

Defense News Conclave

Stories of U.S. - India Defense Partnership

The Relevance of India-U.S. Defense Relations in Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

BRIEFING PAPER #2/April 2022

India-U.S. defense ties have become of paramount importance in the Indo-Pacific, given the tectonic geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic shifts in the region. This relationship will be vital for both the economic growth of the region and for securing an open, free, rules-based Indo-Pacific. The regional disequilibrium and unilateral assertions of a rising China pose challenges to the region, which need to be mitigated through the cooperation of like-minded countries like India and the U.S. The key to India-U.S. defense relations in the Indo-Pacific is strategic deterrence, which can be undertaken primarily by increasing interoperability between the Armed Forces.

Introduction

"My great hope for the future is that there will be an increase in understanding between India and the United States so that both of us may profit by the things which we have to offer in our particular sphere"- Eleanor Roosevelt

Today, the region referred to as Indo-Pacific has been the ocean of churn for millions of years. The region underwent lexical and focal changes over human history, just to remerge as the new strategic lexicon in everyday international relations in the 21st century. This re-emergence is rooted in the region's vast economic, geographic, demographic, commercial, and strategic potential.

Any discussion on the Indo-Pacific must begin with a definition of the geographical tract under reference. India's definition of the Indo-Pacific covers its core interests in the Indian Ocean region, complemented by a presence beyond which ensures

a peaceful periphery. Any [engagement](#) on global commons or the ocean in itself has interconnected effects. This is where U.S. definitions of the Indo-Pacific stretching from Hollywood to Bollywood meet India's conception of the Indo-Pacific, reflecting a meeting of minds and making the engagement cordial.

Currently, international politics is embroiled in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and there are numerous debates around whether the conflict will reshape the world order forever or not. Both India and the U.S. face strategic choices as responsible sovereign nations. Their respective foreign policy stances on the conflict have been specific to their countries' geopolitical and strategic needs. The most reassuring aspect of India-U.S. bilateral ties is the cordial formal engagements that India and the U.S. have undertaken since the beginning of the conflict.

Due to complex historical, geographical, economic, and strategic reasons, India [abstained](#) from voting on a U.S.-backed draft United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution against Russia. Despite their different positions on the current crisis, the U.S. has duly [recognised](#) that both India and the U.S. have different and distinct relationships with Russia and have an independent, de-hyphenated engagement with each other not contingent on any third country. The assurance has not just been in comments but also in the forms of consistent deliverables, keeping up the focus in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Quad (Quadrilateral dialogue) [meeting](#) amidst the rising conflict, the [release](#) of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), and advanced talks on the [deal](#) for drones are all notable, illustrating the continuing centrality of the Indo-Pacific region notwithstanding global geopolitical flux.

In the context of the Indo-Pacific region, India-U.S. defense relations will be [key](#) from both strategic and commercial vantage points. Both countries share interests in counter-terrorism cooperation, regional stability, humanitarian assistance, and maritime security. The designation of India as a [Major Defense Partner](#) of the U.S. has enhanced India's procurement of sensitive defense technologies. As a result, defense procurement from the U.S. has seen remarkable [growth](#). The strategic climate around the Indo-Pacific fosters a shared interest in defense cooperation for ensuring an open and free, rules-based region.

Therefore, this Briefing Paper looks into 'The Relevance of India-U.S. Defense Relations in Indo-Pacific Geopolitics'. This paper covers the evolution of the Indo-Pacific region and encapsulates the need for India-U.S. defense relations in the region. It dwells on maritime security and looks at the existing multilateral arrangements. The paper also focuses on

a few propositions to bring about the coupling of strategic and commercial interests.

The Origins and Evolution of the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Historically, the Indo-Pacific region has been referred to by different nomenclatures but has remained as the central zone of geopolitics and geoeconomics. Karl Haushofer, a German geographer, first [introduced](#) the term Indo-Pacific as '*Indopazifischen Raum*' in his work in the 1920s. Modern Indian historians [exploring](#) maritime relations of the region like Kalidas Nag and Nilakanta Sastri refer to the concept in their scholarly work.

Currently, the Indo-Pacific region [possesses](#) over half of the world's population and includes 58 percent of the youth workforce. Its economy is 60 percent of the global GDP, and the region has two-thirds of the global economic growth. Geographically, the region holds 65 percent of the world's ocean and 25 percent of its land.

With the pivot to the Indo-Pacific in the past few years in the international arena, the focus on the region has gained new momentum. This has resulted from a concerted effort of numerous initiatives and official recognitions by various actors and countries.

In a speech delivered to the Indian Parliament in 2007, Shinzo Abe described the region as the ["Confluence of the Two Seas"](#), drawing from India's history. '*Majma-ul-Bahrain*', which translates to "The Confluence of the Two Seas" is the [title of a book](#) by Dara Shikoh. In addition to India's centrality to the region, the Indo-Pacific has also been central to India's naval thinking. The relief and rescue mission conducted after the 2004 tsunami in the region witnessed a natural coming together of Australia, Japan, India, and the United States.

Box 1: A Story from History

Dara Shikoh was the eldest son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. He was one of the earliest scholars who dwelled upon the commonalities of Sufism and Vedantic traditions. ‘*Majma-ul-Bahrain*’ (The Confluence of Two Seas) is a prominent work towards this end.

Source: <https://indianculture.gov.in/stories/dara-shikoh>

However, official recognition of the centrality of Indo-Pacific architectures began with the efforts of Hillary Clinton in 2011, Julia Gillard and Manmohan Singh in 2013, and with the [renaming](#) of U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) in 2017. By then, the Indo-Pacific concept was well on its way to being entrenched in both popular imagination and strategic thinking.

The Shangri-La Dialogue in 2019 witnessed India [state](#) its Indo-Pacific vision. This outlined India’s indispensable role in the region, commitment to principles of the rule of law, envisioning a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and the sovereign equality of nations. The latest document capturing the U.S.’s [vision](#) for the Indo-Pacific came out in

February 2022, titled “The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States” (IPS).

The five [objectives](#) of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific, as stated in the IPS include advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific, building connections within and beyond the region, driving regional prosperity, bolstering Indo-Pacific security, and building regional resilience to transnational threats. The IPS reiterates ‘support for India’s continued rise and regional leadership’.

Yet, it is not that friction points don’t exist in India-U.S. bilateral relations and their strategic outlooks and interests. While the two countries have overcome the hesitations of history, some contemporary challenges include the looming threat of sanctions over India’s procurement of S-400 systems, apprehensions over India’s initiatives like Make in India, *Atmanirbharta*, and [disagreements](#) over aspects of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

However, there is still a high degree of convergence in India-U.S. visions and aspirations for the Indo-Pacific region. Further, the recent events between Russia and Ukraine have highlighted the importance of focused strategies by the Quad and like-minded countries to [prevent](#) any such actions by

Box 2: U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)

The Unified Combatant Commandant (UCC) of the U.S. comprises two or more service branches. Currently, there are 11 Combatant Commandants. They are divided based on Areas of Responsibility (AOR) or functional basis. USINDOPACOM is one of the six Combatant Commandants divided based on AOR. It was earlier known as the United States Pacific Combatant Commandant (USPACOM) and was renamed to recognise the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and India’s central role in the region.

Source: <https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/>



similarly inclined powers in the Indo-Pacific region. This reinforces the need for robust India-U.S. cooperation as a foundational pillar for the Indo-Pacific region.

Box 3: IPS Objectives and Core Lines of Efforts

| S.No. | Objectives | Core Lines of Effort |
|-------|---|---|
| 1 | Open and free Indo-Pacific | This is the overall framework of IPS. |
| 2 | Ensure Connectivity | a) Pool in new and more resources to the region |
| | | b) Empower ASEAN |
| | | c) Framework for an economic outlook |
| | | d) Build resilience in the Islands |
| 3 | Drive regional prosperity | a) Support India’s rise and regional leadership |
| | | b) Promote good governance and accountability |
| | | c) Promote ASEAN centrality |
| 4 | Bolster security | a) Build strong deterrence capabilities |
| | | b) Promote Quad cooperation |
| | | c) Expand the U.S.-South Korea-Japan cooperation |
| | | d) Build secure, resilient technologies |
| | | e) Strong partnership with Island countries |
| 5 | Regional resilience for transnational threats | Undertake all the core lines of efforts stated above to build a vital region for the world. |

Source: <https://maritimeindia.org/the-us-indo-pacific-strategy-2022-an-analysis/>

Need and Status of India-U.S. Defense Relations in the Indo-Pacific Region

The geography of practices of states often matters as much as their history. As it is often said, '[diplomacy is sited](#)', implying that it is important to analyse where the diplomatic initiative is being practiced geographically. India-U.S. defense cooperation is both mutually beneficial and crucial for safeguarding the Indo-Pacific against the multidimensional threats confronting the region, particularly those from strategic rivals.

China’s skirmishes with India [include](#) the tussle at Pangong Tso, Chushul sector, Eastern Ladakh - Galwan Valley, Depsang plains, and Sikkim. Similarly, China’s clampdown on democracy in Hong Kong, intrusion into Taiwanese airspace, and unilateral actions in the South China Sea challenge the region's stability.

China has indicated it will not hesitate to undertake destabilising activities in the region to retaliate against any activity it deems counter to its interests, despite deep economic engagements with the region. This has been revealed in both India’s experience at its border regions and coercive economic policies implemented by China against countries like [Australia](#).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is [unraveling](#) from a program for infrastructure development into an infrastructure offensive and a debt trap for countries relying on Chinese investments. This has been seen in the case of Sri Lanka’s [Hambantota port](#) and [Uganda’s Entebbe International Airport](#). Along with its [string of pearls strategy](#), BRI and President Xi’s vision of a '[shared vision of community and humankind](#)' reflect a unique Chinese dominance strategy.

Since 2012, Beijing has been focusing on becoming a ‘maritime power’, as [reflected](#) in multiple remarks made by Xi Jinping. Currently, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has [more](#)

[vessels](#) than the U.S. The [blurred lines](#) between commercial and military manufacturing in China have led to an increase in production rate and drastic adaptability to new technology in maritime manufacturing. Industrial growth goes hand in hand with the [modernisation](#) of the PLAN and the expansion of shipyards.

China is also advancing its [submarine](#) capabilities, like a nuclear triad that includes land, sea, and air-based nuclear weapons delivery. Therefore, it will be a strategic imperative for India and the U.S. to cooperate to level the seesaw of the balance of power in the region. As has been rightly [stated](#) in the U.S.' IPS, "*Our collective efforts over the next decade will determine whether the PRC succeeds in transforming the rules and norms that have benefitted the Indo-Pacific and the world*".

The IPS [promises](#) to "*bring together our Indo-Pacific and European partners in novel ways, including finding new opportunities to link our defense industrial bases, integrating our defense supply chains, and co-producing key technologies that will shore up our collective military advantages*".

Several like-minded countries have shown enhanced interest in the Indo-Pacific, including France, which [declared](#) its Indo-Pacific strategy in 2018. France, Australia, and India also became involved in a short-lived trilateral partnership in the Indo-Pacific which managed to meet once. The European Union has also [come out](#) with its Indo-Pacific strategy.

The India-U.S. partnership in the Indo-Pacific region will be built on recognising differential capabilities underpinned by democratic engagement. With China making ever-greater inroads into the subcontinent with its larger resources, India has to invest greater efforts in realising an interconnected and economically integrated region driven by India as an [engine](#) of growth. As duly recognised in the

IPS, India has assets in cultural affinity, proximity, and ability to provide public goods through alliances and friendships, which China cannot match.

On the other hand, the U.S. has the economic heft and naval capabilities to deter. Complementing their respective capabilities and strengths and building on other beneficial partnerships will be the best way forward.

Maritime Security

India has a significant advantage as a maritime nation with open seas to its west, south, and east. The U.S. is the world's strongest maritime power. While public imagination is often focused on India's continental borders and the threats of a multiple-front military engagement, maritime security is equally important. Developing India's maritime capabilities is essential for a peaceful Indo-Pacific region. Enhanced defense cooperation between India and the U.S. in the naval and maritime domain will be a crucial step in this direction.

After all, this is the natural space for expanding geopolitical footprints in the Indo-Pacific region. As has been rightly pointed out by U.S. officials, "*We see tremendous opportunities in working with another democracy, with a country that has a [maritime tradition](#) that understands the importance of the global commons to advance critical issues in the region*".

An all-inclusive maritime security strategy requires the development of homeland maritime infrastructure, island assets, connectivity, and capabilities. India's Indo-Pacific strategy needs to factor in a rise in the Indian Navy's expenditure, and the generous [budgetary](#) allocations for this in the recent Budget are welcome. Beijing will react to this posture and prime up India's adversarial neighbouring states with more [frigates, submarines,](#) and naval equipment.

Box 4: Bilateral and Multilateral Maritime Exercises between India and U.S. in the Indo-Pacific

| Indo-Pacific Maritime Exercises | Description | Year |
|---------------------------------------|--|------|
| Malabar Exercise | The exercise began in 1992 and has been held annually since 2002 | 1992 |
| Habu Nag | Cooperation between the navies of India and the U.S. for facilitating humanitarian aid and disaster relief | 2007 |
| Tiger Triumph | Joint engagement between the Indian tri-service and the U.S. Navy | 2018 |
| Carrier Strike Group Passage Exercise | Indian Navy and Air force with the U.S. Navy to integrate maritime operations | 2021 |
| Exercise Sea Dragon | Indian Navy's P-8I participated in Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise - 22 at Guam in the U.S. with Quad members. India participated for the first time in 2022 | 1966 |
| The rim of Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) | The world's largest international maritime warfare exercise is held biennially, hosted by the U.S. | 1971 |
| Milan Exercise | Hosted by the Indian Navy. The U.S. took part for the first time in 2022. | 1995 |

Source: <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/operations/11>

A stable Indo-Pacific region can be achieved only through shared security architectures for which both strategic and operational cooperation is required. In due recognition of this, the Navies of both countries have undertaken various [Maritime Exercises](#) like Malabar Exercise, Tiger Triumph,

Habu Nag, and Carrier Strike Group Passage Exercise.

India and the U.S. have also [entered](#) into a white shipping agreement to ensure data sharing on cargo ships and expand partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

Box 5: INS-Jalashwa

INS-Jalashwa is the only Naval Ship of American origin in the Indian Navy. It was procured in 2005 and was commissioned in 2007. It can house up to four LCM-8 mechanised landing craft, the flight deck can hold six medium helicopters, has a facility for vertical take-off and landing, and is capable of embarking 1000 troops. It is equipped with medical facilities like operation theatres, a dental center, and a laboratory. INS-Jalashwa has been employed in multiple rescue and aid missions like Operation Samudra Setu, Mission Sagar-IV, etc.

Source: [INS-Jalashwa](#)



Recognising the need for an overarching maritime security and ocean governance framework, India [launched](#) its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) policy in 2015. Further, anchored to India's Act East Policy, India [introduced](#) the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) to support a rules-based order in the region. It seeks to address

traditional security threats and geostrategic concerns and is inclusive and open, where any two countries can collaborate on a particular sector.

Along with India and the U.S., many like-minded countries have joined in cooperation to secure the global maritime commons in the Indo-Pacific region. In January, France [deployed](#) its only carrier group to the region in 2019, followed by the United Kingdom's carrier strike group and an accompanying Dutch frigate in 2021 and the German Navy's deployment of the Brandenburg-class [frigate Bayern](#), in 2021. This is a clear indication of growing cooperation in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

The most recent 11th Milan Exercise [indicates](#) increasing cooperation with like-minded countries. Thirteen nations took part in the exercise deploying their warships, along with delegations from seven other countries. The exercise engaged in advanced naval operations to enhance mutual understanding, operational compatibility, and interoperability.

Box 6: Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI)

The establishment of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) by the U.S. Department of Defense envisions developing and procuring defense capabilities, bolstering deterrence, and maintaining a competitive edge. The initiative's primary focus includes infrastructural development, reinforcing High Altitude Area Defense, free movement, and flow of resources into the Indo-Pacific region.

Source: [DoD-Pacific Deterrence Initiative](#)

Box 7: Milan Exercise

Milan exercise is a biennial exercise first held in 1995, and it is the maritime exercise hosted by India which sees maximum participation.

11th Exercise practices consisted of:

- Three key objectives - achieve compatibility, interoperability, and cooperation
- Anti-Warfare drills using P-8A aircraft and a strike group of Indian fighter jets against a formation of warships
- Weapon firing against low-flying air targets
- Underway replenishment
- Advanced anti-submarine exercises using aircraft and simulation of complex operational scenarios
- Surface target firings

Source:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1800604>

Multilateral Arrangements in the Indo-Pacific Region

Multilateral arrangements cover a mix of economic, social, political, and security concerns, often overlapping. Multiple multilateral agreements in the Indo-Pacific region count India and the U.S as their members. Here, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s role is crucial, and "ASEAN-centrality" is well-recognized, most recently in the U.S.' IPS. Both India and the U.S. are dialogue partners of ASEAN.

The various groupings that both India and the U.S. are part of can complement each other and work synergistically to achieve the common overarching goals of Indo-Pacific security and stability. Countries have the potential to deliver and provide an alternative to 'debt trap dependency' to other countries in the region. These include active collaborations with the EU, UK, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore.

In addition to providing mutual commercial benefit to these countries, this will facilitate the development of the region. Second, the strategically located Island states and littorals need to be tactically engaged through the consultative process while being sensitive to their environment. Third, different tracks of engagement with different ASEAN countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Cambodia and Laos can be pursued. Hence, a network of engagements with different groupings of nations, and targeted economic development along with enhanced defense capabilities can ensure a peaceful region.

ASEAN's ability to coordinate the region's political and security issues is crucial. This is reflected in the "[ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific](#)", released in 2021. The Outlook document describes the rationale of ASEAN countries' cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the objectives it seeks to achieve, the principles of agreement, and the mechanisms and areas of collaboration. The work areas include maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, economic and regional cooperation. ASEAN countries emphasise the need to maintain peace in the region through cooperation with existing groupings and mechanisms.

An inevitable aspect is the trade linkages of ASEAN with China. Similar to efforts made by the U.S., a 'decoupling' strategy with China would mean finding alternative forms of economic cooperation, which is challenging in the near term. Along with China, India's presence in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) can help achieve a balance of power in the region. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), for its part, is another effective platform for the implementation of initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region.

Regional forums, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) are other important frameworks within which both India and the U.S. can work together to enhance cooperation on maritime issues.

Box 8: Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

India established the IFC-IOR in Gurugram in December 2018. Indian Navy hosts the Centre to facilitate cooperation on various challenges affecting the maritime security and trade of the region. Focus areas include maritime security information sharing and working-level linkages with nations and maritime security centres. To facilitate the smooth flow of information sharing, the Centre has International Liaison Officers (ILOs) from ten partner nations, including the U.S. The Centre releases monthly weather forecasts and weather warnings, specific studies/reports, Monthly Maritime Security Update (MMSU), Half Yearly Overview, and Annual Report. The Centre also organises Maritime Information Sharing Workshops (MISW).

Source: [Indian Ocean Region \(IFC-IOR\)](#)

The Quad is shaping up to be a driving force behind cooperation in the region. The Quad has evolved as a grouping, complementing the pre-existing security relationships of its members with an expansive agenda for cooperation on non-security frameworks. Accordingly, the recent emphasis of the Quad has been on [initiatives](#) such as vaccine cooperation, cyber security, 5G, fellowship programmes, etc., all of which aim at improving the well-being of people in the Indo-Pacific Region.

The recent Melbourne Foreign ministerial [meeting](#) of Quad focused on regional challenges, including Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR), maritime security, strengthening people-to-people ties, counter-terrorism, resilient clean energy supply chains, countering disinformation, and cyber security.

A multilateral initiative like Quad serves three diplomatic purposes, in addition to efforts to maintain the stability of the region. First, it provides an additional platform to strengthen cooperation amongst like-minded countries. Second, it can help revitalise bilateral cooperation between member states. Third, it can boost engagement between member countries and other countries in the region. ASEAN centrality, as [reflected](#) in the Quad meeting, plays a crucial role here.

The shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific creates a baseline for cooperation between Quad and ASEAN. Such an ecosystem would facilitate development and secure the Indo-Pacific region. This synergy may even be extended to imaginative, issue-based cooperation with other sub-regional frameworks, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) grouping and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States alliance (AUKUS).

Indian foreign policy circles witnessed intense debates around Quad, AUKUS, and India's exclusion from the latter pact when it was announced last year. This reveals both the high levels of interest in Indo-Pacific issues and certain limitations in strategic approaches. As indicated above, imaginative thinking is required to frame a robust Indo-Pacific architecture.

For example, the Quad, retaining ASEAN centrality at its core by seeking greater involvement from the grouping, can be the vehicle for diverse non-security cooperation in the region. Parallely, the security and strategic burden of the Indo-Pacific

can shift to an extent to AUKUS, with a possible need-based expansion. Security burden-sharing by the AUKUS is good for India, too, as it expands India's choices in the Indo-Pacific and the larger geopolitical tangle it finds itself in the midst of.

Coupling of Defense and Commercial Interests

India and the U.S. need to adopt an inclusive approach to secure strategic and commercial interests and build the region's capabilities. Effective maritime security in the region implies a necessary economic investment as well. The U.S.'s much awaited Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) has its relevance here. A wide range of opportunities is available to both nations to enhance engagement to balance economic benefits and security concerns. These include Export-oriented joint production, Naval Corridors, Investment in R&D, Robust defense supply chains; Focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and adoption of best practices.

i. Export-oriented joint production

The possibilities of building a maritime manufacturing ecosystem with U.S. support holds significant potential. Inward investments in R&D can foster **defense interlinkages**. India and the U.S. can cooperate in such an ecosystem, aiming toward **export-oriented joint and co-production**. India's Defense Offset and Defense Manufacturing policies must facilitate this.

ii. Naval Defense Corridors

Taking advantage of India's vast coastline, a **manufacturing corridor linking the seven ports in the Eastern coastal line**, Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu), Ennore (Tamil Nadu), Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Paradip (Odisha), Haldia & Kolkata (West Bengal), and Port Blair (Andaman & Nicobar Island) can shore up India's maritime advantage. This should be coupled with an

emphasis on para-diplomacy – where States can also seek international collaborations. This can simultaneously anchor co-production of defense equipment to create an industrial base, stimulate defense trade, and contribute to the economies of these States.

iii. Defense supply chains

Integrating into resilient and adaptive **defense supply chains**, paralleled with robust connectivity, can deter the Chinese ‘String of Pearls’ strategy and ensure the security of the Indo-Pacific.

iv. MSMEs

Increasing private sector participation in defense manufacturing, and integrating MSMEs, is the need of the hour. There are successful instances of both – such as Tata Boeing Aerospace and Tata Lockheed Martin Aerostructures; the upcoming Tamil Nadu Revised Aerospace and Defence Policy 2022 and innovative defense projects by Vinveli, Combat Robotics India, etc.

v. Adoption of best practices

Adoption of **best practices** from the U.S. defense manufacturing, conducive to India’s needs, can be adopted. The current strategic necessities in the Indo-Pacific demand quick and efficient defense production and procurement.

Conclusions

The concept of Indo-Pacific needs to evolve into a more robust institutionalised framework to address the mounting challenges. Existing multilateralism needs to be refreshed through newer formulations like polyilateralism to include non-governmental stakeholders.

In the light of the developments in Ukraine, Afghanistan, and the shifting of the Islamic State (IS) into Central Africa, the world today confronts both fresh and existing zones of conflict. For the U.S., China is a strategic rival and competitor, but for India, China is not a distant threat but a real and immediate security challenge.

An economically and military capable India is aligned with the strategic interests of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. will increasingly see India as a net security provider in the region. Only a resilient Indian economy and a top-notch military and strategic community can take the edge out of an aggressive China.

India’s vision for enhancing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region includes a common rules-based order for the region and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries. Jointly tackling maritime threats and natural disasters, conservation of the maritime environment, and maritime connectivity to boost trade, are other key pillars.

These objectives are also major priority areas for various other Indo-Pacific frameworks – the U.S.’ IPS, the ASEAN Outlook, Quad objectives, and all other like-minded countries’ Indo-Pacific policies. This gives ample space for cooperation and is an encouraging sign toward a coherent vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.