

CNEAS COMMENTARY

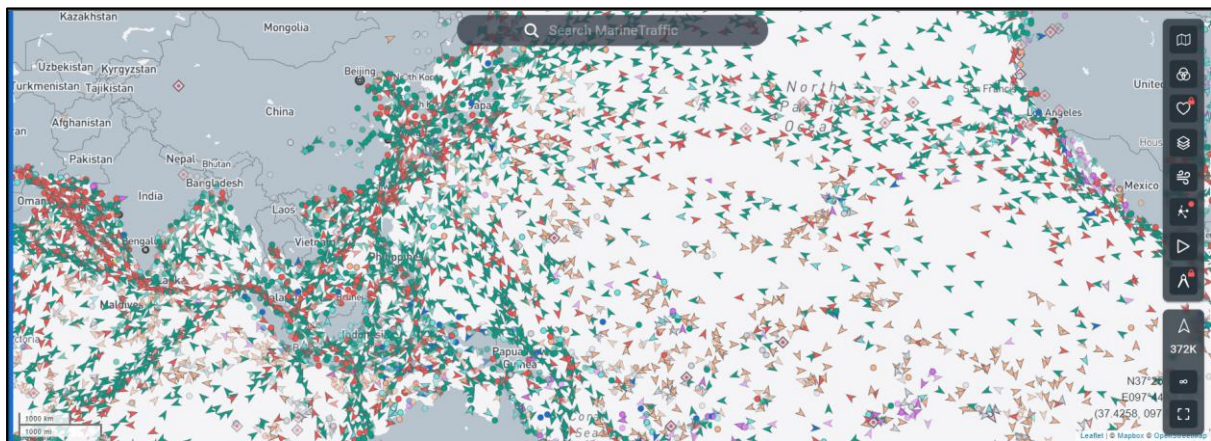
The Indo-Pacific Theatrics and India's contribution to the Quad

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Introduction

The Indo-Pacific is one of the most important regions of the world that carries about 60% of the global GDP through this region. The map below shows the major trade routes that pass through this region:



The above image, blue represents pleasure crafts, red represents military vessels, and the rest represent types of cargo vessels (Traffic, n.d.).

The world's three largest economies, China, Japan, and the United States, are all located on Pacific coasts. The Indo-Pacific region also accounts for about 60% of world GDP and two-thirds of global growth. The Strait of Malacca alone supports up to 25% of international sea trade; if these shipping routes are impacted, the consequences on supply chains to and from Europe and the rest of the world. The Indo-Pacific is also home to nearly 60% of the world's population and 20 of the world's 33 megacities; it also is responsible for more than half of all global carbon emissions. As a result, governments throughout the Indo-Pacific have become critical stakeholders concerning global problems, for example threat of climate change (Policy, 2023).

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

The Indo-Pacific is also home to the grouping of 4 countries, United States, Japan, India, and Australia, known together as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). The Quad is a partnership initiative between the United States of America, Japan, Australia, and India. This grouping was formed after the December 26th, 2004, Indian Ocean tsunami when the four countries formed the Tsunami Core Group to aid to those disaster struck regions. Together, these four countries contributed over 40,000 troops, humanitarian responders, a dozen of helicopters and cargo trucks and planes. This ad-hoc group jointly collaborated and provided tsunami relief and even reconstruction (WION 2021). This grouping was dissolved post the crisis.

After the overwhelming success of this grouping along with showcasing a new form of diplomacy to the world, former Prime Minister of Japan, late Shinzo Abe proposed an “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” in 2006, in order to promote and enhance the spread of freedom and the maintenance of the Rule of Law. This grouping was later taken into consideration by the then Indian Prime Minister and the then American Vice President, subsequently meeting in 2007 in New Delhi. This meeting of the Quad that former PM late Shinzo Abe devised on the basis of peace and democracy was held on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum, hosted in Manila (Chellaney 2007). From 2007, the Quad has been an informal protector of the Indo-Pacific Region and all the countries that comprise it, namely: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan (Republic of China- ROC), Thailand, Timor-Leste, United States, and Vietnam. Most these countries have disputes with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), majorly the US and Australia have trade disputes, while India, Vietnam, Japan, and Nepal have land disputes with PRC.

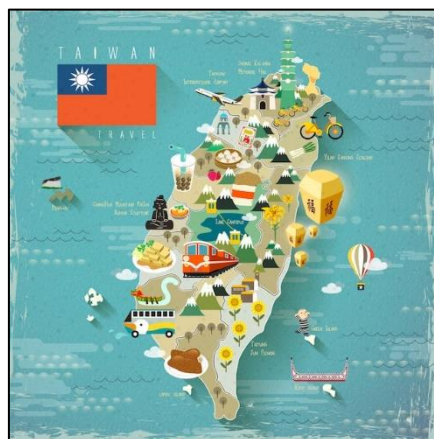
The Need for a Quad

China's Indo-Pacific geopolitics focuses mainly on three maritime zones: the South China Sea, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the broader Indian and Pacific Oceans. China is an Indo-Pacific maritime state with a presence and interest in the greater Indo-Pacific seas, but it is geopolitically confined and handicapped by the arc of neighbouring Indo-Pacific nations and their respective Indo-Pacific agendas (Scott, 2019). China has territorial claims over majority

of the South China Sea, which is increasingly being viewed as a "core interest." China claims control over the Paracel and Spratly scatterings of islands, rocks, atolls, and reefs, their respective exclusive economic zones, and most of the South China Sea under the 'nine dash line'. This claim has triggered conflicts over maritime and territorial sectors with Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia (Scott 2019).

With growing conflicts with China over maritime security, the PRC has become a serious threat to the peacekeeping of these crucial waterways. The PRC has blindsided the globally accepted maritime laws along with challenging the rules-based order. An amalgamation of the Chinese behaviour towards maritime security and continuous territorial claims over islands, including building man-made ones, China's growth has threatened peace and security (WION 2021). The regional power balance has been changing as a result of this dynamic. China's political and economic rise poses a challenge to the national interests to all surrounding States. The United States' strategic focus has been shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. During the preceding decade, arms spending in this region surged faster than any other region on earth, currently accounting for little under 30% of all global spending. At the same time, adequate entities for collaborative safety and methods to resolve conflicts have been lacking in the Indo-Pacific region (Policy, 2023).

The Republic of China (Taiwan)



(@joyimage, n.d.)

The Republic of China came into being in mainland China in 1912. Taiwan was under Japanese colonial administration at the time as a result of the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, which surrendered Taiwan to Japan. After Japan surrendered at the end of World War II, the ROC

government began exercising sovereignty over Taiwan in 1945. While fighting a civil war with the Chinese Communist Party, the ROC government retreated to Taiwan in 1949. Since then, the ROC has maintained effective sovereignty over Taiwan's main island and a number of surrounding islands, leaving Taiwan and China each ruled by a distinct government (China G. o., n.d.). Beijing authorities have never claimed sovereignty over Taiwan or other ROC-managed islands (China, n.d.).

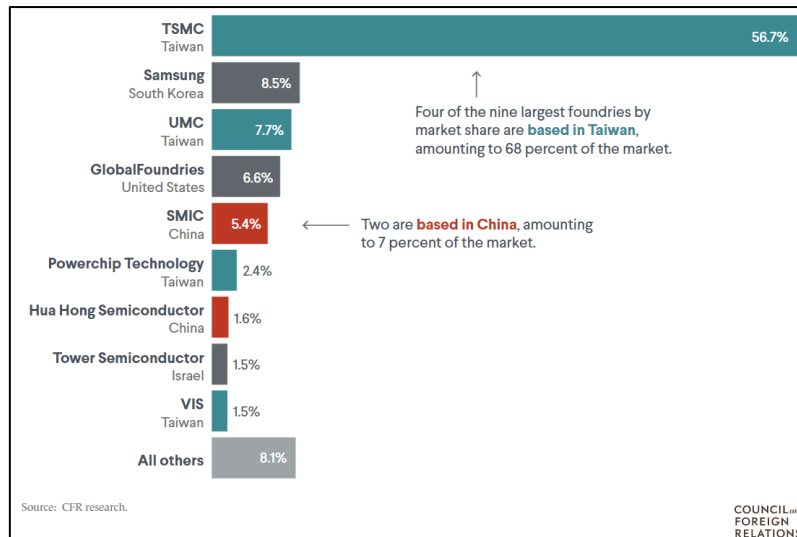
The Taiwanese (ROC) relevance to the Indo-Pacific and the US

Taiwan has been constantly ready with arms to counter the People’s Liberation Army, Air Force and Navy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The tiny island nation of Taiwan has been under the defence umbrella of the United States of America, who also governs the waterways of the Indo-Pacific. Even though an outright war between the PRC and the USA over ROC is “neither imminent nor inevitable,” tensions have been rising between the two States (Sacks, 2023).



(Sacks, 2023).

Despite the US being a thousand miles away from ROC, their fate will have significant repercussions for American security and economy. The Taiwan Strait, a narrow portion of water dividing PRC from ROC has major implications on solving global problems. With keeping the Taiwan Strait in mind, and to protect those cargo vessels that uphold the American economy, it is in US' keen interest to protect ROC from any threat from PRC.



(Sacks, 2023)

In dire events of war, when People’s Republic of China and the United States of America does go to war, this catastrophe would trigger another economic depression which would cropping at least trillions of dollars of the global output. Additionally, ROC is home to approximately 70% of the world’s semiconductor and about 90% of the world’s advanced chips manufacturers. Losing ROC would result in creating a manufacturing depression that no company could ever fill. This scenario could be made possible if the PRC decides to form a naval blockade over the Taiwan Strait, and hence it is in the best interest of the United States to protect ROC (Sacks, 2023). This protection has been nurtured into the formation of the Quad, where the bigger picture governing the cooperation of USA, Japan, Australia, India, South Korea, Vietnam, and New Zealand is to ensure that the PRC does not overstep its bounds over maritime security by scrutinizing the waters (Sacks, 2023).

India-Taiwan Equation



(Panda, 2020)

In the course of the meantime, India formed the India Taipei Association (ITA) in Taipei, and Taiwan founded the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC) in New Delhi. Both of these organisations in both the nations have been successful in promoting essential economic, political, and cultural interactions, encouraging trade and investment links and growing people-to-people contacts in a variety of fields. In May 2020, two members of the Indian Parliament virtually attended the inauguration ceremony of the newly elected President, Tsai Ing-wen and also praised the spirit of democracy in Taiwan, indirectly sending a message to China showing that India was keen in deepening ties with Taiwan (Panda, 2020). In July 2020, India had announced the appointment of Gourangalal Das, a Joint Secretary level official, as its new envoy to Taiwan, signalling that India was strengthening diplomatic ties with Taiwan (Panda, 2020).

In 2007, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India (TECC) and India-Taipei Association (ITA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. Annually, bilateral cooperative meetings and academic seminars are organised. Since January 2023, 115 projects and cooperative proposals have been executed, with 25 bilateral seminars held. Agriculture and food science; new materials for sustainable energy and storage devices; health care, including functional genomics, drug development, and biomedical devices; earth, atmosphere, and ocean sciences, including disaster management; and technological advancements for societal applications and cloud computing are all part of the science and technology cooperation (China T. R., 2023). Taiwan-India cultural contacts have expanded in recent years. Taiwanese films are often shown at major Indian film festivals, while Taiwanese performing arts companies have been highly appreciated by Indian audiences (China T. R., 2023).

Conclusion

Given the economic significance, strategic setting, and role in altering international relations, the Indo-Pacific region has evolved as a crucial focal point in the global geopolitics. The founding of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, comprised of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, has been playing a critical role in fostering Indo-Pacific stability and security. India's partnership to the Quad underscores the country's rising relevance as a major player in the region. Through Quad, India continues to successfully boost its ties with like-minded nations, enabling collaborative efforts to solve similar concerns such as

maintaining freedom of navigation, supporting regional peace, and acting as first responders to humanitarian disasters. Furthermore, the Quad has made it possible for India to present itself as a responsible and predominant regional actor, supporting its objectives of an Indo Pacific that is open and free.

Beyond that, India's strengthening associations with Taiwan are a significant component of the country's Indo-Pacific policy. While not officially recognised politically, India and Taiwan's rapidly developing commercial, scientific, and individual relationships have an opportunity to provide possibilities for both countries. Strengthening these relationships would help India in diversifying its trade and investment partners, as well as boosting its strategic standing in the Indo-Pacific.

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