



# INDO-PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

#02/2022/July-September, 2022

## Civil Society's Role in Indo-Pacific Development

**The Indo-Pacific Civil Society Forum (IPCSF) is an informal coalition of civil society organisations (NGOs, think tanks, etc.) working across the region toward realising a shared vision of peace, security, stability, and prosperity.**

<https://cuts-wdc.org/indo-pacific-forum.htm>

*The Indo-Pacific Civil Society Forum (IPCSF) was officially launched on September 30, 2022. The theme of the event was "Role of Civil Society Organisations in Shaping the Indo-Pacific Region: Prospects and Challenges." Ichiro Fujisaki, former Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. and President of Nakasone Peace Institute, Japan; Stephen Ezell, Vice President, Global Innovation Policy, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, and Lurong Chen, Senior Economist, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, Indonesia spoke on the occasion, which was moderated by Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International.*

Given various developments in the Indo-Pacific region and emergent challenges, there is a vital need for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region to come together to exchange information and experiences. This was the unanimous view of experts who came together virtually to launch the Indo-Pacific Civil Society Forum (IPCSF), an initiative of CUTS International.

IPCSF is a coalition of CSOs operating in the Indo-Pacific region, including think tanks. It will be a platform for networking and trust-building, generating awareness, and information dissemination on the impacts of these regional developments on the ground. Since many regional differences have traditionally arisen because countries have misunderstood each other, people-to-people conversations at all levels are crucial.



It was recognised that several other players, even beyond the immediate region, also have a role in the Indo-Pacific without diluting key principles such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality. Notably, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a US-led initiative part of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, is just the latest in a list of recent initiatives centred on the region.

'ASEAN centrality' has been a running thread in the visions of the Indo-Pacific that have evolved, including the US and European Indo-Pacific strategies. This was suggested a pathway to inclusive economic development and open regionalism to stimulate regional development.

The Indo-Pacific frameworks, therefore, need to foster open and inclusive development, which is fair and does not lead to the formation of groupings and alliances, as this would not be in any country's interests.

Innovation-based economic growth in the Indo-Pacific was also discussed. Enabling small businesses to take advantage of the digital revolution and expanding access to opportunities created by technology-enabled innovation emerged as key priority areas to ensure regional development. Trust-building among Indo-Pacific was emphasised as the foundation for the region's digital cooperation and ICT-led development.

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## Did India err by Walking out of IPEF's Trade Pillar?

India has signed into three out of four pillars of IPEF, namely, supply chain, tax & anti-corruption, and clean energy. It has opted out of the trade pillar due to the lack of consensus over data privacy, digital trade, labour and environmental standards.

IPEF is the first plurilateral deal signed by India after stepping back from RCEP. The move may seem justified in the short term, but it might place India in a challenging position in its ambition to integrate effectively into the global value chain. *(BS, 13.09.22)*

### Global Mineral Security Partnership

Australia has joined the Minerals Security Partnership, the US, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the UK and the European Commission.

Speaking at the Sydney Energy Forum, leaders highlighted the importance of not only transitioning to renewables but of ensuring the supply chains used to make the technologies do not remain as concentrated as they are today. Net Zero Technology Acceleration Partnership was signed, side by side, between the US and Australia, seeking to accelerate the development and deployment of zero emissions technology. *(TG, 12.07.22)*

### Myanmar Economy Remains Fragile

Army-ruled Myanmar's economy remains fragile as civil strife, inflation and onerous policy decisions add to troubles facing farmers and businesses, according to a report by the World Bank.

The absence of a substantial rebound in growth – with GDP in 2022 estimated to be still around 13 per cent lower than in 2019 – means that livelihoods and coping mechanisms will continue to be severely strained.

About 40 per cent of the population will live below the national poverty line in 2022, unwinding nearly a decade of progress on poverty reduction. The economy is projected to grow three per cent in the

fiscal year ending in September 2022, following an 18 per cent contraction last year. *(TH, 21.07.22)*

### US-Indo-Pacific Strengthen Trade Ties

The first in-person IPEF ministerial meeting took place in Los Angeles, where the 14 member nations negotiated on four major pillars: trade, supply chain resilience, green energy and anti-corruption.

The partner countries signed the agreement represent over 40 per cent of the global economy and 28 per cent of global goods and services trade. The framework was signed to advance the partner countries' resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness and competitiveness.

The IPEF will seek high standards, primarily through the trade pillar, to prevent future supply chain disruptions and locates workers at the centre of the economic agenda to bring more equitable growth. *(Reuters, 09.09.22)*

### U.S. Signs a Deal to Aid Pacific Nations

In a two-day summit at Washington, an agreement was signed between 14 Pacific Island nations and the US. An investment of more than US\$860 by the US is announced for the region, along with grants to the Solomon Islands for tourism development and digital connectivity.

The key focus was on climate change, economic growth, maritime security and island states' communication links with countries like Japan, Australia and India.

*(NYT, 30.09.22)*

### Taiwan Crisis

Tensions on Taiwan hike as China is conducting live-fire drills in retaliation to Pelosi's visit to the Island. Beijing is attempting to isolate Taiwan on the International stage by imposing economic sanctions, carrying out military drills and hindering the scope of Taiwan's "Cheque-book diplomacy" with allies.

China has raised the bar for carrying out future drills across the median line, and this will perhaps become a new normal for the Island. US-China relations have sunken low, and communication lines are interrupted, further increasing the chances of misunderstandings. *(TN, 07.08.22)*

### 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific

The 51<sup>st</sup> Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) meeting held in Fiji is a significant regional summit against the backdrop of the global pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical rivalry. In the "2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent", the Forum stated to break grounds on a myriad of issues, namely climate change, security and connectivity.

In addition, PIF aims to build a knowledge economy that complements the blue economy through harnessing investment in scientific research, information technology, e-commerce, and education, among many others. *(AJ, 11.06.22)*

### Joint Military Drills by US-South Korea

The US and South Korea began their biggest combined military drills. The Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise marks the resumption of large-scale training sessions post COVID-19.

Drills include field exercises involving aircraft, warships, tanks, and thousands of troops. The significance of this joint exercise is rebuilding the South Korea-US alliance and solidifying the combined defence posture by normalising the combined exercises and field training. *(ET, 22.08.22)*

### India-Vietnam Second Security Dialogue

The Second Security Dialogue was held in Delhi between the Vietnamese delegation led by Lt. General Luong Tam Quang and Indian Deputy National Security Advisor Vikram Misri. They discussed matters like defence and security, maintenance of peace, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific with a special focus on the Indo-Pacific.

The delegation signed the India-Vietnam Defense Partnership towards 2030 and MoU on Mutual Logistics Support. Peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and the importance of implementing the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative were reiterated. The strategic cooperation between the two countries widens the scope of dealing with probable threats and peace building in the region. *(ToI, 15.09.22)*

### Russia gaining Foothold in Indo-Pacific through Myanmar

**T**he leader of Myanmar's ruling military junta, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Moscow to expand his regime's defence and energy cooperation with Russia.

Post Ukraine invasion, the Myanmar military junta has strongly supported Putin. Both governments of Russia and Myanmar are finding themselves on common ground as they share sanctions from the West.

Receiving a steady stream of weapons, including drones, fighter jets, and armoured vehicles. At the same time, Myanmar is supporting Russia by supplying raw materials. In addition, Myanmar's geographical location is a strategic boon for Russia. *(TD, 25.07.22)*

### Australia Risk Policy Institute



ARPI successfully delivered training to representatives of the Philippines Government on strategic risk policy focusing on cyber security. Two ARPI directors will be attending India to deliver Cyber Security and strategic risk policy training for the Delhi Institute of Management.

As part of the global focus, ARPI is undertaking work on new and emerging risks in Ghana. The level one course (for all risk professionals and new and emerging) will be launched soon and available for face-to-face delivery and online.

[www.arpi.org](http://www.arpi.org)



### Unnayan Shamannay

Unnayan Shamannay is undertaking projects on border *haats* between India and Bangladesh, named IBBH. Research on Multimodal-Connectivity is corroborated in the BBIN subregion to facilitate trade and connectivity. Alternative transport corridors are enquired under the project to address traffic diversion. Analysing technical, economic and political implications of traffic diversion from roadways to waterways are enquired into.

<https://www.unsy.org/home>

### Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations



ICRIER's ongoing activities focus on agriculture policy & sustainability, climate change; digital economy; and trade investment & external relations. A webinar was organised on the eve of 25 years of BIMSTEC, engaging on its opportunities and challenges.

<http://icrier.org/>

### Institute for International Policy Studies/Nakasone Peace Institute

IIPS is conducting extensive research on diplomacy & security issues, industry trade; the interface of economy and society for formulating regional policies and strategies; and technology-impact assessment in terms of potential and risks of digital and advanced technological innovation on international relations and international security from a global perspective.



Along with work on individual areas like space, cyber and maritime security. Focusing on the Indo-Pacific region, webinars on the impact of hybrid warfare in the region and the prospect of Quad were organised.

<https://npi.or.jp/en/index.html>

### Center for Strategic and International Studies

CSIS hosted a webinar on supply chain cooperation with India, Vietnam and other emerging markets; and towards a clean and secure energy future in the Indo-Pacific. Events on Japan's vision of FOIP, US-Australia alliance prioritising Indo-pacific and blue pacific agenda for 21<sup>st</sup> century were conducted to explore the geopolitical opportunities.



<https://www.csis.org/>

### Perth USAsia Centre

Pursuing geopolitical issues across the Indo-pacific region, numerous discussions were held on security challenges, regional economic integration and clean energy transition. A report analysing Australia's engagement with regional groupings recommending the reallocation of resources in the Indo-pacific region was released.



<https://perthusasia.edu.au/>

*\*Members profile will be updated in future editions.*

AJ: Aljazeera; BS: Business Standard; ET: Economic Times; NYT: New York Times; TD: The Diplomat; TG: The Guardian; TH: The Hindu; TN: Times Now; Tol: Times of India



CUTS International, D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India. Ph: +91.141.2282821, Fx: +91.141.2282485, E-mail: cuts-washington@cuts.org, Website: www.cuts-wdc.org