least lack of sustained direct challenge to) US preponderance; on the other hand, the United States relies significantly on cooperation from other states to maintain its power”. (Goh, *Hierarchy and the Role of the United States in the East Asian Security Order*, 2008) She proves her argument by showing the “relationships of subordination and super-ordination within the anarchical state system”. (Goh, *Hierarchy and the Role of the United States in the East Asian Security Order*, 2008)

Evelyn Goh’s “layered rank order hierarchy” (Goh, *Hierarchy and Regional Security Governance*, 2013:178) framework contends that there exist multiple orders with varying degrees of hierarchy in East Asia and “conflict might arise from jostling across the layers of a hierarchy and not just at the top, or from a clash between two hierarchies, or from a major state’s defection to another hierarchy”. The framework assumes that an inherent hierarchy prevails among states; this is based on the authority a state exerts vis-à-vis its peers. Such a hierarchy gives rise to super-ordinations and sub-ordinations. Thus, the framework envisions an anarchical system as a scale where a unipolar system occupies one end and a multipolar system holds the opposite end, and in between “there is a spectrum of possible international orders with varying degrees of hierarchy, including a preponderant but not imperial power, informal empires, great power concerts, security communities and a range of semi-sovereign relationships”. (Goh, *Hierarchy and Regional Security Governance*, 2013:178) According to Goh, the layered hierarchy depends on “social identity formation processes and social ordering principles” on the one hand and “the modes of social assurance and deference” on the other hand. The former determines the ranking, as well as the identity of great powers and the latter, helps in the preservation of hierarchy. Based on these two criteria, Goh categorises the US as a tier 1 country followed by China. She places India, Japan and Australia in tier 3 and the rest in the rank below these powers. She observes that China and Japan prefer to defer to the US to maintain the order while there is an “incipient” rank competition between China and Japan which has the potential to destabilise the emerging order in East Asia.

Further, Goh (2013:4) argues that “the most important strategic changes have reflected not the balance of power challenges to US primacy, but rather a complex process of renegotiating the consensus on values, rights, and duties that underpins US hegemony vis-à-vis other states”. Further, she claims that the “US hegemony has been established in post-Cold War East Asia not merely as a result of its preponderance of power, but mainly because of the complicity of

key regional states, which prefer to sustain a regional order underpinned by US primacy and leadership”. (Goh, *The Struggle for Order Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*, 2013:5) In addition to studying material conditions of primacy in the region, Goh also focuses her attention on the social relations among states in the region to draw home the argument about continuing US hegemony in the region. She concludes her work by showing that the “regional states are negotiating a new social compact that would consolidate the US hegemony but also make room for rising powers and satisfy the insecurities of the smaller states, while promoting common interests and shared understandings of what constitutes ‘the good life’ in terms of regional international relations”. (Goh, *The Struggle for Order Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*, 2013:7)

- **The Sino-centric Order**

Doyle (2014:41) argues that China has re-emerged to play an essential role in all “regional (and international) discussions concerning economic, political and security matters...Today, China stands ready to reassert its historical hegemonic role in the most populated region of the world - Asia”. Taking the historical view, he contends that the resurgence of the “Middle Kingdom” is just another chapter in China’s long history. According to him, history has come full circle for China in the Indo-Pacific region. Traversing through history, he claims that China’s pursuit for wealth and power comes through its consciousness about its status as a “Middle Kingdom”, where China was superior in the current hierarchy distributing public goods and as guarantor of security to the neighbouring states in return for tribute and suzerainty. In a somewhat dramatic manner, he claims that “the Middle Kingdom is back!”. (Doyle, 2014:55) Pillsbury (2015:17) describes his experiences about how Chinese scholars have started thinking about a China-led order and how the communist party is trying to realise “its long-term goal of restoring China to its “proper” place in the world”. The concept of ‘Tianxia’ is being propagated in Chinese academic literature. “William A. Callahan translates tianxia as a unified global system with China’s “superior” civilisation at the top”. (Pillsbury, 2015:26) “Tianxia presents a popular example of a new hegemony where imperial China’s hierarchical governance is updated for the twenty-first century”. (Callahan, 2008) Jacques (2009) calls China a “Civilisation-State” rather than a nation-state which is likely to assert the historical tenets of a tributary system over its neighbours when it is in a position to rule the world.

While many scholars take a pessimistic view of Chinese re-emergence, Kang (2003) takes an optimistic view of the rise of China. He argues that the regional order was preserved in the history whenever China was strong. However, in that scenario, China always assumed top position while its neighbours were secondary. As far as China was given the status of being the dominant power in the region, there would not be any interstate wars. Taking a historical view, he claims that the Indo-Pacific region will see Sino-centric order if the US retreats the region. He concludes by saying that “there is likely to be far more stability in Asia and more bandwagoning with China—than the balance of power theorists expect...[and] China is likely to act within bounds acceptable to the other Asian nations”. (Kang, 2003)

C. Raja Mohan sees a likelihood of a concert emerging in the region due to the presence of shared energy security and maritime safety interests among major powers. According to him, the bilateral and trilateral dialogues regarding security issues in the region denote an inclination of major powers towards some sort of concert. “While these moves (security dialogues among nations) do not add up to a formal concert, they have the potential to generate some agreements on shared interests among the major powers of the Indo-Pacific”. (Mohan, 2013:229) Robert Kaplan’s conception of a concert is a bit different. He places the US at the centre and expects it to leverage Indian and Japanese powers in their respective maritime expanses on the one hand and reach an understanding with China regarding maritime security on the other hand. Thus, instead of the classic form of a concert, Kaplan proposes the concert coordinated by the US. (Kaplan, 2010) Like Kaplan, Hugh White, former security advisor to Hawke government, also has a different idea regarding the concert in the region. He proposes that China and the US form a concert. According to him “strategic competition could be avoided through the development of a concert of powers”. (He, 2012)

- **The ASEAN-conceived Order**

Evelyn Goh recognises the role of ASEAN states to shape the regional order in the Indo-Pacific region. She argues that Southeast Asian countries have played a significant role that has influenced the prevailing order in the Indo-Pacific. Contrary to popular opinion that the order is designed only from the top, Goh analyses the role of Southeast Asian states through the strategies of ‘Omni-enmeshment’ of significant powers and intricate balance of influence. The Omni-enmeshment “strives to include all major powers in regional affairs, to tie them down

with regional membership, and to bind them to peaceful norms of conduct” while the balance of influence “is the Southeast Asian version of indirect balancing in bilateral or triangular relations, combined with a more ambitious aim of forging a regionwide balance of influence among the major powers using competitive institutionalization and diplomacy”. (Goh, *Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies*, 2007/2008:43) Further, she argues that ASEAN states have preferred US primacy in the region and simultaneously ASEAN is attempting to assimilate China in the current order in the region, precisely below the US.

Acharya contends that the post-Cambodian conflict settlement era saw Asia-Pacific states accept ASEAN’s nominal leadership which helped it to come up with the multilateral security forum – ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). “ASEAN itself aspired to a role in regulating the behaviour of major powers and in creating a stable post-Cold War regional order in the Asia Pacific”. (Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 2001:6) Through a constructivist lens, he further traces ASEAN’s journey towards becoming a security community. His emphasis on identity is underscored even in the analysis of multilateral institutions that have emerged in the region. According to him, “the dialogue and institution-building processes involving ideas (both indigenous and imported), regional cultural norms, and the quest for a collective regional identity have played a crucial role in promoting the concept and practice of multilateralism”. (Acharya, *Ideas, Identity, and Institution-building: From the ‘ASEAN Way’ to the ‘Asia-Pacific Way’*, 1997) The ASEAN-led multilateral organisations like ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM+) have played a role in keeping ASEAN in the driver’s seat. “Asia is increasingly able to manage its insecurity through shared regional norms, rising economic interdependence, and growing institutional linkages”. (Acharya, *Will Asia’s Past Be Its Future?*, 2003/2004) Overall, if one reads between the lines, one may conclude that rules and norms have played an essential role in the successful conduct of ASEAN; this, in turn, has played a significant role in managing the regional security order through ASEAN-led multilateral institutions.

Minilateral Arrangements in the Indo-Pacific

There is no single definition of the minilateral arrangements. Further, there are different opinions regarding a number of participants in the Minilateral formations. Ashizawa claims that “the concept of minilateralism is, relational, and the question of minilateral practice is almost always raised against the record of parallel arrangements involving larger numbers”. (Ashizawa, 2013:118) He contends that the minilateral arrangement implies a small number of, often, privileged states that exhibit a collaborative behaviour. Patrick (2015) defines minilateralism as “flexible networks whose membership varies based on situational interests, shared values (and) relevant capabilities.” Joshi (2017) lists four essential factors associated with the minilateral arrangements — “nature of the problem; interests of member states; their shared values; and lastly, their capabilities to contribute to the resolution of the problem.”

Implications for India

C. Raja Mohan predicts the possibility of multiple sub-regional orders in the Indo-Pacific and claims that India is “likely to pursue the three ideas – cooperative security, an Asian concert and balance of power – simultaneously”. (Mohan, 2013:234) He advocates closer relations with the US as there is a convergence of interest between the two states. He foresees “the evolution of the triangular dynamic between New Delhi, Beijing and Washington” that will produce “many fascinating twists and turns”. (Mohan, 2013:258) Sidhu, Mehta and Jones think that India has essential ingredients like ideas, people and tools to substantially shape the global order. In the multilateral domain, India’s attitude has been changed from the country practising ‘universalism of the weak’ to the country practising ‘internationalism of the strong’. (Sidhu, Mehta, & Jones, 2013:4) Pant and Joshi (2016) study various foreign policy options before India to cope up with the strategic flux in the Indo-Pacific region. They conclude that India is pursuing a strategy of hedging; i.e., close partnership with the US, stable relationship with China and local partnerships with regional powers. However, their study is based on the premise of rising China and the relative decline of the US.

Rajagopalan argues for closer ties between India and the US. According to him, regional cooperation between key powers presents itself as an alternative option. However, such a partnership would also compliment closer India-US ties. “If closer ties with the United States should prove difficult to attain, a regional balancing strategy with other powers in the Indo-Pacific offers India an alternative approach, and such regional partnerships could also be a

potential supplement to an augmented US-India alignment”. (Rajagopalan, 2017) Tellis insists upon close relations between India and the US. He predicts that the ‘quadrilateral’ might take some more time to materialise fully. Therefore, there is a strong case of strong bilateral relations between India and the US along with efforts to make the ‘quadrilateral’ work. (Tellis, 2017)

DEFINITION, RATIONALE, AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study attempts to show the co-existence of three orders in the region and its implication for India. It delves into ways in which the US, China, and ASEAN have tried to employ their respective conceptions of the order and how India manages the regional security fluidity. It also examines various aspects of the two security minilaterals, viz.; the India-Japan-Australia trilateral and the Quadrilateral involving India, Japan, Australia and the US. It analyses the inter-state relations between the participant countries of minilaterals to examine whether the minilaterals assist India to cope up with the ever-changing situation. However, it strictly sticks to traditional security issues without trespassing into economic and non-traditional threats.

The study investigates the regional events between 2007 and 2017. The year 2007 is imperative for two reasons. One, from 2007 onwards, Chinese rhetoric and actions over the territorial claims in SCS became more virulent. It objected to countries exploring oil in their territorial waters, enforced a unilateral ban on fishing in parts of SCS, conducted military exercises, undertook scientific surveys, organized tourist trips to disputed islands and used law-enforcing agencies as well as fishing boats to deter countries from conducting routine activities in SCS waters. In the subsequent years, for the first time, China submitted maps to the UN claiming that the entire SCS was its own which was contrary to the claims by several ASEAN countries and Taiwan. Additionally, in the East China Sea, China got into a spat with Japan over Senkaku islands. It created problems of exploration as well as fishing rights and declared a unilateral Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea.

Two, in 2007, Japan proposed the idea of Quadrilateral for the first time which was quickly embraced by the US, Australia, and India. However, it got fizzled out as soon as the members clasped it. In 2017, Japan came full circle by proposing the Quadrilateral again and getting a

positive response from the rest of the three nations. Thus, the period between 2007-2017 saw, on the one hand, the meteoric rise of China to the extent that scholars started contemplating about China-led order and on the other hand, the emergence of minilateral diplomacy as an instrument to cope up with the regional uncertainties.

Before beginning the study, it must be clarified that the ‘Indo-Pacific’ is a relatively new strategic construct, which has emerged as the most dynamic region of the 21st century. In the geographic parlance, the region covers a vast expanse of ocean and land situated between the eastern coast of Africa on the one side and the western coast of the US on the other side. However, for this study, India has been considered as the western boundary of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ region, instead of the eastern coast of Africa. Apart from that, the ‘order’ is defined as an accepted form of the hierarchy. The dominant actor should be able to influence and change the behavior of the rest with or without the use of the force.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do multiple orders co-exist in the Indo-Pacific region?
- What is security minilateralism?
- What role do minilateral mechanisms play while dealing with the multiple orders in the Indo-Pacific?
- Where does India fit into the various orders?
- What are the implications of the multiple orders on India?
- Whether minilateral arrangements provide additional levers to India to deal effectively with the strategic flux in the region?

HYPOTHESIS

- Multiple orders co-exist in the Indo-Pacific region; these include the US-led order, a Sino-centric order and an ASEAN-conceived order. There exists a symbiotic relationship between the US-led and ASEAN-conceived order.

- Emerging minilateral mechanisms underscores India's significance to the regional order, consolidates India's 'Act East' policy and provide India with additional levers to manage the flux.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method of analysis. It would primarily be based upon primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include government press releases, government documents, data from the official websites of organisations and speeches of leaders at various forums. Secondary sources include books, newspaper reports, academic journal articles and television reports. The study uses both analytical and descriptive methods.

CHAPTER 2

THE CO-EXISTENCE OF MULTIPLE ORDERS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

INTRODUCTION

The hesitance on the part of the US to share the burden of its allies has raised doubts over the US-led order in the region. While at the same time, the emergence of the Sino-centric order is raising alarm bells in certain quarters in the Indo-Pacific region. As these two orders are prominently in vogue, the ASEAN is silently choosing its options. On this background the chapter evaluates the three orders in the Indo-Pacific and argues that the three orders co-exist in the region simultaneously.

THE US-LED ORDER

When President Barak Obama took office in 2009, the US was reeling under the clouds of two prolonged wars in the West Asia and a worst economic shock in the form of subprime crisis. The general public opinion experienced war wariness. Although the bilateral treaties with Japan, Australia and South Korea were intact, the US was looking at the region anew through the prism of terrorism. Furthermore, the economic recession had put the US in an uncomfortable position; especially in the stark contrast with that of China. Thus, the twin objective of the newly elected Obama administration was to get the US on the economic recovery path and reduce its overseas assignments without compromising its leadership on the world stage. Although there was a continuity in the foreign policy vis-à-vis East Asia, Obama's foreign policy team felt that the region was neglected to a certain degree and the global war on terror drew excessive attention at the cost of the economic issues in East Asia. (Bader, 2012)

The churning in the US policy circles regarding the means to manage relations in East Asia had begun during President's Bush Jr.'s term in office. On the one hand, there were attempts to forge a closer relationship between the US' allies (Blackwill & Dibb, 2000), and on the other hand, there was an attempt by the US side to cultivate China as a responsible stakeholder on the international stage and move the Sino-US bilateral ties along the more cooperative path. (Christensen, 2011) Even the National Security Strategy (2006) which was in force till 2010 asserted the need for China to act responsibly and assured help from the US in this regard. "As China becomes a global player, it must act as a responsible stakeholder that fulfil its obligations and works with the United States and others to advance the international system that has

enabled its success: enforcing the international rules that have helped China lift itself out of a century of economic deprivation, embracing the economic and political standards that go along with that system of rules, and contributing to international stability and security by working with the United States and other major powers. [...] If China keeps this commitment, the United States will welcome the emergence of a China that is peaceful and prosperous, and that cooperates with us to address common challenges and mutual interests.” (White House, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2006) At the beginning of his term, President Obama tried to form Great Power Condominium (G-2) with China. During the first Strategic and Economic Dialogue, he talked of the importance of the US-China bilateral relationship for the world and how the bilateral relationship was a prerequisite to solve pressing global problems. “If we advance [our mutual] interests through cooperation, our people will benefit, and the world will be better off—because our ability to partner with each other is a prerequisite for progress on many of the most pressing global challenges.” (Bush, 2011) However, the attempt fizzled out quickly due to abrasive moves from China towards the US and its partners in the region. In 2009, four Chinese naval ships harassed the USS Impeccable in the international waters near the Chinese coast. In 2010, Chinese foreign minister warned Southeast Asian countries against taking help of an ‘outside power’ to solve regional territorial issues. (Christensen, 2011) In the same year in September, boat collision incident at the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea escalated into a diplomatic row between Japan and China. In September 2011, Indian Naval Ship Airavat faced harassment from Chinese navy off the coast of Vietnam. Thus, in stark contrast to G-2, the US decided to pursue ‘Asia Pivot’ policy.

The ‘Pivot’ Strategy

Although the policy was formally outlined in 2011 by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in an article in the Foreign Policy magazine, she visited the Indo-Pacific countries – Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and China – as her first official trip abroad in 2009. (Robertson, 2017) Further, the NSS, 2010 made a strong pitch for the US’ Asian alliances. It reaffirmed the fact that the US’ alliance system in Asia was fundamental to its overall strategy for the region. “Our alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand are the bedrock of security in Asia and a foundation of prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. We will continue to deepen and update these alliances to reflect the dynamism of the region and strategic trends of

the 21st century.” (White House, National Security Strategy, 2010) However, it stressed on the equal partnership between the US and its allies implying that the US wanted its allies to share the burden of the alliance. “We are modernising our security relationships with both countries to face evolving 21st century global security challenges and to reflect the principle of equal partnership with the United States and to ensure a sustainable foundation for the U.S. military presence there.” (White House, National Security Strategy, 2010) Additionally, to add new partners, the document dedicated a whole paragraph for India and did not hyphenate it with Pakistan, unlike earlier NSS document.

The ‘Pivot’ strategy was not a single document, but a series of articles and speeches by the top leaders of the US. In addition to Hillary Clinton’s articulation of the policy through an article in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, President Obama outlined a broad vision of it in his speech in the Australian Parliament in November 2011 by claiming that the US was ready to turn its attention to the vast expanse of Asia-Pacific after a decade that saw two costly wars. (Obama, 2011) “...the United States has been, and always will be, a Pacific nation. [...] as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends.” (Obama, 2011) He added that the US was committed to defending the international order by amplifying its presence in Asia-Pacific. Though the country was prepared to carry out reductions in its defence spending, it would spare the Asia-Pacific. “The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay.” (Obama, 2011)

The ‘Pivot’ strategy – later came to be known as ‘rebalancing’ policy – was aimed at increasing diplomatic, economic, military and strategic commitments of the US towards the broader Indo-Pacific region. It strived to maintain regional architecture built by the US after the end of the World War II. The six objectives of the policy identified by the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were: strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights.” (Clinton, 2011) These objectives were consistent with the overall US strategy towards the region for aeons which included “access to Asian markets, maintain a permanent base in the region, prevention of domination of the region by a hostile power, preservation of alliance system and spread of democracy and human rights across the

region”. (McDevitt, 2007) However, such a pronouncement of the policy was required to change the general perception that the US had neglected the region in its quest to wage war on the terror. Although there was overall continuity in the newly announced policy, the two new features stood out – active military engagement with the partners in the region and a more holistic view of the expanse as a whole. (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2012) The immediate impact of the former was evident from the increased military and economic engagement with the traditional US allies in the Indo-Pacific and a pursuit to make new partners to create a ‘networked partnership’ in the region.

- **Increased Military Engagement**

The US decided to expand the number of troops rotated at Darwin facility in Australia. Further, Australia permitted greater access to its air force and naval facilities to the US air force and navy respectively. (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2012) Similarly, the US announced that it would deploy its four Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) at Singapore's Changi Naval Base. (Bender, 2015) In the same vein, the US also firmed up more military engagement with the Philippines. It expanded the “joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities” with Japan and planned “a hub for regional humanitarian and disaster relief efforts” in Thailand. (Clinton, 2011) It anticipated 60 per cent of its naval assets in Asia by 2020. (Mogato & O'Callaghan, 2012)

- **Increased Economic Engagement**

In the economic realm, the US moved to engage the region multilaterally. It recognised the centrality of ASEAN in the regional affairs and put greater emphasis on the regional economic initiatives like Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Similarly, it broadened its commitment to the region by working in small multilateral groupings such as Lower Mekong Initiative and Pacific Islands Forum. The Obama administration actively entwined the US in the Trans-Partnership Partnership (TPP) negotiations to stay in the driving seat vis-à-vis economic norm-setting. It excluded regional economic powerhouses such as India and China. It was a wise strategy to knit a trading community, and thus create a new economic architecture for the region with modern norms based on the environmental protection, labour laws and intellectual property rights among others. However, while investing in multilateralism, the US

did not lose sight of its bilateral trade agreements with the regional economies. The multilateralism was the way to supplement the existing economic relations with the region and not to supplant them.

The 'Pivot' a Success or a Failure?

According to a Congressional Research Service Report for the US Congress, the 'Pivot' policy combined South Asia and East Asia as a geographic whole. It visualised the strategically important oceanic area of Asia-Pacific as a singular entity joining crucial choke points in the Indian Ocean with manufacturing hubs of East Asia. Such a conception would imply a more coherent US policy towards the entire region as against a piecemeal approach towards the sub-regions. "Increasing strategic rivalry between China and India also serve[d] to bring these Asian sub-regions into a larger Asia-wide strategic dynamic." (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2012) Besides, it was a recognition from Washington that centre of gravity had shifted towards east and Asia-Pacific was the linchpin of the future economic as well as strategic developments. Since the advent of the 21st century, Asia had become the largest trading region for the US, and thus it needed more attention from the US. Further, it had proved its resilience during the economic recession of 2008. Therefore, by clubbing the Indian Ocean Region and Pacific Ocean Region, the US had tried to create a vast expanse both physically and in the national imagination of the regional countries. The most evident reason behind this re-conception was US' attempt to get local powers involved in the regional matters; thus, reduce its responsibilities by sharing them with middle-powers. Additionally, it was also an endeavour to preserve the prevailing order in the region by drawing more countries at the centre of the regional affairs.

Thus, the Obama administration's strategy had – what Daniel Drezner characterised – two elements; multilateral retrenchment and counterpunching. (Drezner, 2011) The objective of the multilateral retrenchment was to reduce the US commitment overseas and to shift the burden onto the global partners. It was directed at restoring the US standing on the world stage in the aftermath of the two costly wars and economic depression. Counterpunching asserted the US power when challenged in the international arena. It was manifested by the tightened economic and security cooperation with China's neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region.

The unexpected rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) put limitations on the success of Obama's 'Pivot' strategy. Pentagon had to devote a considerable amount of resources in West Asia. Additionally, to bring the economy back on track, the Congress-led cuts in the defence budget made life more difficult. According to one estimation, the US defence spending dropped by 25 per cent, and in spite of claims that the cuts would not affect Asia-Pacific, the situation on the ground presented a grim picture. (Klingner, 2015) Katrina McFarland, an Assistant Secretary of Defence for Acquisition spoke of the need to revisit the 'Pivot' strategy due to budget constraints. (Obama at West Point, 2014) Additionally the jettisoning of the long-standing "two-war" force-sizing construct created doubts in the minds of the US allies. (O'Hanlon, 2011) The administrative limitations were accompanied by the weak US response against Chinese high-handedness in the South China Sea in case of the Philippines and Japan – both important spokes in the 'Hub-and-Spoke' strategy. Furthermore, the military coup in Thailand drifted that country towards China in the light of the US objections. "Overall, the momentum of the administration's rebalancing strategy in Asia, initially announced with such fanfare, seem[ed] to have weakened during its second term in office." (Tow, America's Emerging Choices in Asia, 2016) However, the US could still maintain the regional order in the Indo-Pacific. The means to achieve the end were the constructive engagement with the region through the multilateral forums, the advent of the minilateral formations and partnerships with the new friends while deepening relations with the existing ones.

Engagement through Multilateralism

Due to its overwhelming military and economic power, its strong bilateral treaty relations with the allies and presence of relatively small and middle powers (both economically and militarily) in the region, the US was never eager to manage the regional order through a multilateral mechanism like in Europe. It was more comfortable acting unilaterally when it came to deal with the security situation, along with its allies. It always thought that the multilateralism was a constraining instrument for the conduct of the regional affairs. The Obama administration changed the course of such dominant thinking. In 2009, Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State of the US signed the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) which was a pre-requisite to join the East Asia Summit (EAS). The treaty "committed signatories to the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in domestic affairs." (Mohammed & Yates, 2009) The following year, the US appointed an ambassador to ASEAN for the first time in the history.

Subsequently, President Obama became the first President of the US to participate in the EAS in 2011.

Continuing the momentum, Washington hosted ten heads of states of ASEAN in Sunnylands, California for an extraordinary summit in 2016. The joint statement decided to “respect and support [the] ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms to in the evolving regional architecture of the Asia-Pacific” and committed “to enhance collaboration at international and regional fora, especially at existing ASEAN-led mechanisms”. (White House, Joint Statement of the U.S.-ASEAN Special Leaders’ Summit: Sunnylands Declaration, 2016) Before that, the US-ASEAN relationship was elevated to the ‘Strategic Partnership’ in 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The TTP was another way to engage the Southeast Asian players in the broader regional architecture that included Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia. It was a step towards achieving the “strategic goal of revitalising the open, rules-based economic system that the United States ha[d] led since World War II”. (White House, FACT SHEET: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific, 2015) The TTP was envisioned to complement the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Further, the statement released by the White House about President Obama’s Asia Strategy in 2015 asserted the policy of “unprecedented” commitment towards regional organisations that were centred around the ASEAN. According to National Defence University, the Obama administration officials spent far more time in the Asia-Pacific region than their predecessors. (Klingner, 2015)

Engagement through Minilateralism

The US innovatively found a way to preserve the regional order through the formation of Minilateral organs. They are small groups, generally three-five members, designed to resolve a specific regional issue. On the one hand, it is an ideal way to update an ‘alliance mutuality’ while on the other hand, it is a knack to get ‘partners’ involved in the traditionally exclusive bilateral formations. Tow and Acharya define alliance mutuality as “a condition (rather than a strategy or process) reached in bilateral alliance politics where relations between the more powerful and less powerful ally in a particular security dyad have matured from distinctly asymmetrical to more evenly balanced sets of interests and interactions.” (Acharya & Tow, *Obstinate or obsolete? The US alliance structure in the Asia–Pacific*, 2007) The US forged minilateral relations amongst its spokes as well as amongst the spokes and partners. The US-

Japan-India trilateral, the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Security Dialogue, the US-Japan-India-Australia Quadrilateral, India-Japan-Australia trilateral are some of the examples of evolving minilaterals in the region.

- **Networked Architecture**

The Asia Strategy Statement, 2015 claimed that the US was “moving beyond the ‘hub and spokes’ model of the past, toward a more networked architecture of cooperation among allies and partners—including through expanded trilateral cooperation frameworks—built on shared values and interests.” (White House, FACT SHEET: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific, 2015) The strategy aimed to involve more stakeholders in the region to carry the flag of the US-constructed regional order. It was a way to overcome the exclusivity of the bilateral treaties and to make relations between the nations suitable to handle contemporary regional complexities. The policy was a continuation of the idea first articulated in early 2000 by Robert Blackwill and Paul Dobbins to create spoke-to-spoke relations. It was a way to broaden the intra-spoke alliance. (Tow & Envall, The U.S. and Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?, December 2011)

- **The ‘Spoke-to-Spoke’ Relations**

The manifestation of the policy was evident in the ‘spoke-to-spoke’ bilateral relationships such as Japan-Australia, Japan- the Philippines and Australia-South Korea. The Japan-Australia bilateral relations saw an upward trajectory since 2002 with the Sydney Declaration for Australia-Japan Creative Partnership. The two countries began to have ‘2+2 (defence-foreign ministers) meeting’ format since signing a ‘Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (2007)’. Furthermore, they agreed to exchange supplies, services and security information. Both countries also signed an ‘Agreement on the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology’. Likewise, South Korea and Australia forged a close relationship in the security arena. These two countries, too, began the ‘2+2’ dialogue among their respective ministers. The relationship flourished following the ‘Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation Relations’ of 2009. In 2015, the two countries came out with the ‘Defence and Security Cooperation Blueprint’. Similarly, Japan- the Philippines bilateral ties assumed significance in the light of increased friction with China. The joint military exercises, transfer of defence

material to the Philippines, signing of a new defence pact were some of the trends evident in the ensuing years. The Philippines became the first Southeast Asian country with which Japan signed a defence pact as it had, previously, signed the defence pacts only with Britain, Australia and India apart from the US. (Gady, 2016) The flotilla of Japanese ships including a submarine also made a call to the Philippines port in 2016. The visit by destroyers and other naval ships; donation of patrol vessels and used military hardware became a regular feature in the bilateral defence relations between the two countries. Thus, the US encouraged the spoke-to-spoke ties to enhance interoperability among them.

- **Securing New Partners**

The National Security Strategy, 2015 underlined the need to maintain the global order that emerged after World War II by modernising the alliances and enhancing interactions among them. It further highlighted the importance of partners in managing the security order in the region. It singled out Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia from Southeast Asia and India from South Asia as countries with which the US intended to deepen ties. (White House, National Security Strategy, 2015) Thus, the US embarked on the precise strategy to befriend new partners. It adopted a strategy of helping the partner in capacity-building, thus divesting itself of any security responsibility towards the partner. The majority of partnerships emerged on the shared security concerns in the region. Additionally, they were win-win propositions for both the US and the partners. The partnerships served the US' aim of broadening the stakeholder pool while the partners got access to the US military hardware. Further, they earned a valuable friend on the international stage.

The US-Malaysia relations improved during Najib Razak's period in office since 2009. The bilateral relationship was elevated to a 'Comprehensive Partnership' during President Obama's visit to that country in 2014, the first US president to visit Malaysia since 1966. The visit put the focus on the bilateral strategic talks and Bilateral Training and Consultative Group. Further, Malaysia formally joined the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative in 2014. Similarly, the relations between Indonesia and the US were also elevated to the level of 'Strategic Partnership' from the level of a 'Comprehensive Partnership' during President Joko Widodo's visit to Washington in 2015. Additionally, the visit by the Indonesian President also saw other diplomatic, economic and security agreements between the two sides. Both countries decided

to set up an annual ministerial strategic dialogue to formalise high-level interactions. (Parameswaran, The new U.S.-Indonesia strategic partnership after Jokowi's visit: Problems and prospects, 2015) Moreover, Washington and Jakarta signed a joint statement on comprehensive defence cooperation that included the joint production of defence equipment. In the maritime sphere, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding on maritime cooperation. (Parameswaran, The new U.S.-Indonesia strategic partnership after Jokowi's visit: Problems and prospects, 2015)

The US-Vietnam ties came of age since normalisation of bilateral relations in 1995. In 2008, the two countries held bilateral Political, Security and Defence Dialogue at the vice-ministerial level. It was followed by a visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2010 and 2012. From 2010 onwards, both sides instituted an annual Defence Policy Dialogue at vice-ministerial level. (Hiebert, Nguyen, & Poling, 2014) In 2013, the two countries raised their relationship to a 'Comprehensive Partnership'. During a state visit by President Trong to the US, the joint statement "underscored their commitment to collaborating on, among other issues, addressing non-traditional security threats, cooperation in maritime security, maritime domain awareness, defense trade and information sharing, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and defense technology exchange." (White House, United States – Vietnam Joint Vision Statement, 2015) The statement gave a holistic view of the bilateral relations. President Obama paid a reciprocal visit to Vietnam in 2016 in which he lifted the ban on the sale of lethal arms and weapons to Vietnam.

In South Asia, the US got a partner in India to preserve its regional order. The bilateral relationship reached zenith when both sides signed a Nuclear Agreement in 2008. It was a significant confidence-building measure between the two. Before that India had signed Defence Framework Agreement for ten years in 2005 which was renewed for another ten years in 2015. They also inked Defence Technology and Trade Initiative in 2012. After Prime Minister Modi assumed power in Delhi, the relationship got a new boost. By 2016, the top leaders of the two countries had met on four different occasions. In 2016, both countries signed long pending and strategically significant the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). "President Obama recognized India as a 'major defence partner' during Prime Minister Modi's June 2016 visit to Washington, DC, a designation allowing India to receive license-free access to American dual-use technologies that was formalised by Congress..."

(Kronstadt & Akhtar, 2017) As a result defence sale from the US to India reached almost \$10 billion in eight years. Both sides issued the ‘U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region’ during a summit meeting in 2015.

So, the US sustained the regional order by integrating elements of bilateral and plurilateral arrangements. In the aftermath of the sub-prime crisis, the US began by adopting various strategies including the G-2 Condominium, Asia ‘Pivot’ and Networked Architecture to preserve its order. However, the Networked Architecture proved to be the best strategy. Therefore, it sculptured temporary and flexible structures. It weaved them together by creating a shared understanding of security threats facing the region. It “generated a subtle process of bilateral-multilateral co-existence”. (Tow & Envall, The U.S. and Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?, December 2011) It ascertained the creation of multiple stakeholders from Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, South Pacific and South Asia together. For that reason, the US policymakers integrated the vast maritime expanse of the Indian and Pacific region into a coherent Indo-Pacific region. They made sure that the perception of the Indo-Pacific is embossed on the national imagination of the individual countries. The US got a positive response from the regional allies and partners as they also had stakes in conserving the US-led order.

THE SINO-CENTRIC ORDER

During the 19th Communist Party Congress (CPC), Chinese President Xi Jinping heralded the arrival of a “new era”. (Phillips, 2017) He said that owing to the tireless struggle for decades, “China stood tall and firm in the east”. (Phillips, 2017) “This is a new historic juncture in China’s development...an era that will see China move closer to the centre of the world and make more contributions to humankind.” (Phillips, 2017) In contrast to the current superpower – the US – which is in retreat, Chinese President spoke against isolationist tendencies. Striking right notes in front of Communist Party cadres and keeping the international audience in mind, he warned against environmental degradation, thus painted China to be a responsible global actor. The President further offered an alternative model for countries which intended to develop faster – socialism with the Chinese characteristics. He aimed China to become “a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence” by the middle

of the 21st century. (Xinhua, 2017) He referred to China as a “great power” or “strong power” 26 times during his speech. (Buckley & Bradsher, 2017) About the military, he intended to build military not only to fight but also to win the wars. Bonnie Glaser and Matthew Funaiolo inferred from the speech that “China harbour[ed] a deep-seated desire to displace the United States as the dominant power in Asia.” (Glesser & Funaiolo, 2017) However, such inference contrasted starkly with President Xi’s assertion that China would continue to “uphold [the] international order.” (Xinhua, 2017) Since China was the biggest beneficiary of the liberal order, China would like to replace the US and lead the current order sans the uncomfortable elements like the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and issue of the Human Rights among others.

President Xi’s articulation of rejuvenated China was in line with his “Chinese Dream” which he had referred to when “he was promoted to the top communist party post” in November 2012. (BBC, 2013) "The great revival of the Chinese nation is the greatest Chinese Dream," he said. He emphasised that China should take the Chinese way to realise the Chinese Dream. (China Daily, 2013) Some scholars thought that he was referring to old notions when China was strong and prosperous, ruling the Northeast Asian region. According to Michael Pillsbury, the reference to the “China Dream” was related to the book titled “The China Dream: The Great Power Thinking and Strategic Positioning of China in the Post-American Era” written by Liu Mingfu, a colonel in Chinese Army which was published in 2009. The book argued for increased Chinese military power vis-à-vis the US, purely as a defensive strategy. It called for turning some money bags into ammunition belts. (Callahan W. , 2013) It “primarily employ[ed] familiar geopolitical concepts to craft China’s grand strategy: deterrence, balance of power, and peace through strength.” (Callahan, 2013: 60) The author predicted that the competition between China and the US would be like a “protracted marathon”, which China would win in the end. (Pillsbury, 2015)

The Chinese leader’s stress on the terms such as “rejuvenation”, “revival” and his emphasis on “Chinese culture”, “5000 years of history” and “a rich civilisation” gave room to think that China wanted to recreate a system in which it was a ‘Middle Kingdom’ around which the entire world was woven. Liu Mingfu contended that “China should regain its position as the most powerful nation in the world, a position it had held for a thousand years before its humiliation.” (Economist, 2013) Such a view had also been reflected in the book ‘The Under-Heaven

System: The Philosophy for the World Institution' by Zhao Tingyang, a Chinese intellectual. According to him old Chinese concepts of governance were necessary for the 21st-century world. Therefore, it is essential to look at the ancient Sinocentric world order.

Ancient Sino-centric Order

The concept of 'Tianxia' guided the Chinese worldview during ancient times. 'Tianxia' literally meant 'all-under-heaven' or 'all the people' or a 'world institution'. (Callahan W. A., 2008) 'Tiantzu' - 'Son of Heaven' presided the 'Tianxia'. (Fairbank, 1968) 'Tiantzu' was supreme in all the realms of life. He was the "military leader, administrator, judge, high priest, philosophical sage, arbiter of taste, and patron of arts and letters, all in one." (Fairbank, 1968) He was much more than a mere 'human being'. Thus, 'Tianxia' was a way to look at the world from a truly global and an all-inclusive perspective under the authority of 'Tiantzu'.

The world order was hierarchical rather than egalitarian, with China at the top. The 'superordination-subordination' relationship pattern guided the relations between China and other states. The pattern was just an extension of how the relations were observed inside China between "father and son, husband and wife, and prince and minister." (Fairbank, 1968) The common thread of 'benevolence-obedience' between the patron and the client weaved the associations. Thus, formal inequality was the defining feature of the Chinese World Order. While China was the only dominant state, other states were secondary vassals of China. China provided political legitimacy as well as security guarantees to its vassals.

Geographically, the Chinese state was roughly the same as it is today, without Tibet. The northern border was vulnerable to attacks by the outsiders, known as 'barbarians'. Based upon the influence of the Sinic culture, states of Vietnam, Japan and Korea along with China formed the inner core of the East Asian Order. China was physically connected with all these countries which had dense cultural similarities with China. The distant states of Burma, Siam, Java, the Ryukyu islands had mixed cultural influence of India and China. Therefore, although these countries had a degree of cultural similarities with China, they were never counted into the inner core of the Chinese world order. The outer Zone consisted of the "outer barbarians generally, at a further distance over land or sea, including eventually Japan and other states of

Southeast and South Asia and Europe that were supposed to send tribute when trading.” (Fairbank, 1968)

China had strong military potential vis-à-vis other states in the region. “Chinese military organisation and technology also gave it the capability to project power over long distances.” (Kang, 2007:30) China used the military power to exchange legitimacy from the vassal states. It protected the states that followed the system’s rules and let them pursue independent domestic and foreign policy. (Kang, 2007:44) However, it did not mean that China never invaded its neighbours. It administered Vietnam from 112 B.C. to 907 A.D., almost a thousand years. Further, it again invaded Vietnam and occupied it for 21 years between 1407 to 1428. Apart from this, the region was largely peaceful compared to the European region which experienced a lot of violence. Thus, Chinese World Order “provided a normative social order that also contained credible commitments by China not to exploit secondary states that accepted its authority. This order was explicit and formally unequal, but it was also informally equal: secondary states were not allowed to call themselves nor did they believe themselves equal with China, yet they had substantial latitude in their actual behaviour.” (Kang, East Asia Before the West, 2010)

The relations between China and the rest of the states were guided by two critical factors: Confucianism and Tribute system. Confucianism lied at the heart of Chinese society. The whole inner core of the East Asian region lived by the Confucian ethos. Since the superiority of China was an accepted phenomenon, the secondary states were ranked according to their cultural similarity vis-à-vis China. China and the rest of the East Asian nations were held together by the cultural practices that were common in the region. These cultural practices were the result of Confucianism which was well entrenched in the internal as well as external affairs of the vassal states of China.

China had a complex administrative structure. The officers were selected by conducting examinations and not by hereditary. Such examinations used to test Confucian knowledge of the candidates. Similarly, the neighbouring states used to choose civil servants based on the knowledge of Chinese philosophy and culture. Thus, “the political power was maintained by cultural means”. (Fairbank, 1968) The civilizational quotient of the ‘Sinic’, as well as the surrounding states, used to be judged by the level of Confucian proficiency. If states did not

adhere to Confucian principles, they were considered to be barbarians. The shared norms and practices among the Confucian society of East Asia acted as a biggest soft power of China. China never imposed the Confucian norms and practises over the 'Sinic' states, but these states readily accepted them as part of their culture. However, barbarians and nomads had different worldviews, cultures, traditions and norms. In that situation, the outward cultural expansion was one of the means by which to absorb them into the inner 'Sinic' core.

Nevertheless, cultural means were not the only means available to deal with the barbarians. The Confucian philosophy listed two diametrically opposite strategies to handle the barbarians: pacifism and militarism. According to one of the Confucian classics, "if remoter people [we]re not submissive, all the influences of civil culture and virtue [we]re to be cultivated to attract them to be so; and when they ha[d] been so attracted, they m[ight] be made contested and tranquil." (Fairbank, 1968) On the other hand, it had also been mentioned that the only way to absorb the barbarian state was to attack them. "To absorb weak states, and attack those that [we]re wilfully blind, was a good rule of war.". (Fairbank, 1968) Thus Confucian ideas had a profound impact on the East Asian 'Sinic' states, and it was one of the significant glueing factors to keep them together.

Besides Confucianism, the tribute system was another practice which was prevalent in the region. The tribute system was a recognition by the vassal states of China's superiority over them. By deferring to China, secondary states used to get a formal recognition in the Chinese court, a formal rank in Chinese hierarchy, a permission to commence trade with China and certain special diplomatic privileges. Besides accepting Chinese suzerainty; vassal states had to pay taxes, generally, in the form of ceremonial presents, follow Confucian rituals and remain subservient to the Tiantzu. The tribute system was a way to start trade with China which was always a bilateral affair. It was also a way to secure independence for itself from Chinese power and a way to seek legitimacy for itself. "As long as the hierarchy was observed and China recognized as hegemon, there was little need for interstate war." (Kang, East Asia Before the West, 2010) "A key aspect of legitimate hierarchy [wa]s a credible commitment on the part of the dominant state not to exploit the subordinate states." (Kang, East Asia Before the West, 2010) The act of seeking legitimacy from China was known as 'investiture'. The practice of 'investiture' was a measure of equality between those two states which had received 'investiture' from a common hegemon, China. (Fuchs, Kasahara, & Saaler, 2018:40) Thus, the

tribute system was a way to manage foreign relations between China and other states. Although the minion states had to conform to the tradition in exchange for legitimacy, security and sovereignty over their respective geographical area; it was not compulsory for the rest of the states.

According to some scholars, the tribute system was just an excuse to begin trading relations with China. For Fairbank, trade was an alternative for war when it came to relations between China and nomad. Though there was a close connection between the tribute system and trade, the two also took place independent of each other. The condition of paying tributes before the commencement of the trade was mandatory only for peripheral states. However, China's trade was not limited to the peripheral states. It had far reached to various parts of the globe through silk and spice routes and was substantial in terms of volume. "In existence for well over two thousand years, (the silk route) was the source for the transfer of many innovations, ideas, and goods from and to China and the outside world. Yet probably more important in terms of volume was the vast maritime trade connecting Japan, Korea, and Northeast Asia to China, Southeast Asia, and India, the Middle East, and even Europe." (Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, 2010) However, when it came to East Asia, China dominated the trade in both material and normative terms. The sheer size and material superiority of China vis-à-vis other states in the region had enabled it to create a dependency upon itself.

The Emerging Sino-centric Order

Today, China has embarked on the path to revive the old features of the ancient world order led by it. Some of the elements to achieve the objective are as follows.

- **Belt and Road Initiative**

In May 2017, in a grand Summit, which saw a couple of dozens of world leaders in Beijing, President Xi spoke of "a big family of harmonious co-existence" through the "project of the century" (Meyers, 2017); i.e., Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI was first announced in 2013 in two phases which aimed to connect Asia to Europe by building ports, railway networks, pipelines and other physical infrastructure. It has two components: continental and maritime. The continental part, declared in Kazakhstan, known as 'Silk Road Economic Belt' aims to

connect the two continents via land route which passes mainly through Central Asia while the maritime component, introduced in Indonesia, known as ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ aims to connect the two continents via Pacific and Indian Ocean which covers Southeast Asia, South Asia and West Asia. The project includes more than 60 countries and expects a multi-Trillion dollar turnover.

The BRI has two dimensions – internal and external. Domestically China faces few challenges which it hopes to overcome by the BRI. First, there is a huge economic disparity between eastern and western China. The eastern province, with its proximity to the coastal zone, is much more prosperous vis-à-vis the hinterland. The Silk Road Economic Belt is a way to open up the western provinces of China by building infrastructure through adjoining central Asia all the way to Europe. Additionally, it is an attempt to assuage the restive Western part of China. Second, China faces the massive issue of overcapacity and overproduction, especially in steel, cement and construction material sector. (Chaturvedy, 2017) So, the project’s objective is to find new markets for Chinese companies to dump the surplus production, create demand for Chinese goods and explore overseas investment opportunities for Chinese companies. Third, Beijing seeks to export Chinese standards in the fields of technology and manufacturing. As China focuses its sight on becoming an innovation-based economy, it tries to ship as much higher-end manufacturing goods as possible.

The external dimensions of BRI are in line with President Xi’s global ambitions and his priority to create a stable neighbourhood. In a conference on ‘Peripheral Diplomacy’ in 2013, President Xi had articulated the need to improve relations with its neighbours. “Maintaining stability in China’s neighbourhood is the key objective of peripheral diplomacy. We must encourage and participate in the process of regional economic integration, speed up the process of building up infrastructure and connectivity. We must build the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, creating a new regional economic order.” (Panda & Basu, 2018) Thus, BRI is much more than just an economic initiative. With such a huge initiative China aims to enmesh countries in its economic web. By pumping huge funds, it attempts to create an economic dependency for the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, with its unsustainable and opaque loan disbursement, China aims to make inroads in various states of strategic importance, especially small nations. The pattern is evident in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and several other countries. It also gives credence to suspicion of the

regional powers such as India and Australia that China is trying to encircle them. It clearly shows Chinese ambitions to control the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and the Southern Pacific Ocean.

Another objective of BRI is to reduce dependency on the international choke points by diverting energy imports directly to China through a network of pipelines.¹ China is highly dependent upon energy resources for its development. It imports more than 80% of energy supplies from foreign countries. The BRI is a smart strategy to diversify the energy basket. Apart from that, BRI is also crucial for China's quest to create cultural and material 'indivisibility' among itself and the regions surrounding it. The whole project promotes Chinese companies to construct physical infrastructure in the participating countries. It is an attempt to create a physical uniformity across the periphery, thus a strategy to exert influence in the fringe expanses.

The BRI was conceptualised by imagining China at the centre of the world. It was not a coincidence that the launch of BRI was coupled with a more muscular foreign policy by China. Thus, the BRI can be interpreted as a strategy to counter the US' presence in the Indo-Pacific. It is one of the principle paths towards the realisation of the Chinese Dream.

- **Trade and Financial Institutions**

The Indo-Pacific region is the economically vibrant region with China as the largest trading partner of almost all the countries. According to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Database, 2017, China is the world's second-largest economy only behind the US. (Bajpai, 2017) Among the major countries, except for Japan and South Korea, China has a substantial positive trade balance with all the nations. That means, China exports more to these countries than importing from these countries. China is the biggest trading partner of almost all the major countries in the region. Its economy is export-oriented. Thus it focuses entirely on finding avenues to boost its exports.

¹ The 'Malacca Dilemma' was the term used by the then Chinese Premier Hu Jintao in 2003 indicating over reliance of China on Malacca Strait for the energy imports. He feared that the Strait can be easily choked in the times of the hostile situation

However, trade with China is not a merely a way to exchange goods and services. It has converted the import-export dependencies into strategic tools to shape foreign policies of individual countries. In 2012, at the height of escalation of conflict between Japan and China over the Senkaku islands, China had tightened the screws on the Japanese firms in the country. Similarly, in retaliation against the deployment of the THAAD missile defence system, China, led by state media and grassroots political groups, boycotted popular South Korean products. (Jourdan, 2017) According to Mancheri, any escalation of the conflict in the region would hurt partner country of China more than China itself due to trade dependence on China. (Mancheri, 2017) Thus, China has geopolitical intentions behind carrying out the trade.

Additionally, China is supporting its economic activities by opening up new banks for the lending purposes – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) headquartered in Beijing and the New Development Bank (NDB) headquartered in Shanghai. It is premature to say that the establishment of these lending institutes is a way to challenge the Brettenwood System. But China seems to be impressed by the achievements of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in uplifting the Least Developed and Developing countries; thereby influencing their policies. Thus, the AIIB or NDB might be the ‘Chinese Way’ of achieving the similar objectives and spreading Chinese principles worldwide.

Zha Daojiong, Professor at Peking University, attribute four motives to the Chinese economic institutions. First, the excessive foreign reserves held by China can be better utilised in commercial terms rather than putting them in the US treasuries. Second, China aims to internationalise its currency. Third, the banks give business to Chinese firms, thus employment opportunities to local Chinese folks. Fourth, China can mitigate the perception of the Chinese economic intrusion in the foreign countries with the help of multilateral lending. (Daojiong, 2015)

- **Aggressive Behaviour**

After President Xi took over the reins of China, the country abandoned the old mantra given by Deng Xiaoping – “Hide your strength, bide your time”. Chinese behaviour in the past decade is nothing but aggressive. Its claims to maritime spaces in the South China Sea, its use of maritime militia to coerce the opponent, its application of the regular forces to intimidate naval

ships of the other countries, its unsavoury tirade against foreign nations through state-owned media, its fiery territorial claims against the neighbouring countries, its predatory economics and its disdain towards the international law is symptomatic of the desire to rule the entire world. It has seen limits of the US hard power in the middle east and elsewhere in the recent times. Even in the South China Sea, the US has used its rhetorical power more than its actual hard power. Besides Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP), the US has not done much to constrain China. Moreover, the US is trying to share its responsibility by engaging more members in the region which have deep economic ties with China and lacks the military muscle to counter China. The ASEAN is also a divided house incapable of taking hard action apart from condemning the Chinese activities.

According to former Singaporean diplomat Bilahari Kausikan, China influences a country in three ways: persuade, induce and coerce. It tries to interfere in internal affairs of the nations by swaying the leader of the country in different ways including diplomatic and economic means. It seeks to create oversimplified narratives of an issue and offers false choices. (Wai, 2018) “China doesn't just want you to comply with its wishes; it wants you to... do what it wants without being told”. (Yong, 2018) If the country is not persuaded or induced, China coerces the target. The policy is best demonstrated in the Philippines. While former President Aquino III of the Philippines took a hard line against China vis-à-vis the South China Sea, the current President changed the course in the opposite direction. Thus, China creates such a situation in the region that a country has to accept the Chinese rules to live peacefully.

- **Military Strength**

In the past decade, China has increased its military strength comprehensively. Its military budget is second highest, just behind the US. Sheer numbers of its armed personnel, aircrafts, army hardware and naval hardware are enormous compared to many countries in the region. Tables 2.1 – 2.3 gives us the idea in this regard.

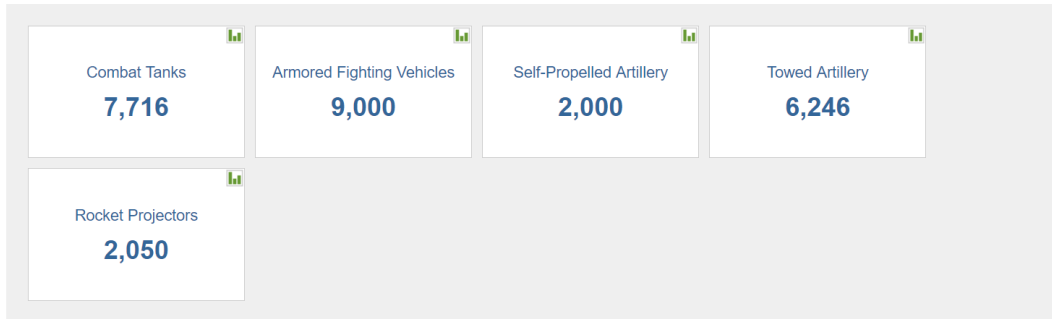


Figure 2.1: China's Military Hardware in Numbers (Global Firepower, 2018)

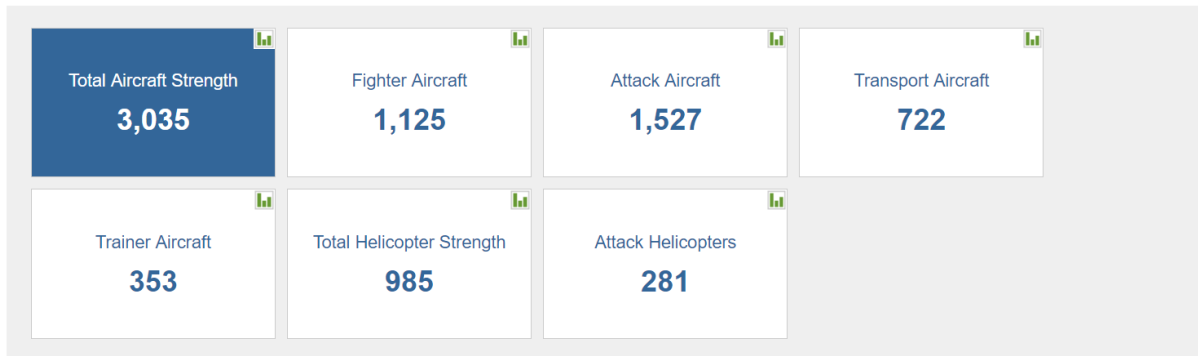


Figure 2.2: China's Airforce in Numbers (Global Firepower, 2018)

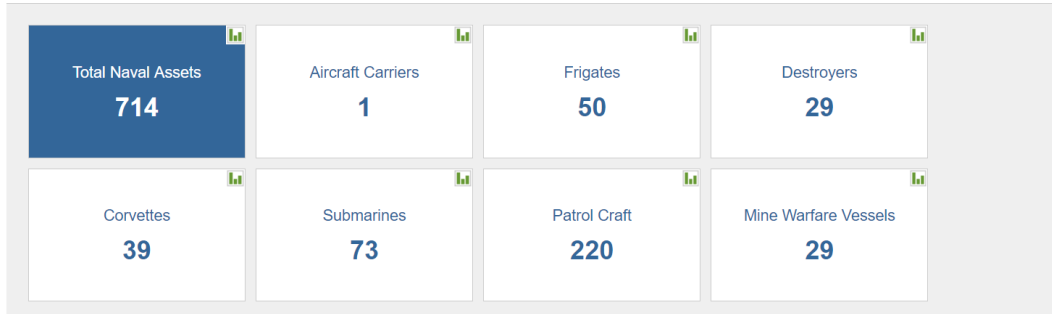


Figure 2.3: China's Navy in Numbers (Global Firepower, 2018)

Additionally, China acquired a foreign naval base in Djibouti in 2016, thus turned its gaze exclusively towards the Indian Ocean. Similarly, China has also increased the capacity of its Hainan naval complex which falls under its South Sea Fleet responsible for operations in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. "Once the least important of China's three fleets, the South Sea Fleet has since become the primary recipient of China's more advanced naval warships, including the Shang-class nuclear attack submarine, conventional submarines (Kilo-, Song- and Yuan-class), the above-mentioned Jin-class SSBN, and a dozen of China's more advanced guided-missile destroyers and frigates and three new amphibious warfare ships,

bringing its total to 29 major surface combatants”. (McDonough, 2015) Therefore, China has been on the way to become a top-ranked military by 2050 as per President Xi’s vision.

- **Confucius Institutes**

China is trying to spread its influence by setting Confucius institutes world over. These are Chinese funded institutes that are assigned to disseminate Chinese language and Chinese culture throughout the world. They are set up inside foreign university campuses and are filled with professors appointed by the Chinese state. However, these institutes are often criticised for their propaganda value. They spread very narrow and state-approved views of the Chinese traditions that exclude classical Chinese traditions used by Taiwan. (Pan, 2006) Similarly, they promote “a watered-down narrative on issues that provoke international controversies — such as China's incorporation of Tibet or Taiwanese sovereignty.” (Rahn, 2018) According to David Shambaugh, China spends around \$10 billion annually for propagating its soft power. (Shambaugh, 2015) Thus, Confucian institutes is a way to spread the Chinese culture and build soft power leverage in foreign countries. “In Southeast Asia, as of the beginning of 2017, China had set up 31 Confucian Institutes as well as four Chinese Cultural Centers in Thailand, Singapore, Laos, and Cambodia.” (Parameswaran, China Plays Up ASEAN Confucius Institute Presence With Laos Project, 2017) Likewise, Australia has fourteen of them.

Thus, there are similarities between the ancient Chinese capabilities and the capabilities China has already acquired or is seeking to earn in the present times. It has become a massive player in the trade and has successfully converted its economy into a formidable military arm. It has effectively created trade dependencies and is trying to emerge as a responsible global player amid uncertainties of the US trade policies. Through the BRI, it is attempting to resuscitate the Silk Route and the Spice Route which were at the heart of the process of globalisation in the ancient times. China has a top-down approach towards the spread of its soft power unlike that of the US. Therefore, though it is attempting hard, it has achieved a little success. The aggressive strategic behaviour accompanied by its influence operations is a testament to China’s wish to see the return of the Sino-centric World.

THE ASEAN-CONCEIVED ORDER

ASEAN emerged as an anti-communist organisation in 1967 with the blessings of the US at the height of the cold-war. 'Consensus' and 'Consultation' were its core principles. Earlier in its evolution, it declared 'The Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia' (ZOPFAN) in 1971 and signed 'The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia' (TAC) in 1976. The TAC mandated its signatories to respect the mutual independence and territorial integrity of the state, non-interference in the internal affairs of the other state and resolution of differences in a peaceful manner without the use of the force. Thus, ASEAN established itself as a normative organisation. The emphasis on the norms was because the regime security of the individual state was coterminous with its national security. Further, all the countries were more or less of the similar material capabilities, and they were secondary vis-à-vis external powers in the region. Therefore, setting the norms and working under the US security umbrella was a preferred way for the ASEAN during the cold-war era. The end of the cold war saw the expansion of ASEAN which originally had only five members - Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. During the last decade of the 20th century, former communist states of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam along with Myanmar and Brunei were included in the grouping. Thus, the 10-member ASEAN became the principle regional organisation at the heart of the Indo-Pacific.

ASEAN always preferred the US-led order in the region. However, the financial crisis – first of 1997 and then of 2008 – exposed the US vulnerability in the economic domain. The US could not help the Southeast Asian economies in 1997 and was itself gutted by the economic recession in 2008. On the contrary, China gave much needed helping hand during the 1997 Asian financial crisis and emerged tall during the 2008 sub-prime crisis. Since then it never turned back. It successfully converted its economic might into a military power and challenged the prevailing regional order. With the help of economic heft and new institutions of its own making, it confronted the status quo in the region. Thus, the region discovered another hegemon in the form of China along with the US. Though, China was always present on the horizon; due to the overwhelming presence of the US, it could not express itself in a dominating way.

Amid such a turbulent time, the ASEAN did much more than to hedge between the US and China. It conceived a favourable order and made particular strategic choices to shape the same. Since any hegemonic order depends upon the legitimacy provided by the weaker states,

ASEAN could configure the broad contours of the desirable order for the region in return of providing legitimacy to the hegemon. It achieved its aim by two ways – one, by constantly evolving multiple multilateral organisations led by ASEAN, making sure that it remains in the driving seat and two, by the strategy of – what Evelyn Goh has termed as – Omni-enmeshment. Since ASEAN is a 10-member organisation, it is not possible that the national interests of individual states always converge with the organisational interests. Therefore, while ASEAN has made some decisions as an institution, others are made by the members independently.

ASEAN-led Multilateral Security Organisations

Since the end of the cold war, the ASEAN has always remained in the driving seat vis-à-vis the regional security issues by creating multilateral organisations led by itself. Although the success of such organs is debatable, they have sought to profess ASEAN's norms, principles and values to the participating members. The security multilateralism makes sure that all the major actors in the region are involved in the formation, thus reducing surprises and making the security environment more predictable. "It not only helps to enhance the prospects for a more predictable and constructive relationship among the major powers but also enables ASEAN to dilute Great Power dominance in Southeast Asia, in keeping with the original ASEAN norm of regional autonomy." (Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, 2009) "Furthermore, the presence of a multilateral security organ is to act as a shock-absorber against the existing trends within both the global economic and security climate." (Sundararaman, 1998) Thus, these institutions enable ASEAN members to manage power dynamics in the region and uphold the desirable security order in the region.

Keeping with its norms, ASEAN's Security Multilateral Organs – ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) – are all 'cooperative security' mechanisms as against 'collective security' mechanisms which are based on "security dialogues, confidence building and norm creation among others". (Koga, 2018) The emergence of ARF could be attributed to the end of the cold war and subsequent retreat of the US. It was a strategy to keep the US engaged in the region. Additionally, it was a way to check the Chinese power. The organisation also ensured that middle powers such as India, Japan and Australia among others were included. The ARF works "by promoting

transparency in strategic intent and threat perceptions; by building mutual trust and confidence with regard to military capabilities and deployments; and by developing a habit of cooperation which facilitate the peaceful resolution of conflicts.” (Sundararaman, 1998)

The EAS was initially based on the membership of ASEAN+3 countries that included ASEAN members along with China Japan and South Korea. However, fearing Chinese domination, its membership was expanded to include India, Australia and New Zealand when it was launched in 2005. By 2011, the US and Russia also acceded to it. The precondition for joining EAS was that the members needed to sign the TAC. The US was opposed to signing such an agreement and constraining its actions. However, finally, it had to endorse the TAC. Thus, it was considered as a victory for ASEAN’s normative framework. Apart from that, the agenda of EAS also saw a gradual expansion. Initially, maritime security issues were not on the agenda. However, following China’s reckless activities in the South China Sea, maritime security issues were first added in 2011. In the exactly similar fashion, the ADMM+ started mentioning the South China Sea in its declarations from 2011 onwards. (Koga, 2018) All these instances show that the ASEAN had ensured its upper-hand when it came to set the agenda of the multilateral meetings. It also proves ASEAN’s ability to engage multiple powers and highlight the issues of the regional import. However, due to its normative nature and lack of teeth vis-à-vis taking actions for flouting rules, ASEAN-led security multilaterals have not been able to alter the situation on the ground.

Omni-enmeshment Strategy

Evelyn Goh defines Omni-enmeshment as “the process of engaging with a state so as to draw it into deep involvement into international or regional society, enveloping it in a web of sustained exchanges and relationships, with the long-term aim of integration.” (Goh, *Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies, 2007-2008*) She further explains that the Omni-enmeshment strategy has a long-term aim of identity alteration and interest redefinition of the target state. It is achieved by extensive engagement of the target state which serves the objectives of tying down and binding together. (Goh, *Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies, 2007-2008*)

The ASEAN countries are extremely sensitive to the domination of one particular power in the region. They have always made sure the presence of multiple powers. In other words, they have always diversified their dependencies. (Goh & Feffer, China and Southeast Asia, 2006) “While acknowledging that they cannot avoid being part of the ambit of the big powers, Southeast Asian nations have shared a desire not to fall within the exclusive sphere of influence of one great power.” (Goh & Feffer, China and Southeast Asia, 2006) They have engaged a maximum number of powers and have excluded none. The twin objective of the strategy is to create deep stakes in the regional stability and to nullify each other’s influence. Thus, “surprises are reduced, and expectation of stable future relations dampen the security dilemmas that trigger... dangerous strategic rivalry...By creating institutional connections between potential rivals, channels of communication are established which provide opportunities to actively influence the other's evolving security policy.” (Ikenberry & Jitsuo, 2002)

The Omni-enmeshment policy has shades of ‘soft’ balancing. Since ‘balance of power’ is one of the legitimate ways of preserving the desired order (Alagappa, 2002), such a policy makes sense in the region. However, it is not a conventional balance of power. In the conventional ‘balance of power’, the actors make sure near equal distribution of the military capabilities between the principle states. But, Southeast Asian states, on the one hand, make sure that the US remains a preponderant state in the region and on the other hand forge closer relations with the middle powers such as Japan and India. Such a policy is implemented by the indirect means of providing military facilities and inking agreements regarding defence and intelligence sharing among other ways. This trend is visible in the region since the end of the cold war and especially after China started behaving aggressively in the region.

Vietnam has elevated its relations with many regional powers in the recent years. The US and Australia are ‘comprehensive partners’ of Vietnam while India is a ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partner’. It inked a defence agreement with the US in 2011 which facilitated high-level defence exchange between the two countries. The US also helps in training its Coast Guard personnel and provide used Coast Guard cutters. Apart from lifting the ban on the sale of the lethal weapons to Vietnam, the US aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson would be visiting the Vietnamese port in early 2018, the first time since 1975. Similarly, Indian ships also make port calls to Vietnam on a regular basis. Apart from the US, India and Australia; Vietnam-Japan relations have flourished in the recent years. Japan, an ‘Extensive Strategic Partner’, “provided training

on underwater medicine for personnel from the Vietnamese Navy at a Japanese naval facility” in 2013, keeping in mind the induction of Kilo-class submarines. (Hiep, 2017) Additionally, Japan donates coast guard vessels to Vietnam. Further, Japan would be helping Vietnam by sending two radar-based earth observation satellites to augment its maritime intelligence. (Hiep, 2017)

Singapore is another case in point which try to involve as many powers in the region as possible since the end of the cold war. It offered its naval facilities to the US when the latter closed its bases in the Philippines in the 1990s. In ensuing years, it signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with the US and later upgraded it to Enhanced DCA in 2015. The Enhanced DCA provided a broad structure for Defence cooperation between the two countries in military, strategic and technological arenas. In 2012, it allowed four US littoral combat ships to be deployed on the rotational basis. Importantly, it also deployed the U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon aircraft in 2015 which is known for its anti-submarine warfare. (Kuok, 2016) Apart from the US, Singapore has close defence relations with India whose naval ships make frequent port calls to that country. India is the only country with which Singapore has bilateral agreements for all the three services – army, navy and air force.

The Philippines has cultivated close ties with the regional powers including the US and Japan. Even though it closed down the US bases in 1992, it signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998 which enabled both countries to carry out joint exercises. The Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, 2014 granted extensive access to the US military to the Philippines facilities. (Albert, 2016) It bolstered the US presence in the Philippines. Despite foul-mouthed tirade of Filipino President Duterte against the US, the defence ties remain intact. Apart from the US, the Philippines has built close defence ties with Japan that include strategic partnership, a high-level political interaction and regular strategic dialogues, aid based military capacity building, port calls and military hardware transfer. (Gronning, 2018)

Thus, individual ASEAN states pursue the Omni-enmeshment strategy to weave multiple powers in a mesh for safeguarding the desired order in the region. They do not fear the hegemony of the US but fear its defection, more in the light of belligerent China. Sometimes the strategy is implemented independently without the agency of ASEAN. However, it achieves the overall objective of conserving the suitable security climate in the region.

Although not all the Southeast Asian states lean towards the US, the most of them do. Others like Laos and Cambodia accept the Chinese patronage in return of substantial economic gains. But, their policies impact the overall security situation in the region to a limited extent since those states do not exert significant influence over the region.

Criteria for Deciding Power Status

Evelyn Goh has stated few criteria to decide the status of the state in East Asia post-cold war era. (Goh, Hierarchy and Great Power Cooperation in the East Asian Security Order, 2013) These standards can be used to determine whether the power can be called as a great power or a middle power vis-à-vis East Asia. The criteria are – the ability to make war and peace, a provider of security, a generator of wealth and normative affinity.

- **The Ability to Make War and Peace**

The great power has a potential to initiate major warfare in the region and also to act as a mediator if the region experiences a war. The post-cold war scenario involves both traditional and non-traditional wars. The US has shown its ability to initiate a war multiple times during the cold war years. At the same time, it has also acted as a mediator to diffuse a particular crisis. The notable examples are a North Korean nuclear issue and East Timor independence struggle among others. Even during the war against terror, it has made significant contributions regarding intelligence sharing and other anti-terror tactics. China, too, has shown its capability to initiate a war directly or through its proxies. However, its peace-making credentials are not as strong as the US. Most of its actions are categorised as coercive towards the regional nations. The middle powers such as India, Japan and Australia have been involved in the regional crises in their respective sub-regions. Although they have demonstrated their capabilities in their backyards, their influence is far less when compared to the US or China.

- **A Provider of Security**

The fulfilment of this criteria requires the overwhelming presence of the military and a significant number of alliances or partnerships in the region. The provider of security must be militarily stronger enough to deter the enemy and protect its ally in the case of a war. The US

perfectly fits in this criterion with its network of allies and partners. It has bilateral treaties with Japan, South Korea and Australia. Further, the Philippines and Thailand were its close partners. The East Asian economic success is attributed in large part to the security umbrella provided by the US to the region. Additionally, it has overwhelming naval assets in the region which are operated under its Pacific Command. Comparatively, China cannot be said to be the security provider in the region. It has considerable military assets which have increased manifold in the recent years both in terms of numbers and technological advances. However, it does not have any allies and partners in the region. On the contrary, most of the states suspiciously look at China. The middle powers' capability in this regard is limited and restricted mostly to the respective sub-regions.

- **A Generator of Wealth**

This criterion is to do with the economic order in the region. The US has, for years, provided market access to the goods from its allies which has hugely benefitted Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and other Southeast Asian economies. Moreover, there was a fair amount of two-way bilateral investment between the US and its allies. The US had institutionalised its economic influence by the formation of Brettenwood System. Similarly, China has also played a significant role in the economic progress of the region. After opening up of its economy under Deng Xiaoping in 1976, China has become a major economic partner of the regional countries. Moreover, it played a phenomenal role during the Asian Financial Crisis faced by the Asian Tigers. Japan, too, was an important player in the economic arena with its 'flying geese model' in the position of the lead goose. However, India and Australia were too weak in this criterion. Australia, being a part of the western paradigm throughout the cold war period, had some leverage compared to India which opened up its economy under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) only in the early 1990s.

- **Normative Affinity**

According to Goh, Normative affinity relates to "ideology, governance structures, language and culture – with other states in the system." (Goh, Hierarchy and Great Power Cooperation in the East Asian Security Order, 2013) East Asia is diverse regarding its culture, religion, governance structure and polity. Even ASEAN is different in terms of the culture, languages,

governance structures and faiths. Therefore, particular norms cannot be attributed to the entire region. However, ASEAN has its norms such as consensus, consultation, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of the other nation and peaceful resolution of differences without the use of force. If the great powers and middle powers are judged based on conformity to ASEAN norms, then the US and China can be said to be having least affinity to these norms. Both countries have violated them a multiple number of times throughout the history. The middle powers like Japan, Australia and India, are far better off in terms of adherence to these norms in the post-cold war era.

From the above analysis, it is clear that ASEAN prefers the US to remain a primary actor in the region. Most importantly, it is a provider of security as well as wealth. More so, it does not have any territorial ambitions neither a problematic history post-cold war period. Countries fear when the US intends to lower its profile in the region. At the same time, ASEAN understands the importance of China. However, due to its geographic proximity and brazen behaviour in the region, it cannot be trusted. Nevertheless, due to its economic and increasing military muscle, it occupies the most important position after the US. All of the ASEAN-led security multilaterals have inducted both the US and China. However, the individual behaviour of the states tilts towards the US preference. Middle powers like India, Japan and Australia are important for the region, but they have limited utility since their constrained resources. However, they are actively engaged in the region helping the states indirectly by capacity building and other strategically significant operations. Thus, the ASEAN shows smart thinking on its part to shape an order with the US at the top, followed by China and then other middle powers. As the legitimisation by the subordinate states is most important for any order to sustain, the ASEAN states navigate their policies in such a way as to mould the desired security order.

CONCLUSION

The Indo-Pacific region inhabits three orders simultaneously, viz.; the US-led order, the Sino-centric order and the ASEAN-conceived order. The US-led order was established right after the end of the cold war. It was thought to be invincible until the 2008 financial crisis after which serious doubts were raised about the endurance of the order. Therefore, the most

challenging task before the US was to preserve the prevailing order by adapting to the ever-changing regional security environment. The US began attempts in that direction during the term of President George W. Bush. It intensified those efforts while President Obama held office. It started by proposing a grand bargain with China in the form of G-2 Condominium. When the proposal failed, it changed the direction of its policy by 180 degrees and presented Asia 'Pivot' policy. The plan could not be entirely realised due to the sudden rise of the ISIS in West Asia. However, the innovative strategy of forming a "complex patchwork of bilateral, trilateral and plurilateral" formations proved partially successful. (Cha, 2011) The term 'partially' is used before 'success' is because it could not stop the abrasive behaviour of China when it militarised the South China Sea. Neither could it find a solution to the predatory economics of China to make inroads in the small Indo-Pacific littorals. However, it could hold on to its primacy in the region.

The 2008 economic recession and the 'partial success' of the Asia Pivot germinated hopes in the minds of Chinese policymakers. China thought itself to be capable of leading the regional order as it had always shepherded it during the ancient times. The rise of President Xi Jinping gave additional impetus to this thinking. He openly admitted the Chinese ambitions in the form of 'Chinese Dream'. The words were accompanied by the actions on the ground. China conceptualised the BRI and made adequate financial provisions for the same. It continued the economic progress. It raised the speed of military modernisation. Further, it began investing hugely in the Artificial Intelligence. Behind the desire to lead the region and eventually the world, was the sense of humiliation by the West for hundreds of years. Therefore, the new policies were conceptualised by keeping China at the centre of the world. In this way the Sino-centric order is emerging in the region. The perceived weakness of the US further facilitated the rise of the order. Although currently, the order is in the buds, the next decade will see it take a concrete shape.

The ASEAN has always been stuck in the great power rivalry. However, after the end of the cold war, it made conscious choices to deal with the regional powers. While China always has been present on the canvas, the ASEAN deliberately gave preference to the US. It made sure that the US interests in the region do not cease to exist. It invented ways to keep the US engaged in the region. In doing so, it never neglected China and other Asian powers. It established deep economic relations with China but hobnobbed the US and the rest of the Asian powers when it

came to maintaining security ties. It continuously invented security multilaterals to manage the security situation, though serious questions were raised about the success of those initiatives. The ASEAN states preserved the organ's identity as a normative grouping by emphasising its norms while dealing with the regional issues. During Cyclone 'Nargis', the ASEAN prevented multilateral action against Myanmar by the United Nations Security Council under 'Right to Protect' article of the UN charter. So, while it preferred the US in the region, it took a firm stand when the Security Council actions seemed to go against their norms.

Therefore, the ASEAN-conceived order is mainly complimentary with the US-led order in the region. If David Kang's argument that the East Asian region was always comfortable with hegemony is considered to be correct, then the ASEAN is said to be satisfied with the US hegemony in the present times rather than the Chinese hegemony. Thus, the region is experiencing co-existence of three orders simultaneously: the US-led order, the Sino-centric order and the ASEAN-conceived order.

CHAPTER 3

THE MINILATERALS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: THE QUADRILATERAL AND THE INDIA-JAPAN-AUSTRALIA TRILATERAL

INTRODUCTION

The chapter examines the Quadrilateral initiative and the India-Japan-Australia Trilateral initiative in the larger frame of Security Minilateralism. The Quad involves India, Japan, Australia and the US while the trilateral involve the same countries sans the US. The absence of a big power makes the trilateral peculiar. Since both the minilaterals are at the primary stages of development, the conclusion is based on the joint statements of the meetings as well as intra-state relations between the countries. The relations are examined by using Thomas Wilkins' 'Intra-Alliance Politics Framework.' It examines the intra-alliance relations based on following parameters: Interests, Power, Insecurity, Ideology, Domestic Politics and Norms. The former three parameters belong to realist school of thought in the International Relations while the later three belong to the Pluralist or Liberal school of thought. Although the framework is structured to evaluate relations between 'allies', it is also helpful to examine 'intra-partner' relations in the Quad as well as the India-Japan-Australia Trilateral.

The chapter starts with theoretical discussion of security minilateralism. It then looks at the security minilateral initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region and tries to find out reasons for the spurt of the security minilaterals in the region. Later it examines the evolution of the Quad and the India-Japan-Australia Trilateral. In the last section, it evaluates both the minilaterals in the 'Intra-Alliance Politics Framework' developed by Thomas Wilkins.

SECURITY MINILATERALISM

Minilateralism can be said to be a shorter version of Multilateralism. Theoretically, it perfectly fits into the definition of Multilateralism. However, there are few differences which makes it different from multilateralism. It stands precisely between bilateralism and multilateralism. Although there is no fixed definition of the minilateralism, few scholars have tried to define it. (Naim, 2009) defines minilateralism as “the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem” while (Ashizawa, 2013) views it as a “collaborative behaviour by small numbers of selected, often privileged, states (or politics), as opposed to large-number multilateralism, which is usually associated with global

institutions and regimes.” Similarly, minilateralism can also be defined as “flexible networks whose membership varies based on situational interests, shared values and relevant capabilities.” (Joshi, 2015)

These definitions do not specify the ideal number of countries required to be present in a formation to be called it as a minilateral formation. “There is no specific number, say five or ten, assigned to the size of minilateral institutions; as the small membership size is defined in relation to the size of larger multilateral groupings in the same issue area.” (Ashizawa, 2013) Thus, these definitions are ‘relative’ as against ‘absolute’ vis-à-vis number of participants present. (Naim, 2009) calls their ‘ideal number’ a ‘magic number’ which depends upon the problem at hand. According to him, the smallest number of nations should be able to solve a particular problem to be called it as a minilateral arrangement even if the smallest number is big in absolute terms. He explains his point by giving an example of ‘G-20’ group which account for 85% of world’s economy. Therefore, these 20 countries are better placed to contemplate and formulate a policy that is in the interest of world economy. Similarly, “world’s 20 top polluters (that) account for 75 percent of the planet’s greenhouse gas emissions (and) 19 countries (that) account for nearly two thirds of the world’s AIDS-related deaths” are best suited to deliberate and resolve the problems in their respective areas. (Naim, 2009)

Likewise, Ashizawa’s interpretation of minilateralism emphasises the “small number of privileged states” as against “large-number multilateralism” (Ashizawa, 2013). Thus, Ashizawa implies that minilateral formations include only those states that matter the most to settle a particular issue. The smaller the number, the swift is a decision-making process. It is often difficult to synchronise the policies of a large number of states to realise a collective goal. Different states have different means to reach an end, although the end is common for all. The whole purpose of minilateralism is to avoid the slow decision-making process and realise the shared goals by limiting the number of participants. “The traditional model of multilateralism with its impulse to universality that implied low barriers to participation clearly cannot remain the constitutive principle of multilateralism in the twenty-first century” (Jung, 2016).

Tow and Envall explicitly defines security minilateralism as – “three but sometimes four or five states meeting and interacting informally (in the absence of a governing document) to discuss issue-areas involving mutual threats to their security or, more often, to go over specific tasks related to building regional stability and order.” (Tow & Envall, The US and

Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?, 2011) They consist of members with common interests, thus can be 'reactive' in nature to a particular threat. (Tow W. , 2015) They are "established to leverage common values and interests in order to shape the larger regional agenda for security cooperation and to pursue a favourable balance of power." (Tow W. , 2015) They are flexible in a sense that they are devoid of any formal treaty. (Tow W. , 2015) Their longevity depends upon the nature of the problem which can either be a temporary one or a long-term one. (Tow & Envall, The US and Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?, 2011) By embarking upon a minilateral arrangement, countries "shape the goals consistent with its preferences and minimise constraints on its freedom of action." (Patrick, 2015) "Rather than relying on tired organizations, countries can adapt nimbly, by creating novel frameworks that are fit for purpose." (Patrick, 2015) That is why countries of varied political systems, values, politics and orientations can form a consortium in the form of a minilateral to address a particular issue. Alternatively, "Minilateralism can be viewed as a 'hybrid' form of security alignment, bringing to a given crisis more likeminded players and material resources than those normally generated by a bilateral alliance, but offering more flexibility or spontaneity than less nimble multilateral groupings that must identify continued rationales for their existence once that particular crisis is defused or modified." (Tow & Limaye, What's China Got to Do With It? U.S. Alliances, Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific, 2016)

Depending upon the nature of the threat, minilateral cooperation can be intensified horizontally as well as laterally. Thus, secretary-level dialogue can be raised to the ministerial level and further to the summit level dialogue. Similarly, it can diversify the cooperation from one area (e.g. Human Assistance and Disaster Relief) to other areas such as (joint naval exercises, anti-submarine operations, reconnaissance operations, search and seizure operations, technology cooperation etc.). Once it serves the purpose, it can be disbanded or can be turned to deal with a different issue. Thus, security minilateralism is an essential tool of diplomacy in the hands of its participants. It can be used to express country's approval or disapproval of a particular event in the region. Although it is not as exclusive as bilateral arrangements, it is neither as inclusive as multilateral arrangements.

Minilateralism Vis-À-Vis Multilateralism

Minilateralism is closely associated with multilateralism. According to Robert Keohane, multilateralism is “the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states” (Keohane, 1990), whereas for John Gerard Ruggie, “multilateralism is an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of ‘generalise’ principles of conduct - that is principles which specify appropriate conduct of the class of actions, without regard to the pluralistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence.” (Ruggie, 1992) While Keohane’s thrust is on the coordination of policies among three or more states, Ruggie’s definition puts multilateral principles over and above the individual ‘national interest’ of a state. Therefore, when a country becomes a part of a multilateral arrangement, it is accepted that it will gain in some areas while lose in other areas. The states strive for relative gain rather than absolute gain and “consistently seek to minimize gaps in gains favouring their partners.” (Fukushima, 1999) Multilateralism help states in common understanding of a given issue and resolve the same through coordinated policies. Moreover, the institutional form is adaptable to the constantly changing times. “Institutional arrangements of the multilateral form have adaptive and even reproductive capacities which other institutional forms may lack and which therefore may explain the roles that multilateral arrangements play in stabilizing the current international transformation.” (Ruggie, 1992)

John Gerard Ruggie introduces two concepts which are bi-products of generalised organising principles involved in the multilateralism – ‘indivisibility’ and ‘diffuse reciprocity’. ‘Indivisibility’ creates a common understanding of various social constructs and provides uniformity about physical attributes of the cooperation. “Depending on circumstances, that indivisibility can take markedly different forms, ranging from the physical ties of railway lines that collectively chooses to standardise across frontiers, all the way to the adoption by states of the premise that peace is indivisible.” (Ruggie, 1992) It creates a feeling of collectiveness among the members of a multilateral organisation by creating a physical or ideational construct. ‘Diffuse reciprocity’ makes sure that all other participants accrue the relative equivalent benefits of a specific action over a period. “That is to say, the arrangement is expected by its members to yield a rough equivalence of benefits in the aggregate and over time.” (Ruggie, 1992)

Thus, minilateralism fits perfectly in the Keohane's articulation of multilateralism. However, it proves to be more agile and flexible when it comes to selecting between national interest and overarching multilateral principle. Minilateral formations "are not 'norm builders' in the same sense as multilateral institutions." (Tow & Envall, *The US and Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?*, 2011) Therefore, the issue of multilateral interests superseding national interests does not arise. As a typical security minilateral formation limits the number of participants, there is greater compatibility between principles of minilateral compositions and individual interests of its members. Moreover, due to a small number of participants, the voice of each member is given due diligence and cooperation is strictly restricted to the areas where all the members are on the same page. However, some of the characteristics of a multilateral grouping such as a shared understanding of a problem, coordinated policies and adaptability can be applied to the minilateral gathering in a letter and spirit. However, all these factors become much simpler to implement in the actual scenario owing to the small number of members in a minilateral formation.

Minilateralism also resolves the problem of relative gains. In multilateralism, the member benefits just by being a member of a multilateral organisation, unlike minilateralism. Eg. The members of World Trade Organisation (WTO) become eligible for concessions by others just by being a member of WTO, even though they don't take any reciprocal step in that regard. The minilateral group by its nature is so small that there is no possibility of a member riding free on account of being a member. The members of minilateral formation "extract maximum relative gains by associating with each other in response to threats or in carrying out mutual interests." (Tow & Envall, *The US and Implementing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific: Can Convergent Security Work?*, 2011) Thus, it reduces the losses to near-zero which happens to be a product of negotiations. Thus, members of minilateral formation benefit instantly as against 'diffuse reciprocity' where members get their pound after some time. Likewise, the inherent nature of a typical minilateral formation – ad hoc, flexible, reactive and limited to a particular area – offers less scope for the indivisibility. Therefore, minilateralism can be said to be "multilateralism of small numbers." (Oye, 1986)

Whether minilateralism act as a 'stepping stone' or a 'stumbling block' for multilateralism? This issue has been extensively debated in the field of economics. According to some economists, Regional Trade Agreements or Preferential Trade Agreements signed by 'selected

few' (economic minilaterals) discourage countries from engaging in multilateral forums like World Trade Organisation (WTO). While others argue that such minilaterals help the cause of multilaterals by showing them a path to move forward. Since security minilateralism is new territory, such a debate warrants a brief discussion.

Security minilaterals are issue specific, and their durability is always proportional to the ensuing threat perception. Therefore, compared with multilateral forums, they can be looked at as 'an exclusive' groupings aimed at resolving a particular issue. Moreover, lack of a treaty and 'undeclared goals' further increases the ambiguity around such groups. "Wilkins identifies 'undeclared goals' as opposed to explicit treaty commitments, as a critical feature in evolving minilateral alliance politics." (Tow W. , 2015) According to (Patrick, 2015), security minilaterals "are morally problematic, since they threaten to replace the provision of international public goods with club goods benefiting a narrower range of countries while marginalising formal international institutions". Furthermore, minilateralism negatively affect legitimacy. (Engelbrekt, 2015) However, the failure of multilateralism has led to an emergence of minilateralism. As Daniel Drezner puts it, after the end of the cold war, "multilateral talks have inevitably failed; deadlines have been missed; financial commitments and promises have not been honored; execution has stalled; and international collective action has fallen far short of what was offered and, more importantly, needed." (Drezner, 2009) Therefore, it is wrong to look at the security minilateralism as an alternative to security multilateralism. On the contrary, minilateralism tries to fill in the gap left by multilateral groupings. It attempts to compliment multilateral efforts by endeavouring to find solutions in small groups. Moreover, the sheer proliferation of minilateralism in the region devoid of effectual multilateral organisation nullifies the possibility of the marginalisation of a particular country or a group of nations. Since the world is not divided into the blocks anymore, there is enough conversation among the states having diverse interests and influences.

Besides, the minilateral formation can become accommodative of other members if they successfully tackle a particular issue. However, in such a scenario they shall lose their identity as a 'minilateral' grouping and shall be superimposed by a new identity as a 'multilateral' forum. The amorphous structure of a minilateral formation allows it to change its form depending upon the situation. If successful, a minilateral composition can expand to other policy areas, thus widening its scope. However, the minilateral formulation is strictly a political

process controlled by states and not by any other actors. Furthermore, they are exclusive regarding their membership, and there is no organisational cost involved.

Minilaterals as Quasi-Alliances or Partnerships?

Thomas Wilkins has perused the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between the US, Japan and Australia in terms of alliance framework. However, his analysis can be extended to examine the relationship between overall security multilaterals and alliance. Thomas Wilkins attribute four characteristics to a typical alliance – “joint military collaboration, a formal instrument of security cooperation (a treaty), an obligation to mutual assistance against an enemy in time of war, and a commitment to common goals”. (Wilkins, 2007) Multilaterals lack a treaty and an obligation to mutual assistance against an enemy in the time of war. Nevertheless, they include joint military collaborations and a commitment to common goals. Thus, multilaterals does not bear all the properties of an ideal ‘alliance’ but exhibit some characteristics of it. Wilkins further argue that alliance is subset of a wider phenomenon called alignment. (Wilkins, 2007) “Alignment is a relationship between two or more states that involves mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future.” (Tow & Limaye, What’s China Got to Do With It? U.S. Alliances, Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific, 2016) Thus, members of multilaterals can be said to be aligned towards each other over a security issue. However, since alliance is a subset of alignment, multilaterals can also be called as a ‘quasi-alliance’ or a ‘virtual alliance’. Victor cha defines quasi-alliance as “the relationship between two states that remain unallied despite sharing a common ally.” (Cha, 1999) He further contends that “alliances are not the only form of interstate cooperation for security purposes. There are many less formal security arrangements that accomplish the same purpose and in some cases are more cohesive than formal alliance ties.” (Cha, 1999) Cossa’s virtual alliance bears “three basic traits - the formation of security consultative mechanisms reflecting common interests and values; the lack of formal treaty or legislative obligations underwriting the parties who are collaborating; and the tendency for such collaboration to diversify their avenues of security cooperation into different regional and global institutions or forums so as to mitigate suspicions by other states that an alliance containment posture is being formulated against themselves”. (Zatkova, 2009) Furthermore, “virtual alliance is predicated on maintaining and strengthening existing relationships, and consequently is more attainable than trying to construct a new formal

alliance.” (Zatkova, 2009) Hence, security minilateral comes most closely to be called as ‘virtual alliance’.

Alternatively, minilaterals can also be looked at as partnerships. “A security ‘partnership’ is a more fluid association in which obligations are voluntarily assumed but not contractually defined, binding, or specified. Partnerships can be reviewed and modified on a case by case or temporal basis.” (Tow & Limaye, *What’s China Got to Do With It? U.S. Alliances, Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific*, 2016) “Security partnerships have at least two other outstanding characteristics - structures of interaction which are usually embedded in the joint statements which identify areas of cooperation; and underlying motives for cooperation based on addressing common challenges and seizing opportunities in several areas rather than countering a particular country or group in a threat-centric context.” (Tow & Limaye, *What’s China Got to Do With It? U.S. Alliances, Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific*, 2016) Thus, partnerships rally around a solid reason and replicate itself in other areas of mutual benefit. Minilateral formulations manifest all the attributes of the term ‘partnerships’. These are fluid associations devoid of formal treaties with periodic meetings and issuing joint statements conveying positions on the particular issues of their interests. However, minilaterals may have a purpose of checking a specific country or a group of nations. Moreover, their cooperation is intended to secure a favourable security order in the region.

Although partnerships are devoid of any formal treaty, they have unwritten rules of interaction. They restraints individual instincts of countries to respond to a particular situation in an ‘ad-hoc’ manner. (Tow & Limaye, *What’s China Got to Do With It? U.S. Alliances, Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific*, 2016) While issuing a joint statement, each country is consulted thoroughly, and wording is drafted to accommodate all the relevant concerns each country has vis-à-vis regional situation. ‘Partnership’ enhances trust among the members, thus increasing the level of coordination among them regarding any decision which might have ramifications for the region. They help to strengthen bilateral relations amongst partners. They also appear less threatening to the third country due to the nomenclature. ‘Alliances’ remind policymakers of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Warsaw Pact, Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) or other bilateral alliances. However, the terms such as ‘minilaterals’ or ‘partnerships’ mellow down the perception which is associated with the term ‘alliance’.

SECURITY MINILATERALISM IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Japan-China-South Korea trilateral devised in 1998 can be said to be the beginning of the minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific region. The meetings continued until 2015, not regularly on account of the strained relations between the three countries. (Kesavan, 2018) In 1999, the United States, Japan and South Korea formed the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) to coordinate their policies vis-à-vis North Korea. It began with ad-hoc meetings between the three nations in the aftermath of the Agreed Framework between the US and North Korea in 1994. (Sahashi, 2011) But, North's Taepodong missile test in 1998 and the US policy review of North in response gave TCOG a regular shape. However, it could not sustain for a more extended period due to "widening disparities between South Korean and US policies on North Korea during the presidential terms of Kim Dae-jung and George W. Bush, by intensified tensions between South Korea and Japan over territorial issues and unresolved historical differences, and by Chinese efforts to use its growing bilateral relationship with South Korea as a wedge within US alliance politics in Northeast Asia." (Tow W. , 2015) Subsequently, the Six-Party Talks replaced it in 2006.

Though TCOG could not succeed as envisaged, the idea of minilaterals did not lose on policymakers in the United States. Robert Blackwill, an advisor to George W. Bush during the presidential elections of 2000 who went on to become the US ambassador to India between 2001 and 2003, argued for greater coordination between the US's bilateral alliances. According to him, Asia was a geopolitical whole, so the entire region ought to feel the impact of the events in its any corner. Therefore, the US, Japan, Australia and South Korea should streamline their policies and act in unison while dealing with the region. "America's three primary bilateral alliances in Asia should be brought closer together over the next five years to form a more effective security effort on behalf of Asian peace and stability." (Blackwill & Dibb, 2000:125) Such a collective effort would restrain unilateral decision-making in the American policy circles vis-à-vis the region. The allies would get an opportunity to have a greater say in the US policy formulation. Additionally, such an arrangement would "equally distribute the strategic burden in Asia." (Blackwill & Dibb, 2000) Moreover, such an arrangement looked perfect in the light of rising China. Similarly, Paul Dibb, former deputy secretary for Strategy and Intelligence in Australia's Department of Defence, went a step further to argue that it was better to start the process of coordination in time rather than during a crisis. "It is [...] prudent for the

four allies to begin now to build enhanced patterns of cooperation and coordination, lest they be forced to attempt to do so in the midst of a crisis that affects all their vital interests.” (Blackwill & Dibb, 2000) These suggestions resulted in the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between the US, Japan and Australia was inaugurated in 2002 at the vice-ministerial level. It was elevated to the ministerial level in 2005.

In the same year of the launch of TSD, India, China and Russia also launched trilateral meetings at the ministerial level. The sudden exposure to the unipolarity in the world affairs led all the three countries to come together with a trilateral format. Russia had lost its influence on the world stage after the disintegration of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). “Russia ha[d] been trying to establish itself as the hub of two bilateral security partnerships that [could] be used to counteract American power and influence in areas of mutual concerns.” (Pant, 2008) As an emerging power, China felt the need to check the US unilateralism. “China [was] a rising power that [saw] the United States as the greatest obstacle in achieving its preeminent position in the global political hierarchy. As a consequence, it realise[d] the importance of cooperating with Russia.” (Pant, 2008) India always favoured a multilateral world over the unilateral one. “The concerns that the United States is probably becoming too powerful and unilateral, and that a unipolar U.S.-dominated world would not be in the best interests of weaker states like India, ha[d] made the idea of a strategic triangle attractive for certain sections of the Indian strategic elite.” (Pant, 2008) Such events coincided with improved bilateral relations between all legs of the triangle. “The proposal for a Moscow-Beijing-Delhi strategic triangle had originally come from the former Russian prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, during his visit to India in 1998, arguing that such an arrangement would be a force for greater regional and international stability.” (Pant, 2008) Although Russia-India-China (RIC) triangle could not shape at the summit level, foreign ministers of the three countries are holding annual meetings since 2001, the latest being 15th iteration of the same in New Delhi. RIC foreign minister’s meeting was the beginning of India’s minilateral moment.

The region experienced a flurry of minilaterals in the coming years. Japan proposed the idea of quadrilateral in 2006-2007 which was readily endorsed by India, the US and Australia following which the exploratory meeting took place in 2007. Annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US – Malabar Exercise – saw the participation of the “so-called” quad countries and Singapore. However, the idea saw a silent death in the coming years following

vehement diplomatic protests by China. Notwithstanding this, the upcoming years saw trilateral formations including the countries of the quad. India-Japan-US trilateral dialogue was launched in 2011 at the director or assistant secretary level and elevated to the ministerial level in 2015. Similarly, India-Japan-Australia trilateral dialogue was launched in 2015 at secretary level. Apart from that, in the India Ocean Region, the Trilateral Maritime Security Co-operative initiative was launched at National Security Advisor level by India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives in 2011 while in the Northeast corner of the Indo-Pacific, the US, Japan and South Korea have been holding trilateral talks at the defence minister level since 2008. These minilaterals do supplement various bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the region like naval exercises, 2+2 dialogues and other such formations. However, it is essential to discuss the reasons behind the emergence of such efforts in the past decade.

Rise of China

China has always loomed large over the Indo-Pacific horizon, especially in the sub-regional theatre of Northeast and Southeast Asia. The end of cold-war and ascendancy of the US as a sole power in the world did not deter China from pursuing an aggressive posture towards its neighbours over the territorial claims, particularly in the South China Sea as well as in the East China Sea. It used force against Vietnam in 1974 and 1988 to claim Paracel islands and occupy few reefs in the South China Sea respectively. In 1992, China passed 'Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone' law and claimed all the Spratly islands as well as adjoining archipelagos. In 1995, it occupied Mischief Reef, and when the Philippines objected, it escalated the matter only to stop short of the armed conflict. (Weissmann, 2012:92) The construction over Mischief Reef represented, according to Michael (Leifer, 1995) "the most southerly projection of a Chinese presence and the first seizure of territory claimed by a member of ASEAN."

In 2002, China agreed to negotiate Code of Conduct on the South China Sea which resulted in Declaration on Conduct in the South China Sea. However, it failed to have a positive impact on Chinese assertiveness. From 2007 onwards, Chinese rhetoric and actions over the territorial claims in SCS became more virulent. It objected countries to explore oil in their territorial waters, enforced unilateral ban on fishing in parts of SCS, conducted military exercises, undertook scientific surveys, organised tourist trips to disputed islands and used law enforcing agencies as well as fishing boats to deter countries from performing their routine activities in

the waters of SCS. In 2009, for the first time, China submitted maps to the United Nations claiming the entire South China Sea which was contrary to several ASEAN countries and Taiwan. From 2013, China started reclamation of seven of its eight Spratly outposts and, as of June 2015, had reclaimed more than 2,900 acres of land.” (Department of Defence, 2015) Furthermore, it developed military infrastructure like airstrips and berthing facilities over these reclaimed islands.

In the East China Sea, China escalated its dispute with Japan over Senkaku islands. Chinese fishing vessels damaged Japanese Coast Guard ships. In 2013, it unilaterally declared Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea. Likewise, in Southern Pacific Ocean it started making inroads bypassing Australia through various economic, diplomatic and political means; most importantly; chequebook diplomacy. Such Chinese activities made Australia jittery which feared the presence of unfriendly maritime power would lead to a power shift in South Pacific which would be inimical to its interests. (Derewlany, 2018) In Indian Ocean Region, China begun aggressively expanding its influence at the cost of India. It employed strategy of encircling India known as 'String of Pearls'; increased presence of submarines in the Indian Ocean; secretly docked submarines at Karachi and Hambantota; initiated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor infringing India's sovereignty; sold defence material including arms, frigates, submarines, missiles and radars to India's neighbours and followed unsustainable debt model to usurp significant ports and other facilities from Indian Ocean littorals. Furthermore, it tested Indian resolve by creating a standoff with Indian Army at various places across the Himalayan border like Chumar, Depsang and Doklam.

Failure of Security Multilateral organisations in the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region has witnessed many security multilateral forums led by ASEAN like ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit and ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus. However, none of the forums has been able to resolve any of the territorial disputes neither it has been able to check the unruly behaviour of China. ARF founded in 1994 remains the first and primary security multilateral organisation in the region. It strictly adheres to the 'ASEAN Way' – principles of consensus, consultation and non-interference – which makes it toothless to resolve any issue. Critics dub it as a 'talk shop' which pushes disputes under the carpet. Ralf Emmers and See Seng Tan blame its large membership, weak institutional structure, adherence

to the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the state and diverse strategic perspective of its key members for its failure. Jerry Kwok Song Lee adds disunity among ASEAN members as an additional reason for its failure which was evident in the inability of ASEAN to come up with a joint communique at the end of ASEAN foreign minister's meeting in Cambodia in 2012. (Lee, 2015)

The East Asia Summit, inaugurated in 2005, is not an exclusive security multilateral organisation. "The first EAS declaration described the forum as for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia." (Goodrich, 2017) Although it has been successful in engaging all the relevant powers in the region, the forum has been unable to come up with a solution to the hard-pressing security issues in the region. Wide membership, unclarity regarding its leadership, overlapping agenda with other regional multilateral institutions and conflicting geopolitical interests of the members has restricted its success. (Malik, 2005) Another institution, the "ADMM was established in 2006 to facilitate the establishment of the 'ASEAN Security Community (later, ASEAN Political-Security Community: APSC)" which was further expanded to add eight ASEAN Dialogue partners; viz.; Australia, China, New Zealand, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the US. (Koga, 2018) "ADMM-Plus focuses on promoting defence cooperation related to non-traditional security issues, such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, disaster management, peacekeeping operations, and military medicine (MM). ADMM-Plus became a regionwide, defence-oriented cooperative security arrangement whose aim was to become an action-oriented institution that would facilitate practical defence cooperation among its Member States." (Koga, 2018) However, apart from issuing statements, calling for resolution of South China Sea disputes based on international law, ADMM Plus has not been able to achieve anything substantial. Furthermore, it failed to issue a joint communique in 2015. Thus, all the regional security multilateral organisations have been unable to tackle hard security issues in the region adequately.

INDIA-JAPAN-AUSTRALIA TRILATERAL

India hosted 4th iteration of India-Japan-Australia trilateral dialogue in December 2017. The Joint press-release read:

“the three sides highlighted the growing convergence of their respective countries’ interests in the Indo-Pacific region and underscored their shared commitment to peace, democracy, economic growth and a rules-based order in the region. They underscored their support for ASEAN centrality in the political and security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. The three sides stressed the need for greater collaboration on maritime security and domain awareness and disaster response capabilities. [...] They deliberated on strengthening regional connectivity as well. The three sides welcomed the regular meetings of this important dialogue mechanism.” (MEAd, 2017)

The joint statement indicated a strong convergence of interests as well as values between the three countries. It highlighted the centrality of ASEAN in managing regional affairs. It stated requirement for greater collaboration in multiple hard and soft security arenas. It also touched upon the connectivity issue and expressed collective vision of the three countries vis-à-vis Indo-Pacific. By focusing on ASEAN centrality, the three countries expressed their wish to play a supportive role to the existing security architecture in the region and reassured ASEAN of its primacy vis-a-vis regional security issues. The reference to the ‘connectivity’ indicated that all the three countries were uncomfortable with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China which was based on opaque funding, unsustainable credit facilities and eventual debt trap. They understood that there had to be a viable alternative to BRI to dissuade countries from going to China for their connectivity needs.

Although the joint statement strongly expressed reservation against China and underlined the ASEAN centrality in the regional security matters, it was not sufficient to gauge the effectiveness of the trilateral. The real advantage of the trilateral was that it improved bilateral relations between all the three dyads. India, Japan and Australia collectively “represent[ed] the maritime arc which [wa]s increasingly being called the ‘Indo-Pacific’. If any collective grouping of states connect[ed] the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, it [wa]s the India-Japan-Australia trilateral; they [we]re the resident powers of the Indo-Pacific”. (Joshi, India-Japan-Australia Minilateral: The Promise and Perils of Balancing Locally, 2015) Thus, India-Japan-

Australia trilateral manifested itself as the timely cooperation of the middle powers in the Indo-Pacific.

India-Japan Dyad

Historically strong relations between India and Japan has seen a steep upward trajectory in the past decade. In 2006, Shinzo Abe had called for quadrilateral dialogue between India, the US, Australia and Japan which was endorsed by the then PM of India Manmohan Singh. (Mohan, What the return of quadrilateral says about India and emerging Asian geopolitics, 2017). During the same year, both countries elevated their relationship to “a Global and Strategic Partnership with the provision of annual Prime Ministerial Summits.” (MEA, 2014) In 2007, PM Abe addressed the Indian Parliament where he delivered a speech titled ‘Confluence of the Two Seas’ where he spoke about ‘the arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ and need for greater cooperation between India and Japan – “a region called ‘the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ will be formed along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent. The Strategic Global Partnership of Japan and India is pivotal for such pursuits to be successful.” (MFAJ, 2007) He also spoke about collective efforts by the US, Australia, India and Japan for the success of a ‘broader Asia’. “By Japan and India coming together in this way, this "broader Asia" will evolve into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely.” (MFAJ, 2007) The words were matched by the actions when the four countries along with Singapore participated in the 2007 iteration of the Malabar exercise. In the next year, India and Japan issued ‘the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India’ and commenced bilateral 2+2 dialogue in 2009. (Joshi & Koga, Japan-India Security Cooperation, 2013) India and Japan, along with the US instituted a trilateral dialogue in 2011 at the director-general level.

Both countries sustained the upward trajectory in India-Japan relations. During his second term in office in 2012, PM Abe announced ‘Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond’. “Advocating for stronger ties between Australia, India, Japan and the US, it highlighted Tokyo’s concern over maritime security in the region and Japan’s effort to envisage a regional security architecture out of such concerns.” (Mastuda, 2007) In an article titled “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” Prime Minister Abe contended that “peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in

the Pacific Ocean [we]re inseparable from peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean. Developments affecting each [we]re more closely connected than ever.” (Abe, 2012) He “envisaged a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific.” (Abe, 2012) The next year's summit meeting reflected PM Abe's push for hard security cooperation. “The two Prime Ministers decided to further improve joint maritime exercises between the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force and the Indian Navy as well as to establish a Joint Working Group on the US-2 amphibian aircraft.” (MFAJa, 2013) The renewed vigour in the relationship could be attributed to the aggressive behaviour by China against both India and Japan – Chinese incursions in the Depsang sector of India, harassment of Indian assault ship by Chinese vessel near Vietnamese port of Nha Trang and unilateral declaration of Air Defence Identification Zone over disputed Senkaku island in East China Sea.

The relations were further cemented by the visit of the Japanese emperor and empress to India in the same year; i.e., 2013. In the next year, the Japanese government “issued a legal reinterpretation of the post-war prohibition on Japan's right to participate in collective self-defence. Under this, the government embraced a more permissive interpretation of self-defence, which extended beyond the narrowly circumscribed protection of Japanese territory to encompass safeguarding the lives and well-being of Japanese citizens at home and abroad, as well as access to resources and materials essential to the survival of the country.” (Nilsson-Wright, 2017) It was in keeping with Prime Minister Abe's attitude to alter Article 9 of the constitution to suit the ground realities. Along with the internal developments in Japan, the tone and tenor of the joint statements with India also became more aggressive from 2014, the year when NDA government came to power in India.

The term “Indo-Pacific” made its debut in the bilateral political lexicon, and both the countries elevated their relationship to “Special Strategic and Global Partnership”. In 2015, Japan was admitted into the annual US-India naval exercise – Malabar. In the same year, the US-Japan-India trilateral was elevated to the ministerial level. Moreover, India-Japan-Australia trilateral was launched. The South China Sea was mentioned in the joint communique and references to ‘stability’, ‘prosperity’, ‘freedom of navigation’ and ‘rule of law’ became routine. The two leaders signed “Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership: Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World.”

(MFAJb, 2015) They expressed their concern regarding the situation in the South China Sea. On defence front, the leaders signed “‘Agreement concerning the Transfer of the Defence Equipment and Technology’ and the ‘Agreement concerning Security Measures for the Protection of Classified Military Information.’” (MFAJb, 2015) Moving further, both sides “reached an Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.” (MFAJb, 2015) They expressed their concern regarding the situation in the South China Sea. On defence front, the leaders signed “‘Agreement concerning the Transfer of the Defence Equipment and Technology’ and the ‘Agreement concerning Security Measures for the Protection of Classified Military Information.’” Moving further, both sides “reached an Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.” Japan proposed the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” in the coming years to connect entire region from Africa to western Pacific through diplomacy and infrastructure. India readily welcomed the initiative which was in line with India’s own ‘Act East’ policy. Besides that, Japan actively supported India in various multilateral forums.

India-Australia Dyad

The bilateral relationship between the two countries suffered from a ‘neglect’ until Kevin Rudd was elected in 2007. (McDonald, 2009) He decided to reverse the course of action which was hitherto in place. Stephen Smith, foreign minister in Rudd’s cabinet, felt that relationship with India was needed to be upgraded to satisfy the need of the time. “It [wa]s absolutely essential in the course of this century that Australia t[ook] its relationship with India to a new level, that we t[ook] our relationship with India to the front line of our international partnerships.” (McDonald, 2009) The actions matched the words. During a visit to India in 2009, PM Kevin Rudd and PM Manmohan Singh appreciated a ‘Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation’ and elevated the relationship to ‘Strategic Partnership’. The ‘Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation’ listed areas of cooperation which included terrorism, disaster management, defence dialogue, information exchange, maritime and aviation security among others. It also formulated a structure for future multi-level bilateral cooperation at the level of foreign ministers, national security advisors and service to service exchanges among others.

The Defence White Paper published in the same year identified India to be the rising country in terms of strategic heft and would have “a stronger voice and stake in strategic affairs.”

(Department of Defence C. o., 2009) “India is an important partner for Australia given our shared democratic values, our maritime interests, and our commitment to combating regional and global terrorism and maintaining a rules-based global security order. As India extends its reach and influence into areas of shared strategic interest, we will need to strengthen our defence relationship and our understanding of Indian strategic thinking.” (Department of Defence C. o., 2009) Coming years saw a high-level exchange of leaders from both sides. In 2011, Australian Defence Minister visited India and held talks with Indian Defence Minister who reciprocated the visit in the next year. Julia Gillard, the then Australian PM, made a trip to New Delhi in 2012. The joint press release identified the region as ‘Indian-Pacific region’ and expressed their desire to maintain stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. (MEAA, 2012)

The relationship got boost after the NDA government took power in India in 2014. Australian PM Tony Abbott became the first foreign dignitary outside the leaders of SAARC to visit India. The two countries signed ‘Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement’ despite having some differences regarding nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was a great milestone since it had constrained bilateral relations from flourishing for long. The next encounter between two summit leaders happened just after two months in Brisbane, Australia where both sides signed a ‘Framework for Security Cooperation’ which guided the bilateral relations for the next few years. The plan included Annual summit, foreign minister’s and defence minister’s meetings; engagement on the issues of terrorism, trans-national crime, border protection, non-proliferation, civil nuclear energy and disaster management among many others. (MEAb, 2014) During his address to the Australian Parliament, PM Modi said that India would put Australia at the centre of its vision rather than the periphery. He urged both countries to work coherently for the larger good of Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. (Staff, 2014) Further consolidating the relationship, the two nations held bilateral naval drill – Australia-India Exercise (AUSINDEX) – in 2015 and 2017. (Weigold, 2017)

The momentum in the relationship sustained after the change of leadership in Australia. The new PM Malcolm Turnbull visited India in 2017. The joint statement recognised the region as Indo-Pacific and shared “a commitment to democratic values, the rule of law, international peace and security, and shared prosperity.” (MEAc, 2017) Both countries decided to commence 2+2 dialogue between defence and foreign secretaries of the two countries. Most importantly

both countries “agreed to invest in trilateral consultations with third countries to enhance regional and global peace and security.” (MEAc, 2017) Thus, it opened a new vista for more countries in the region to involve themselves in the trilateral deliberations regarding regional issues in the future.

Japan-Australia Dyad

The security relations between Japan and Australia saw an uptick in the first decade of the 21st century. Sydney Declaration for Australia-Japan Creative Partnership (2002), The Japanese–Australian Memorandum of Understanding (2003) and Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (2007) were some of the critical milestones in the bilateral relationship. The Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation acted as a base for the future security cooperation. It included a range of issues like security and defence cooperation, United Nations reforms, border security, counter-terrorism and disarmament among others. It also provided structure for future high-level bilateral interactions between defence ministers. Furthermore, it mandated the 2+2 defence-foreign ministers meet. (Nilsson-Wright, 2017) The declaration also strived to enhance bilateral cooperation in the trilateral framework with the US and other multilateral forums.

Both countries signed ‘Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA)’ in May 2010 which made Self-Defence Forces of Japan (JSDF) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) eligible to exchange supplies and services. The reciprocal provisions were valid for exercises and training, the United Nations Peacekeeping operations, Human Assistance and Disaster Relief operations and transportation of nationals among others. (MFAJc, 2010) Next came the ‘Japan-Australia Information Security Agreement (ISA)’ which was necessary to implement ACSA effectively. The ISA, signed in 2012 laid foundation for information sharing and cooperation between the two countries as well as the US. The relationship was further enhanced when Japanese PM Shinzo Abe visited Australia, and both sides signed ‘Agreement on the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology’. This agreement intensified the defence partnership between the two countries with joint research, development and production of defence equipment and defence technology transfer between the two countries. It ended Japan’s post-war prohibition of arms export and elevated the Japan-Australia relationship to a ‘special strategic partnership’. (Nilsson-Wright, 2017)

Relationship saw sustained momentum under Malcolm Turnbull. The sixth iteration of 2+2 defence-foreign ministers meet in 2015 exchanged opinions on the situation in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. They also discussed the importance of trilateral relations with the US and India. The summit between Abe and Turnbull issued a joint statement titled 'Next steps of the Special Strategic Partnership: Asia, Pacific and Beyond' in which they reaffirmed their resolve to engage with the US in their respective alliances and welcomed inaugural trilateral dialogue with India. The leaders expressed their firm reservation regarding attempts to change the status quo in the South and the East China Sea by claimants, without mentioning China. During the next summit meeting between the two leaders in Sydney in 2017, the joint communique dedicated four paragraphs to describe security situation in the Indo-Pacific; especially South and the East China Sea. Both sides asserted their commitment towards rules-based international order, freedom of navigation and overpass, unimpeded trade and peace in the region. They opposed unilateral and coercive action by any party in the Indo-Pacific. (MFAJd, 2017)

Thus, the bilateral relationship between each of the three pairs improved like never before. The US was the common thread that bound the Japan-Australia relation. Both the countries were on the 'right' side during the entire period of the cold-war. Such was not the case with India and Japan. Both countries were on the opposite sides of the divide during the cold war. However, both the countries always had a very close relationship since historical times. India and Australia were poles apart till the turn of the century. The improved bilateral relations between them was the most dramatic one. Since the trilateral relationship was a result of an immediate common challenge faced by the three countries; its durability depends upon the life of the threat and political party in power in the individual states. The India-Japan relationship has a strong base, but India-Australia relation has to be managed with caution for it to be sustainable.

QUADRILATERAL

Indian, Japanese, Australian and the US officials met in Manila, the Philippines in November 2017 for second Quad meeting which took place on the margins of ASEAN and EAS

gatherings. The core issues discussed were - the rules-based order in Asia, freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime commons, respect for international law, enhancing connectivity, maritime security, the North Korean threat and non-proliferation, and terrorism. However, there was no joint communique after the meeting. The four countries issued four different statements that are as follows:

The US statement read,

“...The officials examined ways to achieve common goals and address common challenges in the region, such as: upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, including freedom of navigation and overflight, respect for international law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes; increasing connectivity consistent with international law and standards, based on prudent financing; coordinating on counterterrorism and maritime security efforts in the Indo-Pacific; and further cooperating to curtail the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programs and unlawful acts. The quadrilateral partners committed to deepening cooperation, which rests on a foundation of shared democratic values and principles, and to continue discussions to further strengthen the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.” (State, 2017)

Indian statement said,

“...The discussions focused on cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners. They agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large. The officials also exchanged views on addressing common challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region as well as on enhancing connectivity. The Indian side highlighted India’s Act East Policy as the cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.” (MEAf, 2017)

Japanese statement read,

“...and discussed measures to ensure a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific. From this perspective, the participants discussed the direction for cooperation, including with countries in the region, in upholding the rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific, tackling proliferation threats, including North Korea’s nuclear and missile issues, against which maximized pressure needs to be

applied, ensuring freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific and countering terrorism and other issues. The participants affirmed their commitment to continuing discussions and deepening cooperation based on shared values and principles.”

(MFAJe, 2017)

Australian statement read,

“...to discuss a shared vision for increased prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific region and to work together to ensure it remains free and open. The officials examined ways to achieve common goals and address shared challenges in the region. This includes upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and respect for international law, freedom of navigation and overflight; increase connectivity; coordinate on efforts to address the challenges of countering terrorism and upholding maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Officials also agreed to work together to address threats to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programs. The participants committed to continuing quadrilateral discussions and deepening cooperation on the basis of shared values and principles.” (Department of Foreign

Affairs and Trade, 2017)

The statements reflected the concerns of the four countries. The US statement was the most elaborate one. The phrase - ‘increasing connectivity consistent with international law and standards, based on prudent financing’ - stood apart from the rest of the communiqués. The BRI was one of the bigger worries for these countries. No state apart from the US specified the issue as explicitly and precisely as the US. Australia and India made passing references to the need for increased connectivity while Japan dropped it altogether. Further, India avoided mentioning ‘freedom of navigation and overflight’ as well as ‘respect for international law’. The reason could be that there were differences regarding the perception of the ‘freedom of navigation’ between India and the US. Besides, the bilateral relations with China might have played a part in the final wording of the statements. These subtle differences between the statements show the complexity in forging an informal alliance or partnership between the four countries, even though they have consolidated bilateral and trilateral ties among themselves. Each nation has a multi-layered relationship with China and each other. Thus, the success of Quadrilateral in its new avatar - Quad 2.0 - depends upon how well the countries manage their individual as well as mutual relations with China

Difference between Quad 1.0 and Quad 2.0

The four Quad countries were part of the Tsunami Core Group in 2004-2005 which was set up to coordinate the rescue and relief efforts in the Indian Ocean Region in the aftermath of the devastating Tsunami. (Madan, 2017) The countries had few similarities - they were regional powers in their ways, had necessary capabilities to deal with the calamity, did not have interstate disputes among themselves and were present in the region while the disaster took place. Incidentally, the four countries were fighting terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. In a book titled 'Utsukushii Kuni E' – Towards a Beautiful Nation – Shinzo Abe conceived an idea of Asian democracies joining forces and having a dialogue among India, Japan, the US and Australia. The foreign minister of Japan, Mr Taro Aso, repeated the idea in a speech titled 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' in front of a domestic audience at Japan Institute of International Affairs. (Mohan, What the return of quadrilateral says about India and emerging Asian geopolitics, 2017) The leaders of the rest of the countries endorsed the nascent idea, and the first official level meeting took place on the sidelines of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila, the Philippines in May 2007. (Varadarajan, 2007) However, this meet was preceded and succeeded by two phases of Malabar annual bilateral naval exercise between the US and India. Japan was included as a third country in the first phase of the exercise, which took place in April 2007 in the Western Pacific Ocean. In addition to the existing three members, Australia and Singapore were incorporated in the second edition of the exercise that took place in the Bay of Bengal in September 2007. (Brewster, 2010) The multilateral activity at sea rattled nerves in Beijing which put intense diplomatic pressure on all the four countries. Australia and India succumbed to the pressure, and the whole idea fizzled out.

The current iteration of the Quad took place on the backdrop of the altered ground realities in the South China Sea. China has become too big to manage by any one country. The retreating tendencies of the US and its insistence on more equitable sharing of burden by its allies have proved to be critical points behind the re-emergence of the Quad. Since the Quad countries did not plan any joint military strategy unlike Malabar, 2007; China did not react vociferously to Quad 2.0. Moreover, the phrases used in the statement were not new to China which has become accustomed to it. The same expressions make an appearance after bilateral and trilateral meetings involving the Quad nations. Moreover, the statements do not alter ground

realities. Though any hard-military component did not accompany Quad 2.0, it stood apart from Quad 1.0 in the 'connectivity' aspect. The reference to 'connectivity' has to be looked at in consonance with Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy', Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) and India's 'Act East' policy. The Quad 1.0 was too informal and devoid of any robust agenda unlike Quad 2.0 which discussed several issues of collective importance. In the meantime, various bilateral and trilateral security-related agreements and vision documents have led to an increased level of trust among them.

INTRA-ALLIANCE POLITICS FRAMEWORK

Interests

There is an overall convergence of interests among the countries involved in both the minilaterals. The states have stakes in maintaining the existing liberal order promoted by the US. They loathe the emergence of a rising hegemon in the Indo-Pacific region. In short, all of them consider China as a common threat to their well-being. However, all the four countries have interest in the peaceful rise of China. Therefore, their core objective is to manage the rise of China rather than containing it. Their economies are highly intertwined with that of China which is the largest trading partner of all of them. It is one of the reasons why the Quad treads very carefully and takes Chinese sensitivities into account.

The four countries are dependent upon SLOCs for their trade and energy security. Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea is far from reassuring towards its neighbours. Moreover, China has been trying to reduce its dependence on Malacca Strait by developing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, thus taking the oil from the Persian Gulf directly into China via Pakistan and also by laying pipelines through Myanmar into Southern China, thus bypassing Malacca Strait. Therefore, the four countries may face 'Malacca Dilemma' in the future.

Wilkins has contended that there might be slight variation in the individual interests and alliance interests. They may vary in scope, depth or intensity. (Wilkins, 2007) The statements released after the Quad meeting reflect such a trait. India has neither named North Korea in its statement nor has referred to shared values and principles among the four countries. Similarly,

Japan has not mentioned 'connectivity'. These variations corroborate Wilkin's contention regarding the difference of interests.

Albeit common interests, different countries have different expectations from a minilateral. Additionally, their motives for joining the same also differs. Amid the ongoing burden-sharing debate, the Quad is a way to create a networked-alliances in the region for the US. It is also an avenue to share responsibility amongst the partners. Therefore, Quad is much more than a threat-centric alliance for the US. India, Japan and Australia have the interest to engage the US amid uncertain times in the region. All the three countries are middle-powers, and they have limitations to act decisively against China which holds far too many levers vis-à-vis the three countries. Thus, the inclusion of the US in the regional affairs is currently in the interest of the three countries. The Quad is an ideal platform which engages the US without burdening it.

On the other hand, the trilateral can be said to be the mechanism to insure against China in the absence of the US. It is a way of local balancing. Though the forum has only issued statements so far, it has a potential to emerge as a more solid formation. According to C. Raja Mohan, "They could build the first of multiple middle power coalitions for promoting regional resilience: Informal arrangements of nations cooperating with one another on strategic issues, working in self-selecting groups that do not include China or the United States." (Mohan & Medcalf, Delhi, Tokyo, Canberra, 2017) Although the trilateral is not a substitute for the close ties with the US, it can "limit regional stability amidst the shifting dynamic between America and China." (Mohan & Medcalf, Delhi, Tokyo, Canberra, 2017) According to Yogesh Joshi, "India, Japan and Australia are relatively capable states who can produce a fair amount of internal balancing against China." (Joshi, India-Japan-Australia Minilateral: The Promise and Perils of Balancing Locally, 2015)

Power

According to Wilkins, power plays the prime role in the formation and dissolution of alliances. The relative power capabilities decide the country's bargaining power in an alliance. However, even the strongest of the allies depend upon the weaker power. And the great powers do not coerce the weaker partner at the cost of the cohesion of the alliance. (Wilkins, 2007) The US is too superior in terms of its economic and military power than the rest of the countries in the

Quadrilateral. Its military budget is more significant than the combined budget of the next five members. Additionally, it is technically superior to the rest of the states. It plays a primary role in the bilateral treaty alliance with Japan and Australia. However, power is not calculated only in material terms. Country's location also plays a vital variable while determining power. The three countries - India, Japan, Australia – occupy three corners of the world which make them valuable partners. India straddles the entire Indian Ocean, precisely between the busiest chock points of the globe - Strait of Hormuz and Malacca Strait – as well as looking over busiest SLOC. The location of Australia, a continent in itself, is ideal for projecting power in the South China Sea as well as in the South Pacific. Japan rests in the far east of the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, geography compensates for the power asymmetry in the Quad.

India, Japan and Australia possess near equal material power. Japan is technologically superior to the rest while India is the most massive military force in terms of the number of troops. Japan is the biggest economy of all but India is not too far. Japan is the largest foreign aid donor to India and eyes India as an alternative investment location to reduce its economic dependence on China. The three countries are “the most powerful naval powers. Their respective geographies provide additional heft to their naval strength.” (Joshi, India-Japan-Australia Minilateral: The Promise and Perils of Balancing Locally, 2015) Thus, there is a little power differential in the trilateral formation. All the three countries play a complementary role to each other.

Insecurity

There are two dimensions to the insecurity faced by states – external and internal. The external insecurity leads to the formation of a security minilateral grouping while the internal security takes the form of entrapment, defection and free riding. ‘Entrapment’ means getting dragged into the partner's conflicts. ‘Defection’ refers to the betrayal by the security partner that leaves rest to fend for themselves vis-a-vis external enemy. ‘Free Riding’ is a sentiment of the powerful that others are not sharing the equitable burden of an alliance and taking undue advantage of itself to meet their ends at meagre costs.

The minilaterals are free from entrapment but might face defection or free riding. Liberty from entrapment, unlike formal alliances, is one of the most attractive unique selling propositions of

the minilaterals. The informal nature of the Quad and the Trilateral does not require them to participate in others' war. Instead, they indirectly help the partner at the time of crisis. Moreover, the structure of the Quad or the Trilateral does not give scope for free-riding. The absence of any formal obligation towards the partner makes it free from the free-ride trap.

However, the flip side of the coin is that the member countries feel vulnerable to the external threat in spite of being a part of the Quad or the Trilateral. Especially, the weaker country such as India which has disputed border with China and does not have a treaty alliance with the US like Japan and Australia is more susceptible to pressure from China.

The Quad has experienced defection in the past. Australian refusal to be a part of the future Quad meetings was the prime reason for its untimely dissolution. Australian stance was followed by India which backtracked when pressurised by China. Although it did not hinder the bilateral cooperation between the countries, it indeed created an environment of distrust. The deep-rooted distrust prevented India from hiding Australian requests to be a part of the annual trilateral naval exercise – Malabar – since 2015. (Greene, 2017)

Ideology/Values

Although the original idea of the Quad was born out of a notion of cooperation between the democratic powers, the real aim of the formation was to create a bulwark against the rising hegemon. The 'democracy' construct was to legitimise the structure and make it look benign. The idea of Quad was born out of crude strategic calculations. Similarly, the emergence of trilateral was also emerged out of necessity. One, the three countries felt the need to strengthen the trilateral partnership between themselves to have more coherent views regarding the region in other minilaterals and multilaterals. Two, they thought to engage with each other in the view of the retreat of the US and emergence of a new hegemon. Three, they sought to create local balancing against the rising challenges in the form of China. The ideology and values were used to legitimise the whole exercise.

Domestic Politics

The failure of Quad 1.0 had reasons in the domestic policies of the countries involved. The Labour government under PM Kevin Rudd did not want to antagonise China. Similarly, the UPA government was hesitant to adopt a strict policy stance to tackle China. Similarly, successive governments after PM Abe, both of Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Japan, were less enthusiastic with the idea of Quad. However, when Quad made its comeback, all the four countries had traditionally conservative governments. PM Modi, PM Abe, President Trump represent conservative politics of their respective nations. Thus, domestic politics is one of the crucial determinants to decide the future of the Quad.

CONCLUSION

The Security Minilateralism is a relatively new concept in the security studies. It is ad-hoc, flexible, agile and threat-centric. The small number of participants make it swift in decision-making. It is informal and involves no organisational cost. The states pursue minilateral to maintain a favourable balance of power. They aim to preserve a suitable security order in the region. The fear of rising hegemon in the form of China necessitated the formation of the Quadrilateral while the uncertain times amid rising China and declining the US required the establishment of the India-Japan-Australia Trilateral. Ideally, the weaker states get into an alliance to balance a stronger nation. However, the Quadrilateral is virtual-alliance of the greatest superpower and regional middle-powers against a rising superpower whose material capabilities are far less than the existing superpower. Its sole aim is to maintain the prevailing rules and conventions, thus retain an order which benefited the US and its allies all these years. Paradoxically, even China benefitted from the existing liberal order in the region.

Both the Quad and the India-Japan-Australia trilateral are in a nascent stage. They are driven by the convergence of interests. Since there is compatibility in terms of their values and principles, the four countries have transcended over various factors such as power differential, ideologies and domestic politics. Although minilaterals have the potential to act as a balancer between the US-led order and the emerging Sino-centric order, it hasn't worked so due to the lack of the teeth. Moreover, it has not worked as an additional lever for India in its quest to manage between the host of orders. Thus, unless it is accompanied by the hard security mechanisms, its impact is likely to remain limited. There is a danger of it becoming another

talking shop. However, if it is used correctly and if participants come out of the prisoner's dilemma, it may prove to be the agilest instrument to cope with the uncertainties.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

INTRODUCTION

In the everchanging landscape of the Indo-Pacific, India is adjusting to the new realities. It has to cope with the US-led order, an emerging Sino-centric order and the ASEAN-conceived order simultaneously. The chapter looks at how India fits into these orders and examines how India is responding to the triple intersection of the orders in the region.

INDIA IN THE US-LED ORDER

India was never a part of the US-led system during the entire period of the cold war. The bipolarity was the flavour of the system during that time. The world was divided into various partitions such as the East-West divide, the North-South divide or the First World-Third World divide. Being a third world country, India was always in the opposite camp of that of the West. Thus, it was never part of the Western bloc led by the US. Naturally, it was excluded from the economic web weaved by the West among themselves. In the political sphere, India had adopted the principle of Non-alignment. It, along with the other members of the Non-alignment movement had vowed not to take sides between the US and the Soviet Union during the height of the bipolar rivalry. Although for many non-aligned countries, there was a stark difference between the stated position and the activities on the ground, India did cling to the principle on the paper throughout the cold war era. As a result, India refused to be a part of the US-led security organisations that came up in the region in the form of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Moreover, despite being informally invited to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India did not enter the organisation suspecting the US influence over it.

Despite the avowed principle of non-alignment, India was tilted towards the Soviet Union so much so that the Morarji Desai government which assumed power in the immediate aftermath of the emergency in 1977, had to announce the policy of the 'Genuine Non-alignment'. (Jayapalan, 2001: 100) With the collapse of the bipolar world and dissolution of the Soviet Union, India suddenly lost its trusted friend on the international stage. In the ensuing years, India had to face pressure from the US regarding signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and shelving its Nuclear Programme. The US forced Russia to deny India

access to the dual-use technology critically important for India's space programme. Additionally, India had unstable governments in the last decade of the 20th century which accentuated the external problems.

However, the one unprecedented event occurred during these chaotic years was the liberalisation of the Indian economy. Due to the balance of payment crisis of 1991, India had to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which pressed it to open up its economy. Due to the process of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation, the market of billions of people was opened for the Multinational Companies. This episode singularly changed the world's perception towards India. Thus, in spite of facing severe economic sanctions in the wake of the Nuclear Tests in 1998, India could normalise its relations with the world, especially with the West in a short span of time. Although, there was a number of other factors for the quick restoration of the ties with the US including the Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbott diplomacy, the 9/11 terror attack on the US soil, NDA's worldview; the structural changes in the India economy was one of the most important reasons.

Thus, at the turn of the century India and the US began intensive engagement towards each other. President Bill Clinton visited India in 2000, the first visit by the US President in more than two decades. It highlighted the turnaround of the US perceptions of India. The next decade can be interpreted as the golden period in the bilateral ties between the two countries. As a fallout of the 2001 terror attacks in the US, the two countries got together on the common anti-terrorism plank. Further, to deter India from getting closer with Iran and host of other geopolitical as well as transactional reasons, the US inked 123 Nuclear Agreement with India in 2008. The agreement was the testament of the elite political will on both sides since there was an immense internal opposition in both the countries to forge the nuclear deal. Both the governments spent considerable political capital in signing the agreement. Though the agreement did not generate the immediate windfalls for the American companies, it proved to be the most substantial CBM between the two countries. It raised the bilateral political trust manifolds.

There was uncontested American domination in the first decade of the 21st century. The world was experiencing the Unipolar moment of the US. The 'War on Terror' had diminished any possibilities of the US retreat from any of the parts of the world. The anti-terror objective of two countries emerged as the major glueing factor in the bilateral relations. As a victim of terror

for more than a decade, India offered its assistance to the US efforts to defeat the face of the terror in the form of the bases and troops. The Indian navy came off its ‘Cinderella Service’ image to proactively take part in the anti-piracy operations. It escorted the foreign ships off the piracy-infested choke points in the Indian Ocean. It played a commendable job during the Tsunami of 2004. It was the first respondents to many littorals of the Indian Ocean including Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar among others. These events raised India’s stature in the eyes of the World and the US. The US started considering India as a consequential partner in the region. As a result, relations between the two countries were elevated to the new level in the upcoming years. The 2008 global financial crisis only expedited the mutual association between the two countries.

The Rationale for Assisting India’s Rise

The saga of the bilateral bonhomie between the US and India which had begun in the early 2000s continued under the subsequent US presidents and Indian Prime Ministers. Although the degree of cooperation and suspicion varied under various governments, no government tried to reverse the course of the relationship. Thus, the bilateral relations got bipartisan support in both the countries. The Republicans and the Democrats in the US saw the value of India alike. Similarly, BJP-led NDA, as well as Congress-led United Progressive Alliance UPA, stayed on the same course while dealing with the US. There were few reasons to promote India in the Indo-Pacific region from the US side.

First, India was a democratic country and the US considered the promotion of democracy as its primary objective. The 2005 National Security Strategy mentioned the word ‘democracy’ 52 times. It painted democracy as a panacea for the cause of terrorism. The advancement of democracy was one of the fundamental objectives of the US National Security Strategy. (White House, 2006) India was the world’s largest democracy and the US was the world’s oldest democracy. Therefore, the US saw merit in the promotion of India on the world stage as it would have realised its objective of furtherance of democracy as well. Apart from that multiculturalism, the rule of law, freedom of speech and liberalism among others bound the two countries together.

Second, the US MNCs saw India as a massive market for their products. As discussed earlier, the advent of LPG had already liberalised the Indian market. It was an ideal condition for the US MNCs to enter India. Had there been the US economic sanctions imposed on India, the MNCs could not have accessed the market of more than a billion people. Therefore, there was internal pressure on the US administration to go easy on India.

Third, India's rise was not a threat to the US primacy in the Indian Ocean Region. Due to similarities in the values and India's benign security posture, the US felt assured about the advancement of India. Even during the height of the cold war, India was a democracy having been tilted towards the socialism. It had adopted some of the communist principles in its governance like the five-year planning, import substitution model and other similar policies; but never in the history was India a totalitarian regime. Since the end of the cold war, India had begun to turn into a market economy. It was growing moderately unlike that of China and was strengthening its military capabilities in a measured way.

Fourth, the rise of China had created a security dilemma in the minds of the US policymakers. To balance the rise of China, the US needed a reliable regional partner in the Indo-Pacific. With the size and demographic dividend on its side, India was the only player in the Indian Ocean Region which could have been thought to counter China effectively. Apart from that, during the 2008 sub-prime crisis, India was the only country along with China which stood still while others were crumbling. Thus, India had come as a bright spot in the gloomy economic environment of 2008. It was a need of an hour to engage India more meaningfully and cultivate the bilateral ties.

Fifth, the US had come up with a strategy to expand its bilateral alliance system by adding the non-treaty partners into the pool. The India-engagement strategy was a part of a broader game to induct India into the US-led regional security order. It was aimed at sharing responsibilities with the like-minded countries. "By giving India a stake in the American world order, the US would have been able to influence India's choices, even in the absence of a formal alliance between the nations." (Pardesi, 2017) It could have created a shared understanding of the regional security issues with India. While rising China was challenging the US primacy in the region, the US needed partners like India to maintain the regional order.

India's Rationale to be a part of the US-led Strategy

Due to the end of the cold war, India was in need of a strategic partner on the international stage. However, because of the cold war rivalries and a deep suspicion about the intentions of the US, India was guarded to extend a hand of friendship. Such a doubt was rooted in the historical events such as the US' continued support to Pakistan throughout the cold war, the arrival of USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal to intimidate India, President Nixon's idea of Beijing-Islamabad-Washington axis during the liberation war of East Pakistan and the US' pressure tactics to force India into multilateral Nuclear treaties such as NPT and CTBT.

In spite of these factors, India accepted the US partnership and reciprocated to the US gestures positively because of the following reasons. First, India always considered itself a regional power subservient to none. It always felt that it had been underrepresented in the global politics and on the global high tables. India's leadership quest can be traced back to Jawaharlal Nehru's period who convened Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in 1947 at the height of the internal ethnic strife and subsequent conferences in 1949 and 1955 with the aim of Asian solidarity. The partnership with the US gave India the desired legitimacy of its stature in the world affairs. Additionally, India needed a quick respite from the economic sanctions which were hampering its economic growth in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear tests.

Second, as discussed earlier, the war on terror brought India and the US on the same page vis-à-vis the issue of terrorism. Previously India never got proper attention when it complained about state-sponsored terrorism. Terrorism used to be considered as a law and order issue. However, when terror struck on the US soil, the world came to terms with India's pleas. Thus, the US' support was a critical element against India's war against terrorism.

Third, the rise of China posed a serious challenge to India's quest to become a leading world power. China always opposed India's entry into the Multilateral Organisations like the UNSC or NSG. Therefore, to achieve its targets, India needed solid support from the power which could superimpose China. The US played that role while signing 123 Nuclear deal with India. President Bush prevailed over Premier Hu to exempt India from the NSG rules.

Fourth, India got a chance to improve its defence capabilities by buying the US platforms. Earlier, India was highly dependent upon Russia for its defence requirements. Apart from that India bought military hardware from Germany, the UK, Israel and France. But by befriending the US, India got more options to build up its defence capabilities, and the cooperation with the US showed the astounding result. Within a decade, India-US defence ties reached a total value of approximately \$10 billion.

Fifth, while the US was perceived to be retreating from the region, India got an opportunity to fill in the shoes of the US. Although the boots were too large to fill by India and the US was not leaving the region like that of the UK by the end of the colonialism. Moreover, India got the opportunity to shoulder some responsibility in the regional security matters. Otherwise the only power capable of filling the vacuum was China. Thus, it was in the interest if India to make partners with the US and act as the regional power which India always considered to be.

India's Response to the US 'Pivot'

Taking on from Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, PM Manmohan Singh began positively with the bilateral relationship with the US in the initial years of the UPA government. He signed a ten-year defence framework agreement in 2005. The agreement envisaged joint exercises and exchanges, collaboration in the multinational exercises where mutual interests converge, strengthening of military capability to defeat terrorism, stopping the proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and cooperation in missile defence system. (Krishnaswami, 2005) It was followed by India buying a variety of defence hardware from the US worth approximately \$8 billion including C-17 Globemaster III and C-130J Super Hercules transporters, P-8I Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft and Harpoon anti-ship missiles. It was followed by the path-breaking nuclear agreement. In no time the US became India's top defence exporter. However, during his second term in 2009, PM Singh could not maintain the flow which was created during his previous term. The US under its new regime under President Obama was partly responsible for it.

Immediately after taking over, President Obama tried to strike an informal deal with China to divide the world responsibility among the two. This proposition was entirely unacceptable to India as it had considerable differences with China on the range of issues, most importantly on

the variable perceptions over the long Himalayan border between the two nations. India thought that it was being used as a bargaining chip by the Americans. The proposal created deep mistrust among Indians vis-à-vis American intentions which drifted itself from the US in coming years, most importantly in the strategic and security arena.

“Under the 2004 Next Steps in Strategic Partnership agreement, India and the United States were supposed to sign the communication interoperability and security memorandum of agreement (CISMOA) and a basic exchange and cooperation agreement for geospatial cooperation (BECA)”. (Pant & Joshi, 2015) However, both of these agreements were not signed during the UPA era in the office. Further, “India's nuclear liability law put the US-India nuclear deal in limbo.” (Haniffa, 2011) Indian Defence Ministry selected “French *Dassault Rafale* aircraft instead of American F-16’s in the \$14.84 billion Indian Air Force Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) competition.” (Vikram, 2012) “Notwithstanding such setbacks, in 2012, the US DoD took a step forward and initiated the Defence Technology and Trade Partnership (DTTI) with an objective of creating a flexible mechanism to ensure that senior leaders from both nations [we]re persistently focused on the opportunities and challenges associated with growing our defence partnership.” (Pant & Joshi, 2015) However, this initiative also did not find takers in New Delhi. In the same year, few influential analysts and policymakers came out with a document titled ‘Non-Alignment 2.0’. Although it was not an official government policy document, few government officials were involved in the deliberations that produced the document. The ‘Non-Alignment 2.0’ was very cautious about India’s relations with the US. It said that India should not take any action that might hurt Chinese sensitivities. In the transition period, argued the document, “India holds a special attraction for the U.S. because it is the biggest of the new powers (apart from China itself) and also has a complicated relationship with Beijing. For the Bush and Obama administrations, neither of which favoured containment strategies of the old type, India has a derivative value that sometimes exceeds its intrinsic value... While there may appear to be attractions for India to exploit its derivative value, the risk is that its relations with the U.S. could become a casualty of any tactical upswing in Sino-American ties. Nor is it entirely clear how the U.S. might respond if China posed a threat to India’s interests. The other potential downside is that India could prematurely antagonise China.” (Khilnan, et al., 2012) It was a testament of deep-rooted suspicion in the minds of Indian policymakers vis-à-vis the US which was compounded by the release of the Wikileaks tapes.

However, the situation changed under the NDA led by PM Narendra Modi in a short span of time. The NDA government began proactive engagement with the US on the lingering issues. It renewed the 2005 defence framework agreement by another ten years and started consultations on resolving the nuclear liability law in India. “Both states agreed to establish a special task force to oversee the implementation of the DTTI.” (Pant & Joshi, 2015) During his visit to India as a guest of honour for India’s Republic Day parade, President Obama and PM Modi issued a joint strategic vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region reaffirming their shared understanding of the security threats facing the region. In the following years, India and the US reached a breakthrough over India’s nuclear liability law. India signed the country-specific version of the LSA called LEMOA in 2016, the same year when the US designated India as a ‘Major Defence Partner’. The designation “institutionalised the progress made to facilitate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level at par with that of the US’ closest allies and partners.” (Financial Express, 2016) The US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter met his Indian counterpart Manohar Parrikar a record seven times. (Financial Express, 2016) India ordered more defence equipment from the US including Apache Attack and Chinook heavy-lift helicopters. Additionally, the Indian Navy started participating in the Rim of the Pacific exercise (RIMPAC).

Thus, India reinvigorated its relations with the US under PM Modi. It kept its relations with the US separate from China and did not mix the two. It openly indicated its drift towards the US and shared a common perception of the security environment of the region. The India-US bilateral relations opened up new avenues for India’s engagement with the world. Though the nuclear deal with the US did not yield direct results, especially to the US companies, it did open nuclear market for India. India got into nuclear agreements with Australia and Canada. Apart from that, it could trade with Japan where nuclear trade with non-NPT signatory is a sensitive issue. Further, India inked various deals with the US allies like Japan and Australia regarding defence technology transfers and intelligence sharing among many others. Moreover, it participated in multiple minilaterals including the trilaterals and quadrilaterals which showed its security preferences. Therefore, India’s partnership with the US came with little or no cost as it did not impact India’s much celebrated strategic autonomy. Conversely, the partnership insured India from the threat emanating from the region to a limited extent.

INDIA IN A SINO-CENTRIC ORDER

India and China are not only the two countries but also two old civilisations with a rich statecraft. Both the states had its conceptions of the world orders. In India's case 'Chakravartin' was the ultimate ruler ruling the entire universe while in Chinese case 'Tiantzu' was the lord of the empire. Both the civilisations exchanged ideas, cultures, goods and people among others while miles apart from each other. The trade-off was disrupted by the long reign of colonialization over both of these civilisations. The advent of Westphalian principles changed the bilateral relations fundamentally. The 'territory' assumed immense importance, unlike earlier years where state power used to get reduced as far one went from the centre of the power. The Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 and India's unconditional acceptance of it made the two countries neighbours of each other. However, since establishing diplomatic ties among them in 1950, political differences started surfacing between the two. The most pressing among them were over Tibetan Spiritual leader Dalai Lama and McMahon line that separated Tibet and India. The bilateral relations were further deteriorated when Chinese Premier Enlai outshone Indian PM Nehru at Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955. While Nehru was keen to lead the newly independent countries on the international stage, the Chinese were not very happy to accept India's leadership. The bad blood between the two sides culminated in the brief war in 1962 in which China defeated India.

The war left deep scars on the Indian side as it took place on the backdrop of the much-celebrated slogan – 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' and signing of the 'Panchasheel' – the five principles of peaceful coexistence. For China, it was a result of Nehru's 'Forward Policy' on the Indo-Tibetan frontier. The war had a chilling effect on bilateral relations which were downgraded until 1976 when the two countries re-established the diplomatic ties. However, political push came only in 1988 when then PM Rajiv Gandhi visited China. However, the thaw in the relations could not lead to the path towards resolution of the irritants. In 1993 and 1996, the two countries inked agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity along the LAC. More than a decade later, when PM Vajpayee visited Beijing in 2003, the two sides decided to form a framework to resolve the boundary issue by the special representatives from both sides. Later in 2005, 2012 and 2013, the two countries added to the agreements to manage differences

along the LAC. Although the framework did not yield any substantive results till date, it has at least engaged the two sides in a meaningful dialogue.

Indian Anxieties vis-à-vis China

The 1962 border war with China refused to leave India's collective memory. The ensuing years of cold war further reinforced the threat perception from China. In spite of being a communist country, China deferred with the Soviet Union and joined hands with the US. It befriended Pakistan and formed a nexus with Islamabad and Washington, the two anti-Delhi capitals. Moreover, during the Cambodia conflict India and China were on the opposite sides of the divide. India wholeheartedly supported the Soviet Union and Vietnam while China sided with Pol Pot regime which was recognised by the United Nations. It vehemently opposed Vietnam. Thus, India has always been suspicious about Chinese intentions towards itself and the region. Today, India feels suspicious towards China on the three different levels – state level, regional level and global level.

At the state level, the unresolved boundary issue is the prime reason for Sino-Indian discord. China has kept the dispute brewing to use it as a lever against India. It is a pressure-tactic from China to shape the external behaviour of India. China claims two different area of the Republic of India. The first is Aksai Chin, approximately 37,000 sq.km of expanse, located in the Ladakh region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. And the second is northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, with the area of 84,000 sq. Km. (Guruswamy, 2017) In addition to this Pakistan gifted 5,180 sq. Km. of Indian territory to China. In 1981, it was decided to put the boundary issue on the backburner and proceed with other aspects of the bilateral relations. There were few Confidence Building measures and few agreements signed between the two countries to avoid flare up between the two armies. Since 2005 to date, more than 20 rounds of talks have been conducted between the special representatives of the two countries. However, the talks have produced zero output. According to a former National Security Advisor of India, “talks are high on style and hospitality...but there has been little traction.” (Guruswamy, 2017) C. Raja Mohan attributes the delay in resolution to the increasing bonhomie between India and the US. “It is reasonable to presume that India's deepening defence and Security cooperation with the United States in the second term of the Bush administration (2005-2009) and the civil nuclear

initiative of July 2005 strengthened Beijing's logic to delay the resolution of the boundary dispute." (Mohan, 2013:18)

At the regional level, India faces two challenges from the Chinese side. First, its quest to establish primacy in the Indian subcontinent which is a traditional area of influence of India, and second, its deepening friendship with Pakistan that has made the country a virtual satellite state of China. In the recent past, China has made deep inroads in the countries surrounding India including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Seychelles, Mauritius and Pakistan. During President Rajapaksa's tenure in Sri Lanka (2005-2015), China gave loans to develop Hambantota port which straddles the strategically vital Sea Lanes of Communication in the Indian Ocean Region. The credit became unsustainable within no time since the agenda of China was to secure a partnership in the management of the port once the loans grew unsustainable. China succeeded in its objective and Hambantota became a significant element of its BRI strategy. Similarly, the Maldives became a part of the BRI when Chinese Premier Xi visited that country in 2014. Till 2012, Beijing did not have an embassy in the Maldives. However, by 2017 the Maldives signed a free trade agreement with China and leased some atolls and islands to that country. (Manning & Gopalaswamy, 2018) It changed the law in its national parliament to make the process of 'leasing' legal. Apart from that China is heavily involved in the infrastructure projects in the Maldives. Likewise, China moved closer to Nepal in the recent past. The two countries signed several MoUs in multiple areas of cooperation to reduce Nepal's dependency over India. Nepal also welcomed China's BRI and readily participated in it. Similarly, China also invested in Bangladesh and Myanmar. It agreed to develop Chittagong port of Bangladesh and agreed to take 70 per cent of stake in Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port. (Aung & Lee, 2017) It built pipelines through Myanmar to carry oil to its south-western province bypassing the Malacca Strait. (Bloomberg, 2017) Besides South Asia, China started developing closer relations with several Indian Ocean littorals such as Seychelles and Mauritius. These islands have been historically very close to Delhi. Thus, China has been trying to establish its presence in India's backyard. The attempts have been evident since the past decade. Moreover, China has increased its naval presence in the Indian Ocean substantially under the garb of anti-piracy operations. It has further gone on to secretly dock its submarines in surrounding ports of Gwadar and Hambantota.

The “higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the deepest sea and sweeter than honey” friendship of Pakistan and China has reached new levels in the recent past. The prime bonding factor between the two countries is anti-India sentiment present on both sides. China has always attempted to restrict India in the subcontinent by using its proxy – Pakistan. In return, it has helped Pakistan by giving financial and military aid. Earlier China helped Pakistan to develop its nuclear arsenal. Today, it has concentrated on developing Pakistan’s armed forces and infrastructure. In 2016, China struck \$4-\$5 billion submarine deal with Pakistan. It agreed to provide eight new Stealth Attack Submarines to Pakistan. Taking the bilateral relationship to the new heights, the two countries signed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2015 with an estimated \$46 billion investment from China in Pakistan. CPEC is one of the important arms of the “Project of the Century” – the BRI. Through CPEC, China envisages investing in roads, railways, ports, pipelines and Information network. (Markey & West, 2016) However, CPEC infringes on India’s sovereignty as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Moreover, it is a way to increase Chinese presence in Pakistan. Additionally, Pakistan has handed over its Gwadar port to Chinese state-owned enterprise. Thus, China is in control of Gwadar which is located very close to the Strait of Hormuz. It has sought to take control of the major choke point important not only for India but also to all the oil-dependent countries of the world.

At the global level, China is opposed to a more prominent role for India. In contrast to India, China has resisted every attempt of the multilateral institutions to involve India. While the proposal for the establishment of EAS was on the table, China wanted the organisation to have ASEAN+3 members. It opposed India’s inclusion into the same. Similarly, although India had supported China’s claim to be the permanent member of the UNSC, China does not help India’s bid to sit on the high table. It had also objected to the NSG exemptions to the US-India nuclear deal. It keeps opposing India’s membership bid in NSG. Thus, China has adopted the constraining strategy to limit India in the regional affairs. It does not want to see another Asian power to rise at the global high table.

What does it mean to be a part of the Sino-centric Order?

As seen in the previous chapter, China tries to implement its order by way of including countries in the BRI, creating trade dependencies, posturing aggressively in its neighbourhood

and through the spread of Confucianism. The last path, i.e., the establishment of Confucian institutes in the foreign countries is the least developed way among the others. China has just begun to influence the world through its soft power. However, the world has seen enough of the rest of the paths towards establishing the Sino-centric order.

India refused to be a part of China's ambitious project – BRI – on account of violation of its territorial integrity. It did not participate in the BRI summit held in Beijing in May 2017 which was attended by the representatives of more than 60 nations. Instead, it reiterated that the “BRI projects pushed the recipient countries into indebtedness, did not transfer skills or technology and were environmentally unsustainable.” (Mohan, Raja Mandala: India's China reset and BRI, 2018) Speaking at annual Raisina Dialogue, Vijay Gokhale, then secretary (economic relations) in the External Affairs Ministry who later became the foreign secretary of India said that connectivity projects should be consultative and in consonance with the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. “If you have players who come and set a different set of rules, who set a different set of standards, where there are no standards, where there are weak rules and procedures, you automatically create infrastructure and ecosystem of dependency”, he emphasised. (PTI, 2018) Thus, India has stayed away from the BRI and is contemplating alternative infrastructure projects that are based on the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, transparency and sustainable credit facilities. Asia-Africa Growth Corridor in partnership with Japan is one of the healthy alternatives to the BRI.

The bilateral trade between the two countries amounts to approximately \$70-\$90 billion which is highly skewed towards China. In 2016, the total trade was \$70.8 billion out of which Chinese exports counted for \$58.33 billion while India's export to China totalled \$11.76 billion. Thus, there was a massive trade deficit of \$46.56 billion. (Varma, 2017) India exports approximately 3% of its total exports to China while China's export to India amounts nearly 15% of India's total imports from the foreign country. (GoI, 2015) “At the turn of the 1990s, China and India were roughly equal in terms of aggregate economic size and per capita income. By the turn of the second decade of the 21st century, China loomed nearly four times larger.” (Mohan, China's rise, America's pivot, and India's Asian ambiguity, 2013) Moreover, there has been considerable Chinese investment in Indian companies like Paytm, Ola and others. Thus, there has been a substantial amount of Sino-Indian trade relations. Although India is not overly

dependent upon China for its trade purposes, the fact remains that China is India's one of the top three trading partners.

Chinese incursion in the Indian territory has increased in the recent years. (Arunachal Observer, 2018) Moreover, the timing of the intrusions corroborates the theory of Chinese attempts of coercion by employing its hard power. The pattern is self-evident which has been going on for more than two decades. In 1997, the Chinese troops intruded in the state of Himachal Pradesh after the visit by Premier Zemin to India in late 1996. Similarly, during PM Vajpayee's visit to Beijing, the Chinese troops intruded into the state of Arunachal Pradesh. In 2013, before PM Li began his visit to India, the Chinese troops intruded Depsang sector in Ladakh. Similarly, China crossed to the Indian side just before a visit by India's External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid to that country in 2013. Most recently, when President Xi visited India in 2014, Chinese troops entered the Demchok sector in Ladakh. Therefore, it can be inferred that such intrusions before or after high-level bilateral visits are a well thought out strategy on the Chinese part to make India behave the way China wants it to. Moreover, China has started issuing stapled visas to the Indian citizens from the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh. "China started needling India in a big way with its three policies – more ambitious border incursions, stapled visas for Indian citizens domiciled in the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, and pushing some twenty thousand of its troops disguised as 'construction workers' in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir – only after India, under the UPA government started courting the US and went ahead with the Indo-US nuclear deal." (Sharma, 2014) "Given that the number of incursions grew exponentially in recent years (from 140 in 2006 to 411 in 2013), and given the 2014 intrusion followed the same template as the 2013 intrusion suggests a coordinated strategy, not a rogue operation." (Smith, 2014)

India's Response

The UPA I took forward the momentum generated by PM Vajpayee's visit to Beijing in 2003. Building on the peace process initiated by the earlier dispensation, it achieved an early breakthrough in the form of an "Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question". (MEA, 2005) The agreement was followed by the flurry of high-level visits from both sides including foreign ministers, defence ministers and home ministers among others. Chinese Premier Hu Jintao visited India in 2006,

and Indian PM Manmohan Singh reciprocated the visit in 2008. In December 2004, Indian Army Chief General Vij visited China for the first time in the decade. The visit was responded back by the Chinese Army Chief in 2005. Further, Indian Air Force Chief visited China in 2008 “and agreed to increase the defence exchanges between two countries and enrich the content of the exchanges.” (Malik, 2017) In 2006, during the visit by Chinese Defence Minister, the first ever MoU was signed between Defence Forces of the two nations. On the economic front, China emerged as the largest trading partner of India during the first term of UPA. Both countries became founding members of the minilateral BRIC which later came to be called as BRICS with the inclusion of South Africa.

However, bilateral relationship lost the positive momentum during the second term of PM Singh. India faced an aggressive Chinese posture on LAC. “The 2010 summer recorded an almost 100 per cent increase in the number of stand-offs between the patrols of the two sides. These peaceful stand-offs were reported from Depsang, Demchok and Pangong Tso areas of the Ladakh region.” (Das, 2013) Similarly, in January 2011 People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops intruded in Gombir area in Demchok region in Jammu and Kashmir. Although all the incidents were resolved peacefully, the sudden rise in Chinese activism on the border on the backdrop of the weakening US and world economy was indicative of the fact that Chinese were asserting themselves to pressurise India to amend its external orientation. Due to the Indo-US nuclear deal, there was a perception that India had tilted towards the US. Even a section in the INC was not keen to be seen as a pro-American country. Due to the domestic political environment, PM Singh was not in a strong position to counter such perceptions and keep strategic autonomy intact. Thus, Congress party started alleviating the perceptions that India went closer to the US. As a result, the defence cooperation between the two countries came to nearly a standstill. Despite it, China did not stop pressuring India. In the aftermath of the military standoff at Daulat Beg Oldi, India entered into a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement with China in 2013 hoping that the situation would improve. However, India faced yet another intrusion in Chumar sector of Ladakh region in the next year. Other issues such as stapled visas and Dalai Lama’s movement inside Indian territory also impacted the relationship. Thus, during UPA II regime India took a softer position in dealing with China. It tried to improve the Sino-India bilateral ties at the cost of its other bilateral relations, most importantly the US.

The NDA government led by Modi showed resolve to respond to China from a position of power. He invited Tibetan PM-in-exile Lobsang Sangay to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014. It was a significant departure from the past and a firm posturing vis-à-vis China. In his term in office, he instilled new energy in India's relations with the US. Importantly, India and the US moved ahead on the defence and security cooperation which was stalled during the UPA II era. He invited President Obama as a guest of honour for Republic Day parade in January 2015, and both leaders released a joint vision for the Indian Ocean Region and the Asia Pacific. Moreover, PM Modi focused on improving relations with the US allies in an unprecedented way. The joint declarations with the countries such as Japan and Australia emphasised vital Indian principles such as 'respect for sovereignty', 'freedom of navigation' and others among several. He unfurled 'Act East' policy which replaced the 'Look East' policy to enhance relations with East and Southeast Asian nations. The government showed its resolve in the most difficult military standoff with China since 1962 – the Doklam Standoff at the tri-junction of India, Bhutan and China. Both the sides started building up troops along the border. The Chinese state-controlled media used abusive and vitriolic language against India. It tried to threaten India through psychological warfare. However, India stood its ground, and the crisis was resolved diplomatically. Thus, PM Modi showed an assertiveness while dealing with China. But, the hard security policy did not impact its other policies, especially economic policy. The NDA government succeeded to secure a substantive amount of Chinese investment in India. Moreover, both the countries supported each other at the global platforms in the areas of climate change, trade among others. Furthermore, India became a founding member of China initiated and China-headquartered AIIB and NDB. Thus, NDA government under PM underscore that "normalizing relations with Beijing will not come at the expense of sacrificing New Delhi's burgeoning relations with the US and other leading Asian countries; neither will it affect the expansion and intensity of its strategic partnerships with such states." (Pant & Yogesh, *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power*, 2016:76)

INDIA IN THE ASEAN-CONCEIVED ORDER

India and Southeast Asia cultivate historical ties. The region is thoroughly influenced by the Indian culture. The present-day southeast Asian states were kingdoms of various Indian kings during different epochs in the history including Cholas, Srivijaya and Majapahit among others.

Ideas, cultures, people, goods, religions and many other things sailed from India to Southeast Asia. The advent of colonialism artificially obstructed the natural camaraderie between the two regions. Various colonial powers occupied different states in Asia and choreographed relations among them according to their inter-state ties. Thus, Southeast Asia has always been the reflection of various regional and extra-regional powers. While historian Reginald LeMay describes the region as “the bamboo curtain that shifts with the changing cultural impacts of both India and China” (Sundararaman, 2014), during the colonial era the area bore the weight of the colonial masters. The former process was natural unlike the later which was forced.

At the fag end of the colonialism, India and Southeast Asian states were united by the common thread of the anti-imperialism. However, anti-colonialism could not bind the two for long as the cold war distanced relations once again in the ensuing years. In spite of India’s much-touted policy of non-alignment, India was always perceived to be siding with the communist Soviet Union. It became evident especially after the Sino-Indian war of 1962, more so in 1971 when India and the erstwhile Soviet Union signed the friendship treaty. Communism was anathema to some of the southeast Asian states that later formed ASEAN in 1967. The prime reason for being anti-communist was that the communism and nationalism were not in line unlike the case of Vietnam. Since the ‘regime security’ was another name for the ‘national security’ in the region, the states – except Vietnam and Indochina – were extremely sensitive towards communism. The relations were further stressed when India became the only non-communist country to recognise the Vietnam-installed Heng Samrin government of Cambodia which had three repercussions. One, India’s action decisively drifted it away from the five founding members of ASEAN. Two, it drastically improved relations between India and Vietnam and pushed the two countries further in the lap of the Soviet Union. Three, it helped the ASEAN countries to dispel some of the inhibitions regarding China and improved the bond between the two.

Meanwhile, the Indian Navy embarked on the path of modernisation in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The modernisation plan was a response to several events in the region. First, the Indian Navy had played an astounding role in Bangladesh liberation war which enabled it to break free of its ‘Cinderella Service chrysalis’. (Prakash, 2008) Second, India felt intimidated by the US which had sent its nuclear-armed Seventh Fleet task force USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal in support of Pakistan. Although India managed to stave off the threat by going along

with the Soviet Union, Indian policymakers felt the need to strengthen its naval forces. Third, Britain had decided to withdraw its military assets from the east of Suez in 1967 which would have led to a vacuum. Although the US was capable of filling the void, it was inimical to Indian interests primarily in the wake of the two oil shocks. Therefore, although naval expansion and modernisation had nothing to do with Southeast Asia, it had a daunting effect on the ASEAN states. The fears were exacerbated by the Indian actions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the late 1980s. By the end of the decade, India had two aircraft carriers – INS Viraat and INS Vikrant – and a nuclear-powered submarine INS Chakra. Thus, “India came into the Southeast Asian regional security reckoning after a gap of more than three decades, not so much because of its unflinching support to Vietnam but owing to the rapid expansion of its navy in the 1980s.” (Naidu, 2010)

The end of the cold war was an era of profound structural changes at the systemic level and adjustments of foreign policies of the individual countries at the regional level. The ASEAN expanded to include communist countries into the regional bloc. It gave it a true regional structure. Due to the spectacular economic growth, it gained a weight of itself independent of regional or global powers. Similarly, India unlatched its closed economy. For the first time in the post-independence history, it emerged as a gigantic market. Due to sustained efforts in the previous decade, it was much stronger than the earlier years; especially its naval strength was formidable in comparison to the regional countries. Due to the disappearance of ideological walls, India too felt the urge to engage the region. Then Indian PM P. V. Narasimha Rao unveiled the ‘Look East’ policy during his tenure in the office. Consequently, India became Sectoral Dialogue Partner and a Full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1992 and 1996 respectively. It became a Summit Level Partner in 2002. The Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation signed at Bali in 2003 set up the roadmap for the economic relations between the two. In 2005, India was one of the founding members of the EAS. Before that in 1996, India was given the membership of ARF, the ASEAN-led regional security multilateral organisation. Subsequently, India enthusiastically participated in all the security and economic dialogue forums conceived by ASEAN including ADMM+, Shangri La Dialogue, RCEP and Delhi Dialogue. Moreover, it engaged selected ASEAN countries in various trans-regional multilateral organisations such as BIMSTEC, MGC and the IORA.

Path-breaking Regional Events in the Post-Cold War Era

There were two path-breaking events occurred immediately after the end of the cold war which changed the region profoundly. First, the US decided to close its bases in the Philippines in 1992. Due to internal political dynamics in the Philippines, the US had to close down its Subic Bay base in 1992. Before that, the Clark Air Base was shut down due to the volcanic eruption in 1991. (Sanger, 1991) It created a massive security vacuum in the region as the region was overly dependent on the US security umbrella till the time. The region experienced increased assertiveness from China after the US withdrawal. “In 1995, China built structures on the Mischief reef – a small, rocky outcrop lying 135 miles west of Palawan and well within the Philippine-claimed 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).” (Storey, 1999) Despite the diplomatic protests and other diplomatic avenues, China did not relinquish the illegal possession of the Mischief Reef. “China's heightened attention to its South China Sea claims pointed quite literally to the porosity and softness of Southeast Asia's frontiers”. (Ba, 2009) It made other ASEAN countries insecure about Chinese intentions towards the region in the absence of the US. It also highlighted the possibility of China’s quest for domination and hegemony in the region.

Second, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1996 shook the Asian Tigers from the bottom. The countries came to terms with their dependency on the US economy and the value of the regional economic interaction. (Ba, 2009) Though all the Tigers came out of the crisis in a short span of time, the episode taught them that they had to engage the Northeast Asian region economically. It also proved the importance and power of the Chinese economy. It created the need for a forum to take care of the regional economic and security issues. The ASEAN+3 mechanism followed by EAS can be said to the child of this need.

Why ASEAN and India Need Each Other?

First, the meteoric rise of China is the primary reason for the ASEAN’s interest in India. China is growing economically for more than two decades. It is not only an integral part of the global value chain but also a significant manufacturing hub of the world. It is the biggest trading partner of many of the Indo-Pacific countries in the region. However, its economic rise has been accompanied by the military surge which has resulted in an increased assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. The China threat is compounded by the perceived decline and retreat of the US.

In such an environment, India stands out as an ideal alternative. India itself has a land boundary dispute with China. Therefore, it knows the nature of the threat to the countries in the region. Further, India has the credible military strength to act as a counter to China in the geographic expanse.

The ASEAN countries are indulging in the soft balancing with the help of India. According to T. V. Paul, “soft balancing behaviour involves the formation of limited diplomatic coalitions or ententes...with the implicit threat of upgrading their alliances”. (Paul, 2005) Thus, Southeast Asian countries maintain close diplomatic ties with India. Some of the countries like Singapore and Vietnam have gone further to forge tight defence and security relations with India. Other countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand maintain robust ties with India. Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar have a developmental association with India. Additionally, India indulges in joint naval exercises, port visits, joint patrols and training of defence personnel with the ASEAN nations.

Moreover, India and ASEAN countries do not have any territorial dispute. India does not have any territorial ambition in Southeast Asia. Geographically it is very close to the region, and its readiness was tested during Tsunami in 2004. Further, due to its benign nature, Myanmar had allowed only India to get involved in relief operations while it was hit by the cyclone Nargis. It did not allow any other country in the relief work due to its insecurity with the foreign country’s intentions. Additionally, India has the utmost respect for the international law. The peaceful resolution of the maritime boundary issue with Bangladesh in 2014 according to the UNCLOS was a testament to India’s respect for international law. (Habib, 2014) The comparison with China was inevitable since the case involved a large country and its smaller neighbour. India showed magnanimity in accepting the judgement in letter and spirit. Besides, India has kept its strategic autonomy intact. Although it closely cooperates with the US and its allies, India has made sure that it is not seen taking sides or forging an alliance with the US. Thus, while some countries like Indonesia are apprehensive at being seen with the US against China, such apprehensions do not hold true with India.²

² During Raisina Dialogue 2018, an Indonesian scholar said that Indonesia would not like to be seen with the US against China. Although China may emerge as a threat to Indonesia, it won’t be part of any formation that is led by the US.

For India, according to Pant and Joshi, “regional balancing appears far less threatening to Beijing than a possible alliance between India and the US...it allows India to escape questions on its ‘strategic autonomy’ which has been the cardinal principle guiding India’s foreign policy decision-making.” (Pant & Joshi, *Indian Foreign Policy Responds to the U.S. Pivot*, 2015:109) Moreover, in the light of India’s dispute with China, India gets an additional pressure point to manoeuvre China strategically. The bilateral and multilateral exercises with the ASEAN countries improve interoperability between India and those countries. Since Southeast Asia is a vast maritime expanse, the joint naval exercises help in domain awareness and shared understanding of threats. The access to military facilities of various countries adds to India’s capability to comprehensively deter the threat.

India’s Act East Policy

PM Modi announced India’s ‘Act East’ policy in Myanmar during India-ASEAN summit in 2014. The change from ‘Look’ East to ‘Act’ East suggested the government’s intention to add vigour in India’s relations with ASEAN in political, security, economic and cultural spheres. The internal dimension of the policy included better infrastructure connectivity with India’s North Eastern states. “The objective of the policy [wa]s to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop a strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh with other countries in our neighbourhood. The North East of India has been a priority in our Act East Policy (AEP)”. (Government of India, 2015) The external dimension of the policy was to further relations with the extended neighbourhood in the East of India. As a result of which “India upgraded its relations to a strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Singapore and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region.” (Government of India, 2015) According to Palit, three distinguishing features of the AEP regarding ASEAN were respecting the salience of ASEAN as the core of the regional economic architecture, engaging the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) members of ASEAN as a strategic priority and connecting to the rest of the Southeast Asian countries on bilateral terms. (Palit, 2016) Moreover, it envisaged more magnificent land and sea connectivity with the ASEAN members through various infrastructure projects such as Kaladan

Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Rhi-Tiddim Road Project. (Government of India, 2015)

The naval component of the AEP included enhanced maritime relations with the Indo-Pacific countries. India enhanced its maritime relations with Vietnam and Singapore to a great extent. India extended \$500 million line of credit to Vietnam in 2016. (Neelakantan, 2016) Further, it offered to train submariners for Vietnam's Russia-built Kilo-class submarines. It got permission to use Vietnam's naval facilities. Likewise, India's naval relations with Singapore saw a significant uplift. "India and Singapore sought to enlarge the scope of SIMBEX beyond its traditional emphasis on anti-submarine operations. The 2017 iteration of the exercise explored other areas of operational cooperation, including advanced naval warfare drills, air defence exercises, and gunnery live firings, even witnessing the maiden participation of Singapore's F-15SG fighter". (Singh, 2018) Additionally, India's security and naval relations with other East Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia among others improved substantially. Thus, AEP was an integrated policy for the Indo-Pacific region as a whole rather than individual sub-regions. Since Southeast Asia fell at the heart of the region, the policy put great emphasis on that region. However, the policy is in the evolution process which is why there is a time lag between the policy articulation and actual steps on the ground.

CONCLUSION

Historically, India has successfully managed its relations with the major powers. During the cold war, it sided with the Soviet Union in the garb of the Non-Alignment. However, it always maintained an upper hand in the regional affairs. The present scenario has multiple orders in the Indo-Pacific and India is trying to adjust to the new reality. India is comfortable with the US-led order in the region as it is congruent with the principles India believe in. After the end of the cold war, India systematically embraced the US and benefited from its close partnership. However, while closing the gap between the US and itself, India has made sure that it retains its strategic autonomy. India is a partner with the US and not its ally. Therefore, India is not obliged to follow the US in every matter in the region. However, the two countries cooperate closely where their interests converge vis-à-vis the third country.

The Sino-centric order is hierarchical and yet to be operational in toto. However, China's behaviour in the region gives a glimpse of the emerging Sino-centric order. India is firmly against the Chinese ways that go against the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and transparency. Though China has tried to coerce the countries through various means into its order, India has resisted such a move. Since Chinese order believes in kowtowing by other states, it is difficult for India to accept such a position. Although India does not want to contain China, it is willing to go with the countries that believe in its principles. Thus, India has implemented the policy of the external soft balancing to manage the challenge of the Sino-centric order.

ASEAN-conceived order is complimentary with the US-led order. Therefore, India has a significant role as an external balancer. However, due to its limited economic and military capabilities, India has been placed below the US and China, and there is enough goodwill for India due to its perceived benignity. China is a common threat to both India and the ASEAN nations. Thus, India is also deepening its ties with these nations and acting as a soft balancer to create peace and stability in the region.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

As Kissinger contends, “no truly global ‘world order’ has ever existed”. (Kissinger, 2014:9) Different regions had different orders at a particular time in the history. Nevertheless, global conceptions of world order have always been in the discourse. Islamic order based on the divine rule of god or communist order transcending national boundaries of the individual states has ever been contemplated, and the actors have tried to implement the same without success. The current world order is broadly based on the Westphalian principles which were devised to end the European power struggle in the Seventeenth century. Besides, the regional orders also operate within the confines of the same Westphalian principles.

The colonialism helped to spread the Westphalian principles all over the world. Europe ruled the world for approximately two centuries. After the two world wars and the decolonisation process across the globe, it transferred its world custodianship to the US. Due to the similar worldview of both custodians, the transfer was peaceful and underlying principles to govern the world remained the same. The US became the sole hegemon in the world after the end of the cold war. Unlike the earlier era, where different hegemons ruled various parts of the world – China was the hegemon in East Asia, the Islamic world order ruled the West Asian region, the Europeans were custodians of Europe – the US became dominant force both at the systemic as well as regional level. However, re-emergence of the erstwhile regional satraps started to change the scenario.

During the pre-colonial era, the East Asian region was dominated by China. The Europeans held the kernel during the colonial period. After the retreat of the colonial powers, the area became a playground of the superpower politics. The end of the cold war brought East Asia under the steadfast leadership of the US. Thus, except during the cold war, historically the region has been dominated by a single hegemon. However, for the first time in the history the region is experiencing the multiplicity of the hegemons and their respective conceptions of the orders. Since the US was not a resident power of East Asia, it effectively managed the regional affairs by employing the hub-and-spoke system and keeping forward military presence through foreign bases. It shouldered the economic burden of the alliances. However, as its economy

started panting, especially after 2008, it began to contemplate alternate ways to manage the region, without compromising its pole position. It employed three strategies – the Great Power condominium (G-2), the Asia Pivot and Networked Architecture. The networked architecture proved sustainable and acceptable to the states in the region which became part of the network. The strategy was a win-win for both the US and its partners. Additionally, the US broadened the regional boundaries to increase the stakeholder pool in the region, and it successfully did so by renaming the region, first as Asia-Pacific and then, the Indo-Pacific. The broad conception allowed the US to involve critical regional powers such as India and Australia in the local affairs. These policies successfully enabled the US to preserve its order.

However, the US' economic weakness, its perceived reluctance to shoulder the weight of the alliance, neutrality on the part of influential ASEAN members like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand facilitated the emergence of the Sino-centric order. China was never satisfied with the third party dominating the East Asian political landscape. It always had a historically derived image of itself at the top of the world. It loathed the century of humiliation. Therefore, it always attempted to come on the top of the region and dominate the regional affairs. Throughout the cold war, it never got along with the nations which had claimed the regional leadership. China's falling out with India and then the Soviet Union can be analysed from this point of view. Thus, China always needed an opportunity and an opportune time to break the shackles and establish its supremacy. The 2008 economic crisis provided it with a perfect chance to show its material capabilities to the world which were quietly acquired over the years. Since then, China assumed a regional hegemonic role. President Xi's arrival on the horizon expediated the process. Under the leadership of the new President, China harped back on the historical conceptions of the world order where China was at the top and rest all were secondary vis-à-vis China. During ancient times China preserved its position by trade and tribute system, creating dependency upon itself, building formidable military power and through cultural influence. The contemporary means to achieve the same ancient ends are the BRI, trade and financial institutes of its own making, enhanced military capability, intimidating strategic posture and the spread of the Confucian institutions. Although China's cultural influence is insufficient, its other strategies have successfully created the desired results in different parts of the world and specifically in the Indo-Pacific region. In spite of suspicions, most of the Indo-Pacific countries are subscribers of the BRI. They are also the takers of the Chinese founded

financial institutions. Additionally, they are heavily dependent upon China for trade. Thus, Chinese conception of its order is slowly but definitely taking concrete shape in the Indo-Pacific region.

The ASEAN-conceived order is subtle and implemented by ASEAN as a whole as well as individual ASEAN countries. Since the end of the cold war, the ASEAN has made smart choices and made sure that the US primacy is conserved in the region. The US is the most significant player who can make war and peace. It is a provider of security as well as a generator of the wealth. It does not have territorial ambitions in the region. Moreover, the region has taken giant strides in the economic arena under the US leadership. The ASEAN countries achieve their objective by continually reinventing itself through regional multilateral organisations. They make sure that the agenda is not hijacked by the member states other than ASEAN nations. Apart from that, they employ the strategy of Omni-enmeshment which endeavour to incorporate as many powers as possible. Thus, ASEAN engages not only the US but also other powers such as China, Japan, India and Australia among others. The degree of involvement of the regional powers depends upon their material capabilities. For example, India is engaged more in the security arena rather than economic arena due to its power potential in the respective area. Moreover, ASEAN strictly sticks to its norms such as consensus, consultation, amicable resolution of disputes without the use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of the state. By weaving foreign countries in its institutional web, ASEAN makes them conform to the institutional norms. In that sense, ASEAN-conceived order can be considered to be the normative order.

The regional powers have reacted to the multiplicity of the orders by forging minilateral groupings along with the traditional bilateralism and multilateralism. Minilateralism is an innovative way which is more than bilateralism and less than multilateralism. So far, non-traditional security issues such as piracy have been tackled by minilateral efforts by the regional countries. However, security minilateralism for the traditional security threats is a new concept for the region. Most of the minilaterals involve the US or its allies and partners. Since minilateralism is a flexible mechanism, the regional powers have clung to it in the times of uncertainty. It has several advantages such as quick decision making, common interests, shared understanding of the problem and absence of forced obligation. Moreover, the forum can be

used to signal approval or disapproval towards a particular event. Notwithstanding the rewards, the flip side of minilaterals is that the member countries can face 'Prisoner's Dilemma' due to its non-committal nature. Besides, it may be perceived as 'ganging-up' against a particular country.

The Quadrilateral and the India-Japan-Australia trilateral is an extension of the US policy towards the region. The twin objective of both the minilaterals is to check the Chinese abrasiveness and preserve the US-led order. The formations have attempted to achieve its targets by diplomatic means such as through issuing joint statements. However, the strategy has not worked on the ground. It has not been able to rein in the Chinese activities. On the contrary, the Chinese aggression has risen in the past decade. Notwithstanding its failure to curb the Chinese moves, the minilaterals has enabled the increased coordination among the allies and partners of the US. It has raised the defence and security cooperation amongst them.

In the case of Quadrilateral, the joint statement contained all the phrases that have been regularly used against China in the recent past. However, such a diplomatic protest has failed time and again. Moreover, the Quadrilateral 2.0 did not include a joint naval exercise between the participants. Further, the Australian request to participate in the annual Malabar Naval Exercise was rejected by India which showed a degree of the trust deficit in the grouping. Thus, there are questions regarding the effectiveness of the security minilaterals among the US partners and allies. For last several years, these countries are diplomatically trying to constraint vigorous Chinese activities in the region, albeit unsuccessfully. Still, there is no change in the minilateral format or its lateral expansion on the ground, except the addition of Japan to the annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US.

Although the minilaterals are not efficacious in its primary aim, they are on the right path vis-à-vis their secondary aims, i.e., to improve spoke-to-spoke relations, spread the normative architecture throughout the region and create a larger pool of stakeholders in the area. Moreover, they have helped India's AEP. The minilaterals has made India a stakeholder in the regional security. It has deepened India's engagements with the Eastern countries. Moreover, it has given India more visibility in the security matters. Besides, it has underlined the centrality

of the ASEAN. In this regard, the location of the Quad 1.0 and 2.0 is interesting. Both the meetings took place in Manila. The Quad 2.0 met on the sidelines of the EAS.

Amid the regional churning India is calculating its options. Since the end of the cold war, the US-led order has benefitted India. Thus, India found the normative structure of the US-led order favourable for its rise. It made sustained efforts to come out of the hangover of the cold war and improve relations with the US at the beginning of the century. It got an equally enthusiastic response from the US. As a result of the improved relationship, India got a nuclear deal from the US which gave it legitimacy as nuclear power and helped it to trade in nuclear substance. It enabled India to import uranium for its power plants which used to face the problem of under capacity. The most significant advantage of the deal was that it built trust between the two democracies. India's trade in defence hardware with the US rose to spectacular levels within 7-8 years. Overall, it was a win-win relationship between the two countries.

However, as India has always put the strategic autonomy at the top while conducting its foreign policy, some quarters in New Delhi felt that India was moving very close to the US. According to them, it was affecting India's manoeuvrability while taking independent decisions at the world stage. Thus, the momentum in the bilateral ties slowed down tremendously during the second avatar of UPA. However, with the change of the government in New Delhi, the energy was restored. PM Modi proactively engaged with the US in all the matters including security, defence and climate change. He made India's relationship independent of India's relations with the third country. He embraced the US as a partner rather than anything else in the Indo-Pacific region. The US partnership offered India with an opportunity to enhance its internal defence capacity. On the part of US, the partnership allowed it to widen its networked patchwork and encourage a member on the world stage which share similar values as itself.

While India's relations with the US were on an upward trajectory, its ties with China fluctuated in the past decade. The Doklam standoff at trijunction of India-Bhutan-China border was the lowest point in the relationship. Although both nations resolved the crisis through diplomatic means, it had every possibility of getting out of hand. The Chinese aggression was not unusual but was a part of its strategy to make India kowtow before itself. The idea had roots in the

Chinese history. While China was a middle kingdom, neighbouring nations used to bow before China and barter peace in return for the subservient position. Thus, by overawing India and Bhutan, China tried to enforce its position as the chief hegemon of the region. Its posture towards the two neighbours showed their place in the eyes of the Chinese state.

Therefore, India has always remained steadfast in its opposition to the evolution of the Sino-centric order. It knows its inferior position in such an order. If such an order ever realises, it would lose its regional influence over the subcontinent in no time, the signs of which are visible since all of India's neighbours are intrinsically integrated into Chinese economy either by trade or through the BRI. However, India has been prudent in its approach. While it criticised Chinese designs of BRI and unsustainable loans, it participated in its economic initiatives. It tried to balance its China policy with a sagacity. Since for the first time in the history India faced a superpower in its neighbourhood, its policy towards China could neither be too aggressive nor too submissive. The UPA government took a soft approach towards China, sacrificing its relationship with the US. However, the NDA government dealt with China from the position of strength. India's tough stand during the Doklam crisis showed that India could never compromise its core interests and its friends. The message reverberated not only in the subcontinent but also across the Malacca Strait.

The ASEAN always recognised India's prowess and involved it in its institutional web accordingly. It admitted India as a sectoral dialogue partner only after the end of the cold war and when India opened up its economy. India's rising military power led its entry into ARF in 1996. As soon as India normalised its relations with the US in the early 2000s, India's stature in the ASEAN rose to that of Summit-level partnership in 2002. In spite of opposition from China and some other countries, ASEAN made sure that India became a founding member of the EAS in 2005. Subsequently, it was added to every multilateral forum. Thus, India's power has always been recognised by the ASEAN and its involvement in the ASEAN multilateral forums can be considered as a reflection of its power. India, on its part, always gave importance to its relations with ASEAN after it unveiled the 'Look East' policy in the 1990s. The rise of China and India's dependence on the SLOC was another reason that bound the two regions. As China increased its presence in the India Ocean, India started eyeing the Pacific Ocean beyond Malacca. Similarly, development of India's northeast also needed active engagement with the

ASEAN countries. The NDA government's 'Act East' Policy was two-pronged in the sense that internally it aimed to bring development to India's northeast while externally India reached out to the Southeast Asia, East Asia and Southern Pacific countries more vigorously. Though India made good progress internally, it could not achieve its goals on the external front except more visibility for the bilateral relations as well as greater enthusiasm for engagement with the countries externally. Multiple infrastructure projects like Kaladan Multimodal Project could not see the light of the day. In the security arena, India deepened its relations with the regional countries like Vietnam and Singapore. However, there was no exceptional 'Act' under the government's AEP. Due to similarities between India and ASEAN regarding overall norms of the regional engagement, India is satisfied with its position in the ASEAN-conceived order. Owing to its complementary nature, India will try to contribute to the ASEAN attempts to preserve the normative architecture for the region designed by ASEAN.

Overall, India has employed two strategies to deal with the multiplicity of the orders in the region, hedging and soft balancing. The hedging strategy is used when there is an uncertainty in the air. It is an insurance against the churning in the regional security structure. India is helping to preserve the US-led order in the region. It is cooperating with the US in the security and defence matters which are of mutual benefit. Moreover, it is diplomatically supporting the US in its quest to preserve the US' normative web. It is actively participating in the US-led initiatives such as the formation of the minilaterals even at the cost of being perceived as siding with the US. Further, it is deepening its relations with the US allies. At the same time, India has tried to improve its ties with China. It has tried to engage China diplomatically as well as economically. While strengthening ties with the US, it has made sure that it does not come at the cost of its relations with China. After all, China is India's biggest neighbour having an unresolved territorial dispute. Thus, India is refraining from keeping all the eggs in one basket. India's soft balancing strategy against China and an emerging order led by it is evident from its burgeoning defence ties with the US and its partners. Multiple joint exercises, signing of LEMOA with the US, inking defence related agreements with Japan and Australia, enhancing security cooperation with ASEAN countries are all part of India's soft balancing against China. Further, India's participation in the regional multilateral initiatives is also a testimony to its policy of soft balancing against China. Since ASEAN-conceived order is convergent with that

of the US-led order, India's strategies are fitting perfectly in the ASEAN's overall designs for the region.

Therefore, it can be drawn from the above analysis that multiple orders co-exist in the Indo-Pacific region concurrently: the US-led order, the Sino-centric order and the ASEAN-conceived order. The US-led order and an ASEAN-conceived order compliment each other, and their co-existence is harmonious. The Sino-centric order, which is in the process of evolution, can go against the normative architecture built by the former two after the end of the cold war. India prefers the US-led order in the region as it is coterminous with India's normative thinking. India's threat perception comes mainly from China which has always maintained an antagonistic attitude towards it. Thus, the emergence of the Sino-centric order is inimical to India's interests. India is part of the important minilaterals in the region which are mainly led by the US or its allies. Thus, India has become the US partner in the process. However, the minilaterals has given India legitimacy as the sole power in the Indian Ocean Region. Since India's 'Act East' policy indicates the significance of East; the minilaterals consolidate India's Act East policy in the diplomatic terms. As all of the joint statements from the minilaterals mainly express concern over Chinese activities in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Region, it complements one of the important goals of the AEP, i.e., to manage the emergence of the Sino-centric order. However, minilaterals have failed to check the Chinese activities on the ground. Due to its 'soft' approach, minilateralism has not been able to emerge as a lever in Indian foreign policy arms. However, in future, it can emerge as an important lever in India's diplomatic arsenal.

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