WEP Warwick Evans Publishing

International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration

ISSN: 3005-9836 (Print), ISSN: 3005-9585 (Online) | Volume 7, Number 2, Year 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62051/ijsspa.v7n2.04
Journal homepage: https://ijsspa.org

Fear of Abandonment: Comparative Process Tracing of Hedging Strategies in Australia and India Amid U.S.-China Strategic Competition

Kening Li*

School of English and International Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, 100000, China

*E-mail: kn_lovetheworld@126.com.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the fear of abandonment has shaped the hedging strategies of Australia and India amid intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition between 2012 and 2022. Drawing on a comparative process-tracing approach, the study introduces an analytical framework that conceptualizes fear of abandonment as a multidimensional strategic anxiety – encompassing the fluidity of security commitments, vulnerability of economic dependence, and scarcity of strategic autonomy. Through case analysis, the paper finds that both countries employ hedging, but diverge in form: Australia adopts an institutional hedging model anchored in alliance loyalty and bureaucratic contradictions, while India pursues a more autonomy-preserving path, marked by selective engagement and non-alignment continuity. These differentiated responses reveal how medium-sized powers recalibrate their strategies to mitigate abandonment risks under structural pressures. The study contributes to the broader literature by moving beyond Southeast Asian-focused analyses and enriching theoretical understandings of hedging through a causally grounded, middle-power perspective.

KEYWORDS

Fear of Abandonment; Strategic Hedging; Middle Powers; U.S.-China Strategic Competition.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the Biden administration incorporating the "outcompeting China" strategy into the National Security Strategy [1], the power struggle between the U.S. and China has evolved from a subtle geopolitical undercurrent into an overt framework for reshaping the international order. In this profound transformation, the Indo-Pacific region has become the focal stage for great power competition, pushing medium-sized powers to the crossroads of strategic choices. The U.S. strengthens its military presence through the Indo-Pacific Strategy, while China deepens economic cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative [2]. This binary trend of security-economy division forces regional countries to weigh the difficult balance between dependency and autonomy. The strategic choices of Australia and India are particularly representative: as key nodes in the U.S. security network, both countries actively participate in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy and cautiously engage with China's Belt and Road Initiative [3]. Such seemingly contradictory behaviors stem from a core driving force – the fear of abandonment – which reflects concerns over U.S. strategic retrenchment leading to unmet security commitments, as well as fears of economic backlash from excessive confrontation with China. Such kind of fear is not simply a derivative of traditional security dilemmas but a deep-rooted anxiety among medium-sized powers under the dual pressures of a

loosening hegemonic order and the rise of an emerging power. Understanding how this fear systematically shapes the hedging strategies of these two countries may well help decode the survival logic of medium-sized powers in the Indo-Pacific region.

Existing literature on hedging strategies in the Indo-Pacific region tends to focus on Southeast Asian countries [4][5][6][7] or remains limited to patching the balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy [8][9]. While these studies reveal the tension between economic interdependence and security pressures, they mainly focus on the "weak state hedging" model or confine their analysis to the superficial layers of security dilemmas, neglecting the specific strategic autonomy demands of medium-sized powers and lacking a deconstruction of their causal mechanisms. It is worth noting that some studies do focus on Australia's fear of abandonment and its hedging strategies in the Indo-Pacific region [10][11][12][13]. However, these single-case studies on Australia are limited by unclear summaries of hedging characteristics and insufficient inductive confidence in the mechanisms of hedging strategies. Therefore, this study attempts to use process-tracing methods, which are adept at capturing causal mechanisms in strategic decision-making [14], to help analyze the black box of how national fears are transformed into specific policies. Additionally, this study tends to use a dual-case comparison design of Australia and India to highlight the differentiated paths taken by these two countries in response to the same structural pressures in the Indo-Pacific region, thereby overcoming the limitations of single-case explanations. Thus, the focus of such a comparative process-tracing will be on the causal chain of "strategic anxiety - hedging response" and will attempt to inductively analyze the differentiation mechanisms of hedging strategies, striving to construct a hedging spectrum to address research gaps.

Based on this, the central research question is: How has the fear of abandonment systematically shaped the path differentiation of Australia's and India's hedging strategies during the 2012-2022 U.S.-China strategic competition? By relying on a dual-case comparative process-tracing method and employing the time frame from Obama's Pivot to Asia in 2012 to the burgeoning Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, this paper aims to re-anchor the agency coordinates of medium-sized powers in great power competition, exploring the risk-diversification logic they construct between the fluidity of hegemonic commitments and the accessibility of rising-country countermeasures. To answer this research question, the overall structure of this paper follows a logical chain of "theoretical construction - process tracing - mechanism analysis". First, this paper constructs a "strategic anxiety - hedging response" analytical framework that concretizes the traditional international relations theory's discrete concept of "fear" into a three-dimensional system, including the fluidity of security commitments, vulnerability of economic dependence, and scarcity of strategic autonomy. Second, this paper compares the paths of Australia and India under strategic anxiety via the comparative process tracing. Finally, this paper attempts to deconstruct the causal mechanisms to reveal the differentiated logic by which the two countries respond to the fear of abandonment.

2. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION

The fear of abandonment is not a static psychological perception, but a dynamic strategic anxiety embedded within the changing power structures [15]. In the context of this paper, it can be defined as the systemic concern of medium-sized powers about the potential dysfunction of traditional security commitment systems relying upon the U.S. This concern arises both from the anticipated decline in the reliability of the hegemonic power and from the growing countermeasures of the emerging power. Accordingly, amid U.S.-China strategic competition, this anxiety could present three dimensions: first, the fluidity of security commitments. That is, at the security level, medium-sized countries fear being abandoned by the U.S., given the shift of the U.S. from an offshore balancer to a selective intervener [16]. Second, the vulnerability of economic dependence. That is, at the economic level, medium-sized countries fear being abandoned by China, given China's ability to reshape regional order through trade countermeasures [17]. Third, the scarcity of strategic autonomy.

That is, at the level of autonomy, medium-sized countries fear that their own capabilities are insufficient to withstand the abandonment risks from the first two dimensions, making it increasingly difficult for them to maintain independent action space. The intertwining of these three anxieties forms the common starting point for the hedging strategies of Australia and India.

The innovation of this theoretical framework lies in breaking away from the traditional security-economy binary perspective on hedging strategies. By deconstructing the fear of abandonment into a composite anxiety involving security, economy, and autonomy, this paper attempts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the generative logic of hedging strategies in medium-sized powers. It is not merely a reactive response to a single threat, but rather a continuous effort to reconstruct strategic autonomy in the interstices of great power competition. This framework is expected to lay the foundation for the subsequent comparative analyses.

3. HEDGING STRATEGIES IN AUSTRALIA AND INDIA AMID U.S.-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION

From 2012 to 2022, focusing on the evolution of Australia's and India's hedging strategies in the Indo-Pacific region, it can be seen that despite both being driven by the fear of abandonment, their policy responses diverged, ultimately forming such two typical patterns as institutional hedging and autonomous hedging.

For Australia, from Obama's Pivot to Asia to the Trump-era Indo-Pacific Strategy, decision-makers consistently oscillated between strengthening alliance ties and expanding strategic autonomy. This oscillation was concretized in the 2016 Defence White Paper, which emphasized "the critical role of the United States in ensuring stability in the Indo-Pacific region" by stating that "the levels of security and stability we [Australia] seek in the Indo-Pacific would not be achievable without the United States", while also asserting the necessity that "the self-reliant defence of Australia's territory remains the highest priority for this Government" [18]. At the same time, it affirmed and supported "China's continued economic growth and the opportunities this is bringing for Australia and other countries in the Indo-Pacific" [18]. Thus, this dual narrative translated into a unique hedging model in practice – mitigating security anxieties by deeply embedding into the U.S.-led security alliance, while attempting to maintain a fragile balance in economic engagement with China. However, Australia's 2018 decision to ban Huawei from participating in the 5G network [19] exposed the inherent vulnerabilities of its institutional hedging: when technological security issues became highly politicized, economic rationality had to give way to alliance loyalty, this leaving Australia passive in the 2020 trade dispute with China [20]. And its efforts to reduce economic dependence on China through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) were also limited in effectiveness [21].

This dilemma is reflected in a noticeable generational shift in Australia's strategic discourse. Comparing Kevin Rudd's emphasis on Creative Middle Power Diplomacy (2007-2010) [22] with Scott Morrison's Value-Based Alliance First approach (2019-2022) [44][23], Australia's strategic culture gradually shifted from pragmatism to ideological bias. This transformation reached its apex in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, which defined China as an "assertive" power in the Indo-Pacific region[45]; yet while treating China as a systemic competitor, Australia failed to provide an alternative economic engagement framework, merely abstractly "advocating for a rules-based international order designed to support economic growth" [24]. This undoubtedly led to structural gaps in its policy toolbox. Notably, Australia's bureaucratic consensus tradition in foreign decision-making helped show the characteristic of contradiction: the ongoing struggle between the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade over threat prioritization led to a security-first path dependency in policy outputs [25].

In contrast, for India, as an heir of the Non-Aligned Movement, its policymakers have remained cautious of any form of institutional alliance. This historical memory was reflected in the 2019 U.S.-India signing of the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), which allowed India access to sensitive U.S. military technologies, but India insisted that technology transfers include provisions for local production [26]. This selective engagement strategy further developed under U.S.-China strategic competition, as India pursued dual-track participation – both advancing the U.S.-India Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) (2016) and engaging China in the informal Wuhan summit (2018) [27][28]. Such seemingly contradictory behaviors follow a clear strategic calculation – to build strategic redundancy by participating in multiple platforms such as the Quad and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), thus avoiding excessive reliance on any single mechanism.

Whereas, India's hedging practice underwent a key turning point after the 2020 Galwan Valley border clashes. Unlike Australia, which accelerated its alignment with the U.S. during its crises, India adopted a unique confrontational engagement strategy: reinforcing its military defenses at the border while maintaining dialogue with China through BRICS. Additionally, India repeatedly opposed U.S. mediation in the Sino-Indian border clashes, insisting on resolving the issue through bilateral negotiations. This "dual-track + preventing-third-party-penetration" model was systematically expressed in Modi's "Five Principles" for strengthening international maritime security cooperation, presented to the United Nations Security Council in 2021. The "Five Principles" include eliminating barriers to legitimate maritime trade, resolving maritime disputes peacefully and based on international law, jointly addressing maritime threats posed by natural disasters and non-state actors, protecting the marine environment and resources, and encouraging responsible maritime connectivity[46]. It is evident that India emphasizes seeking dominance in the Indian Ocean region while avoiding direct challenges to China's Belt and Road Initiative. This delicate balance is, to some extent, supported by the centralized nature of India's decision-making system. The Strategic Policy Group (SPG), led by Ajit Doval, effectively integrates the differing positions of the military, diplomacy, and intelligence agencies, ensuring the coherence of India's hedging strategy [29].

From the above, it is clear that the divergence in the paths of Australia and India essentially lies in their different approaches to defining the boundaries of strategic autonomy. For Australia, institutional hedging means seeking limited autonomy within the existing alliance framework, with policy adjustments always constrained by the collective action logic of Western countries. In contrast, for India, the core of autonomous hedging is to maximize freedom of strategic choice, and its policy design always leaves room for the possibility of disengagement.

This divergence is more deeply rooted in the differentiated cognitive constructions of the fear of abandonment between the two countries. Australia's anxiety is defensive, stemming from its limited ability, as a medium power, to independently respond to China's rise. In contrast, India's fear is more proactive, with a greater concern about its strategic autonomy being compressed by great power competition. This cognitive difference reflects a sharp contrast on the policy timeline: when the U.S. withdrew from the TPP, leading Australia to accelerate RCEP negotiations, India chose to withdraw at the final stages of negotiations [30][31]. As India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated, the evolving collision between Washington and Beijing generates "a host of strategic challenges" for India; but the solution for New Delhi cannot consist of pursuing any simplistic alignment with one over the other; rather, "developing the mindset to not only respond but actually leverage that [competition] is what could define the new India"[47]. It is clear that for India, any institutional constraints that might weaken its strategic autonomy are unacceptable.

4. MECHANISM DISCUSSION

The aforementioned path divergence between institutional hedging and autonomous hedging is essentially a product of the fear of abandonment resonating with both internal and external factors in

specific historical contexts. This fear is not a static psychological constant, but is transformed into concrete policy choices through a dual dynamic mechanism – internally, the shaping role of cognitive frameworks; externally, the constraining effect of geopolitical realities. Understanding the interaction between these internal and external mechanisms may well be key to interpreting the dilemmas faced by middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region.

First, the shaping role of cognitive frameworks acts as an initial filter in the construction of strategic anxieties in both countries. Australia's decision-makers have consistently viewed the U.S.-China competition from the perspective of a peripheral member of the Western countries [32], a collective cognition that traces back to the historical trauma of Singapore's fall during World War II – when Britain was unable to provide protection, the U.S. became the cornerstone of security dependence [33]. This historical memory projects into the contemporary as an over-sensitive focus on the reliability of the U.S. alliance, making any signs of U.S. strategic retrenchment, such as Trump's withdrawal from TPP, interpreted as a harbinger of systemic U.S. betrayal. This resulting cognitive loop drives Australia to frame its hedging strategy within the institutional-optimization category – strengthening alliance ties through actions like upgrading the ANZUS Treaty and advancing AUKUS, attempting to alleviate abandonment anxiety with tighter institutional bonds. This mindset is particularly evident in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, which almost equates the Indo-Pacific Strategy with the Alliance Strategy[48], but fails to propose substantial plans for building autonomous deterrence capabilities, revealing the inhibiting effect of its cognitive framework on policy innovation [24].

In contrast, India's cognitive construction presents a starkly different historical dimension. As the victim of colonial history and a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, its decision-makers have consistently remained wary of dependent relationships [34]. This collective memory leads them to interpret the U.S.-China competition primarily as an opportunity for strategic autonomy. As Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated, "any friction between countries implies both risk and opportunity, and the goal of the Indian government is to manage risk and maximize opportunity" [35]. Thus, when the U.S. advanced its Indo-Pacific Strategy, India did not view it merely as a security assurance but, with a growth-oriented mindset, saw U.S.-India cooperation as mutually beneficial. For example, in the 2015 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship, the document repeatedly mentions that "the United States and India commit to work to conclude defense transactions, not as ends in and of themselves, but as means to strengthen both countries' security, to reinforce the strategic partnership" and to "enhance cooperation toward maritime security and to increase each other's capability to secure the free movement of lawful commerce and freedom of navigation across sea lines of communication, in accordance with the principles of international law" [36]. This unique cognition led India essentially to seek to create strategic ambiguity to prevent any major power from making deterministic predictions about its behavior.

Second, the constraining effect of geopolitical realities provides a material anchor for cognitive frameworks, transforming abstract fears into concrete policy options. As for Australia, its geographical location forms the physical basis for its strategic dilemma. As an isolated continent in the South Pacific, Australia features a lot of maritime lifelines exposed to China's "area denial" capabilities [37]. This geopolitical vulnerability materializes as a maritime prisoner's dilemma in its policy terms [38]. As the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper repeatedly emphasizes, "the region's seas and airspace are becoming more contested, and freedom of navigation is under challenge in parts of the region", and "Australia is concerned about the potential for the use of force or coercion in the East China Sea and Taiwan Strait" [39]. This awareness forces Australia to focus its hedging efforts on maritime security, with decisions like joining the Quad and upgrading the P-8A anti-submarine patrol fleet being, in essence, an attempt to diversify risks through maritime security multilateralization [40]. However, this path fundamentally conflicts with its economic structure, as Australia's exports of minerals to China are the largest compared to other export sectors [41], meaning that any escalation of security confrontation between Australia and China in the security

domain could trigger economic backlash. Thus, the split between Australia's geo-economics and geo-security creates a dilemma for its institutional hedging.

In contrast, India's geopolitical situation presents a complex duality. India is both a geopolitical pivot of the Eurasian continent and a key maritime node in the Indian Ocean. This dual identity offers India both strategic opportunities and policy paradoxes. On one hand, in the land domain, the high-altitude geographical features along the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) force India to prioritize the modernization of its army. According to India's Union Budget 2021-22, 61% of the defense budget is allocated to the Army [42], which undoubtedly limits India's tilt toward naval and air force development. On the other hand, in the maritime domain, India must guard against so-called China's Strings of Pearls strategy while avoiding being assimilated into the U.S. forward deployment agenda [43]. This balancing demand has led to a unique form of "Indian Monroeism", where India uses its security provider identity to transform its hedging strategy into a tool for building regional maritime leadership. So, this dual geographical reality shapes India's autonomy-driven hedging, with its dynamic balance constantly shifting between the priorities of land and sea strategies.

As seen above, the interaction between internal cognitive frameworks and external geopolitical realities shapes the differentiated logic with which Australia and India respond to the fear of abandonment. For Australia, the historical path dependence of its cognitive framework, coupled with the maritime vulnerability in its geopolitical reality, pushes it toward institutional hedging. By comparison, India's colonial memory and its dual geographical characteristics give rise to autonomous hedging. This mechanistic differentiation proves that middle powers' strategic choices are not passive adaptations to the international structure, but rather a creative reconstruction influenced by both internal historical genes and external geographical positions.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the hedging practices of Australia and India are both responses to a shared strategic dilemma and products of their unique historical experiences and geopolitical positioning. The core concern of this paper is to reveal the interactive mechanisms of both the commonality and differences between the two. Based on a comparative process tracing of the two countries' cases, this study finds that, in the context of U.S.-China strategic competition, the fear of abandonment has driven the two countries' hedging strategies in the Indo-Pacific region in a differentiated manner, forming a spectrum of "institutional-autonomous" hedging strategies.

Specifically, Australia's institutional hedging is deeply embedded in the Western alliance system, with its strategic choices profoundly influenced by the institutionalization of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. From the ANZUS Treaty to AUKUS, Australia's security policy has always centered on strengthening institutional ties, attempting to alleviate its abandonment anxiety by reaffirming U.S. military commitments. In contrast, India's autonomous hedging is rooted in the historical legacy of the Non-Aligned Movement, with its strategic core being issue-based cooperation rather than institutional attachment. Be it joining the Quad or refusing to sign additional clauses of the U.S.-India Logistics Exchange Agreement, India consistently retains the freedom to act unilaterally, and this strategic ambiguity allows it to flexibly adjust its engagement with the U.S. and China in response to changing circumstances. Therefore, the differences between the two countries essentially stem from their differentiated cognition of the concept of strategic autonomy. Australia equates it with increased voice within the institutional framework, while India views it as freedom of action outside the institutional framework. However, regardless of these differences, this undoubtedly highlights the complexity of middle power strategic choices – these countries are neither passive recipients of great power competition nor simple beneficiaries of power shifts, but creative agents who continuously reconstruct their strategic positions in the interplay of historical legacies and current pressures.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study carry some significant implications for policy makers. For Australia, deepening institutional ties has in fact reduced the flexibility of its hedging strategy, making the economic costs of decoupling from China increasingly unbearable. Both the defense expenditures raised by the AUKUS submarine agreement and the difficulty of diversifying economic dependence through the CPTPP reveal the long-term costs of its security-first path. For India, while it maintains policy flexibility through strategic ambiguity, the trends of U.S.-China decoupling and increasing pressures for engagement will inevitably push the multilateral-connection model to its limits. These dilemmas reveal that the strategic choices of middle powers are fundamentally a constant balancing act between the costs of hedging and the need to mitigate risks.

REFERENCES

[1] Javed H. Sino-American competition since 2017: is there a US foreign policy consensus and continuity on China? [J]. International Politics, 2024: 1-26.

[2] Ryou-Ellison H J. Indo-Pacific Strategy Versus Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for hegemony in Asia[J]. Maritime Security, 2021, 2(1): 71-123.

[3] Varano J. Tearing up the belt and road initiative: Australia's rejection of China's new silk road in Victoria[J]. Australian Outlook-Australian Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2021, 6.

[4] Tan S S. Consigned to hedge: south-east Asia and America's 'free and open Indo-Pacific' strategy[J]. International Affairs, 2020, 96(1): 131-148.

[5] Mubah A S. Indonesia's double hedging strategy toward the United States – China competition: Shaping regional order in the Indo-Pacific? [J]. Issues & Studies, 2019, 55(04): 1940007.

[6] Wu X, Velasco J C. Navigating the Indo-Pacific: Vietnam's Hedging Strategies Amid the Geopolitical Rivalry Between China and the United States[J]. Asian perspective, 2024, 48(1): 95-118.

[7] Huang Jichao Japan's diversified hedging strategy in the Taiwan Strait under the new pattern of China US Asia Pacific game. World Economic and Political Forum, 2022, (01): 54-76

[8] Ye X. Explaining China's hedging to the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy[J]. China Review, 2020, 20(3): 205-238.

[9] Chan Y, Charoenvattananukul P. Singapore's Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Case of Principled Hedging[J]. East Asia, 2024, 41(3): 255-272.

[10] Joshi S. Fear of abandonment: Australia in the world since 1942[J]. 2017.

[11] KAMPMARK B. Fears of Abandonment: Australia, Biden and Cancelling the Quad Visit[J]. Counter Punch, 2023.

[12] Laurenceson J, Zhou M. Small grey rhinos: Understanding Australia's economic dependence on China[J]. Retrieved July, 2019, 29: 2022.

[13] Yu Lei The Construction and Influence of Australia's Hedging Strategy under the Australia US Alliance: Based on the Theory of Power Structure [J]. United Front Studies, 2020,4 (06): 94-105. DOI: 10.13946/j.cnki. jcqis. 2020.06.011

[14] Pedersen R B, Beach D. Observing causal mechanisms with process-tracing methods – the benefits of using a 'mechanism' understanding of causality[J]. Available at SSRN 1664660, 2010.

[15] Kinnvall C. Globalization and religious nationalism: Self, identity, and the search for ontological security[J]. Political psychology, 2004, 25(5): 741-767.

[16] Levy J S, Thompson W R. Balancing on land and at sea: do states ally against the leading global power? [J]. International Security, 2010, 35(1): 7-43.

[17] Shicun W, Colombage J. Indo-Pacific strategy and China's response[J]. National Institute for South China Sea Studies, 2019.

[18] 2016 Defence White Paper. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-white-paper

[19] Botton N, Lee-Makiyama H. 5G and national security after Australia's telecom sector security review[R]. ECIPE Policy Brief, 2018.

[20] Zhou W, Laurenceson J. Demystifying Australia-China trade tensions[J]. Journal of World Trade, 2022, 56(1).

[21] Graham E. The political economy of Australia-China relations[J]. Adelphi Series, 2021, 61(490-492): 55-74.

[22] Binko Commentary on Australia's "Medium Power Diplomacy" - Focusing on the Foreign Policy of the Kevin Rudd Government [D]. Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, 2009.

[23] Carr A. A model alliance? The strategic logic of US-Australia cooperation[J]. The Washington Quarterly, 2021, 44(4): 51-66.

[24] 2020 Defence Strategic Update. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update

[25] Burns A, Eltham B. Australia's Strategic Culture: Constraints and Opportunities in Security Policymaking[M]//Strategic Cultures and Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific. Routledge, 2016: 22-45.

[26] Smith J. Modi 2.0: Navigating Differences and Consolidating Gains in India-US Relations[J]. The Heritage Foundation, 2019, 5: 1-31.

[27] Muneer Z. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement[J]. brief, Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, Islamabad, 2016.

[28] Madan T. Managing China: Competitive Engagement, with Indian Characteristics [J]. Global China, 2020.

[29] IANS. Strategic Policy Group Reconstituted, Ajit Doval is Chairman. October 10, 2018. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/strategic-policy-group-reconstituted-ajit-doval-is-chairman/article25175468.ece

[30] Park S C. RCEP versus TPP with the Trump Administration in the USA and Implications for East Asian Economic Cooperation[J]. Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review, 2017, 5(4): 135-152.

[31] Gaur P. India's withdrawal from RCEP: Neutralising national trade concerns[J]. Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy, 2022, 27(2): 270-288.

[32] Ang I, Stratton J. Asianing Australia: Notes toward a critical transnationalism in cultural studies[J]. Cultural Studies, 1996, 10(1): 16-36.

[33] Farrell B. The defence and fall of Singapore[M]. Monsoon Books, 2017.

[34] Keenleyside T A. Prelude to power: The meaning of non-alignment before Indian independence[J]. Pacific Affairs, 1980, 53(3): 461-483.

[35] Wu Lin India's perception and response to competition between China and the United States [J]. International Studies, 2020 (4): 21

[36] 2015 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship. https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015-Defense-Framework.pdf

[37] Grant N M. China Geostrategic Relations: The Belt and Road Initiative, Asian Region Instability and Australia[D]. Charles Darwin University (Australia), 2021.

[38] Aswani R S. Non-Traditional maritime security threats in the Indian Ocean Region: Policy alternatives[J]. Journal of Public Affairs, 2022, 22(2): e2456.

[39] 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf

[40] Imtiaz A, Qazi M S. Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean: Australia's Maritime Security amid the Sandison's Vulnerability[J]. Journal of Nautical Eye and Strategic Studies, 2024, 4(1): 88-123.

[41] Wickes R, Adams M, Brown N. Economic Coercion by China: the impact on Australia's Merchandise exports[J]. Institute for International Trade Working Paper Series, 2021, 4.

[42] Demand for Grants 2021-22 Analysis: Defence. https://prsindia.org/budgets/parliament/demand-for-grants-2021-22-analysis-defence

[43] Ladwig III W C. Delhi's Pacific ambition: Naval power, "Look East," and India's emerging influence in the Asia-Pacific[J]. Asian Security, 2009, 5(2): 87-113.

[44] "Our alliance with the US is the bedrock of Australia's security. Australia is a stronger regional power because of the US alliance." Speech by Prime Minister Scott Morrison in the lead-up to the 14th G20 Summit, Asialink Diplomacy. Available at: shttps://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/diplomacy/article/speech-scott-morrison-g20-summit/

[45] "Since 2016, major powers have become more assertive in advancing their strategic preferences and seeking to exert influence, including China's active pursuit of greater influence in the Indo-Pacific". 2020 Defence Strategic Update, Australian Government Department of Defence. Available at: https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update

[46] Rezaul H. Laskar, "5 Principles Needed for Global Maritime Security, Says PM Modi as He Chairs UNSC Meet," Hindustan Times, August 9, 2021, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/5-principles-needed-for-global-maritime-security-says-pm-modi-as-he-chairs-unsc-meet-101628527337014.html

[47] S. Jaishankar, The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World (Noida: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2020), 6,https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2021/03/non-allied-forever-indias-grand-strategy-according-to-subrahmanyam-jaishankar?lang=en

[48] According to 2020 Defence Strategic Update, "Australia is a staunch and active ally of the United States, which continues to underwrite the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. We [Australia] will continue working with the United States to build defence cooperation in the region to meet security challenges – such as the ongoing threat

from terrorism – and to build common approaches to ensure stability in our region. We [Australia] will also continue to prioritize our engagement and defence relationships with partners whose active roles in the region will be vital to regional security and stability, including Japan, India, and Indonesia," 2020 Defence Strategic Update, https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update