



FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva

The idea of the Indo-Pacific is developing; but foreign policy discussions in many countries have been significantly shaped by the still-evolving Indo-Pacific narrative. Depending on their strategic and economic interests, countries have defined their own Indo-Pacific geographies. Beyond the establishment of a few formal platforms—like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) or the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS)—Indo-Pacific is a powerful narrative to counter the rise of an assertive China. Due to the nature of the narrative, the major focus, thus far, has been on strategic matters within the region. Apart from strategic importance, all major powers have recognised that the Indo-Pacific region will also be an economically dynamic region. As a result, many outside powers have been attracted towards Indo-Pacific discussions. More than a dozen countries from the region have established the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). The European Union and many of its member states have also come out with their own Indo-Pacific visions or strategies. Apart from strengthening economic cooperation within the region, we need to be equally concerned about sustainability issues within the Indo-Pacific.

The region will experience substantial economic growth, but this will occur amid increasing geopolitical competition and contested connectivity strategies. Therefore, despite these pressures, the Indo-Pacific region needs to be equally focussed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Most countries in the region are densely populated. They are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change. Discussions on these issues and efforts to build a cooperative mechanism on sustainability within the Indo-Pacific may be far more important than immediate strategic concerns. Realising this, the second issue of the Indo-Pacific Review has focussed on the theme: “Building a Sustainable Indo-Pacific”.

Marufa Akter and Subaita Fairouz’s paper highlights causes and consequences of climate change and global warming in the Bay of Bengal region and its littoral states. The countries in the region are at the forefront of challenges arising from climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Therefore, the paper argues in the favour of a legitimate regional governance structure to deal with these issues. Oorja Tapan explains the concept of blue economy and highlights the potential of blue economy cooperation in the Indo Pacific, particularly in the Indian Ocean. She demonstrates that blue economy cooperation will take care of geo-economic interests and environmental concerns. This will also provide an accessible opportunity for littoral states in the region to collaborate in a multilateral setting. The paper also describes some of the Indian initiatives in blue economy sphere.

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Helena Varkkey and Shofwan Choiruzzad describe that palm oil is mainly produced in the countries in the South and its expansion and intensification is linked to many social and environmental issues. These concerns are raised in the North which has led to Northern-led policies to guide the sustainable transition of the sector, which the paper questions. Indonesia is the largest producer and exporter and India is the largest importer and consumer of palm oil. The paper contends that both of these countries could contribute to a more effective and sustainable transition for the sector. Shwe Yee Oo's paper shows that to improve energy security, many countries in the Indo-Pacific region are considering Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Floating Nuclear Power Plants (FNPP) as a solution. The author is worried that nuclear expansion could become a threat to the region's existing security challenges. At the same time, nuclear energy could be an area of cooperation in terms of sustainable innovation.

Dhanasree Jayaram and Kurnica Bhattacharjee explain that the Indo-Pacific region is not only highly vulnerable to climate change but also contributes to more than half of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The worst impacts of energy poverty are experienced disproportionately by women and other marginalized groups. The authors build a case for a gender-transformative just-energy transitions agenda in the region that ties together climate justice and gender justice imperatives. Elizabeth Morison describes that the demand for critical minerals is essential for the expansion of renewables and also important for the energy transition. However, deep-sea mining could cause irreparable damage to both the environment and Australia's relationships within the Indo-Pacific.

Through these papers, we have been able to raise some of the crucial issues concerning a sustainable Indo-Pacific region. I hope this special issue of the Indo-Pacific Review will contribute meaningfully to evolving discussions on the Indo-Pacific and will be of interest to scholars working on various issues concerning the region and sustainable future of the world.

Gulshan Sachdeva

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