



SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Perpetual Peace in the Indo-Pacific: Implementing Collective Security, Arms Control, and Confidence-Building Measures

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing strategic competition between China and the United States raises concerns about potential conflicts in the Indo-Pacific. However, achieving long-term stability in the region through cooperative security frameworks is essential. The realization of a peaceful region that fosters mutually beneficial cooperation is a non-negotiable goal in positive international relations. This article explores the possibility of achieving this in the Indo-Pacific from an International Relations perspective, particularly through the concepts of collective security, arms control, and confidence-building measures (CBMs). It argues that implementing these three concepts will lead to sustainable peace (perpetual peace), ultimately making the region a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation. A qualitative method is employed in this study, with data emanating from relevant literature and authoritative sources. While challenges such as military competition and geopolitical tensions persist, shared commitment to multilateral mechanisms can mitigate risks. The key factor in achieving this goal is a shared commitment to maintaining the process.

KEYWORDS

Collective Security; Confidence-Building Measures; Indo-Pacific; Regional Peace

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a focal point of global geopolitical and economic competition, primarily due to the acceleration of security and economic interactions between nations in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean regions ([Medcalf, 2020](#)).

The Indo-Pacific concept has been promoted by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a regional military and political security cooperation initiative led by Australia, the United States, Japan, and India (see [Jie, 2019](#); [O'Neil, & West, 2020](#); [Kliem, 2020](#)). Today, the Indo-Pacific is at the center of global economic and geopolitical gravity, serving as the primary stage for competition between the United States and China. Across the region and beyond, America's allies and partners are increasingly proactive in pursuing their strategic interests, leading to the formation of new security networks.

Given the region's history of crises, tensions, and illicit trade, many countries, particularly in ASEAN, are committed to collective action to address these challenges. They support multilateralism and an international order based on the rule of law, striving for a safer world through inclusive global governance. Major powers play a crucial role in determining whether the Indo-Pacific will be a region of cooperation or conflict. Amidst persistent rivalry between China and the United States, fears of war remain tangible.

Efforts to transform the Indo-Pacific into a region of cooperation are not merely aspirational. The ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) is one such initiative aimed at fostering meaningful collaboration in Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific. However, the region faces increasing security concerns, governance challenges, and strategic competition, all exacerbated by environmental vulnerabilities. Addressing these issues requires synergy among regional actors, processes, and institutional frameworks.

The challenges of the Indo-Pacific region are characterized by increasing security concerns, governance challenges, and strategic competition amidst environmental vulnerability. An emphasis is needed on synergies among regional actors, processes and institutional frameworks. The realization of a peaceful region which can then produce mutually beneficial cooperation is a non-negotiable goal in the context of positive international relations. How to turn challenges and competition in the Indo Pacific region into mutually beneficial cooperation in a peaceful condition is an interesting question that should be discussed. This article aims to contribute to the study of regional cooperation in international relations by exploring how challenges and competition in the Indo-Pacific can be converted into mutually beneficial cooperation under peaceful conditions.

This paper is structured as follows: First, it outlines the literature review, which focuses on the concept of collective security, and then explains the method employed in this study. Next, the article presents the results and discussion, focusing on the implementation of collective security, arms control, and confidence-building measures in the context of perpetual peace in the Indo-Pacific. Lastly, it concludes with a summary of the key findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of collective security is based on the principle that peace can be maintained through mutual commitments among states to protect against external threats. In the Indo-Pacific, where countries possess varying capacities, collective security functions effectively only when it accommodates the security needs of smaller nations. A fundamental assumption of collective security is that international stability cannot be achieved solely through unilateral military control but requires multilateral cooperation ([Buzan et al., 1998](#)). Regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) exemplify this principle by fostering joint military exercises and intelligence-sharing among ASEAN countries and external partners like the United States, China, and Japan. Similarly, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)—comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.—has emerged as a key initiative in addressing regional security concerns, particularly in response to China's growing military influence.

Closely linked to collective security is arms control, a diplomatic approach aimed at limiting the development, production, and proliferation of weaponry to prevent arms races and reduce the risk of conflict. Traditionally grounded in military security and strategic calculations, arms control is increasingly shaped by moral imperatives and international legal frameworks ([Hanson, 2022](#)). The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) serves as a global standard for preventing nuclear proliferation while promoting peaceful nuclear energy use. However, within the Indo-Pacific, arms control dynamics have become more complex with initiatives such as AUKUS, a security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States that involves nuclear-powered submarine technology transfer. While AUKUS is presented as a deterrence strategy to counterbalance China's influence, critics argue that it could intensify regional military competition. In contrast, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) demonstrates a successful regional arms control effort, prohibiting nuclear testing and deployment among Pacific Island nations.

A crucial mechanism in maintaining regional stability is confidence-building measures (CBMs), which aim to reduce uncertainty, prevent hostilities, and foster trust between states. These measures can be formal or informal, unilateral or multilateral, and implemented through military, political, or diplomatic engagements ([Mason & Siegfried, 2013](#)). One example of CBMs in practice is the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), which provides guidelines to avoid naval confrontations, reducing the risk of unintended military escalation. Similarly, the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) promotes diplomatic dialogue to manage territorial disputes, although its effectiveness remains limited without a legally binding Code of Conduct (COC). While CBMs are valuable tools for fostering regional trust, their effectiveness depends on genuine commitment from participating states. A case in point is China's engagement in CBMs while simultaneously militarizing artificial islands in the South China Sea, raising concerns about the sincerity of its security assurances.

These concepts collectively align with Immanuel Kant's notion of perpetual peace, which he outlined in his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (see [Kant, 1897](#)). Kant argued that lasting peace among nations requires a strong foundation of international legal frameworks, adherence to legal norms, and the establishment of institutions that encourage peaceful coexistence. His vision suggests that multilateral cooperation, rather than power politics, is the key to achieving stability. In the Indo-Pacific, perpetual peace remains an aspirational goal, but regional initiatives such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) reflect a commitment to rules-based governance and institutionalized peace efforts. Additionally, organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) highlight the role of regional cooperation in addressing security, economic development, and climate-related challenges, reinforcing Kant's vision of stability through governance and diplomacy.

Through the interplay of collective security, arms control, and confidence-building measures, the Indo-Pacific region continues to navigate complex security dynamics. While challenges remain, sustained multilateral engagement and institutionalized mechanisms provide pathways toward reducing tensions and fostering a more stable and cooperative regional order.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing on the analysis of social phenomena through literature review and expert opinions ([Martono, 2016](#)). The research integrates theoretical perspectives with practical developments, drawing from books, academic journals, policy reports, and reputable news sources.

The study follows a deductive approach, beginning with a general discussion of Indo-Pacific challenges before narrowing down to specific cooperative mechanisms. Data sources include publications from National Resilience Institute (Indonesian: *Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional*, abbreviated as Lemhannas), Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Indonesian: *Kementerian Komunikasi dan Digital Republik Indonesia*, abbreviated as Komdigi), Center for a New American Security (CNAS), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other relevant institutions. The research highlights differences in strategic perspectives among Indo-Pacific powers while assessing regional security dynamics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Indo-Pacific region continues to be an important geopolitical and geoeconomic region that accounts for the majority of global trade and economic activity. However, these advantages are accompanied by a number of complex challenges. This complexity is not only local and technical but has also led to widespread conflict leading to war. There are important and immediate policies that countries in the region have been taking to anticipate.

In the Indo Pacific region, Indonesia in particular and ASEAN in general are important parties that must be taken into account ([Yanuarti et al., 2020](#)). Indonesia, which is located in the heart of the Indo-Pacific, has an important role in promoting security and stability in the

Indo-Pacific Region. In order to realize security and stability in the Indo-Pacific Region, Indonesia issued a Global Maritime Axis policy which focuses on five main pillars. First, rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture as a nation that has a long history of maritime connectivity. Second, managing Marine Resources for sustainable development, balancing growth with environmental preservation. Third, develop infrastructure and maritime connectivity to ensure better access to thousands of islands in Indonesia. Fourth, strengthen maritime defense to maintain sovereignty and protect Indonesia's maritime borders. Fifth, encourage maritime diplomacy that focuses on peacefully resolving maritime disputes and advancing the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Admiral Erwin S. Aldedharma said that Indonesia, through the Global Maritime Axis, is committed to maritime diplomacy and multilateral operations as a basic strategy to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific Region. Through cooperation, diplomacy and a shared vision for the future of the oceans, a safe, stable and prosperous Pacific region can be created for future generations ([Lemhannas, 2024](#)).

Two years before, in 2022, former President Joko Widodo at the 17th East Asia Summit in Cambodia said that Indonesia together with ASEAN has attempted to maintain stability and peace in the region. East Asia Summit countries must strengthen the foundations of peace in the Indo-Pacific. Not actually sowing the seeds of hostility, let alone beating the drums of war. The Indo-Pacific should not only be seen from the narrow perspective of security politics, but also its potential for economic cooperation ([Komdigi, 2022](#)). On this occasion, the President conveyed three proposals that could be implemented in East Asia Summit relations. First, strengthen the spirit and paradigm for collaboration. East Asian countries must be able to accommodate mutual trust between countries. The second thing, according to the President, is that East Asian countries must respect the rules of the game in relations between countries. The UN Charter and international legal instruments such as UNCLOS must be consistently enforced. The third thing is to create inclusive regional architecture in which all parties will benefit from a strong foundation for cooperation. At the end, the Indo-Pacific must become a peaceful, stable and prosperous region ([Komdigi, 2022](#)).

The ASEAN Outlook on Indo Pacific was formed at the 34th ASEAN Summit in 2019, in Thailand. As the largest regional organization in Southeast Asia, all members are obliged to participate in ensuring that the Indo-Pacific region is always under the banner of peace. Indonesia is the country that initiated the formation of AOIP. Related to China as a major and threatening power in the Indo Pacific region, last year, China expressed its support for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), including through a commitment to 25 concrete projects worth 28.75 billion US dollars (around Rp. 468.5 trillion) announced at the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum under Indonesia's chairmanship. ASEAN is ready to continue working with China to ensure the realization of all these concrete projects, and develop various other collaborations in the four priority pillars of the AOIP ([Pramudyani, 2024](#)).

Efforts to achieve peace in the region could be disrupted by the worrying presence of weapons in each country. Within ASEAN, ownership of weapons is increasing in quantity.

For example, Indonesia is ranked first as the country with the best military strength in ASEAN 2023 by achieving a PowerIndex score of 0.2221. Vietnam is in second place with a PowerIndex score of 0.2855. The total number of Vietnamese military soldiers is estimated at around 3.01 million people. Apart from that, the country known as the Land of the Blue Dragon has 75 combat aircraft, 1,829 tanks and 55,740 armored fighting vehicles. Global Firepower gave Thailand's national defense strength index score of 0.3738. It is estimated that the White Elephant Country is armed with 73 fighter jets, 18 attack aircraft, 587 tanks and up to 39,808 armored vehicles (Dwi, 2023). On a broader scale in the Indo-Pacific region, five of the six countries with the largest military powers in quantity are in this region, namely the United States, China, India, Japan and South Korea (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Countries with the strongest militaries in the Indo-Pacific region. Source: [GlobalFirepower \(2025\)](#)

This kind of condition requires the implementation of strong arms control so that it does not become an obstacle to the realization of a peaceful region. The need to contribute from all countries in Indo-Pacific regions to reduce the danger of armed conflict and misunderstandings or miscalculations of military activities that may give rise to concerns, in particular in situations where participating countries do not have clear and timely information about the nature of such activities is very crucial. Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) must be strengthened into Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs). Such CSBM includes the exchange of information, a means for compliance and verification, as well as various forms of military cooperation that aim to reduce the risk of conflict, increase trust

among countries, and contribute to greater openness and transparency in the field of military planning and activities early warning indicators of potential conflict situations ([OSCE, 2025](#)).

One of the important and interesting standpoints and policies regarding the future of the Indo Pacific region comes from France. For France, the Indo-Pacific is a geographical, humanitarian, strategic and economic reality, considering France's position in two Oceans, with five Overseas Territories and Departments (New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis & Futuna, Reunion and Mayotte). France, which is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, promotes the Indo-Pacific as a free, open and inclusive region, where France wants to try to synergize with the main players in the region and increase cooperation in political, strategic, economic, and even the environment.

More than one and a half million French citizens live there. Overall, the maritime areas of these areas cover 11 million km², more than two-thirds of the French Exclusive Economic Zone, the second largest in the world after the United States. This is an area where we maintain a number of significant facilities that contribute to regional security. Around 8,000 defense personnel are stationed throughout the region, making France the only European power with an active presence in the Pacific as well as in the Indian Ocean. France also has important economic ties with the Indo-Pacific. This region holds 35% of the world's wealth today. In 2018, 9.3% of France's imports came from the Indo-Pacific region and 10.6% of its exports went there ([Ambassade, 2024](#)).

In the Indo-Pacific, France wants to contribute to peace, stability and economic growth, by strengthening partnerships in three sectors that are fully in line with Indonesia and ASEAN priorities (maritime cooperation, connectivity, economy):

Regional peace and stability: The Indo-Pacific must continue to be a space of freedom and sovereignty that respects each other. France played its full role, encouraging a resolution of the crisis through dialogue and the establishment of confidence-building measures. France together with its regional partners contributes to regional security and stability, through eradicating illegal trade (narcotics, human smuggling, illegal fishing), piracy, as well as terrorism and radicalization that threaten the region;

Economic cooperation: This axis targets development, increasing connectivity and developing physical and digital infrastructure in areas that really need it. French companies can play an important role in regional connectivity, especially in the fields of maritime communications, port infrastructure, airports and roads, telecommunications via satellite and undersea cable networks. The economic aspect also includes the development of vocational/university education and research that contributes to increasing human capital. In Indonesia, the establishment of a center of excellence for vocational education in the fields of electricity, automation and new and renewable energy is a pioneering model of government-private partnership which is expected to train 500 teaching staff and more than 100 thousand students by 2022. France is finally supporting high-level scientific research and technological innovation through sustainable joint funding mechanisms (the Nusantara program) and

around a hundred inter-university agreements for double diploma programs and research/research activities ([Ambassade, 2024](#)).

The US as the most important country in the Indo Pacific region, besides China, is building a modern, networked Indo-Pacific Regional Security Architecture: The Program's work helps chart a course for the United States as it seeks to renew its Indo-Pacific alliances and partnerships and build a more networked regional security architecture. Through this, the US can strengthen its existing relationships with highly capable allies and partners, with a focus on Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Taiwan. In addressing shared challenges spanning diplomacy, technology, security, and values, the Program analyzes the key pillars of the relationship and provides recommendations on how U.S. policymakers can strengthen coordination to maximize opportunities and manage challenges. The program produced a detailed agenda for establishing formats including the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the US), AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States), and the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral. These groups are central to building a more networked regional security architecture to support a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific ([CNAS, 2024](#)).

The big dream of the Indo-Pacific to be a prosperous and peaceful region faces quite a tough challenge from the existence of AUKUS. Even though AUKUS is basically intended as a counterweight to the PRC's military power by the US in order to create stability, security and peace in the Indo-Pacific region. This pact can, on the contrary, give rise to the potential for escalation of conflict in the Indo-Pacific region because of the commitment of Australia, Britain and the US to maintain stability, security and peace in the Indo-Pacific region. Using weapons technology development instruments is an ancient concept that was commonly used in the cold war era through the arms race which was commonly carried out by the US and the Soviet Union and their proxy countries ([Putro, 2021](#)).

In the geopolitical context of the Indo-Pacific region, although Australia, the UK, and the US officially state their commitment to maintaining stability, security, and peace in the region, their development of nuclear-powered submarine technology through the AUKUS defense pact, on the contrary, has the potential to threaten stability, security, and peace in the Indo-Pacific.

In fact, ASEAN, with the spirit of multilateralism, can have a joint stance to call for stability, security and peace in the region, especially because ASEAN is one of the important actors in the Indo-Pacific which is geographically located between China and Australia. However, in this case, it seems that ASEAN multilateralism will be difficult to realize considering that ASEAN countries tend to have different attitudes, for example the Philippines that has clearly supported the AUKUS agreement ([Putro, 2021](#)).

In the midst of competitive regional security conditions, high hopes for the creation of sustainable peace which in turn will have an impact on the creation of a cooperative Indo-Pacific region are still being pursued. Indonesia itself continues to strive to make this happen. One of the efforts made by Indonesia in 2023 was to emphasize that the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) would form useful cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The ASEAN Indo-Pacific

forum aims to transform rivalry in the Indo-Pacific into fruitful cooperation and build a habit of cooperation with a win-win formula without anyone feeling excluded ([Kemenkeu, 2023](#)). This way, the region becomes a safe and peaceful place for all and becomes a land for shared prosperity

CONCLUSION

For idealists, peace is the beginning of creating an order that is conducive to cooperation. The longer peace lasts, the longer cooperation will be carried out in it. To achieve this, especially in a regional context, relevant concepts are needed to be implemented.

Building a cooperative and prosperous region requires a shared vision from all its members. This vision is none other than a shared view that sustainable peace is the key to mutual progress. In the Indo Pacific region, unfortunately, this vision has not been accepted as a whole, especially from large countries competing for the strongest influence. However, this does not mean that efforts towards sustainable peace in the form of mutual security, arms control and confidence building measures are not being implemented. Global Maritime Axis Policy, AOIP, ASEAN-France Partnership, China's policy on AOIP, AIPF, and others.

The concept of collective security, arms control and fostering mutual trust through confidence building measures (which can be elevated into confidence and security building measures) are and will be needed which will lead to a condition of sustainable peace in the region, which in turn will make the region a field. mutually beneficial cooperation. If this continues to be carried out with high commitment, it is not impossible that perpetual peace will become better fuel for common prosperity in the Indo Pacific region.

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