

The Essentialness of Civil Society Organisations in the Indo-Pacific Region

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Many predictions were made post-2008 financial crisis that this century will have two hotspots: inner Asia and Indo-Pacific. The numerous developments in the Indo-Pacific region are proving this prediction right. However, the shift in focus has come about with the region facing both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. At the same time, many initiatives are developing to address these challenges, like the initiatives from the private sector, media, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), and the Global Gateway, among many others. Invariably, the vacuum seems to be in the collaborative engagements of CSOs. Hence, through this Discussion Paper, effort is made to understand the essentialness of the CSOs in shaping the Indo-Pacific region.
- 1.2. The coupling of CSOs' role in the Indo-Pacific region emanates from the fact that all regional developments and challenges affect people on the ground. CSOs and community-based organisations are, in comparison, equipped the most to aid people in coping with these circumstances, including understanding the impacts on the ground and bridging the gap from the grassroots to the policy level.
- 1.3. As the focus is geostrategic, it is essential to comprehend the political perceptions surrounding it, like that of 'Asia is for Asians'. Contesting such claims is crucial because the region under reference is an oceanic region, which transcends territorial abstractions and because the region has always been located in a political, economic, and social historical continuum. Hence, any focus on the region needs to be in tandem with the idea of ASEAN centrality.
- 1.4. Countries in the Indo-Pacific region face many common crises, including economic constraints, relations with China and the US, border contentions among neighbouring countries, contentions over democracy, technology, and people-to-people connections. However, soft power relations are often key in preventing hard power rivalries from escalating into conflict.

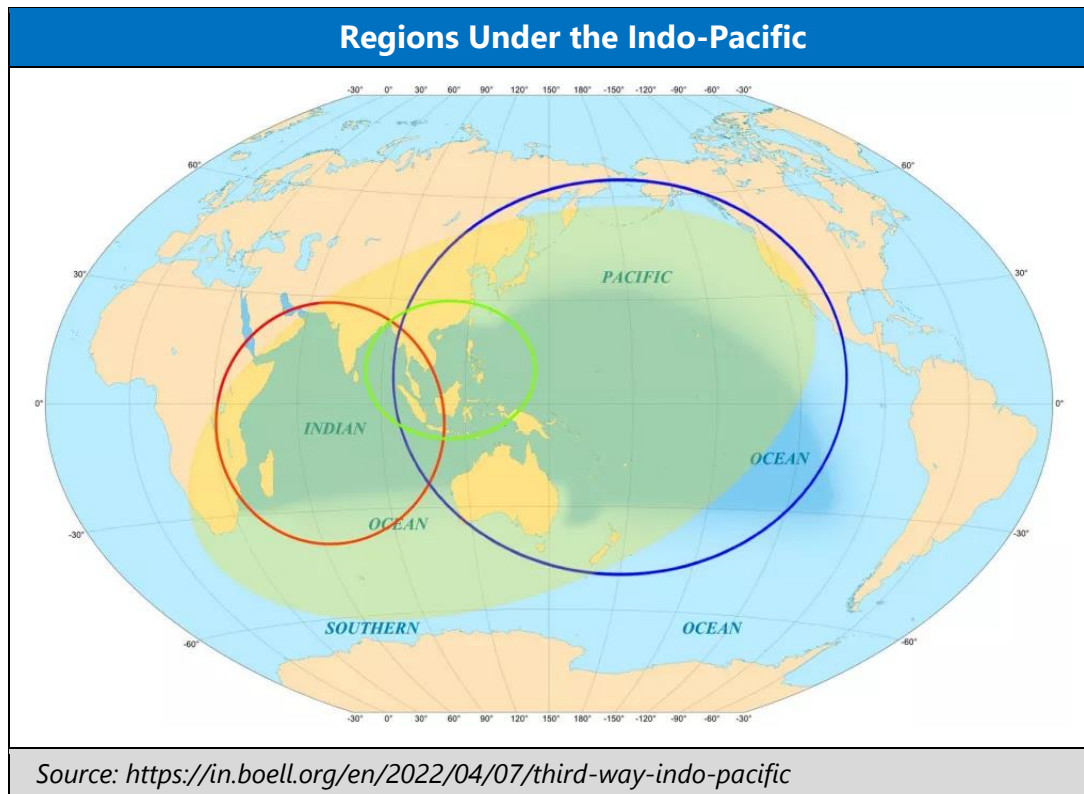
- 1.5. One of the main constraints facing the CSOs is that they often and primarily lack accurate information on new developments. CSOs need to network to facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge. CSOs must engage in free-flowing interactions, discussions, and collaborations between regional stakeholders, including government organisations and think tanks. Timely capacity building for CSOs needs to be another area of focus.
- 1.6. This discussion paper is divided into three parts. Part One commences with an exploration of locating the Indo-Pacific construct in the historical trajectory of geostrategic shifts. The second section situates CSOs in a multilayered fashion. This includes tracing the origins of the idea of civil society, then looking at the historical evolution of the role of civil society, and finally investigating contemporary meanings of the terms 'civil society', 'global civil society', 'civil society organisations', and 'Non-Governmental Organization' (NGO). The third section then explores the intersection of CSOs in the Indo-Pacific, taking into account the key focus areas, i.e., climate change, maritime security and sustainable trade, as stated in the eight Strategic Documents on the region. The paper concludes by emphasising the essential role of CSOs in the Indo-Pacific region.

2. Locating the Indo-Pacific

- 2.1. Post-Second World War Europe was shaped¹ by a reconciliation call for political and economic integration. It is important to note that Europe has had deep-seated cleavages in an identity rooted in ethnic, religious, and geographical divides, among others. These cleavages had caused conflicts, as is evident from history. For instance, in 75 years up to 1945, Europe had three devastating Franco-German wars². However, during the post-Second World War, there was a call for integration of Europe despite the dives and damages of the War. Some prominent factors of influence include the role of the US and vestiges of Socialist internationalism.

¹ Wienand, Christiane, *The Age of Youth: Civil Society and International Understanding Since World War II*, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Johns Hopkins University University of Heidelberg, Available at: <https://www.aicgs.org/2017/12/the-age-of-youth/>

² Pomfret, Richard, *Why Australia fails to understand the EU*, The University of Adelaide, Economics of European Integration at the Institute for International Trade, January 13, 2022. Available at: <https://iit.adelaide.edu.au/news/list/2022/01/13/why-australia-fails-to-understand-the-eu>



- 2.2. Scholars and practitioners in international relations might disagree on the evolutionary and revolutionary nature of changes in rooting from multiple global occurrences like the global financial crisis of 2008. However, the onset of the Ukraine crisis made many practitioners and scholars rethink: Is the world reshaping from the previous order? Increasing tension between the economic powers of the US and China is undeniable. But it is safe to say there is a geo-strategic shift from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. If the political precedence in previous centuries has taught us a discourse, it is that economic and political integration shouldn't be at the cost of human lives. In this decade, any security crisis also aggravates the threat to humankind as it expedites the crisis on the global commons.
- 2.3. The geostrategic shifts to the Indo-Pacific region have garnered global attention to the oceanic zone. The change is a product of multidimensional aspects of concern. The region referred to as Indo-Pacific has been the ocean of churn for millions of years. The most basic definition of the Indo-Pacific is that it is a new geographical space referring to a continuum of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and all lands washed by its waters.
- 2.4. The region underwent lexical and focal changes over human history to re-emerge 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. The definition of the geographical tract under reference stretches from Hollywood to Bollywood. Historically, the Indo-Pacific region has been referred to by different nomenclatures but has remained the central zone of geopolitics and geoeconomics. Karl Haushofer, a German geographer, first introduced³ the term - Indo-Pacific as '*Indopazifischen Raum*' in his work in the 1920s.

- 2.5. Currently, the Indo-Pacific region possesses⁴ 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.
- 2.6. 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"⁵, is the title of a book by Dara Shikoh. 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 renaming⁶ 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.
- 2.7. 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, vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and the sovereign equality of nations. The latest document capturing the U.S.'s vision⁷ for the Indo-Pacific came out in February 2022, titled "The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States" (IPS).

³ Li, Hansong, *The "Indo-Pacific": Intellectual Origins and International Visions in Global Contexts*, Cambridge University Press, June 4, 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3TSrJCY>

⁴ *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*, The White House Washington, February 2022. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

⁵ Shikoh, Dara and Dara Shikuh, Muhammad, *Majma-Ul-Bahrain or The Mingling of The Two Oceans by Prince*, 1654 – 55.

⁶ *India-US Defence Partnership - The Road Ahead*, KPMG, September 2021. Available at: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2021/09/indo-us-defence-partnership-road-ahead.pdf>

⁷ *Ibid*

- 2.8. Therefore, to comprehend the essentialness of the CSOs, it is important to evaluate the pattern of geopolitical equations that are in process in the region. The economic rise of China, post-2008, came with strong military and foreign policy. Assertiveness manifested in the South and East China Seas, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and eastern Ladakh. The replacement of 'Asia-Pacific' with 'Indo-Pacific' was driven by the intention to resist the monopolistic exercise of power.
- 2.9. With the gaining of strategic importance, it has become the centre of the economic and political focal point. This makes it quintessential to the existing threats in the regions. Manifold threats include geographical threats in the form of climate change, economic disequilibrium, and political instability within the many countries and the region. The region possesses unparalleled advantages with the shift in trade routes, primarily through sea lines, change in the centre of manufacturing, being the most populated region, and stepping economic growth. Uniquely enough, the region has brought together the different nomenclature of dividends, like the global North-South, and developed-developing-underdeveloped binaries under the same umbrella.
- 2.10. Hence, the Indo-Pacific is an innovative geopolitical construct based on the idea that the challenges of security and economic development in the Pacific region now stand intertwined with those in the Indian Ocean region. Therefore, it demands an integrated and holistic approach, policy, or strategy.
- 2.11. The geo-strategic shift to the Indo-Pacific from the Atlantic Oceans was brewing for some decades. The multi-dimensional aspects of the Indo-Pacific's economic, geographic, security, and strategic relevance have inevitably brought development opportunities for the countries in the region. A multi-stakeholder approach, including governments; multilateral organisations; regional organisations; private players; and civil society organisations, is quintessential for the region's development.

3. Locating CSOs

- 3.1. To develop an inclusive approach in the Indo-Pacific, the role of the 'third-way'⁸ as described in the EU's Strategy Document on the Indo-Pacific - The Global Gateway is crucial. The 'Third Way' is derived from the common usage

⁸ Bhatia, Rajiv, *The 'third way' to the Indo-Pacific: inclusive approaches to power dynamics in Asia*, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, April 7, 2022, Available at: <https://in.boell.org/en/2022/04/07/third-way-indo-pacific>

of the "Third Space", referring to civil society. Public diplomacy in the region has considerable room to grow by deepening ties with CSOs and the 'Third Space' actors if local sensitivities are understood and respected.

The Origins of 'Non-Governmental Organisation.'

The term 'nongovernmental organisation' was first used by Dwight W. Morrow, a US politician, and diplomat. In his book on international cooperation, published in 1919, Morrow distinguished them from organisations made up of sovereign states. Before the term's official mention in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter, alternative terms such as 'international associations', 'private international organisations', and 'voluntary agencies' were in circulation, some of which are still in use today.

Source: Baylis and Smith, *"The Globalisation of World Politics"*, 2017

- 3.2. Locating CSOs in the Indo-Pacific requires comprehending the conceptual evolution of civil society in the historical trajectory. At the outset, at different stages of development, a unique combination of economic, political, and social conditions existed at the time, shaping the particular meaning of civil society⁹. The concept of civil society as equivalent to the state can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman empires. Modern usage, where civil society differs from the state, gained momentum in post-enlightenment Europe. The late 18th century witnessed the change in economic structure from feudal to mercantile capitalism and mounting claims on political rights with the French and American revolutions. The following centuries witnessed the Industrial Revolution, Colonialism, and World Wars. These occurrences had a fraction of society separate from the state struggling against it, which became the civil society, the middle layer or mediating strata between the state and the citizenry.
- 3.3. Gradually, civil society, from equivalent to the state to an entity mediating between the state and the citizen, witnessed an overhaul by the 1990s. The collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War, a wave of democratisation, the coming of the Bretton Woods System, new communication technologies, and the notion of global beyond the state boundaries became the new normal. Increasing interconnectedness was

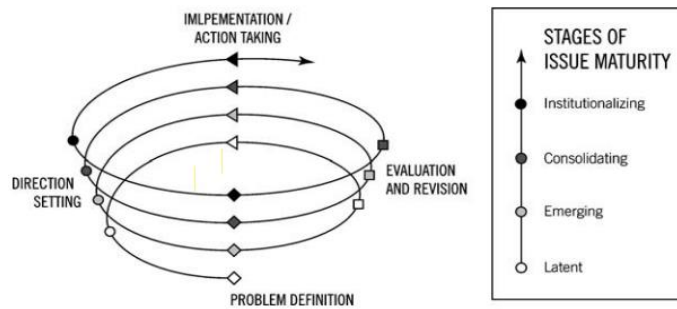
⁹ B.K. Woodward, *Global Civil Society and International Law in Global Governance: Some Contemporary Issues*, International Community Law Review 8: 247–355, Koninklijke Brill NV, Printed in the Netherlands, 2006. Available at: https://brill.com/view/journals/iclr/8/2/article-p247_3.xml

apparent in all sectors. Similarly, civil societies joined hands to be called part of the "Global Civil Society" (GCS). The 'new' GCS differed from the earlier civil societies.

- 3.4. The popular definition of civil society comprises various social movements, media, advocacy organisations, universities, professional associations, religious institutions, cultural institutes, trade unions, think tanks, youth, women organisations, activist mobilisations, NGOs, informed citizenry, and many actors other than the state and the private sector, among many others. In this paper, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are used lucidly referring to Transnational civil society actors, invariably referring to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Trans-national Non-Governmental Organisations (TNGOs) and Trans-national Advocacy Networks (TAN). These CSOs play a role in shaping the trajectory of intra-state relations.
- 3.5. In this sense, CSOs have significantly shifted from the periphery to a central role in global politics. CSOs often act as catalysts for transnational social learning. Scholars analysing CSOs functions argue they usually begin with identifying a problem or problem definition, direction setting, implementation of collective action, and performance monitoring. "Social learning" refers to processes that increase awareness, capacities, and repertoires of actions among social actors in the form of organisational and individual learning. CSOs acting based on a single interest or multiple interests appear to take five roles, including (1) identifying issues, (2) facilitating the voice of marginalised stakeholders, (3) amplifying the importance of issues, (4) building bridges among diverse stakeholders, and (5) monitoring and assessing solutions¹⁰. Social learning about any issue of engagement by CSOs through issue maturity includes latent issues, the emerging stage, the consolidating stage, and the institutionalising stage.

¹⁰ L. David Brown^{1,3} and Vanessa Timmer, *Civil Society Actors as Catalysts for Transnational Social Learning*, Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations Vol. 17, No. 1, April 5, 2006.
Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27927998>

A problem domain learning spiral and stages of issue maturity



Source: Brown and Timmer, 2006

- 3.6. The significant presence of CSOs is evident in International Organisations. More frequently, governments these days join hands with CSOs in implementing policies. The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022 estimates¹¹ that US\$497mn was spent on international humanitarian assistance in 2021 through local and national NGOs.
- 3.7. CSOs play an active role in the emergence of new international norms, engagements beyond borders, governance of transboundary issues like climate change, resolution of conflicts etc. The Essentialness of the CSOs in the Indo-Pacific lies, at the core of their concern for global commons, especially in an unstable environment. In addition, CSOs work in tandem with the grassroots are accurately aware of the needs of the people, and are capable of acting more timely and flexibly. Apart from this, the geo-strategic shift offers a unique opportunity in the Indo-Pacific as the region encompasses the global North and South. There exists a scope to facilitate collaborative engagements in the region, unlike the trend of 'follower CSOs' from the Global South, led by CSOs from the Global North.
- 3.8. CSOs in the post-1990s witnessed an upsurge with the East-West synergies and brooming arms control issues and environmental changes. CSOs were formed due to many social movements that were prevalent during that time. Many 'citizen activists' began networks across borders, establishing "track-two-diplomacy"¹².

¹¹ Angus Urquhart, Fran Girling, Erica Mason and Suzanna Nelson-Pollard, *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022*, Development Initiatives, 20 September 2022. Available at: https://devinit.org/documents/1221/GHA2022_Digital_v8_IdHI18g.pdf

¹² Matthew Evangelista, Ed. By Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *Transnational organizations and the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- 3.9. Internationally, the numerous UN special conferences, like the Rio de Janeiro, popularly called the Earth Summit, in 1992; the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994; and the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 gave ample space for the growth and forging of the strong interconnection of CSOs¹³.
- 3.10. The revolution in communication technologies was a key factor in increasing interconnectedness. The globalisation process embedded with economic liberalisation and privatisation created two effects: organisations resisting the process as part of the anti-globalisation movement or organisations mitigating the adverse effects of the new change with services states use to engage in¹⁴. By 2000, the internet; possibilities of the World Wide Web; and social media boomed the information connectivity across the globe. A new international environment was gaining momentum for CSOs at the centre of global politics, with state and non-state actors as active players in global politics. This is described as “complex interdependence”¹⁵.
- 3.11. Hand-in-hand with efforts to strengthen International Organisations (IOs), it is imperative to focus on developing multiple Multilateral, Polylateral, and multilateral frameworks to curb any more League of Nations effects! Hence, this scenario must be cautious about reasons to build cooperation between states and societies across the globe. One of the primary differences between the post-World War order and the current decade is the juxtaposition between security and the crisis of global commons. Here, the focus is on the role of CSOs in the Indo-Pacific region. Liberal international order came about with the decreasing role of government, making the role of CSOs in delivering public goods pivotal.

4. Putting the two and two together

- 4.1. Increasing contestations in the region lead many countries to step up their regional policy engagements. In addition to India, the US and Japan, countries like the UK, Netherlands, France, Germany, and Australia have published their

Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-history-of-the-cold-war/transnational-organizations-and-the-cold-war/93AA8F51331E6D629563FBE8785F57A4>

¹³ Clark, A. M., Friedman, E. J., and Hochstetler, K. (1998), ‘*The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights, and Women*’, *World Politics*, 51(1): 1–35

¹⁴ Anheier, H., Glasius, M., and Kaldor, M. (2001), ‘*Introducing Global Civil Society*’, in H. Anheier, M. Glasius, and M. Kaldor (eds), *Global Civil Society 2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 3–22

¹⁵ Keohane, R. O., and Nye, J. S. (2003), ‘*Globalization: What’s New? What’s Not? (and So What?)*’, in D. Held and A. McGrew (eds), *The Global Transformations*

Strategic Document on the Indo-Pacific region. Both the EU and ASEAN also have formulated Strategic Documents on the region. The three recurring areas in all these documents are invariably **climate change, maritime security, and sustainable trade**. The challenges and opportunities have made many countries arrive in the region. Hence, it's essential to look at civil society's role in facilitating sustainable trade; maritime security; and mitigating climate change for all in the region.

5. Climate Change

- 5.1. The transcendence of environmental issues beyond national borders has made climate change a feature of global politics and international relations. The international response to the climate problem is manifested in the numerous global environmental governance frameworks and institutions. As a repository, the growth of transnational green politics led to the rise of CSOs that generate awareness, influence international conferences and organisations, and even monitor state policies.
- 5.2. Throughout the decades, environmental issues have emanated two kinds of debates. First, the debate on the complex relationship between scientific understanding of the biosphere, policy and politics. They manifested between the IPCC and government policies. The second debate is on the relationship between development and the environment.¹⁶
- 5.3. The Indo-Pacific region has the highest economic growth rates and high investments in infrastructure. [Remark on non-renewable energy consumption rate in the region]. Unless the transition to clean, renewable energy in the Indo-Pacific can be accelerated, achieving ¹⁷the internationally agreed climate targets will be impossible.
- 5.4. The spill-over effects of climate change into other sectors, affecting the economy, are observed in the Indo-Pacific. The region has the most vulnerable states to climate change. The small island countries risk disappearing underwater, melting glaciers, countries experiencing adverse impacts on agriculture, and overpopulation in urban dwellings, among many

¹⁶ John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*, Eighth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2020

¹⁷ *Indo-Pacific: Guideline for strengthening Dutch and EU cooperation with partners in Asia*, Government of the Netherlands, November 13, 2020. Available at: <https://open.overheid.nl/repository/ronl-84107ff4-e66b-4aa2-a7a9-07fec3e3601b/1/pdf/indo-pacific-een-leidraad-voor-versterking-van-de-nederlandse-en-eu-samenwerking-met-partners-in-azie.pdf>

others. Twenty of the world's thirty-three megacities are located¹⁸ in this region. Nearly 80 percent of economic growth is concentrated in these megacities. Simultaneously, climate change effects are invariably disproportionate. The most vulnerable in low and middle-income countries are stuck the most. Hence, assisting poverty reduction in Asia and Africa has become an interconnected aspect of concern.¹⁹

- 5.5. Climate action is a prerequisite for economic growth. CSOs' joining hands with governments in green recovery can bring about swift changes. As per the Global Commission on Adaptation, each dollar invested in climate-smart infrastructure in developing countries until 2030 will reap four dollars in earnings, up to a net total of US\$4.2tn.
- 5.6. Climate change poses security risks for the region, taking the form of security policy implications. As a risk multiplier, it can spark or exacerbate conflicts. These conflicts can vary from conflict over the sphere of influence and resources; to a failed harvest. It can trigger famines, displacements, migration, and challenge the existence of many Island countries.²⁰
- 5.7. An alternative aspect in dealing with climate change as a security challenge is that the cooperation between 'like-minded' countries is not enough, as the question is on the global commons. Such initiatives are not just in the interest of the Indo-Pacific but for the entire world. Hence, need to overcome bilateral differences between countries, as stated in the IPS²¹.
- 5.8. Challenges like climate change can only be tackled in conjunction with multilateral cooperation and compliance with international law and order in the region. All countries in the region committed to the Paris Agreement of 2015 to reduce global warming by 1.5 degrees Celsius and adopt Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) every year from 2020²².

¹⁸ The Federal Government, *Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific, Germany - Europe - Asia, Shaping 21st Century Together*, Federal Foreign Office of Germany, August 2020. Available at: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/blob/2380514/f9784f7e3b3fa1bd7c5446d274a4169e/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>

¹⁹ *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Foreign Policy, March 2021, Available at: https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html

²⁰ Supra xvii

²¹ Supra iv

²² Supra xvii

- 5.9. Besides climate change being a challenge, the global energy transition is an opportunity to boost²³ earning capability. Currently, the energy demands in the region are met through fossil fuel consumption, primarily coal. The energy sector also accounts for over 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and its transition to cleaner energy will play a vital role in averting the destructive effects of climate change²⁴.
- 5.10. Varying mitigation strategies exist. Germany's strategy document identifies priority areas in climate resilience. Including ecosystem-based adaptation measures, improvement of risk management during extreme weather patterns, innovative insurance solutions, population mobility, and implementation of national adaptation strategies²⁵. Along with disaster prevention, environmental control, and countermeasures to tsunamis²⁶.
- 5.11. One of the pieces of the puzzle in solving climate change is infrastructure development. To promote sustainable outcomes, according to the G20/OECD report, at current investment trends, a cumulative investment gap between US\$5.2tn until 2030, or as high as US\$14.9tn until 2040, will be incurred if the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is taken into account²⁷. If we consider the further infrastructure investment needed to limit climate change and environmental degradation, that figure jumps to €1.3tn yearly²⁸.
- 5.12. The role of Research and Development (R&D) in climate mitigation for the region is significant. The functioning of France's Research Institute for Development (IRD) is a good example. IRD functions with a network of representative offices across the Indo-Pacific region. Along with a network of local partners like universities, NGOs, research organisations, etc. The IRD supports scientific research in three main areas, one of which is climate

²³ Supra xvi

²⁴ *The Global Gateway*, European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels, December 1, 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

²⁵ Supra xvii

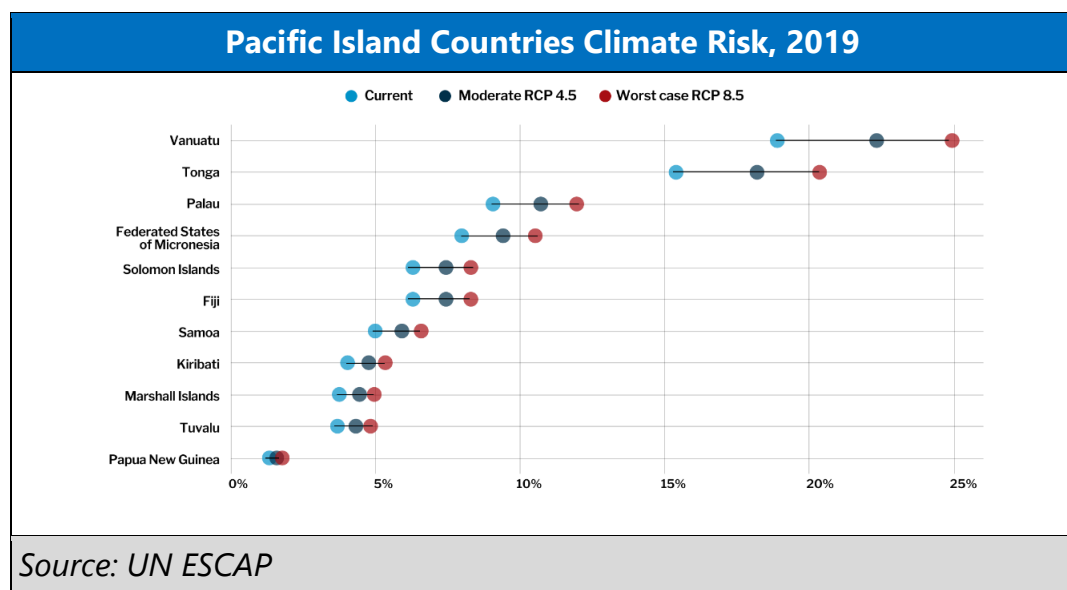
²⁶ Supra xvii

²⁷ OECD (2020), G20/OECD Report on the Collaboration with Institutional Investors and Asset Managers on Infrastructure: *Investor Proposals and the Way Forward*, July 24, 2020. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/private-pensions/Collaboration-with-Institutional-Investors-and-Asset-Managers-on-Infrastructure.pdf>

²⁸ Supra xxiii

change²⁹. Similarly, AFD - the development agency of France from 2015 – 2020, implemented 170 projects for a total commitment of €3.7 bn.

- 5.13. The conjunction of the Global North and South in the region provides a unique opportunity to export sustainable green energy solutions. They aim to achieve SDGs by building green trade flows, cooperating in climate adaptation and targeting ambitious climate policy. Perhaps initiatives like the German government's group of Friends on Climate and Security, launched in 2018 in partnership with Pacific Islands and Nauru to provide focused support for partners to deal with climate change in tandem with UN-affiliated organisations, are vital³⁰.



- 5.14. Multilateral cooperation, in the form of regional and international cooperation, is in place in the region. The US IPEF reads, "The United States will work with partners to reduce their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, support critical infrastructure resilience, and address energy security".

- 5.15. Under the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), the Green Climate Fund, established in 2010, provides grants and loans for developing countries' climate protection projects and adaptation measures. At the regional cooperation, one of the main focus areas of Quad

²⁹ France's Indo-Pacific Strategy, Government of France and Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, February 2022. Available at: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en_dcp_a4_indopacifique_022022_v1-4_web_cle878143.pdf

³⁰ Supra xvii

is climate change³¹. In the ASEAN Outlook, "Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management" form the areas of cooperation with different regional partners.

- 5.16. Equally important are the bilateral negotiations. Example: The Franco-Japanese working group on the Indo-Pacific had one of the focus areas as climate change. These agendas lead to joint projects between developing agencies - AFD and JICA - to upgrade infrastructure and foster climate change adaptation. The working group also envisioned working together in other parts of the regions like South-East Asia³². Another instance of bilateral cooperation is the Deep Marine Observatory in Nouméa, which was set up to measure the impact of climate change and fishing on the marine ecosystem.
- 5.17. Africa, forming the western plank of the Indo-Pacific, is likely to be the continent most affected by climate change, accounting for 80 percent of the world's population that is most at risk, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

6. Maritime security

- 6.1. The peculiarity of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific construct is its link between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Maritime security is one of the primary concerns of the ocean-referred conceptual construction of the Indo-Pacific. The peculiarity of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific construct links the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The different dimensions of maritime security include security concerns, marine ecology, blue economy, and ocean governance. The economic dimension of maritime security is often framed in terms of connectivity. Connectivity facilitates engagement between countries and their participation in the global value chain.

³¹ Matthew Parry; Graphics: Lucille Killmayer, *Australia's strategic view of the Indo-Pacific*, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2022. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/698917/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)698917_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/698917/EPRS_BRI(2022)698917_EN.pdf)

³² Supra xviii

A few people in a small rubber boat attempting to stop a large fishing vessel from killing whales



Source: Greenpeace

- 6.2. As the ASEAN Outlook describes, "Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions are not contiguous territorial space but a closely integrated and interconnected region". It is in the interest of all the countries, in and beyond the region, to maintain peace and security.
- 6.3. Aspects of maritime security comprise unhindered safe passage on shipping routes; open and accessible skies and seas governed by international laws;³³ combat economic and cyber espionage; preventing cyberattacks on vital infrastructure;³⁴ preventing maritime disputes; curbing unsustainable exploitation of marine resources;³⁵ enhance naval deployments; maintain open sea lanes of communication among many others as reflected in the Strategic Documents.
- 6.4. The crucial oceanic zones in the Indo-Pacific are the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Indian Ocean region. The region is central to the world trade route. Around 90 percent of global trade is through maritime transit³⁶. Indo-Pacific accounts for nearly 60 percent of global trade shipping. Apart from these, the strategic position, maritime domain and resources, including minerals and fishing of the region, are enormous. Hence

³³ Supra iv

³⁴ Supra xvi

³⁵ *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, Association of South East Asian Nations Senior Officials Meeting Bangkok Thailand, June 23, 2019. Available at: <https://asean.org/speechandstatement/asean-outlook-on-the-indo-pacific/>

³⁶ *Ibid.*

increasingly, countries within and outside the region have increasing maritime concerns over the region in reference.

- 6.5. The geo-strategic shift has come with security challenges over the oceanic region. A renewed look at building maritime capacity, maritime infrastructure, and maritime domain awareness³⁷ is required. The Pacific Deterrence Initiative and the Maritime Security Initiative are steps in the right direction to building deterrence capability.
- 6.6. The Indo-Pacific conceptualisation encompasses the ocean and land areas, even though the nomenclature concerns the oceanic zones. The region under focus requires special attention to South Asia, ASEAN, and Pacific Island countries.
- 6.7. Strengthening multilateralism ensures peace and security in the region. The Netherlands, towards this end, is encouraging cooperation in the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery (ReCAAP)³⁸. Various multilateral maritime exercises are also conducted to foster cooperation. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations of the EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Somalia ATLANTA, with participation from Germany, India, South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia³⁹ in the Indian Ocean, are operations to protect trade routes in the region. ASEAN outlook also identifies and states that multilateral engagement in maritime cooperation is vital.
- 6.8. Improving economic capabilities and maritime security is rooted in collective security. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium was mooted⁴⁰ at this end. The shift in the balance of power that comes with more substantial economic power is at the cost of change in equilibrium. This requires Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), as proposed by India. Many countries describe the region's security principle as a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP). For instance, under the FOIP, Japan initiated the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B).⁴¹

³⁷ Supra iv

³⁸ Supra xviii

³⁹ Supra xvii

⁴⁰ *Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue*, Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, Media Center, June 01, 2018.

Available at: <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers>

⁴¹ Supra xviii

- 6.9. The effort is made to shape the Quad into a "premier regional grouping" by ensuring the delivery of matters relating to the Indo-Pacific⁴². Per Quad's recent Joint statement, it will focus on coordinating the sharing of satellite data to improve maritime-domain awareness and build green shipping networks.
- 6.10. Cooperation in this oceanic region only has one international clause as the Commandment. This is the United Nations Convention of Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS). The two aspects of the oceanic region are safe passage and peaceful settlement of conflicts on the sovereignty claims of the countries.
- 6.11. Apart from this, cooperation with regional organisations, especially the ASEAN, is witnessing increasing focus. It is often termed "ASEAN Centrality". To secure maritime security, capacity building in the international law of the sea and exploring opportunities in the defence and security realm are vital.
- 6.12. Disaster relief management is another sector that requires multilateral and poly-lateral cooperation. The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) is a strategic cooperation between regional partners addressing disaster relief management.
- 6.13. The EU Joint Communication Strategy Document on the Indo-Pacific identified six priority areas. These include 1) promoting open and rules-based regional security, 2) including secure sea lines of communication, 3) capacity-building and enhanced naval presence in the Indo-Pacific; 4) stepping up naval deployments of EU Member States in the region; 5) supporting the capacity of Indo-Pacific partners to ensure maritime security; 6) facilitate partners' capacity building for the fight against cybercrime⁴³. Overwhelmingly, most priority areas are directly related to maritime. They are adding emphasis on the vitality of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.
- 6.14. A regional maritime security architecture prioritises bilateral and trilateral cooperation for information sharing. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), bringing together 24 navies, is a gambit for the region.
- 6.15. They are strengthening ocean governance in the region. The fundamental of this is the UNCLOS. Ratification and signing of the convention need to be a priority for maritime security, along with the capacity building of officials to

⁴² Supra iv

⁴³ *Ibid.*

enforce the law through bilateral or multilateral mechanisms. Consensus on the law governing the sea is a starting point.

- 6.16. Stakeholders, both the governments and CSOs, have an essential role in equipping the region for maximising their benefits and "mitigating the impacts on local sovereignty and their natural environments"⁴⁴. Governments and CSOs of Australia, New Zealand, the US and Japan can extend or redouble their support for robust governance standards and healthy CSOs, across the Pacific and parallelly develop standards in labour and environment in negotiating with the regional rival.

7. Sustainable trade

- 7.1. Sustainable trade is a core concept and engagement point through various countries' strategic documents. In addition to the economic relevance of the region strategically, the countries within and beyond benefit tremendously from the focus on sustainable trade. Sustainable trade forms a cohesive part of sustainable development under the SDG. The WTO's foundational agreement recognises⁴⁵ trade as a powerful ally of sustainable development. Sustainable development is the exchange of goods and services that generates social and environmental benefits that go beyond economic value to promote environmental resources or reduce poverty and inequality.
- 7.2. Invariably, there are many facets of sustainable trade. This includes the domain of green transition, digital economy and connectivity. The interlinkages form the core of arguments in favour of sustainable trade. For instance, the Netherlands promises to work towards sustainable trade and investment in its strategic document. In transition, it provides a unique opportunity to enhance the digital economy and connectivity on the green front. Recurring recognition of the respective country's lists of interests in the region and corresponding multilateral interests has sustainable trade as one of the focus areas.
- 7.3. To further the upsurging trade agreements, the Indo-Pacific region has four main areas of concern. This includes trade & labour; trade & MSMEs; trade & environment; and trade & gender. It is ubiquitous that CSOs are actively

⁴⁴ *Can regionalism contain geopolitical competition in the South Pacific?*, East Asia Forum, 15 August 2022, Available at: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/08/15/can-regionalism-contain-geopolitical-competition-in-the-south-pacific/>

⁴⁵ World Trade Organisation, Sustainable trade, The Committee on Trade and Environment ('regular' CTE). Available at: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/sust_dev_e.htm#:~:text=Trade%20is%20a%20powerful%20ally,trade%20is%20a%20powerful%20ally%20of%20sustainable%20development.

engaging and need to further their activities surrounding these four aspects for the healthy development of the region. Increasing trade can generate employment opportunities that must meet the population's labour standards and well-being.

- 7.4. There is an increasing focus on MSMEs. Today the question is on facilitating the MSMEs in competition with MNCs. MSMEs form the core of the economy of developing countries. The recently passed US Competes Act aims towards a similar framework of sustaining MSMEs from and competing with the MNCs. For instance, the Egyptian government's grouping of NGOs working in the MSME sector to form a commission⁴⁶ to address problems in the industry can be a practice of emulation. Trade and gender are core components of enabling development. CSOs play a crucial role in facilitating the conducive circumstances for the region's progress.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. *"I feel trade is part of the solution. You might have financing, but if the trade policies don't align, you may not be able to get the technologies you need for climate adaptation."*
- 8.2. Director-General, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. The interlinkage between climate change mitigation and sustainable trade pointers in the discussion paper was aptly summated by DG Okonjo-Iweala in this quote.
- 8.3. CSOs must engage in discussions and collaborations between regional stakeholders, including government organisations and think tanks. Timely capacity building for CSOs needs to be another area of focus. Strengthen the enabling environment for CSOs in tandem with democratic principles facilitating space for CSOs to exercise their essential roles. Polling in of resources to invest and further the capabilities of CSOs. Consultative status for CSOs like the UN ⁴⁷ and emerging multilateral grouping in the region.

⁴⁶ Fatma Ahmed, *Civil society and government cooperate to support MSMEs*, Daily News, Egypt, May 8, 2016. Available at: <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2016/05/08/civil-society-government-cooperate-support-msmes/>

⁴⁷ Willetts, P. (1996), 'Consultative Status for NGOs at the United Nations', in P. Willetts (ed.), 'The Conscience of the World': The Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations in the UN System (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution): 31–62

- 8.4. The Indo-Pacific region will remain a core focus region in the following decades. The role of CSOs working in tandem beyond borders will be crucial in shaping peace, security, and stability in the region. Apart from this, the role of CSOs will shape the development spectrum of the region with adaptation and mitigation responses to climate change in tandem with sustainable trade and facilitating maritime security.
- 8.5. CSOs in the Indo-Pacific region are part of the historical trajectory of geostrategic shifts. The idea and the role of civil society and its contemporary meanings of the term CSOs have varied over decades to the contemporary functioning of CSOs. The intersection of CSOs in the Indo-Pacific, taking into account the key focus areas, i.e., climate change, maritime security and sustainable trade, as stated in the various Strategic Documents on the region, is crucial. Therefore, the role of CSOs in the Indo-Pacific region with emulation of best practices and social learning is essential to ensure development for all in the Indo-Pacific region and to ensure security in the region.