

SOCIAL ACTION

A Quarterly Review of Social Trends

CONFLICT AND PEACE

- ❑ Conflict and Peace (Editorial)
Denzil Fernandes
- ❑ The Contours of Militarisation in the Indo-Pacific Region:
A Quantitative Analysis
Vinod Khobragade & Avneet Kumar Nim
- ❑ Atoning for Violent Pasts: Assessing the Promise and Perils of
Political Apologies
Kasturi Chatterjee
- ❑ Qualitative Analysis of Incidents of Crowd Violence in West
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Peace and Protecting Human and Women's Rights
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- ❑ Overcoming the Barriers: *Kashmiriyat* as a Cornerstone to
Materialize Peace in Kashmir
Syed Eesar Mehdi

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SOCIAL ACTION

Themes for forthcoming issues

NEP 2020: Challenges and Prospects

July-September 2023

(Last date to receive articles : 15 May 2023)

Food Sovereignty and Environmental Justice

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Conflict and Peace

The history of the world is an interplay between those fueling conflicts and others promoting peace. Conflicts range from those arising from ethnic violence, religious clashes, and wars between nations. Generally, conflicts occur when one group of people asserts its identity by dominating and demonizing another group of people. Violence becomes a tool to assert the supremacy and dominance of one group over another. However, amidst violence and hatred between different communities, there emerge men and women, who advocate peaceful co-existence of communities with different identities based on mutual trust and respect for each other's rich traditions and cultures. The First World War was a result of different European empires trying to assert their dominance over the others. At the end of the war, Woodrow Wilson proposed his famous Fourteen points, which included the breaking up of European empires into nation-states and the establishment of the League of Nations, to ensure a peaceful future for Europe. However, one of the nation-states decided to invade others to expand its territory and this led to the Second World War. The end of World War II resulted in the founding of the United Nations to ensure peace and security in the world and save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. But tragically, during the last 77 years, there have been over 250 armed conflicts within countries and between countries, often fueled by big powers in order to boost their arms industry. Over 600 million people live in volatile and conflict-prone areas and young people, women, and children are disproportionately affected by multiple forms of violence such as political violence, organized crime, and terrorist attacks, which exact enormous human, social and economic costs. The proliferation of armed conflicts and civil unrest has also adversely affected food and nutrition security in many countries. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the war that followed since early 2022 continues for over a year causing untold suffering, death, and destruction in Ukraine. In an effort to promote peace in a conflict-ridden world, the United Nations has proposed Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Under this goal, all countries are expected to promote peaceful coexistence among people by reducing arms flows, combatting organized crime, and reducing all forms of violence. Various countries and national and international institutions are working to improve the prospects of peace by enhancing access and supply to contested natural resources; bolstering social cohesion and resolving grievances within and between

communities; increasing opportunity and inclusion; and strengthening state accountability and service delivery.

Since India is home to a large number of cultures, religious communities, linguistic groups, castes, tribes, and ethnic groups, there are a number of conflicts between different communities. India was born amidst conflict due to the partition of the Indian sub-continent. The scars of this conflict are still fresh in the minds of people resulting in communal clashes that frequently flare up between two major religious communities. However, right after Independence, Mahatma Gandhi, and his ideologues pursued better inter-religious relations between different religious communities in India. Some parts of the country, especially Northeast India, are prone to ethnic violence between different ethnic communities. The ethnic violence raging in Manipur is a vivid illustration of the fragility of ethnic relations between different ethnic groups. The Government and civil society groups have endeavoured to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table to agree to a ceasefire and suggest possible settlements. Due to extreme inequalities that exist in the country, there is a continuing conflict between the Government and indigenous people for control over natural resources, which often degenerates to violence inspired by extreme left ideologies of Maoism and Naxalism. Rampant caste discrimination against lower castes or Dalits has resulted in caste conflicts and movements to bring legislations to prevent atrocities on Dalits. There are also conflicts due to unresolved political aspirations of people since Independence, like Kashmir and Nagaland, but at the same time, there is dialogue and an ongoing peace process that attempts to reach an amicable solution to the vexed problems. The ideological push for Hindu supremacy in India inspired by an intolerant brand of religious nationalism, commonly known as Hindutva, has led to widespread violence against marginalized communities and minorities throughout India.

This issue of Social Action contains articles that highlight the increasing number of conflicts within India and in the world and emphasizes the need for peace and reconciliation between various communities in conflict with each other. The article by Vinod Khobragade and Avneet Kumar Nim on “The Contours of Militarisation in the Indo-Pacific Region: A Quantitative Analysis” used statistical tools to analyse the new geo-political reality in the Indo-Pacific Region due to the hegemonic and expansionist rise of China. The authors point out that the rise in defense expenditure and the formation of new regional groups like QUAD and AUKUS led by the US are indications of increasing militarization of the Indo-Pacific Region.

Kasturi Chatterjee analyses the phenomenon of political apologies as a significant means to address violent pasts in her article “Atoning Violent Pasts: Assessing the Promise and Perils of Political Apologies”. The author argues that though there are inherent paradoxes in political apologies, it has the potential to promote reconciliation, restore the dignity of victims, settle historical claims, and help societies resolve past grievances. The article “Qualitative Analysis of Incidents of Crowd Violence in West Bengal from January-July 2019” by Tayeba Khatun and Suresh Kumar investigated 466 episodes of crowd gatherings in West Bengal during the first seven months of 2019 and found that 68 per cent of them turned violent. According to the authors, the key triggers of crowd violence are often the death of a member, protests, destruction of property, and provocative statements, however, the timely deployment of forces, and the use of lathi-charge, tear gas, etc. have been effective crowd dispersal techniques. Juhi Gupta’s article “Women Leaders in Global Peacemaking: Ensuring Sustaining Peace and Protecting Human and Women’s Rights” highlights the need for the inclusion of women in global peacemaking efforts to ensure sustainable peace in conflict-prone regions in the world. The author provides a few cases where women-led peacemaking efforts have succeeded in bringing about enduring peace in some conflict-prone regions and have outlined the challenges and opportunities faced by women in structuring the national and international peacemaking processes. The article “An Assessment of the Involvement of India Towards Providing Assistance in Peacebuilding and Development with Reference to the Post-conflict States” by Rimli Ranjan and Sugant R. dwells on India’s role in promoting peacebuilding and development assistance to other developing countries, especially Afghanistan and Africa, faced with internal and external conflicts. The authors argue that India’s contribution to UN peacekeeping missions in conflict-prone regions across the world as well as its development assistance to many developing countries has the potential of enhancing the stature of India in the global community. The article by Robert Wilson Bhatra “Transformation of Intercommunity Relations and Origins of Communal and Ethnic Violence in Kandhamal” examines the root cause of the communal violence between the Panos and Kondhs, due to changing power relations in Kandhamal, which was once dominated by Oriya caste. The authors pointed out that the conversion of a large number of Panos and a few Kondhs to Christianity brought a religious dimension to the conflict. Shonreiphy Longvah and Somingam Mawon argue that genuine autonomy and development package will bring about true and lasting peace to the Nagas in their article “Autonomy and Development as Conflict Resolution Mechanisms for the

Indigenous Naga People”. According to the authors, the Indian Government has used the strategy of dividing, controlling, and manipulating the Naga people instead of settling the longest-running political conflict of the Nagas. The final article by Syed Eesar Mehdi “Overcoming the barriers: Kashmiriyat as a Cornerstone to Materialize Peace in Kashmir” highlights the potential of the concept of Kashmiriyat to operationalize dialogue and offer a possible solution to the Kashmir conflict. According to the author, the tenets of Kashmiriyat, based on peaceful coexistence, shared values and culture, communal harmony and humanistic ethos, and syncretic and liberal traditions, offer a comprehensive framework for reviving dialogue and materializing the peace process in Kashmir.

All the articles reveal the yearning of the people of India and the world for peace and harmonious living of different communities for their own development and prosperity. It is hoped that in the midst of raging conflicts in India and across the world, enlightened men and women of goodwill may emerge to work toward the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies throughout the world. □

Denzil Fernandes

The Contours of Militarisation in the Indo-Pacific Region: A Quantitative Analysis

Vinod Khobragade*
& Avneet Kumar Nim**

Abstract

The centre of gravity of international relations has shifted from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, which has directly affected peace and conflict equations. China is also posing itself as a hegemon in the Indo-Pacific region by demonstrating its power and militarisation. China's aggressive behaviour is leading to security concerns for the Indo-Pacific littorals. Thus, the region is witnessing a sense of structural realism, which is visible from an enhanced degree of militarisation by significant powers including Australia, India, South Korea, and Japan. The Indo-Pacific littoral states are also struggling and endeavouring to tackle the hegemonic behaviour of China. Therefore, the paper is analysing this militarisation phenomenon through the statistical tool of quantitative analysis. The paper is further analysing that the Indo-Pacific region is expecting the more strategic presence of the United States to checkmate the Chinese politico-military approach in the region. The paper draws to the fact that militarisation in the Indo-Pacific region is likely to increase at a rapid pace in the coming future.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, Security Concern, Militarisation, Strategic Realism, China, USA.

1. Introduction

The geo-economics and oceans are intertwined so closely that they are remaining always at diplomatic fragility. This inter-linkage is likely to help Asia's rise in the 21st century. The region witnessed the eastward shift of the world's economic centre of gravity which makes it a "maritime underbelly" of Asia – the Indo-Pacific. The criticality of the region is underpinned by the dependence of East Asia on the natural resources of West Asia and Africa via the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, to call this maritime sphere

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of zone as Asia-Pacific which traditionally stood for the Asian littoral of the Pacific in a broader sense lost its relevancy as per Western perception. Therefore, Indo-Pacific, a combined nomenclature of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean seemed more appropriate which also suits India's national interests in its maritime domain.

The Indo-Pacific region (IPR) is home to around more than half of the world's population. It holds around sixty per cent of global GDP. The geo-economy of the Indo-Pacific engulfs 65 per cent of the world's ocean and 25 per cent of land which accounts for two-thirds of global economic growth. The advent of the term 'Indo-Pacific' led by the U.S. think tanks such as Pacific Council on International Policy, Pacific Forum CSIS, and American Foreign Policy Council during 2005, was because of China's assertion on the political, military, and economic fronts in the region. Earlier, the region was acknowledged as the 'Asia-Pacific'. However, China still recognises this region as Asia-Pacific and discards the notion of Indo-Pacific. The idea of Indo-Pacific was further solidified by the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, while addressing the Indian Parliament in August 2007. He focused on the "Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans" (Khurana, 2018). Furthermore, President Obama's 'Asia Pivot' policy (2011), India's Act East policy (2015), and Trump's Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (2018) signified the relevance of Indo-Pacific. Recently, the new Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) is released by President Joe Biden administration in February 2022. The IPS (Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, 2022, p.5) states:

Intensifying American focus is due in part to the fact that the Indo-Pacific faces mounting challenges, particularly from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific and seeks to become the world's most influential power. The PRC's coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific.

Moreover, in the midst of the US versus China power of persuasion across the IPR, some scholars, Matsumura (2019) and Lin, et al. (2020), decode the power matrix within the purview of militarisation of the Indo-Pacific. They pointed out that, on the one hand, the United States has more diplomatic and military sway, but on the other hand, China has more economic influence over littoral states (Matsumara, 2019).

Significantly, almost all the major powers have been strategically

indulged in influencing the region. Thomas Schelling, a Noble laureate and an influential scholar of the cold war period, put forth the theory of strategic realism in 1980, which still marked its profound relevancy in modern international politics. Strategic realism focuses its attention on foreign policy decision-making through diplomatic bargaining while using the military might of a nation effectively and strategically. The primary concerns of State's foreign policies are finding ways and means to be successful. For Schelling, the activity of foreign policy is technically instrumental and thus free from moral choice (Dodge, 2012). He suggests various mechanisms, strategies, and moves which can enable state actors to generate collaboration and avoid disaster in a conflict-ridden world, where stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction just waning world peace (Khanna, 2013). Strategic realism can increase the possibility of success through experimentation in the field of militarisation. The experimentation process, which has been witnessed in the policies of major powers, has their national interests in the region, making the region a hotbed of strategic contestation. The integrated deterrence approach evoked by the US and its allies in the form of a network of security alliances and partnerships can be seen through the prism of strategic realism for a better understanding of Indo-Pacific militarisation.

2. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Analysis

The conceptualisation of militarisation can be understood through various forms of realist phenomenon such as strategic realism, offensive realism, defensive realism, security dilemma, balance of power (BOP), balance of terror (BOT), balanced and unbalanced bipolarity, and balanced and unbalanced multi-polarity. John Herz coined the term 'security dilemma' (Herz, 1951) which was subsequently analysed in detail by the scholars Robert Jervis (1976, 78), Charles Glaser (1997), and others. Under this phenomenon, the states remain unsure about the other's intentions, which promotes an arms race to maximise security, and in doing so, sets a vicious circle in motion. The fever of arms race has infected all regions of the world which is pushing up armament expenditure year-on-year. Its expansion established a military, economic, and neo-colonial presence around the world. The doctrine of militarisation can be understood in the light of military organizations, used in how to apply organised violence in defence of the state, mainly in foreign affairs (Thee, 1977). In the great power politics of a multipolar world as evident in the IPR, crises are encouraged by the determination of a state to resist a change that another state tries to make. Under these conditions, the IPR witnessed comprehensive competition not

just in military preparation, but also in the field of economic growth and technological advancement. According to Kenneth Waltz, a neo-realist thinker, “military interdependence is low in a bipolar world and high in a multipolar one (Waltz, 1979, p.169).” He further bolstered his arguments by stating that “Alliances are made by states that have some but not all of their interest in common. The common interest is ordinarily a negative one i.e. fear of the other state (Waltz, 1979, p.166).” And further, for Mearsheimer (2001, p.338), “Unbalanced multipolar systems feature the most dangerous distribution of power, mainly because potential hegemonies are likely to get into wars with all of the other great powers in the system”. This unbalanced multipolar system boosts the doctrine of militarisation with the support of some external powerful actors for the establishment of a balanced multipolar/bipolar system. In the case of the IPR, China acts as a potential hegemon with unequal distribution of power, which invokes countries like India to procure and develop more and more sophisticated weapons with the help of countries like the US, France, Russia, and Israel. Japan has also announced an increase its defence expenditure by two per cent of its GDP. Australia has made a deal with the UK and USA towards the development of nuclear submarines. These recent developments in the IPR are the real indicators of the practice of militarisation. Militarism is the conception that the power of a nation consists primarily, if not exclusively, of its military strength which is represented in quantitative terms. The largest army, the biggest navy, and the biggest and fastest air force in the world become the predominant symbols of national power. “To speak loudly and carry a big stick, to rephrase Theodore Roosevelt’s famous dictum is indeed the preferred method of militaristic diplomacy” (Morgenthau, 1978, p.120-1).

In the sphere of international politics, the quantitative and qualitative changes in the military domain of the states are proportionate to each other. Whenever this proportionate equilibrium gets disturbed either by an outside force or by a change in one or the other elements comprising the system of military, economic, technical and political strength, the system shows a tendency to re-establish the original or a new equilibrium with or without the help of some external force. In the case of the Indo-Pacific, the disproportionate rise of China somehow influences the state of disequilibrium. So, the region is seeking a new balance of power which resulted in the rise of militarisation. The national interests of the US and the West European nations correlate with their national prestige and dominance over world politics, also allowing them to adopt a proactive approach against China’s aggressively expanding footprints in the IPR.

Furthermore, another dimension of the theory of militarisation can be hypothesized in the form of the Sphere of Influence (SOI) (Polybius, 1889). The relevancy of SOI in modern times is being traced by Susanna Hast (2014), Hal Brands' and Charles Edels' (2018) and Resnick (2022). According to Susanna Hast, "military dominance grants a Sphere of Influence (SOI) over a given small power to a rival that possesses a stronger material interest in that small power and is a peer competitor." The SOI can be understood in the modern sense as a geographical zone in which the most powerful actor can impose its will (Resnick, 2022). In the case of the IPR, the US, China and India would like to increase their SOI by means of military, economic and technological dominance. Political and sociological thinkers like Roderick Martin, Robert Cox, and Talcott Person suggested some common tools of SOI such as coercion, inducement, and persuasion (Martin, 1977). China and the US are using these tools effectively in the multipolar IPR, which ultimately motivates more militarisation, thus becoming the subject of careful study by applying various scientific means.

2.1 Research Objective

- (a) To analyse the cause of militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region.
- (b) To locate the US strategic role in the region.

2.2 Research Questions

- (a) Why Militarisation is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region?
- (b) Why the US Strategic support is crucial for the Indo-Pacific region?

3. Research Methodology

There are objective laws in all fields, including the domain of political analysis and these laws must be taken into account in the scientific elaboration of problems. The construction and study of models, particularly such complex ones as the theory of militarization requires various mathematical tools, such as statistical methods of possibilities, correlational analysis, the theory of information, the theory of decision, and the theory of games. Therefore, quantification of data for quantitative measures of all indices, including qualitative ones, is a difficult task to compare and interpret through mathematical methods. Thus, taking account of both qualitative and quantitative analysis in the process of comparing objects is necessary for scientific forecasting (Gaitonde, 1975; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2015).

The structure of the research paper begins with the conceptualisation of militarisation along with a statistical analysis framework, in which realist

models of international relations are discussed. To decode the militarisation of the IPR, a quantitative analysis of the defence expenditure of six major countries has been identified on the basis of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database. For the cause-and-effect relationship, a group of countries (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Pakistan) formed the sample group. In the first place, to establish the interdependence factor amongst sample countries, the authors have calculated the correlation coefficient between China and the rest of the sample countries. After that, the mean and standard deviation of the resultant value of the correlation coefficient has also been calculated for further analysis, so that the output values become more realistic in nature. The later part of this paper is dealing with why the US role in IPR is so crucial and important. For that, vertical differences in the actual defence expenditure of China visa-a-vis combined defence expenditure of the rest of the sample countries have also been calculated and its causal impact has been looked at on the necessity of promising US presence in the IPR.

The variables selected for the data analyses are; expenditure in current USD, Share of GDP, and Share of government spending. The data shortlisted for the analysis have a five-year gap interval and additional data for the year 2021 is also included. To decode the phenomenon of militarisation of the IPR, we are using the Pearson correlation coefficient. This also tests whether the defence expenditure of a country is correlated with other powers or not. The mathematical expression for calculating Pearson Correlation Coefficient is stated below and all the values are calculated with the help of Microsoft Excel application software. The resultant values obtained after due calculations are being tested as per the value limits stated below:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2] [\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

r = Pearson correlation coefficient

n = Sample size (in our case it is 6)

x = Defence expenditure of China in every case

y = Defence expenditure of other countries taking one at a time

\sum = Sum total of variable x , y or xy

Perfect Positive Correlation if value of $(r) = 1$

Perfect Negative Correlation if value of $(r) = -1$

Strong Positive Correlation if value of $(r) > 0.5$

Strong Negative Correlation if value of $(r) < 0.5$

4. Why Militarisation is taking place in Indo-Pacific?

The more realistic global order is essentially anarchic in nature where great powers have potential to destroy each other amidst uncertain world order. Given the uncertain situation, the states are grappling with a security dilemma because of China's 'Aggressive Assertion' in the IPR. This security dilemma would translate into fear, self-help, and power maximisation (Mearsheimer, 2001). In particular, the Indo-Pacific is witnessing increased naval build-ups especially in the South-East Asia region since 2000. Most of the major economies such as Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and North Korea have boosted their defence expenditure by almost more than half in the last fifteen years.

In recent years, China's foreign policy has become more assertive in nature. China's power projection in the IPR is more of the US and its allies centric. China wants to break the hegemonic image of the US, by adopting various means of economic influence, military modernisation, technological advancement, and ideological superiority complex. There can be many factors which are held responsible for Chinese assertive policies. Firstly, it is a natural tendency of re-emerging states to dislodge the current pre-eminent world power. Secondly, China's own worldview plays a role in shaping its foreign policy behaviour. According to Hugh White, Professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University, China wants primacy like the Persians, Athens, Spartans, Romans, and American civilisation (Varrall, 2015). Therefore, the re-emergence of China must be militarily strong and economically sound. According to GDP measurement, today China is the second largest economy in the world, behind the US. Militarily, it ranks third, behind the US and Russia. The keynote is that when a country becomes more and more powerful, it tries to flex its muscles and use it more often, as evident in the South China Sea and East China Sea. China's assertiveness through applying maritime militia, lawfare, aggressive narrative-building, and geo-economics has, directly and indirectly, affected Australia, Japan, and India (Cronin, 2015). Therefore, Chinese belligerence in the IPR has caused apprehensions among the regional countries and has led to a panic situation where the region is becoming increasingly securitised. The IPR, therefore, is becoming an increasingly contested space and the security balances in the region appear uncertain which subsequently encourages militarisation.

During the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP), which was held in October 2022, Xi Jinping, has forecasted Beijing's vision on security perspective towards, "Modernizing China's national security

system and capacity and safeguarding national security and stability” and “Achieving the centenary goal of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and further modernizing national defence and building a strong military in the new era” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2022). He further reiterated that China will intensify troops training and enhance combat preparedness across the board to strengthen all-around military governance, consolidate and enhance integrated national strategies and strategic capabilities. All the nuclear weapon states of the IPR i.e. China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are increasing their nuclear weapons and warheads for Balance of Terror (BOT). The same has been evident from various SIPRI reports. SIPRI (2015) reported that the estimated total stockpile of nuclear warheads of China (260), India (90-110), and Pakistan (100-120), have been increased significantly in the year 2022; i.e. China (350), India (160), and Pakistan (165) (SIPRI, 2015 and 2022). However, Japan, South Korea and Australia are under the nuclear umbrella of the US. Therefore, this new age nuclear arms race is further boosting the militarisation of the IPR. As per SIPRI military expenditure database, head-to-head defence expenditure comparison of strategically important countries of the IPR leads us closer to why militarisation is taking place in the Indo-Pacific.

SN	Country	Defence Expenditure in USD (\$)					
		2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
1	Australia	7273.8	13237.8	23217.7	24046.2	27300.9	31753.7
2	China	22237.1	42790	105522.6	196538.8	257973.4	293351.9
3	India	14287.5	23072.3	46090.4	51295.5	72937.1	76598
4	Japan	45509.7	44300.6	54655.5	42106.1	51970.8	54123.6
5	South Korea	13801.1	22159.5	28175.2	36570.8	45524	50226.9
6	Pakistan	2973.1	4587.1	5974.6	9483.5	10394.5	11304.8
Defence Expenditure as per share of GDP (%)							
1	Australia	1.83%	1.80%	1.86%	1.95%	2.01%	1.98%
2	China	1.83%	1.85%	1.74%	1.75%	1.80%	1.74%
3	India	2.95%	2.75%	2.89%	2.46%	2.88%	2.66%
4	Japan	0.93%	0.93%	0.96%	0.96%	1.03%	1.07%
5	South Korea	2.46%	2.47%	2.46%	2.49%	2.78%	2.78%
6	Pakistan	4.17%	3.90%	3.42%	3.55%	4.03%	3.83%

Defence Expenditure as per share of Government Spending (%)							
1	Australia	5.18%	5.20%	5.02%	5.22%	4.50%	4.63%
2	China	11.34%	10.23%	6.97%	5.60%	4.75%	5.03%
3	India	11.50%	10.42%	9.86%	8.83%	8.79%	8.27%
4	Japan	2.54%	2.69%	2.49%	2.52%	2.29%	2.47%
5	South Korea	14.42%	12.56%	13.22%	12.64%	11.03%	10.47%
6	Pakistan	22.42%	24.45%	16.83%	17.96%	17.44%	17.82%

* Source: - <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

Table: 2						
Country	China(x)	India(y)	China(x)	Pakistan(y)	China(x)	Australia(y)
Year	Defence Expenditure in USD (\$)					
2000	22237.1	14287.5	22237.1	2973.1	22237.1	7273.8
2005	42790	23072.3	42790	4587.1	42790	13237.8
2010	105522.6	46090.4	105522.6	5974.6	105522.6	23217.7
2015	196538.8	51295.5	196538.8	9483.5	196538.8	24046.2
2020	257973.4	72937.1	257973.4	10394.5	257973.4	27300.9
2021	293351.9	76598	293351.9	11304.8	293351.9	31753.7
correlation coefficient (r)	0.977421722		0.989609696		0.93645918	
Country	China(x)	Japan(y)	China(x)	South Korea(y)		
Year	Defence Expenditure in USD (\$)					
2000	22237.1	45509.7	22237.1	13801.1		
2005	42790	44300.6	42790	22159.5		
2010	105522.6	54655.5	105522.6	28175.2		
2015	196538.8	42106.1	196538.8	36570.8		
2020	257973.4	51970.8	257973.4	45524		
2021	293351.9	54123.6	293351.9	50226.9		
correlation coefficient (r)	0.4655332		0.98919867			
Correlational Mean (m)	0.871644493					
Standard Deviation (s)	0.228062996					

*Source: Authors Calculation based on the SIPRI data

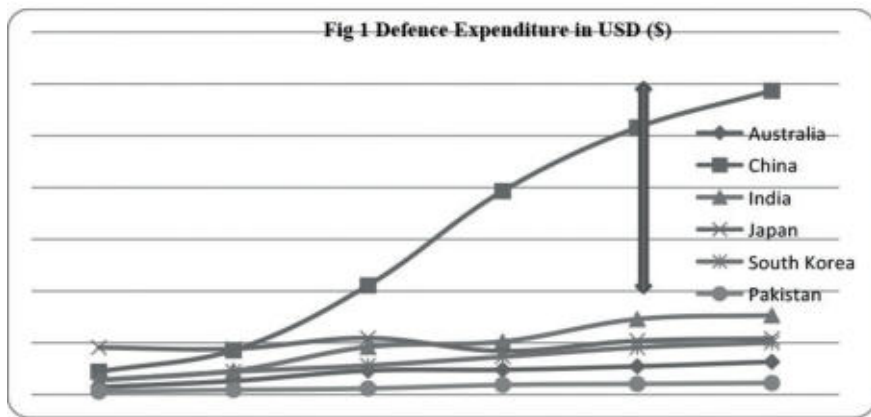
Table: 3										
Country	China (x)	India (y)	China (x)	Pakistan (y)	China (x)	Australia (y)	China (x)	Japan (y)	China (x)	South Korea (y)
Year	Defence Expenditure as per share of GDP (%)									
2000	0.018	0.030	0.018	0.047	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.001	0.018	0.025
2005	0.019	0.028	0.019	0.039	0.019	0.018	0.019	0.009	0.019	0.025
2010	0.017	0.029	0.017	0.034	0.017	0.019	0.017	0.007	0.017	0.025
2015	0.018	0.025	0.018	0.036	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.010	0.018	0.025
2020	0.018	0.029	0.018	0.040	0.018	0.020	0.018	0.010	0.018	0.028
2021	0.017	0.027	0.017	0.038	0.017	0.020	0.017	0.011	0.017	0.028
(r)	0.425		0.681		-0.551		-0.366		-0.257	
(m)	-0.014									
(s)	0.536									
*Source: Authors Calculation based on the SIPRI data										

The paper through computation of the above statistical data finds the correlation coefficient, correlational mean, and standard deviation of the above sample data with regard to defence expenditure in USD (\$). The values of the correlation mean and standard deviation were found to be 0.871 (Table 2) and 0.228 (Table 2) respectively. While doing the comparative analysis of actual Defence Expenditure (DE) between China and other sample countries, values of the correlation coefficient were found to be more than 0.900 (Table 2) in most of the cases. Therefore, it is evident from the above computation that there is a strong positive correlation i.e. (> 0.5) between the defence expenditure of China and other regional powers of the given sample chosen within the IPR. However, Pakistan's military expansion is India-centric and also, to counter security threats posed by homegrown terrorist outfits (Rehman, 2019). Moreover, as per quantitative analysis, the fact cannot be denied that China's military adventurism also has an induced effect on regional powers in the short and long terms as well.

On the other hand, correlations mean calculation in terms of DE as per share of GDP (%) was found to be [-0.137] (Table 3) along with a standard deviation of [0.536] (Table 3). Therefore, according to the resulting outcome, the correlation coefficient (r) indicator brings out the fact that the DE in real value (USD) is having a more concerning factor than the DE as per share of GDP per cent. The more money in real value spent on the modernisation of defence forces ultimately leads to the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific. In the military domain, most of the international players

are contesting on hyper-competitive fundamentals i.e. “strength of interest, legitimacy, innovation, strategic capacity, speed and agility, surprise, shifting rules, strategic signalling, and disruptive manoeuvre”(Freir, Schaus, & Braun, 2020). On this pretext, states are looking forward to procure and develop long-range precision strike capabilities, information warfare, nuclear second strike capabilities, power projection, special operations, and civil-military fusion. And, to achieve such capabilities huge sum of money is likely to be spent in the next decades in the IPR. The hypercompetitive military environment has induced action-reaction dynamics in terms of the formation of alliances and arms race particularly in terms of the naval acquisition. In the light of research data compilation and analysis, it can be claimed that countries like Australia, China, India, North and South Korea as well as Japan have boosted their DE by more than half in the last two decades (Table 1).

5. Why the US Strategic Support is Crucial for Indo-Pacific Region?



From Figure 1, it is indicated that the gap between the DE of China vis-à-vis the combined defence expenditure of the rest of the countries is far more. The combined defence expenditure of all five countries in the Indo-Pacific was around USD 224007 million, against China’s whopping defence budget of USD 293351.9 million in 2021. China’s expenditure on its defence sector is more than 31 per cent of the combined DE of Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, and Pakistan. This economic disequilibrium in terms of military expenditure indicated the formation of regional groups like QUAD, and AUKUS in the IPR. There is a whopping difference of USD 69344.9 between China and the rest of the countries’ actual military expenditures. Therefore, this economic disequilibrium in terms of

military expenditure is attracting the major developed nations like France, Germany, the US, and the UK, to increase their presence in the IPR. Most of these countries are adopting and publishing their Indo-Pacific strategies. Therefore, to fill the mammoth gap in actual spending on the defence sector vis-à-vis China, other regional powers like India, Australia and Japan need strategic defence cooperation from the US and other Western powers to counter balance China. Hence, this seems essential to prevent the hegemonic rise and aggressive policies of China and to re-establish the balance of power in the IPR.

Furthermore, China’s competitive vision and objectives in the Indo-Pacific drive a strategic friction amongst IOR littoral states. China’s vision involves the continuous expansion of its geo/non-geo economic-strategic power, limiting the role of outside powers (US and its allies), and, among others, bringing Indo-Pacific under Beijing’s influence. Chinese initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) are also favouring its increased sphere of influence. Apart from that, the IPR also witnessed military threat perception in the South China Sea, East China Sea, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and other choke points of the Indo-Pacific. The increasing footprint of China in the whole of the Indo-Pacific has an adverse impact on the national interest and national prestige of the Indo-Pacific littoral states and even that of the US. Thus, the US aligned its strategic diplomacy and was willing to aid the Indo-Pacific littoral states in the operational readiness of their military capabilities in a case of potential conflict against China (Lin et al.,2020).

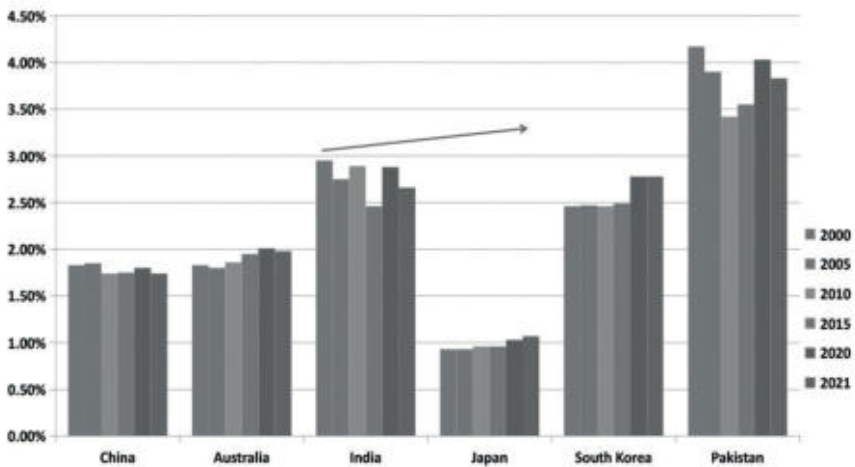


Fig 2 DE as per cent GDP

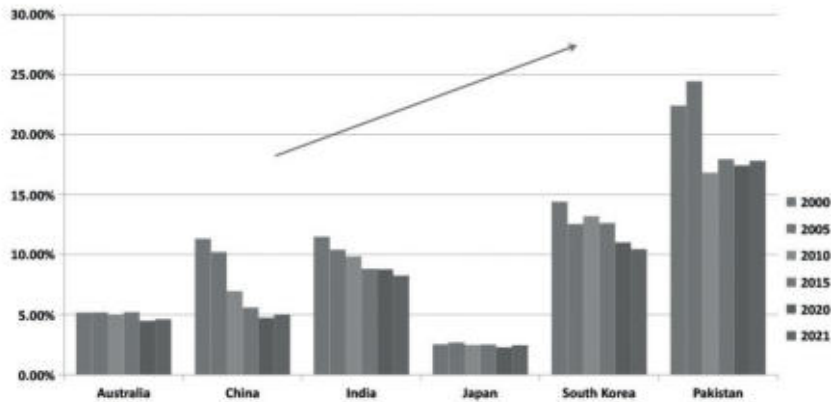


Fig 2 DE as per Government Spending

From (Figure 2) the DE of sample countries, as percent of GDP, is higher than China. The same is true with regard to DE as per Government Spending (Figure 3). This upward trajectory of the growing momentum of DE of Indo-Pacific powers vis-à-vis China is to create multi-polarity in the region and to safeguard individual national interests in the backdrop of the growing hegemony of China in the IPR. Further, it is only possible to check the military capabilities of China by increasing the defence budget by the later countries both in terms of their GDP and share of government spending in terms of maximisation of power. In the case of India, the Government spending of its total budgetary expenditure on the defence sector is more than 8 per cent since 2010. In the case of South Korea and Pakistan, it is nearly 11 per cent and 18 per cent respectively (see Table 1). However, it is evident from the above analysis that mere government spending of littoral states is not enough to counter balance China in the Indo-Pacific.

The striking fact about the national capabilities of the Indo-Pacific littorals makes a profound note that none have the rebalancing capabilities vis-à-vis China. Thus, the groups like QUAD and AUKUS are having its profound importance to check the hegemonic character of China and resist its Area-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, towards challenging its global maritime access. China’s mixed politico-military assertiveness through multifaceted engagements makes the IPR a web of complexity. In this regard, US maritime strategy 2007 and 2015 articulated their ways and means to balance the sheer combination of knowledge (cognitivism), interest (neo-liberalism), and power (realism) (Sakuja & Khurana, 2015). Therefore, the US strategic support in the Indo-Pacific is justified as a rebalancing force against the Chinese might as it is prevalent in various

regional groups like QUAD (Australia, India, Japan, US) and AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, US). Thus, Chinese asymmetric challenges in the cyber, space, and military domains that are altering the power equations in the region cannot be tackled without the US technological intervention and aid to IPR powers.

6. Research Findings

6.1. The computation of sampling data based on DE in (USD) found that there is strong positive correlation having a value of more than 0.8 when making the head-to-head comparison of chosen sample with the DE of China. It means that the actual spending of money on defence modernisation by China made more impetus to do the same by other regional powers of the IPR. But, the marked difference in their GDP does not allow them to match their expenditure despite spending a greater per cent of their GDP on defence. The same has been found in the weak correlation values when the calculation has been made on the variable of GDP per cent. On the contrary, government spending is relatively very high in the smaller nations of the IPR like Pakistan more than 17 per cent and South Korea more than 10 per cent. Hence, it can be predicted that the militarisation of the IPR will likely increase manifestly in the coming decade, as the region has witnessed the four nuclear powers that are pursuing their conflict-laden diplomacy for a long time.

6.2. The primary data retrieved from the SIPRI for the analysis purpose brings out interesting facts about the DE that there is a whopping gap of USD 69344.9 million between China and the rest of the sample countries. The other regional powers can't fill this gap despite an increase in their expenditure in terms of GDP per cent and as per share of government spending. In this alarming situation, countries in the IPR are expecting the US to maintain balance against the un-parallel rise of China. Therefore, more profound US strategic support in this region seems viable and necessary for like-minded democratic countries per se. As per the strategic realism theory, power should be balanced with power (Mearsheimer, 2001), so to counter China's expansionist and hegemonic spread, less powerful countries will automatically choose the United States as their preferred defence partner for an effective balance of power to ensure a balanced multi-polarity in the IPR. So, on the basis of the above analysis, the proposition found valid that more US strategic support is crucial for IPR.

7. Conclusion

The IPR is emerging as a new geo-political reality of the globalized world which is highly interdependent. This complex nature of interdependence brings new contestation and conflicts in the waves of the Indo-Pacific. The hegemonic and expansionist rise of China is setting new normal where like-minded democracies are forming small regional groups under the prowess of the United States (like QUAD, AUKUS), which seems accustomed and relevant in the changing dynamics of the IPR. The actual DE year-on-year is on increasing trends and more sophisticated weapons have been tested in the water of the Indo-Pacific, which gave an extra edge towards militarisation. Moreover, frequent nuclear missile testing by North Korea is further deteriorating the security equilibrium in the IPR. Currently, there are no arms control regimes such as the establishment of a Nuclear Free Zone (NFZ) or arms reduction treaty in Asia in view of constraining the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific.

The IPR is seeking a new balance of power. The blends of realism with liberal and socialist traits are making their headway for the parallel running of conflicts and cooperation. The 20th national congress of CCP vision objectives has further opened the floodgates of military adventure in the Indo-Pacific region. India's military deals with the US and the launching of an Indigenous aircraft carrier programme, Australia's defence programme for nuclear submarines, and Japan's announcement of raising its defence expenditure are some pre-indicators of further bolstering the effect of militarisation. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the role of the arms race and defence development will continue to shape regional security for at least one to two decades ahead in the IPR.

Furthermore, with the beginning of 2023 and the increasing arc of instability, what is also becoming apparent is the huge increase in DE by almost every country — notwithstanding the economic stress they all confront. Estimated spending on defence across the globe is understood to have crossed \$2 trillion in 2022 and is expected to increase substantially in 2023. European countries, such as Germany and France, have announced a substantial increase in defence spending. Japan has already declared that it would raise its defence budget to 2% of its GDP, in view of the threats posed by China and North Korea. Therefore, India along with other IPR states can be expected to follow suit for more militarisation (Narayanan, 2023).□

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