



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>

CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES IN INDIA AND AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME SECURITY POLICIES TOWARDS THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Ta Thi Tieu Nhat*, Nguyen Thanh Long, Nguyen Cao Bao Ngoc

*Faculty of International Relations, Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
10-12 Dinh Tien Hoang Street, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

Received 10 July 2024

Revised 28 November 2024; Accepted 07 February 2025

Abstract: Maritime trade routes within the Indo-Pacific region, a central artery for global trade and geostrategic interests, are witnessing increased maritime security challenges, including inter-state disputes, arms proliferation, terrorist acts, smuggling, piracy, and climate change. Nations in the region have significantly adjusted their maritime security policies in recent years. This article aims to analyze the similarities and differences in the maritime security policies of India and Australia, two key nations that shape the region's security structure. Marked by a changing geopolitical landscape, India and Australia are enhancing their capabilities, modernizing their naval forces, strengthening maritime cooperation with allies and partners, and promoting a rules-based maritime order. However, the article also demonstrates that the different geostrategic visions, relationships with major powers, and varying capacities of India and Australia lead to differences in their maritime security policies. The article provides prospects on how India and Australia can contribute to the maritime security of the Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: India, Australia, maritime security, policy, Indo-Pacific

* Corresponding author.

Email address: tatieunhat@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.63023/2525-2445/jfs.ulis.5332>

TƯƠNG ĐỒNG VÀ KHÁC BIỆT TRONG CHÍNH SÁCH AN NINH HÀNG HẢI CỦA ẤN ĐỘ VÀ AUSTRALIA ĐỐI VỚI KHU VỰC ẤN ĐỘ DƯƠNG - THÁI BÌNH DƯƠNG

Tạ Thị Tiêu Nhật, Nguyễn Thành Long, Nguyễn Cao Bảo Ngọc

*Khoa Quan hệ Quốc tế, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh,
10-12 Đinh Tiên Hoàng, Phường Bến Nghé, Quận 1, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam*

Nhận bài ngày 10 tháng 7 năm 2024

Chỉnh sửa ngày 28 tháng 11 năm 2024; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 07 tháng 02 năm 2025

Tóm tắt: Các tuyến đường thương mại hàng hải trong khu vực Ấn Độ Dương - Thái Bình Dương, một động mạch trung tâm cho thương mại toàn cầu và các lợi ích địa chiến lược, đang chứng kiến sự gia tăng các thách thức an ninh hàng hải, bao gồm: các tranh chấp giữa các quốc gia, phổ biến vũ khí, các hành vi khủng bố, buôn lậu, cướp biển và biến đổi khí hậu, v.v. Các quốc gia trong khu vực đã điều chỉnh đáng kể các chính sách an ninh hàng hải của mình trong những năm gần đây. Bài viết nhằm mục đích phân tích các điểm tương đồng và khác biệt trong chính sách an ninh hàng hải của Ấn Độ và Australia, hai quốc gia chủ chốt trong việc định hình nên cấu trúc an ninh tại khu vực. Được đánh dấu bằng bối cảnh địa chính trị đang thay đổi, Ấn Độ và Australia đều đang tăng cường năng lực và hiện đại hóa lực lượng hải quân, đẩy mạnh hợp tác hàng hải với đồng minh và các đối tác cũng như thúc đẩy trật tự hàng hải dựa trên luật lệ. Tuy nhiên, bài viết cũng cho thấy rằng tầm nhìn địa chiến lược, mối quan hệ với các cường quốc và năng lực khác nhau của Ấn Độ và Australia là nguyên nhân dẫn đến một số khác biệt trong chính sách an ninh hàng hải của hai nước. Cuối cùng, bài viết cung cấp những triển vọng mà Ấn Độ và Australia có thể đóng góp cho an ninh hàng hải của khu vực Ấn Độ Dương - Thái Bình Dương.

Từ khóa: Ấn Độ, Australia, an ninh hàng hải, chính sách, Ấn Độ Dương - Thái Bình Dương

1. Introduction

The Indo-Pacific is emerging as a strategic area with a central role in the global geopolitical structure. This concept represents the unification of two regions, extending from the eastern part of the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific, connected by the Malacca Strait (Tertia & Perwita, 2018, p. 77). Home to over 64% of the global population and several leading economies, the Indo-Pacific stands as a pivotal geostrategic hub while also serving as the backbone of international trade, thanks to its abundant maritime resources and critical shipping lanes (Kapur, 2022, p. 11). However, territorial disputes, piracy, marine environmental pollution, and geopolitical tensions pose serious challenges to this region's maritime security (Australian Border Force, 2021). These challenges require countries to continuously adjust and strengthen policies related to maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and maintain regional stability. Maritime security is understood diversely depending on the context and objectives of each country. Generally, it refers to the condition and capability of a subject, through specific strategies and actions, to ensure the absence of maritime threats that affect its interests, security, and survival. This concept meets three conditions for "securitizing" an issue:

^o This research is funded by the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City under the grant number SĐH2023-02.

the referent object, the threat, and the response measures (Jean, 2007, pp. 23-24). Maritime security policy, therefore, can be understood as a framework of strategies and actions designed to address specific maritime threats, protect the referent object - be it national interests, territorial waters, or regional stability - and implement effective response measures. This policy is shaped by the unique context, objectives, and security concerns of each country while aligning with the broader goal of ensuring safe and secure maritime domains.

This article chooses to analyze the maritime security policies of India and Australia because both countries are located within the strategic Indo-Pacific region and possess contrasting but complementary characteristics. As the two most capable maritime nations in the Indian Ocean, Australia is a middle power in the southern part of the region and plays a vital role in alliances with Western powers, while India is an emerging economy in the northern part. These two countries are not only directly affected by changes in the region but are also actively shaping maritime security policies to protect national interests and contribute to regional stability. Both Australia and India encounter several maritime threats in practice. According to the Australian Border Force, these threats include illegal activities in protected areas, illegal exploitation of natural resources, marine pollution, illegal exports and imports, unauthorized maritime voyages, biosecurity, piracy, violence, or terrorism at sea (Australian Border Force, 2021). India's 2015 Maritime Security Strategy identifies various traditional and non-traditional security threats, including (i) maritime threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity; (ii) terrorism; (iii) illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU); (iv) maritime crime; (v) proliferation of weapons; and (vi) climate change and natural disasters (Indian Navy, 2015b).

In the context of increasingly complex maritime security that threatens the stability of the Indo-Pacific region, comparing the maritime security policies of India and Australia provides deep insights into the different strategies and priorities of these two countries. The comparative approach not only clarifies the similarities and differences in how the two countries approach maritime security challenges but also highlights the geostrategic factors, international relations, and national capacities that influence the formulation and implementation of security policies. Analyzing these differences helps better understand the motivations and strategic priorities of each country, thus opening up prospects for maritime security cooperation in the region.

2. Similarities in the Maritime Security Policies of India and Australia

In 2015, India published the "Indian Maritime Doctrine" and "Indian Maritime Security Strategy." Notably, this was the first time India mentioned the term "Indo-Pacific," reflecting the country's ambition to establish itself as a key regional power by implementing more effective maritime security policies. At the same time, Australia has undertaken several adjustments to its maritime security approach, as evidenced in various government documents such as the "2017 Foreign Policy White Paper," the "2020 Defence Strategic Update," the "2020 Guide to Maritime Security Arrangements," the "2021 Civil Maritime Security Strategy," and the "2023 Defence Strategic Review". Although India's and Australia's maritime security policies have differences in context and implementation, they both recognize the importance of maritime security in safeguarding their national interests, including national security, economic development, and marine ecosystem preservation. Therefore, India's and Australia's maritime security policies share several notable similarities.

Firstly, both India and Australia focus on strengthening and modernizing their naval forces, which form the primary foundation for safeguarding sovereignty and national interests

amidst increasingly complex maritime security landscapes. In comparison to other navies, such as the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), which has 340 active ships, the Indian Navy currently has only 150 ships (World Directory of Modern Military Warships, 2024). This stark contrast highlights the significant difference in fleet size. Therefore, India seeks to increase its Navy's combat capabilities and scope of operation. In 2018, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba affirmed that the Indian Navy "has grown into a powerful force and is ready to face any eventuality" (Lanba, 2018).

Furthermore, India is committed to producing "Make in India" ships and submarines (Ministry of Defence, 2022), which the country steadily transforms from a buyer's Navy to a builder's Navy. The "Make in India" pledge is not only an effort to increase self-reliance in defense but also to reduce dependence on arms imports from other countries. Building warships and submarines domestically will help India increase its rapid deployment capabilities and reduce long-term costs. According to figures reported in November 2023, the Indian Navy currently has 67 vessels under construction, including destroyers, frigates, corvettes, conventional and nuclear-powered submarines, and various other ships (Press Trust of India, 2023). As a result, the future of a stronger navy seems to be clear and planned, with the Navy targeting 200 ships by 2037 (Alvear-Garijo & Pilar, 2023, p. 7). In fact, this demonstrates India's long-term development strategy.

Meanwhile, Australia is actively promoting a "resilient and capable Australian Defence Force (ADF)" (Australian Government, 2023a, p. 37). Within this framework, the Government emphasizes that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), a branch of the ADF, must be optimized for operating in Australia's immediate region to maintain better the security of the country's sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and maritime trade (Australian Government, 2023a, p. 56). The Australian Government has implemented investment programs in ships and submarines, shipyard infrastructure, and skill-enhancement initiatives while prioritizing the acquisition of offensive weapons to bolster the ADF's maritime deterrence and long-range land-strike capabilities.

Secondly, both countries actively promote cooperation with allies and partners to enhance connectivity in order to address maritime security challenges better. It is important to note that maritime security is not the sole concern of any single country. Indeed, any instability arising anywhere at sea can impact the maritime security of both India and Australia. For this reason, the Indian Navy advocates working with navies from friendly countries to "build bridges of friendship" at sea through joint exercises, training programs, and other technical assistance programs (Indian Navy, 2015, p. 108). Specifically, India seeks to enhance maritime cooperation with friendly neighbors and support the maritime capacity-building of these countries. To this end, India has transferred military equipment, shared information at sea, provided more active coastal surveillance, improved sea infrastructure, and fostered joint military exercises. In a similar vein, Australia is developing relationships with key partners to support shared interests in the evolving strategic environment. Australia will enhance joint exercises and improve Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) with India.

Moreover, Australia continues supporting Japan's defense policy and strategic reforms, strengthening defense and maritime security cooperation with Japan. Additionally, Australia promotes MDA, marine environmental protection, and international law in the Southeast Asian region. Furthermore, Australia will collaborate with other Pacific partners to provide security and law enforcement training at the leadership level. It is worth noting that maritime cooperation by both India and Australia is not only driven by the potential threat of instability

in strategic sea lanes but also by their inherent limitations in countering other maritime superpowers. Despite the rapid growth of their naval forces, both India and Australia still need to build a collective maritime force to face major threats. This is clearly reflected in India's active participation in multilateral mechanisms such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and joint exercises such as Malabar, which aim to improve deterrence and enhance maritime cooperation.

Thirdly, India and Australia emphasize the essential role of international law, notably UNCLOS 1982, in maintaining a rules-based maritime order to ensure a safe and prosperous maritime environment. India considers "freedom to use the seas" and "good order at sea" to be inextricably linked to its national interest. Although India has not updated its maritime security strategy documents since 2015, its perspective on maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region has been continuously consolidated on different occasions. In his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 1, 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi affirmed that (1) the Indo-Pacific will be a free, open, inclusive region, including all nations and others beyond who have stakes in it; (2) India promotes common prosperity and security through dialogue and a common rules-based order for the region; (3) India supports "equal access as a right under international law to the use of common spaces on sea and in the air that would require freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce, and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018).

Similarly, Australia considers the rules-based maritime order as one of the most crucial elements in ensuring the safety and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. However, China's assertion of sovereignty over some parts of the South China Sea poses a threat to the global rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific "in a way that adversely impacts Australia's national interests" (Australian Government, 2023a, p. 23). In response, Australia is committed to "continuing to be an active and vocal supporter of a rules-based international order" (Australian Government, 2020, p. 24). This includes abiding by and supporting international laws and treaties, notably the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), as well as supporting international institutions that help limit the exercise of coercive power and foster collective responses to global challenges such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Australian Government, 2020, p. 24).

3. Differences in the Maritime Security Policies of India and Australia

However, there are still distinct elements in India's and Australia's maritime security policies due to the differences in each country's strategic outlook, relationships with major powers, and capabilities.

Firstly, there is a difference in the geographical scope of maritime security policy deployment. While Australia focuses on maintaining stability and influence in its immediate neighborhood, India broadly extends its sphere of influence. Specifically, Australia prioritizes the Northeastern Indian Ocean through maritime Southeast Asia to Papua New Guinea and the Southwest Pacific (Australian Government, 2020, p. 21). In contrast, India identifies several areas where it can benefit, including the primary area of interest: the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal; chokepoints such as the Malacca Strait, Hormuz Strait, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and Cape of Good Hope; island nations; and the Persian Gulf (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2015, pp. 59-60). Additionally, secondary areas of interest for India include the South Indian Ocean, Red Sea, South China Sea, and East Pacific (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2015, p. 60). In short, these differences are due to Australia's unique position between the Indian and Pacific Oceans,

which naturally inclines it towards its immediate environment that encompasses both regions. In contrast, India's maritime strategy establishes a clear distinction between primary and secondary strategic areas, reflecting its geopolitical priorities. India's engagement in these areas is thus more selective, guided by specific national interests and broader strategic imperatives.

Secondly, India and Australia have different perceptions of their relations with the United States and China, leading to differences in implementing their maritime security policies. China's rise in the Indo-Pacific affects Australia's national interests. Therefore, Australia seeks measures and policies to respond to China's regional presence and influence. Australia often publicly criticizes "China's military buildup and maritime sovereignty assertions" as negatively impacting its national interests (Australian Government, 2023a, p. 23). Moreover, as China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative consistently engages the global South countries, supplies resources and energy, and builds loan-funded infrastructures, it is believed to tie those countries into a debt trap and help China control strategic chokepoints along the maritime routes. As a result, Australia has actively been supporting infrastructure development in these countries to provide alternatives to China's investment projects. For instance, to enhance maritime transportation, Australia has supported USD 15 million for upgrading two wharves in Tuvalu (Australian Government, 2023b), USD 20 million for restoring and expanding international ports in Tonga (Australian Government, 2023c), and USD 70 million for upgrading ports in Papua New Guinea such as Kavieng, Kimbe, Daru, Oro Bay, Lorengau, Vanimo, and Wewak (Australian Government, 2023d).

On the other hand, as a close ally, Australia believes that "close cooperation with the United States is central to achieving balance and stability in the Indo-Pacific" (Australian Government, 2023a, p. 8). Therefore, Australia aims to strengthen its alliance with the United States (Australian Government, 2020, p. 22). Consequently, Australia and the United States have enhanced security relations to counter China, including regular visits of United States submarines to bases in Western Australia and the United States' efforts to accelerate missile guidance production capabilities for Australia (Martinez, 2023). Alongside the United States, Australia participates in formal and informal alliances such as QUAD or the trilateral security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) to promote maritime security cooperation to cope with China's influence in the region.

In contrast with Australia, India remains committed to non-alignment with any country. Therefore, despite improving relations with the United States, India still opposes the idea of bilateral maritime patrols (Malhotra, 2023). India views China as a critical country in its long-term strategy. Thus, despite China's rise, India continues to avoid maritime conflicts and reluctantly aligns with the West in confronting or criticizing China in public statements (Malhotra, 2023). Instead, India positions itself beyond a mere balancing act with China to actively enhance its influence regionally and globally. This argument is evidenced by India's efforts to enhance net maritime security (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2015, p. 95) and expand security relations with countries to promote balanced Indo-Pacific relationships. For example, in 2018, India established the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region, and has played a pivotal role in supporting countries to share information and enhance maritime awareness. India also conducts the multilateral exercise Milan with Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, focusing on enhancing security cooperation, building trust, and improving coordination between naval forces of various countries.

Thirdly, differences in capabilities between India and Australia also influence their maritime cooperation areas. Australia excels in cooperation in non-traditional maritime

security aspects, while India has advantages in military cooperation. Given that the RAN is relatively limited compared to other middle powers such as Japan, India, and Indonesia (World Directory of Modern Military Warships, 2024), Australia relies heavily on importing weapons and defense technology from other countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Therefore, despite the clear demarcation of traditional and non-traditional security concerns in various documents, Australia actively collaborates in non-traditional security areas to demonstrate its role and influence in the region. Notably, recognizing climate change as the greatest threat to livelihoods and welfare in the Pacific, Australia launched the Pacific Climate Partnership Initiative in 2023. The initiative aims to support countries in coping with and adapting to climate risks and impacts. Some notable projects have been implemented under the Government's plan, such as mitigating flood impacts in Nadi (Fiji) or coastal adaptation in the capital Fofuafale, Nanumaga Island, and Nanumea (Tuvalu) (Australian Government, 2023e). Additionally, Australia promotes humanitarian assistance and disaster relief for countries in the region (Australian Government, 2020, p. 26).

Meanwhile, the Indian Navy has a more extended development history, evolving through various stages, and currently ranks seventh globally (World Directory of Modern Military Warships, 2024). With a strong navy and advanced defense technology, India pays great attention to building defense capabilities, especially in Southeast Asia. Since 2020, the Indian Navy has conducted naval exercises with Thailand and the Philippines while maintaining regular exercises with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. In 2023, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) organized the ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise at Changi Naval Base, Republic of Singapore Navy. In April 2024, India transferred BrahMos missiles to the Philippine Marine Corps as part of a USD 375 million cooperation package between the two countries. India has strategically taken steps to strengthen its Southeast Asian position, particularly to enhance defense cooperation with Southeast Asian countries.

In general, India and Australia's contrasting maritime security policies illuminate nations' nuanced approaches to safeguarding their oceanic interests. These divergences stem from each country's unique geographical positioning, political landscape, and economic imperatives. Consequently, these distinct approaches may shape divergent long-term objectives for India and Australia. While both nations share common interests in maintaining regional stability and freedom of navigation, their priorities and methods of achieving these goals could lead to varied outcomes in the maritime domain. These divergences underscore the need for ongoing dialogue and cooperation to align strategies and maximize collective security in the Indo-Pacific region.

4. Prospects for Enhancing Maritime Security of India and Australia in the Indo-Pacific Region

Comparing India and Australia's maritime security policies is essential to clarify the similarities and differences between the two countries and to identify opportunities for cooperation and their adaptation to regional security challenges. Both India and Australia acknowledge the crucial role of maritime security in protecting national interests and maintaining regional stability, including national security, economic development, and marine ecosystem preservation. This recognition is evident in key strategic priorities, including naval modernization, enhanced multilateral cooperation, and the promotion of a rules-based maritime order under international law.

This comparison also provides a clearer understanding of each country's strategic priorities, shaped by their geographical, strategic, and international relationship factors. While both countries emphasize strengthening naval power, each has different regional priorities and methods of implementation. India focuses on developing an indigenous naval force to protect strategic sea lanes in the Indian Ocean. At the same time, Australia, with its different geographical position, prioritizes securing sea lanes in the Pacific and enhancing cooperation with allies such as the United States and Japan. Additionally, India emphasizes the "Make in India" strategy to enhance defense self-reliance, whereas Australia focuses on close cooperation with partners like the United States and the United Kingdom through AUKUS. These differences clearly reflect the distinct geopolitical contexts and security needs of each country.

Despite their strategic differences, this comparison reveals that both India and Australia prioritize international cooperation and are committed to upholding a rules-based maritime order, particularly under UNCLOS 1982. This commitment opens up the possibility for close coordination between the two countries to address shared maritime security threats, such as the rise of China and non-traditional threats. As a result of this comparison, it becomes clear which areas offer potential for cooperation, such as enhancing joint exercises, improving maritime domain awareness, and promoting a rules-based maritime order under international law. These efforts will contribute to creating a safer and more stable Indo-Pacific region. Despite the differences mentioned in maritime security policies between India and Australia, the importance of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region will serve as the primary driver for both sides to reach a consensus and coordinate to take advantage of opportunities and counter maritime threats within the region. Given the transnational nature of most maritime issues, which cannot be managed unilaterally, and each country's perception and management of challenges while maximizing resources, maritime security in the region will likely be significantly enhanced in the coming years. Generally, the maritime security outlook of countries such as India and Australia can be considered through (1) focusing on strengthening and modernizing their navies to promote the regional balance of power, (2) enhancing cooperation with allies and partners, (3) promoting an international maritime order based on rules and laws.

Firstly, the coordination between the navies of India and Australia can reduce the power asymmetry with China. Currently, both Australia and India are strengthening and modernizing their naval forces. The RAN is expanding and modernizing its submarine and warship forces. The Australian Government plans to complete the purchase of five Virginia-class submarines from the United States by the early 2030s and invest USD 4.6 billion over the next decade in collaboration with the United Kingdom to design and expand the production of nuclear reactors that will eventually be installed on AUKUS submarines built in Adelaide (Australia) (Greene, 2024). The Indian Navy is also developing a blue-water navy to protect national interests globally. India aims to achieve complete self-reliance in defense technology by 2047, including the ability to build nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers (Bhattacharjee, 2023). India's first indigenous aircraft carrier project, INS Vikrant, exemplifies this naval capability development. This foundation enables India and Australia to balance regional power, mainly through forming a cooperation network based on shared experiences and conducting joint exercises. India and Australia have effectively coordinated bilateral naval exercises such as AUSINDEX and the quadrilateral MALABAR exercise involving Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. They actively participate in exercises organized by other nations, such as Indonesia's KOMODO and France's La Perouse in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, Australia and India host multilateral naval exercises like Milan and Kakadu, involving ships, helicopters,

fighter jets, and maritime patrol aircraft designed to test and enhance combat and joint action capabilities and conduct joint patrols and maritime control activities.

Secondly, Australia and India have the potential to contribute to regional maritime security by strengthening cooperation with allies and partners. (1) India and Australia can leverage their roles in existing minilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms. They should strengthen existing frameworks like QUAD, ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. With QUAD institutionalizing at a higher level, Australia and India have prospects for promoting a broader maritime security cooperation network to address common challenges. They can also proactively lead minilateral cooperation groups, such as the trilateral cooperation among India, Australia, and Indonesia, to coordinate maritime security activities and maintain their regional presence.

(2) India and Australia should continue supporting the capacity-building efforts of other regional countries, *which* can help mitigate power asymmetry with China and maintain a stable balance in the region. Increasing bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral exercises and cooperation between India, Australia, and other regional countries reinforces mutual support against common challenges and enhances military cooperation, security burden-sharing, and self-defense capabilities. India's establishment of the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region in 2018 exemplifies its commitment to enhancing maritime security cooperation by sharing information, contributing to regional stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. India has signed the White Shipping Agreement with Australia since 2017 and plans to sign a similar agreement with Japan. Another core project is the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), which helps countries track "dark shipping" and other tactical activities through a commercial satellite network (Corben et al., 2023). IPMDA marks a step towards formalizing broader information-sharing and cooperation models, benefiting collective defense agendas even though it is not defense-oriented. Additionally, Australia and India have been participating in anti-piracy patrols and security operations against smuggling and other maritime crimes. An example is their involvement in the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

(3) India and Australia can offer more investment alternatives to China's Maritime Silk Road Investments. To achieve this, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), proposed by India and Japan, should be accelerated. AAGC aims to bring the development experiences of East, Southeast, and South Asia closer to Africa, fostering greater connectivity and economic cooperation between the regions. AAGC also provides a development model for Africa, where Asia, especially India and Japan, leads regional and global initiatives for prosperity (Prakash, 2018, p. 3). Connectivity projects like AAGC promote the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital across a broad geographic area, creating win-win situations and opportunities for secure trade routes that ensure the flow of goods and energy. An India-Japan-Australia trade corridor could also enhance economic connectivity and supply chain security.

(4) India and Australia should engage more deeply in regional maritime security through their initiatives. At the 14th East Asia Summit in 2019, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" with seven pillars: (a) maritime security; (b) marine ecology; (c) marine resources; (d) capacity building and resource sharing; (e) disaster risk management; (f) science, technology, and academic cooperation; and (g) trade, connectivity, and maritime transport (Indian Council of World Affairs, 2022, p. 12). IPOI does not create a new institutional framework but aims to promote practical cooperation based on existing regional structures like ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, or the Indian Ocean Rim

Association (Indian Council of World Affairs, 2022, p. 12). At the 2024 ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, the Australian Government announced a USD 64 million investment over four years to enhance its Southeast Asia Maritime Partnership through activities such as coral reef conservation, maritime law enforcement, domain awareness, marine environmental management, and ocean protection (Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2024). Australia's cooperation supports the ASEAN Maritime Vision and the maritime pillar of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. These efforts and projects demonstrate the middle powers' commitment to supporting and developing the maritime sector within multilateral organizations and forums. The active participation of middle powers promotes maritime security cooperation and mutual trust and unites nations, creating a balance of power in the region to achieve the Indo-Pacific vision. India and Australia launched the Australia-India Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Partnership (AIPOIP) in 2020 to shape maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific for a free, open, prosperous, and rules-based maritime order. Through AIPOIP, the Australian Government announced the "India-Australia Industry and Research Collaboration for Reducing Plastic Waste" project with a total investment of USD 4.5 million in 2020 (Department of Industry Science and Resources, 2020). This project creates opportunities for regional countries to participate in practical, clean, and sustainable ocean activities, advancing marine environment conservation and sustainable economic development and ensuring people's security.

Thirdly, India and Australia can contribute to maintaining regional maritime stability and security by consistently committing to a rules-based maritime order. Both countries should uphold their vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, emphasizing principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom of navigation and overflight, and peaceful dispute resolution. This commitment also provides a basis for Australia, India, and other countries to continue exerting legal pressure on China. For instance, Australia submitted Note Verbale No. 20/026 to the United Nations to oppose all of China's maritime claims based on the full provisions of UNCLOS 1982 (Permanent Mission of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2020). Similarly, India has publicly called on China to comply with the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling (Lariosa, 2023). By consistently defending international law as middle powers, Australia and India can present a strong image of international solidarity and determination, not just from any individual country.

5. Conclusion

The maritime security policies of India and Australia both focus on modernizing naval forces through investments in warships, submarines, and advanced technologies, as well as enhancing maritime combat capabilities. Both countries emphasize the importance of international cooperation in maritime security, demonstrated through participation in bilateral, unilateral, and multilateral cooperation mechanisms. Simultaneously, both countries uphold compliance with international law, especially UNCLOS 1982, in resolving maritime disputes and maintaining a rules-based maritime order. India and Australia have committed to promoting cooperation to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Through this, India and Australia continue to play critical roles in the region's maritime security architecture. However, India and Australia also have specific differences in maritime security policies due to different strategic calculations aligned with their national interests.

Nevertheless, this article argues that these contrasts will not diminish the roles of India and Australia in participating in the governance of maritime issues in the Indo-Pacific. This is

because Australia and India share common interests in maritime security, especially in the context of increasing power competition and emerging non-traditional security challenges in the region. In the future, Australia and India will continue to contribute to ensuring maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

References

- Alvear-Garijo, C., & Pilar, M. H. (2023). *Maritime Security, Governance and Connectivity in the Indo-Pacific: India's Central Role and Opportunities for Partnership*. Spain-India Observatory.
- Australian Border Force. (2021). *Annual Reports*. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/reports/annual-reports>
- Australian Government. (2020). *2020 Defence Strategic Update*. <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update>
- Australian Government. (2021). *Australian Government Civil Maritime Security Strategy*. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/nat-security/files/australian-government-civil-maritime-security-strategy.pdf>
- Australian Government. (2023a). *Defence Strategic Review*. <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>
- Australian Government. (2023b). *Enhancing boat harbours across Tuvalu*. <https://www.aiffp.gov.au/investments/investment-list/enhancing-boat-harbours-across-tuvalu>
- Australian Government. (2023c). *Upgrading Tonga's international port*. <https://www.aiffp.gov.au/investments/investment-list/upgrading-tongas-international-port>
- Australian Government. (2023d). *Upgrading ports across Papua New Guinea*. <https://www.aiffp.gov.au/investments/investment-list/upgrading-ports-across-papua-new-guinea>
- Australian Government. (2023e). *Climate Partnership*. <https://www.aiffp.gov.au/climate-partnership-0>
- Bhattacharjee, S. (2023, July 21). Indian Navy is now a formidable blue water force, says Eastern Naval Command chief. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/indian-navy-is-now-a-formidable-blue-water-force-says-eastern-naval-command-chief/article67105817.ece>
- Corben, T., Townshend, A., Herzinger, B., Baruah, D., & Satake, T. (2023). *Bolstering the Quad: The case for a collective approach to maritime security*. United States Studies Centre.
- Department of Industry Science and Resources. (2020). *Australia and India united in research collaborations*. <https://www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/karenandrews/media-releases/australia-and-india-united-research-collaborations>
- Greene, A. (2024, March 22). March British industry to receive nearly 5 billion from Australia to help build nuclear-powered submarines in Adelaide. *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. <https://doi.org/https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-22/nuclear-submarines-program-to-include-5-billion-uk-spend/103618512>
- Indian Council of World Affairs. (2022). *Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative. Towards a Sustainable and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region*. <https://www.icwa.in/pdfs/IndoPacificOceansInitiative.pdf>
- Indian Ministry of Defence. (2015). *Freedom to use the seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* <https://aldeilis.net/mumbai/1686.pdf>
- Indian Navy. (2015). *Ensuring Secure Sea: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*. Naval Strategic Publication.
- Jean, C. E. S. (2007). The Changing Nature of International Security: The Need for an Integrated Definition. *Paterson Review*, 8(22), 23-34.
- Kapur, L. (2022). *Reviving India – France – Australia Trilateral Cooperation in the Indian Ocean*. Delhi Policy Group.
- Lanba, S. (2018, July 11). Indian Navy a strong force, ready for any eventuality. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-navy-a-strong-force-ready-for-any-eventuality-navy-chief-sunil-lanba/articleshow/58286564.cms?from=mdr>
- Lariosa, A. (2023, July 5). India Revises Stance on China – Philippines Maritime Dispute as New Delhi Looks East. *USNI News*. <https://news.usni.org/2023/07/05/india-revises-stance-on-china-philippines-maritime-dispute-as-new-delhi-looks-east>

- Malhotra, A. (2023, April 24). Is India the Balancer in the Indo-Pacific? *Inkstick Media*. <https://inkstickmedia.com/is-india-the-balancer-in-the-indo-pacific/>
- Martinez, L. (2023, July 29). US and Australia deepen military ties to counter China. *ABC News*. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-australia-deepen-military-ties-counter-china/story?id=101811272>
- Minister for Foreign Affairs. (2024). *New funding for maritime partnerships in Southeast Asia*. <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/new-funding-maritime-partnerships-southeast-asia>
- Ministry of Defence. (2022). *The warships project India's strategic strength & self-reliance prowess to the world*. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1825981>
- Ministry of External Affairs. (2018). *Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue (June 01, 2018)*. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>
- Permanent Mission of the Commonwealth of Australia. (2020). *Declaration No.20/026*. https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mys_12_12_2019/2020_07_23_AUS_NV_U_N_001_OLA-2020-00373.pdf
- Prakash, A. (2023). *The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor: Bringing together old partnerships and new initiatives*. Observer Research Foundation.
- Press Trust of India. (2023, June 10). Crest of Navy warship "Surat" to be unveiled in city it's named after. *The Business Standard*. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/crest-of-navy-warship-surat-to-be-unveiled-in-city-it-s-named-after-123110500780_1.html
- Tertia, J., & Perwita, A. A. B. (2018). Maritime Security in Indo-Pacific: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 14(1), 77-95. Doi: 10.26593.
- World Directory of Modern Military Warships. (2024, November 20). *Global Naval Powers Ranking*. <https://www.wdmmw.org/ranking.php>