



## Strategic Culture of the United States in the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy

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### Abstract

A country's foreign policy is often shaped by its strategic culture, and the United States demonstrates this pattern through the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. U.S. strategic culture is generally characterized by several enduring elements, including American exceptionalism and moral crusading, technology- and firepower-intensive warfare, as well as the combination of free security and global power projection. This study aims to analyze how these elements of U.S. strategic culture are reflected in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. The research employs a constructivist approach to highlight the role of identity, values, and norms in shaping U.S. foreign policy orientation in the Indo-Pacific region. The findings indicate that the United States and China share certain similarities in their strategic cultures, yet both countries employ different narratives and strategic discourses in managing their geopolitical rivalry. The study also shows that U.S. strategic culture tends to remain relatively consistent across different administrations while adapting to changing international contexts. Furthermore, this strategic culture is deeply influenced by core American values, including the rule of law, human rights, equality, liberalism, and American exceptionalism. The results contribute to the development of American Studies and international relations scholarship by demonstrating that U.S. foreign policy functions as a medium through which American values and cultural identity are projected internationally. In this context, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 reflects the U.S. interpretation of the Indo-Pacific region as a strategic space for advancing national interests while maintaining the global influence of American political values.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of President Joseph Biden's administration, the United States has emphasized the importance of reaffirming national values within its foreign policy. President Biden has consistently expressed a commitment to restoring the role of the United States as a global leader and to strengthening American engagement in international affairs (Ihsan, 2022). This orientation reflects a broader effort to reassert fundamental American values in foreign policy decision-making. Such values include liberty, equality, order, and the protection of democratic institutions. These values are not merely rhetorical principles but serve as normative foundations that shape the way the United States interprets global politics and formulates its strategic responses to emerging international challenges.

Beyond the case of the United States, the values held by a country can generally influence its behavior and policy orientation in international relations. These value-based patterns are often conceptualized as strategic culture. Strategic culture refers to a set of beliefs, assumptions, and patterns of behavior that guide a state's approach to security and foreign policy (Johnston, 1995). The concept emphasizes that a state's actions in the international arena are not solely determined by material capabilities or rational calculations, but are also shaped by historical experiences, ideological commitments, and national identity. Gray (1981) argued that the way states think and act in international politics is strongly influenced by the sources of their power, which derive from their perceptions, historical experiences, and aspirations. In this context, strategic culture provides the underlying framework through which states interpret threats, opportunities, and policy options.

Understanding strategic culture is therefore essential for analyzing the behavior of states in international politics. However, despite the importance of the concept, there remains relatively limited research examining the strategic culture of the United States in the context of the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in relation to the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. This gap represents a significant research opportunity because the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 constitutes the primary framework guiding U.S. engagement in the region under the Biden administration. Although the strategy has

become a central pillar of U.S. foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific, scholarly attention to the cultural and ideological foundations underlying the strategy remains relatively limited. Consequently, examining the strategic culture embedded in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 offers an opportunity to contribute to existing scholarship by addressing this research gap and providing a deeper understanding of the motivations behind U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Another reason this topic deserves scholarly attention is that, despite the United States presenting the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 as an inclusive framework for regional cooperation, the policy may also reinforce geopolitical polarization reminiscent of Cold War dynamics. In particular, the strategy has been interpreted by some observers as encouraging the formation of competing blocs in response to the growing influence of the People's Republic of China. Such dynamics suggest that strategic culture may play a significant role in shaping how the United States conceptualizes geopolitical competition and regional order in the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 was formulated with the stated objective of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The region holds immense significance for the United States due to its strategic economic and geopolitical importance. Economically, the Indo-Pacific supports more than three million American jobs and accounts for approximately US\$900 billion in U.S. foreign direct investment. Furthermore, the economies of Indo-Pacific countries collectively represent around 60 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The region also contributes to approximately half of global trade and two-thirds of global economic growth (The White House, 2022). These figures illustrate the extent to which the Indo-Pacific has become a critical engine of global economic activity. As a result, maintaining stability and open economic flows in the region is considered vital to the long-term prosperity of the United States and its partners.

In addition to its economic significance, the Indo-Pacific region is also characterized by complex security dynamics. The region faces numerous security challenges, including territorial disputes, military competition, and geopolitical rivalry among major powers. These conditions increase the potential for conflict and instability that

could have broader implications for global security (Poonkham, 2022). From the perspective of the United States, the growing influence of the People's Republic of China represents one of the most significant challenges to regional stability. U.S. policymakers have expressed concern that China's actions in the Indo-Pacific—both military and economic—could undermine the sovereignty and prosperity of other countries in the region as well as the interests of the United States.

Although the geographical mainland of the United States is located far from the Indo-Pacific region, American policymakers often perceive the United States as an integral actor within the regional political and security architecture. In this sense, potential threats arising in the Indo-Pacific are frequently interpreted as threats to U.S. interests and the broader international order (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Consequently, the United States seeks to reinforce its values and strategic influence in the region by strengthening partnerships and promoting norms aligned with its vision of regional order. This approach demonstrates the importance of national values in shaping the meaning, objectives, and policy preferences that underpin foreign policy decisions.

The strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region for U.S. economic and geopolitical interests ultimately led to the formulation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. This strategy represents an evolution of earlier policy initiatives such as the “Rebalance to Asia” policy under the Obama administration and the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) framework introduced during the Trump administration. While these previous policies also emphasized the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 introduces several distinct perspectives that reflect the strategic culture of the Biden administration. For instance, President Biden has emphasized the need to restore American exceptionalism through the expansion and deepening of relationships with countries in the region. This objective is pursued through increased diplomatic engagement and the strengthening of both minilateral and multilateral partnerships (The White House, 2022).

Furthermore, because the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 was developed under President Biden's leadership, it reflects policy orientations that differ in several respects from those of the Trump administration. The strategic culture

underlying Biden's approach places greater emphasis on cooperation, alliance-building, and the reinforcement of democratic values. One notable difference is the narrative employed in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, which consistently portrays the United States as working together with regional partners to achieve shared goals. This contrasts with certain aspects of the FOIP framework, which were sometimes interpreted as reflecting a more transactional approach to international cooperation (Department of State, 2019).

Research on U.S. policies in the Indo-Pacific region has developed from various perspectives. Cliff (2020), for example, argued that the United States should strengthen its relationships with democratic countries in the region while supporting their economic and military capabilities in order to safeguard core U.S. national interests. Similarly, Tellis (2014) observed that the United States often combines elements of confederationism—cooperation with partners while maintaining final decision-making authority—with unilateralism, in which the United States may act independently when necessary. This combination of approaches enables the United States to preserve its hegemonic influence even while relying on the contributions of partner countries.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 also faces challenges. Manning (2018) notes that U.S. policy in the region must contend with differences between American national identity and the diverse economic and security interests of Indo-Pacific countries. These differences can create tensions in the process of building effective partnerships. Consequently, Ball (2008) suggests that Western approaches to the Indo-Pacific should adapt to Asian cultural contexts in order to enhance the effectiveness of regional cooperation. In addition, Arzan Tarapore and Brendan Taylor (2022) emphasize that minilateral frameworks associated with the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) must also take into account the values and cultural perspectives of countries both within and outside these partnerships.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 as a manifestation of U.S. strategic culture and examines its application in the Indo-Pacific region

during the Biden administration from January 2021 to January 2025. U.S. strategic culture is expected to shape how the United States formulates its regional policies and pursues its objectives in the Indo-Pacific while promoting the principles of openness and freedom in the region. Accordingly, this research seeks to address the following research question: How does U.S. strategic culture influence the formulation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022? By answering this question, the study aims to analyze the extent to which U.S. strategic culture shapes the formulation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 and contributes to the broader geopolitical competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

## METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis as the primary methodological framework, complemented by data triangulation techniques. Discourse analysis is used as the main method to examine the use of language, discourse structures, and narratives contained in the policy documents analyzed in this study. This approach is particularly suitable for identifying how meanings, identities, and normative frameworks are constructed within political texts. By analyzing the language and narratives embedded in official documents, discourse analysis enables the researcher to explore how states construct their identities and justify their actions in the international arena. The method is therefore useful for understanding how foreign policy narratives are formulated and how strategic ideas are communicated to both domestic and international audiences.

In addition to discourse analysis, this study applies a triangulation method by combining various types of data and sources of information from different perspectives in order to produce more comprehensive research findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Data triangulation is important in qualitative research because it helps strengthen the credibility and reliability of the analysis by cross-checking information obtained from multiple sources. The data used in this research were collected through internet searches, literature reviews, and the examination of official documents. These sources were systematically compared and analyzed through a cross-referencing process to

enhance the researcher's understanding of the research corpus and to ensure that interpretations are grounded in multiple forms of evidence.

The primary corpus of this research consists of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 document, which serves as the main primary source and is analyzed comprehensively throughout the study. The document provides the official strategic framework of the United States for engagement in the Indo-Pacific region under the Biden administration. Through a detailed examination of this document, the research seeks to identify the narratives, policy priorities, and value-based arguments embedded within the strategy. The document is treated as a central textual source that reflects the strategic discourse of the United States regarding regional order, security cooperation, and geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

In addition to the primary source, the study also examines a range of secondary data sources through textual analysis. These include media articles, speeches delivered by government officials, research reports published by governmental and non-governmental institutions, archival records, international legal documents, and foreign policy reports from relevant countries. These secondary materials provide additional context that helps explain how the Indo-Pacific Strategy is interpreted and implemented within broader geopolitical dynamics. By incorporating these materials into the analysis, the study aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the narratives and policy discourses surrounding the Indo-Pacific region.

More specifically, the triangulation method in this research incorporates three main categories of sources. The first category consists of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 document as the primary policy text analyzed in this study. The second category includes official documents and statements issued by Indo-Pacific countries as well as comparative policy documents from the United States, such as the Rebalance to Asia policy framework. These documents are used to identify patterns of continuity and change in U.S. strategic thinking over time. The third category consists of narratives and perspectives originating from the People's Republic of China as well as analyses produced by non-Western scholars and institutions. Including these perspectives is important in order to broaden the analytical framework and avoid a

purely Western-centric interpretation of regional dynamics. By integrating these three categories of sources, the triangulation process allows the researcher to cross-check the data and validate the key findings of the study.

Data collection in this research was conducted through several methods, including literature review, document archiving, and digital documentation. These processes were carried out systematically while carefully considering the credibility, authenticity, and relevance of the data sources in relation to the objectives of the research. Particular attention was given to official policy documents and authoritative academic sources to ensure that the analysis is based on reliable materials.

The research procedure consists of several stages of analysis. First, the researcher conducted an intensive reading of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 document to identify dominant discourses, patterns of language use, and strategic narratives constructed within the policy text. This stage focuses on identifying how the United States frames its strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region and how certain values and identities are articulated within the document. Second, the study compares the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 with earlier U.S. policy documents, such as the Rebalance to Asia strategy, in order to examine both continuity and change in U.S. strategic culture over time. Through this comparative analysis, the research seeks to identify whether the narratives and values embedded in the Indo-Pacific Strategy represent a transformation or continuation of previous policy orientations.

The analytical process focuses on examining linguistic units and discursive elements that are closely related to U.S. strategic culture, both explicitly and implicitly expressed in the documents. Particular attention is given to the representation of core American values such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, equality, and freedom. These values are analyzed as discursive elements that contribute to the construction of legitimacy in U.S. foreign policy narratives.

This methodological approach is consistent with the constructivist perspective in international relations, which emphasizes the role of language, norms, and identity in shaping the behavior of actors within the international system. Constructivism views language not merely as a tool

for communication but as a mechanism for constructing social reality and legitimizing political action. Within this framework, the study analyzes how the United States uses narratives and values embedded in policy documents to shape norms that can be socially accepted within the Indo-Pacific region. These norms, in turn, serve to support the strategic interests of the United States and reinforce its role as a key actor in regional governance and security arrangements.

The design of this research ensures that the study can be replicated based on the clearly described procedures and technical steps provided in this section. The theoretical framework, data collection procedures, and analytical methods have been explained in detail so that other researchers may replicate the study using similar sources and analytical frameworks. At the same time, the research sets certain analytical boundaries by focusing primarily on key values embedded in U.S. foreign policy, including the rule of law and international order, human rights, liberalism, equality, and freedom. These limitations provide a focused analytical scope while also offering opportunities for future research to expand or deepen the analysis of U.S. strategic culture in different contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### U.S. Strategic Culture

The Indo-Pacific region has long been an arena of competition among major powers, particularly the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In their efforts to expand influence in the region, both countries reflect their respective strategic cultures through policies, narratives, and patterns of engagement. However, the United States and China often interpret each other's strategic culture differently, thereby generating mutual suspicion and deepening regional tension (Johnson, 2009). China frequently perceives U.S. actions in the Indo-Pacific as imperialist in nature, whereas the United States tends to view its own regional presence as legitimate and justified by a set of values, responsibilities, and strategic commitments. This section therefore explains the strategic culture of the United States and identifies the points of divergence in the ways both sides interpret one another, which in turn contribute to the intensification of tension in the Indo-Pacific.

According to Thomas Mahnken (2006), U.S. strategic culture can generally be characterized by three major elements: American exceptionalism and moral crusade, technology- and firepower-intensive warfare, and free security combined with the projection of power. Historically, these elements did not emerge suddenly in the modern era, but were rooted in the early formation of American political identity. In the seventeenth century, the territory that later became the United States was regarded by English Puritans as a place of refuge and promise after experiencing what they viewed as persecution and corruption in England (Zakai, 1992). The Puritans believed that they were a chosen people entrusted by God with the mission of establishing a new social order. Over time, this belief evolved into a broader conviction that the American nation possessed a unique historical calling not only to build a moral community at home but also to serve as an example for others.

This belief later developed into what became widely known as Manifest Destiny, a concept that expanded the imagined geographical reach of the American mission from North America to the wider world. The United States increasingly came to understand itself as a moral and social model for humanity. This understanding resonated strongly with the Puritan religious imagination, particularly the metaphor of a “City upon a Hill,” which suggested that the nation should serve as a visible example for others. In this sense, American national identity was constructed not merely in political or territorial terms but also in moral and civilizational terms. The nation was expected to radiate virtue, justice, order, and progress. Such a worldview reinforced the assumption that the United States had both the right and the duty to respond when moral disorder, authoritarianism, or instability emerged elsewhere. As a result, U.S. strategic culture became closely associated with a tendency to define international conflict in moral terms, including the division between forces of good and forces of evil (Mahnken, 2006; Kennan, 1950).

At the same time, American exceptionalism has also produced limitations in the U.S. approach to the outside world. Moore (1998) argues that this exceptionalist worldview often reduces sensitivity toward cultural diversity, weakens the understanding of foreign societies, and encourages policymakers to interpret global events largely through American assumptions and experiences.

Even so, Moore also notes that the United States has not always been purely backward-looking or ideological. U.S. policy has often combined moral purpose with pragmatic problem-solving. This combination is important because it explains why American strategic culture can simultaneously promote universal values and adjust its methods according to changing political conditions.

Another key element of U.S. strategic culture is the belief that military force, while often presented as a last resort, may be justified in order to defeat evil, restore stability, and defend the liberal international order. Dueck (2006) suggests that within the American strategic tradition, war is not necessarily pursued for conquest alone, but often framed as a legitimate and even necessary means of reestablishing international cooperation and order. Even when military intervention is positioned as a final option, the U.S. way of war tends to emphasize overwhelming superiority in weapons, technology, and firepower. This orientation aligns with broader American cultural beliefs about progress, achievement, and mastery. Just as the American Dream encourages individuals to strive relentlessly for success, American military thought has often assumed that technological superiority and operational intensity can secure decisive dominance (Sneberg, 2015). Furthermore, according to Mahnken (2006), the development of increasingly advanced military capabilities is intended not only to win wars but also to prevent future conflict and minimize casualties through preemptive or deterrent action.

The third important feature of U.S. strategic culture is the existence of what Mahnken describes as free security, or the relative natural security enjoyed by the United States because of its geographical position. The United States is separated from most major rivals by two oceans and bordered by neighboring countries that have generally not posed existential military threats. This favorable geographical situation has enabled the United States to concentrate on expanding its global influence through military, political, and economic means without facing the same immediate territorial vulnerabilities that constrain many other major powers. Moore II (1998) notes that because the United States is surrounded by relatively friendly neighbors, it has had the strategic advantage of choosing conflicts far from its own territory.

This condition became particularly important after the Cold War. With the decline of direct threats to the U.S. homeland, American foreign policy increasingly focused on interventions and strategic competition outside the Western Hemisphere. Norton (2022) observes that U.S. military interventions after the Cold War were often motivated more by geopolitical interests and normative objectives than by immediate homeland defense. In other words, the United States did not see itself as being forced into conflict by direct territorial danger. Rather, it often chose to become involved in external conflicts in order to preserve international order, defend liberal norms, and contain perceived threats to stability. Conflict, from this perspective, is interpreted as a disruption to a global order that the United States regards as both desirable and necessary. Consequently, natural security provides an important basis for the American tendency to project power abroad, including in the Indo-Pacific.

Taken together, these geographical, material, and ideational factors help explain why the United States has remained deeply active in international politics and has positioned itself as a central actor in the Indo-Pacific region. From the American perspective, regional engagement is not simply a matter of opportunistic expansion but part of a broader historical pattern in which national values, strategic assumptions, and material advantages interact. The Indo-Pacific therefore becomes more than a distant geopolitical theater. It becomes a region in which the United States believes it must defend order, preserve influence, and uphold values it considers universal.

### **Comparison of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 with Earlier Indo-Pacific Policies**

Before comparing the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), and Rebalance to Asia, it is necessary to briefly review the main pillars of the earlier policies. The Rebalance to Asia policy was built upon six pillars, namely the strengthening of bilateral security alliances, the deepening of relations with emerging powers including China, engagement in regional multilateral institutions, the expansion of trade and investment, the strengthening of military presence, and the promotion of democracy and human rights (Willis, 2017). By contrast, FOIP rested on four main pillars: respect for the sovereignty and

independence of all states, peaceful resolution of disputes, free, fair, and reciprocal trade based on transparency and connectivity, and adherence to international law, including freedom of navigation (Department of State, 2019). Meanwhile, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 emphasizes five broad priorities: promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, building connections within and beyond the region, advancing regional prosperity, strengthening regional security, and enhancing regional resilience against transnational threats.

These three policy frameworks demonstrate both continuity and change in U.S. strategic culture over time. The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is clearly a continuation of earlier policies, especially Rebalance to Asia and FOIP, but it also introduces important refinements and adaptations. In that sense, the three documents reflect a pattern of strategic inheritance rather than complete rupture. Several elements of U.S. strategic culture remain constant across them, including the emphasis on freedom and order, the defense of core U.S. economic interests, the moral framing of international competition, and the commitment to liberal cooperation under American leadership.

The continuities across these documents are significant. First, all three frameworks place strong emphasis on the values of freedom and order as the normative basis for pursuing U.S. interests, especially the protection of economic well-being and strategic influence. Second, each policy reflects elements of American exceptionalism and moral purpose by presenting the United States as a state that helps shape regional order while confronting threats that are depicted as common challenges to peace and stability. Third, all three policies incorporate liberal commitments, especially through the promotion of democracy, human rights, and multilateral or minilateral cooperation led or coordinated by the United States. These continuities suggest that the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 did not emerge in isolation. Rather, it should be understood as the latest articulation of a longer strategic trajectory.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 also introduces important developments in the expression of U.S. strategic culture. These developments include a more explicit combination of offensive and defensive approaches, a deeper emphasis on cooperation with regional partners than that found in FOIP or Rebalance to Asia, a

more calibrated view of China that is firmer than the Obama administration's but less rhetorically confrontational than the Trump administration's, and a more pragmatic interpretation of liberalism in economic cooperation. Many Chinese analysts have argued that the Biden administration remains strategically tough toward China, even while adopting a more professional and less openly confrontational diplomatic style than the Trump administration. In that sense, continuity in strategic competition has been preserved, but the discursive packaging has changed.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 therefore contains several elements that are either genuinely new or that revive themes associated with the Obama era that became less visible during the Trump presidency. Differences in presidential approach, policy priorities, and interpretations of U.S. identity recall Wendt's (1992) argument that state interests should not be treated as fixed and permanent. Instead, interests are shaped by dynamic social constructions within and among states. The innovations introduced in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 reflect a transformation in how the United States understands its own identity and role. The strategy upholds moral leadership not only to secure material interests but also to preserve normative legitimacy. Accordingly, the strategy is not reducible to economic or military calculation alone.

One of the most important features distinguishing the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 from previous frameworks is its combination of offensive and defensive dimensions. This can be seen in the way the strategy approaches China. Rather than focusing solely on changing Chinese behavior directly, the strategy seeks to shape the broader Indo-Pacific environment within which China operates. From an offensive perspective, the strategy indicates that the United States intends to expand and deepen alliances and partnerships throughout the region. This effort can be seen in initiatives such as renewed attention to climate issues that improve trust among Pacific Island countries, stronger security alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand, the development of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) as an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), higher trade standards intended to encourage partner states to avoid authoritarian economic practices, the creation of new minilateral frameworks such as AUKUS,

and efforts to influence democratic governance in countries such as Myanmar.

These initiatives do not primarily aim to persuade China to become less assertive or less authoritarian. Instead, they are designed to ensure that U.S. influence remains sufficiently strong for American-backed values to become normalized across the region. They also enable the United States to maintain a credible projection of power and to establish the legitimacy of its actions in the Indo-Pacific. In Finnemore's (2003) terms, such practices can be read as efforts to shape the normative environment in ways that make U.S. preferences appear legitimate and widely acceptable.

The defensive side of the strategy is equally important. It is reflected in the emphasis on integrated deterrence to protect the Indo-Pacific from aggression, as well as in efforts to strengthen the economic and military resilience of regional countries so that they can defend themselves more effectively against threats. The strategy also highlights the redirection of resources toward the Indo-Pacific, support for India as an important regional pillar, the reinforcement of democratic institutions to protect societies from destabilizing ideologies, the bridging of cooperation between Indo-Pacific and non-Indo-Pacific partners, and stronger safeguards against economic disruptions such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the United States also leaves room for cooperation with China on transnational problems when such cooperation is necessary to preserve regional and international stability.

These actions reveal an important assumption embedded in U.S. strategic culture: that the Indo-Pacific should remain a relatively stable strategic environment whose openness and order can be maintained through coordinated action. In this sense, the United States imagines itself not merely as an external actor but as a stabilizing power whose role is to preserve the region's "natural security" and rule-based order. If Indo-Pacific stability is maintained, then the liberal principles of trade, democracy, and open sea lanes that benefit the United States can continue to operate. This objective is not presented purely as self-interest. It is also framed as part of a broader identity that the United States has constructed through its interactions with regional partners.

A second important innovation in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is its stronger emphasis on cooperation with regional partners compared with FOIP and Rebalance to Asia. Although President Obama initiated a strategic reorientation toward Asia, Rebalance to Asia did not yet develop cooperation at the same depth found in Biden's strategy, and its practical reach was often centered on the major states of East and Southeast Asia. By contrast, President Trump's FOIP, while rhetorically ambitious, was often constrained by disappointment with multilateralism and by a preference for bilateral or unilateral approaches. That tendency weakened confidence in long-term U.S. commitment and, in some respects, threatened the United States' own claim to be a Pacific power.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 places much greater emphasis on alliances, partnerships, and coordinated engagement (Freeman, Markey, & Singh, 2022). In doing so, President Biden seeks to reconstruct the identity of the United States as a leader that governs through example rather than through transactional bargaining. Implicitly, this is also a response to the legacy of the Trump administration. In Finnemore's (2003) framework, the Biden administration can be seen as engaging in a process of strategic social construction: it is attempting to reshape how Indo-Pacific states perceive the United States by emphasizing consistency, shared purpose, and collective benefit. The aim is not only to strengthen cooperation in practical terms but also to restore belief in the normative reliability of American leadership.

The Biden administration's view of China in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is also more balanced than either the Obama or Trump approaches. On the one hand, the strategy does not understate the challenge posed by China. On the other hand, it avoids reducing the entire regional agenda to direct confrontation with Beijing. Alec Blivas (2022) criticizes the strategy for not always providing a sufficiently clear operational roadmap for managing strategic rivalry with China. Yet from another perspective, the strategy reflects a broader narrative that the United States, as a self-proclaimed global leader with higher moral standards, must be able to compete with China while still cooperating on common global challenges when necessary.

Following Finnemore (2003), this approach can be understood as an effort to build legitimacy around American leadership and to reinforce

democracy, human rights, and other principles as shared regional norms. In other words, the United States seeks to shape the strategic environment so that authoritarian practices or norms associated with China do not become more legitimate or attractive in the region. If the United States were to focus exclusively on confronting China, especially through military means alone, then its moral claim in the Indo-Pacific would likely weaken and its influence would become less sustainable over time.

This logic can also be seen in broader bureaucratic practice. As noted in one report discussed by Eric Feinberg (2021), under President Biden all teams within the National Security Council were instructed to integrate China-related considerations into their respective portfolios. This indicates not only the centrality of China in U.S. strategic thinking but also the emergence of an integrated deterrence approach in which all elements of national power are coordinated to prevent aggressive Chinese action. At the same time, the Biden administration attempts to distinguish itself from the Trump administration by presenting itself as more principled and less selective in its defense of norms. Whereas Trump often used hard rhetoric toward China while appearing willing to overlook issues such as human rights when trade negotiations were at stake (Ford, 2020), Biden frames strategic competition within a discourse of democratic values and broader international responsibility.

Another dimension that distinguishes the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 from earlier U.S. policies lies in its more pragmatic interpretation of liberal economic cooperation. This pragmatic orientation can be seen most clearly in the design of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Unlike previous trade initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which required binding commitments from participating countries across multiple regulatory areas, the IPEF allows participating states greater flexibility in determining their level of involvement. Member states may choose to participate in one or several pillars rather than accepting the entire framework as a single comprehensive agreement. These pillars include trade, supply chain resilience, clean economy initiatives, and fair economy principles (Olson, 2023).

This flexible design reflects an attempt by the United States to adapt its economic engagement

strategy to the diverse political and economic circumstances of Indo-Pacific countries. Instead of imposing strict obligations that might discourage participation, the framework provides a more modular approach that allows states to align cooperation with their domestic priorities. While the IPEF still encourages transparency, environmental standards, and governance improvements, these standards are not always structured as strict legal obligations. This pragmatic flexibility is intended to make U.S.-led economic cooperation more attractive compared to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has often been criticized for creating opaque financial arrangements and long-term debt dependencies.

In Finnemore's (2003) terminology, this effort can be interpreted as another example of strategic social construction, in which the United States consciously attempts to shape the perceptions and preferences of regional actors. Through the IPEF, the United States encourages Indo-Pacific states to view U.S.-led economic frameworks as more transparent, sustainable, and mutually beneficial than Chinese initiatives. In doing so, Washington attempts to construct a narrative in which economic cooperation under American leadership represents a more trustworthy model of regional development. This narrative not only promotes U.S. economic influence but also reinforces the broader ideological competition between liberal and authoritarian governance models.

The Biden administration's return to active regional economic engagement also signals a renewed commitment to liberal economic principles after the more protectionist tendencies associated with the Trump administration. Scherrer (1999) argues that liberal international economic policies have long been central to American foreign policy thinking because they are believed to strengthen both economic growth and political alliances. By encouraging open trade, market integration, and regulatory transparency, the United States aims to create conditions that reinforce interdependence among regional economies. This interdependence, in turn, is expected to reduce the likelihood of conflict while enhancing American commercial interests.

Beyond economic cooperation, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 also highlights environmental and climate challenges as key areas of regional collaboration. Climate change is presented not only

as an environmental problem but also as a strategic issue that affects the long-term stability of Indo-Pacific societies. For many Pacific Island countries, rising sea levels and environmental degradation represent existential threats. By addressing these issues through initiatives such as decarbonization programs and environmental resilience partnerships, the United States seeks to strengthen its political relationships with these states while demonstrating leadership in global climate governance.

These environmental commitments also carry strategic implications in the broader competition with China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China used vaccine diplomacy and development assistance to expand its influence in many parts of the Indo-Pacific. By contrast, the United States initially appeared less engaged due to the Trump administration's withdrawal from certain multilateral institutions such as the World Health Organization. The Biden administration therefore placed renewed emphasis on global health cooperation and climate policy in order to restore credibility and influence in the region. Initiatives such as joint vaccine distribution programs coordinated through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) serve not only humanitarian goals but also broader strategic objectives. By providing public goods to regional states, the United States attempts to rebuild trust and demonstrate the advantages of partnership with democratic powers.

The strengthening of democratic institutions also occupies an important place within the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. Democratic governance is viewed as an essential foundation for the stability and openness of the region. Democratic states are generally considered more predictable partners and more supportive of rule-based international cooperation. As a result, the strategy promotes initiatives that support transparency, accountable governance, free media, and anti-corruption reforms. Such efforts are designed to reinforce institutional resilience in Indo-Pacific societies while simultaneously strengthening the normative appeal of liberal political systems.

From a constructivist perspective, these initiatives help shape a collective identity among democratic states in the region. Countries that share similar political values are more likely to cooperate and develop mutual trust. This collective identity also contributes to the emergence of shared norms

that regulate state behavior. In this way, the Indo-Pacific Strategy seeks not only to balance material power but also to cultivate a community of states that recognize similar political and moral commitments.

Collective security cooperation is another key aspect of the strategy. Moore (2006) observes that the United States has historically attempted not only to defeat adversaries but also to reshape both allies and former enemies in accordance with its broader political vision. The Marshall Plan after World War II represents a classic example of this approach. By helping rebuild European economies, the United States was able to encourage political systems aligned with liberal democracy and open markets. Similar logic can be observed in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. Through economic assistance, capacity-building programs, and institutional partnerships, the United States attempts to influence the political and economic trajectories of regional states in ways that support its preferred international order.

These efforts are also visible in educational and societal initiatives. Programs such as the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) provide opportunities for young leaders from across Southeast Asia to engage with American educational institutions and leadership programs. These exchanges aim to familiarize future political, economic, and civil society leaders with American values and governance models. Although such initiatives do not directly determine political outcomes, they contribute to the long-term construction of favorable perceptions toward the United States.

Historically, similar approaches have been used in other contexts. During the Cold War, the United States often offered military education programs to officers from allied states. Exposure to U.S. training institutions sometimes shaped the political outlook of these individuals once they returned to positions of authority in their home countries. While contemporary programs are less explicitly political, they continue to operate within the broader logic of cultural and ideological influence.

The concept of American exceptionalism remains deeply embedded in the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022. This idea is reflected in the narrative that the United States has historically contributed to the stability and prosperity of the region and will

continue to do so in the future. The strategy repeatedly emphasizes that U.S. leadership benefits not only the United States itself but also the broader Indo-Pacific community. By contrast, Chinese actions are frequently framed as attempts to revise regional order in ways that could undermine stability and autonomy.

This narrative reinforces the belief that the presence of the United States as a Pacific power is essential for ensuring the most favorable future for Indo-Pacific states. From this perspective, the region's prosperity and security are closely linked to continued U.S. engagement. If the regional order were shaped primarily by Chinese preferences, American policymakers suggest that authoritarian norms could become more influential and that political and economic freedoms might be constrained.

American exceptionalism is therefore expressed throughout the strategy's pillars and Core Lines of Effort (CLOE). The emphasis on cooperation with like-minded partners, the portrayal of the United States as a responsible leader in addressing global challenges, and the promotion of democratic governance all reinforce the image of the United States as a benevolent architect of regional order. The strategy also highlights U.S. leadership in technological innovation, economic integration, climate policy, and public health responses. These themes collectively construct a narrative in which American leadership is not only desirable but also necessary for the maintenance of regional stability.

At the same time, the strategy reflects an awareness that military competition with China remains a central concern. The United States continues to strengthen its technological capabilities and its network of alliances in order to maintain credible deterrence. However, unlike earlier eras in which military victory over adversaries was sometimes framed as the ultimate objective, contemporary U.S. strategy places greater emphasis on preventing conflict through deterrence and cooperation with allies. Lessons drawn from Cold War competition encourage policymakers to avoid direct military confrontation while still maintaining a robust capacity to respond to aggression.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy also highlights the emergence of shared threats, including the challenges posed by China, North Korea, and

various transnational risks. The identification of common threats serves an important strategic function. By emphasizing collective challenges, the United States encourages regional states to cooperate more closely with each other and with Washington. Shared threats help mobilize political support and justify increased defense spending, military cooperation, and intelligence sharing.

For instance, growing concerns about Chinese activities in the South China Sea have strengthened defense cooperation between the United States and several regional states. Approximately one-third of global maritime trade passes through these waters, making them strategically vital. If a single power were able to control these routes, the economic consequences could be far-reaching. Consequently, the United States portrays its naval presence as necessary to safeguard freedom of navigation and the stability of global trade networks.

Similarly, North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have reinforced the need for coordinated security cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Even states that previously experienced tense relations with Washington have increasingly sought closer cooperation due to shared concerns about regional security. The expansion of U.S.–Vietnam security dialogue, for example, demonstrates how historical adversaries can become strategic partners when confronted with common threats.

In addition to traditional security challenges, transnational threats such as pandemics, cyberattacks, and climate change also play a significant role in the Indo-Pacific Strategy. These challenges create opportunities for cooperation even among states that are otherwise strategic competitors. For example, both the United States and China face common risks related to global health crises and environmental instability. While competition between the two powers remains intense, cooperation on these issues may still occur when mutual interests align.

Nevertheless, even cooperative initiatives can carry strategic implications. Programs such as regional vaccine distribution efforts coordinated through the Quad simultaneously address humanitarian needs and strengthen political relationships. By providing tangible benefits to regional populations, the United States attempts to demonstrate that democratic partnerships are

capable of delivering public goods more effectively than authoritarian alternatives.

These dynamics illustrate how narratives of shared challenges can reinforce both cooperation and competition. On the one hand, collective threats encourage collaboration across national boundaries. On the other hand, they also provide justification for expanding alliances and strengthening deterrence capabilities. In the context of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, these narratives help legitimize deeper military cooperation while simultaneously reinforcing the perception of the United States as a central guarantor of regional stability.

The presence of shared threats can therefore function as a stabilizing factor in relations among rival powers. Michael Mazarr and colleagues (2021) argue that even during periods of intense geopolitical rivalry, shared challenges may create opportunities for limited cooperation or at least reduce the risk of direct confrontation. For instance, although the United States and the Soviet Union were ideological adversaries throughout the Cold War, moments of cooperation occasionally emerged when both sides faced common threats. A similar dynamic can be observed in the Indo-Pacific today, where transnational challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and cyber insecurity affect both the United States and China. While these issues do not eliminate strategic rivalry, they nevertheless create areas where cooperative engagement may remain possible.

In the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, transnational threats such as public health crises, climate change, natural disasters, and cyber threats are repeatedly emphasized as collective challenges requiring coordinated responses. These shared challenges allow the United States to frame its engagement with the region not solely in terms of geopolitical competition but also in terms of collective responsibility. The language used in the strategy frequently highlights concepts such as “shared domains,” “collective regional capabilities,” and “joint responses.” Such terminology underscores the idea that regional security is not merely the responsibility of a single state but rather a collective undertaking among partners. At the same time, this narrative reinforces the legitimacy of U.S. leadership by portraying the United States as a facilitator of cooperation and provider of public goods.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear example of how shared threats can reshape regional dynamics. During the early stages of the pandemic, China was able to expand its influence in parts of the Indo-Pacific through vaccine diplomacy and medical assistance. Some observers interpreted these efforts as attempts to enhance China's political leverage and improve its international image. In response, the United States and its partners sought to restore balance by coordinating vaccine distribution initiatives through mechanisms such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). These initiatives not only addressed urgent health needs but also demonstrated that democratic partnerships could deliver tangible benefits to regional societies.

This episode illustrates how the narrative of shared threats may serve multiple purposes simultaneously. On the one hand, cooperative initiatives help address immediate humanitarian challenges. On the other hand, they contribute to the broader strategic competition between the United States and China by influencing perceptions of leadership and legitimacy. By framing cooperation as a collective effort among democratic partners, the United States reinforces the idea that regional stability and prosperity depend on the maintenance of a rules-based order.

From the perspective of American strategic culture, the identification of shared threats also reinforces the moral dimension of foreign policy. The United States has historically portrayed its international role as one of defending universal principles such as freedom, democracy, and human rights. By emphasizing the need to confront global challenges collectively, American policymakers reinforce the image of the United States as a responsible leader committed to safeguarding global welfare. This framing aligns with the tradition of American exceptionalism, which views the United States as uniquely positioned to guide international cooperation.

The narrative of collective challenges also helps justify the expansion of U.S. military and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. For example, concerns about maritime security in the South China Sea have led to increased collaboration among the United States, Japan, Australia, and other regional partners. Freedom of navigation operations and joint naval exercises are presented not merely as demonstrations of military power but

as efforts to uphold international law and ensure the stability of global trade routes. Given that a significant portion of global commerce passes through Indo-Pacific sea lanes, maintaining open maritime access is widely regarded as essential for international economic stability.

The United States therefore frames its military presence as a stabilizing force rather than a source of escalation. American policymakers argue that credible deterrence is necessary to prevent unilateral actions that might disrupt the regional order. In practical terms, this approach involves strengthening alliances, enhancing interoperability among partner militaries, and expanding joint training programs. These initiatives are intended to increase the collective capacity of regional states to respond to potential crises while reducing the likelihood of direct confrontation.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific Strategy acknowledges that strategic competition with China cannot be entirely avoided. The rise of China as a major economic and military power has transformed the geopolitical landscape of the region. For the United States, managing this transformation requires a careful balance between competition and cooperation. While the strategy seeks to limit the expansion of Chinese influence in certain areas, it also recognizes that global challenges such as climate change and nuclear proliferation require engagement with Beijing.

This dual approach reflects a broader pattern within American strategic culture. Historically, the United States has often combined ideological rivalry with pragmatic diplomacy. During the Cold War, for example, the United States simultaneously pursued containment of the Soviet Union and negotiated arms control agreements. A similar pattern can be observed in the Indo-Pacific today. While the United States seeks to strengthen alliances and deter aggressive behavior, it also maintains channels of communication with China in order to prevent misunderstandings and manage crises.

Another important feature of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is the emphasis on regional resilience. Resilience refers to the ability of societies and institutions to withstand external shocks and adapt to changing conditions. In the context of the Indo-Pacific, resilience includes economic diversification, infrastructure development, cyber security protection, and disaster

preparedness. By supporting these initiatives, the United States aims to strengthen the capacity of regional partners to maintain independence and stability.

Economic resilience is particularly important in light of the growing interdependence among global supply chains. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in many international production networks, including shortages of critical medical supplies and disruptions to manufacturing sectors. In response, the Indo-Pacific Strategy emphasizes supply chain cooperation and diversification among trusted partners. Such initiatives are intended to reduce dependence on single suppliers while strengthening economic ties among democratic economies.

Infrastructure development is another area where resilience plays a key role. Through partnerships with international financial institutions and regional development initiatives, the United States supports projects that improve transportation networks, digital connectivity, and energy systems. These projects are often presented as alternatives to infrastructure financing offered through China's Belt and Road Initiative. By promoting transparency, environmental standards, and financial sustainability, U.S.-supported initiatives attempt to distinguish themselves from models that have been criticized for creating debt burdens or governance challenges.

In addition to economic and infrastructural resilience, the Indo-Pacific Strategy also highlights the importance of technological cooperation. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, and digital communications are increasingly central to both economic growth and national security. The United States therefore seeks to collaborate with regional partners in developing secure and trustworthy technological ecosystems. These partnerships aim to ensure that technological innovation supports democratic values and open markets rather than authoritarian surveillance systems.

The strategic importance of technology has become particularly evident in the competition between the United States and China. Control over advanced technologies is often viewed as a key determinant of future geopolitical influence. Consequently, the Indo-Pacific Strategy encourages cooperation among partner states in areas such as

research and development, digital governance standards, and cyber security. By fostering collaborative innovation networks, the United States attempts to maintain technological leadership while reducing the risk of technological fragmentation.

Environmental sustainability also occupies a central place within the strategy. Climate change poses significant risks to many Indo-Pacific countries, particularly small island states that face rising sea levels and extreme weather events. By supporting climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives, the United States seeks to strengthen partnerships with these vulnerable communities. Programs focusing on renewable energy, sustainable fisheries, and disaster resilience contribute to both environmental protection and regional stability.

Such initiatives reinforce the broader narrative that American engagement in the Indo-Pacific benefits not only strategic interests but also global welfare. By linking security cooperation with environmental and economic development, the United States presents itself as a comprehensive partner capable of addressing multiple dimensions of regional challenges. This integrated approach reflects the constructivist insight that foreign policy is shaped not only by material power but also by ideas, norms, and identities.

Ultimately, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 reveals how deeply strategic culture influences U.S. foreign policy behavior. American policymakers interpret the region through a framework that combines historical experience, ideological commitments, and geopolitical calculation. Concepts such as exceptionalism, moral leadership, technological superiority, and collective security continue to shape the language and priorities of U.S. engagement. These elements are not static; they evolve in response to changing global conditions and domestic political debates.

Nevertheless, certain patterns remain remarkably consistent. The United States continues to view itself as a central architect of international order and as a defender of liberal values. At the same time, it recognizes that maintaining influence in the Indo-Pacific requires adaptation to new realities, including the rise of China and the diversification of regional actors. By blending traditional strategic assumptions with new policy instruments, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022

represents both continuity and evolution in American strategic culture.

Another important dimension that emerges from the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is the effort to institutionalize cooperation through minilateral frameworks. Minilateralism refers to cooperation among a limited number of states that share common interests and strategic objectives. Unlike large multilateral organizations, which often involve complex negotiations and diverse interests, minilateral arrangements are designed to enable faster decision-making and more focused collaboration. In the Indo-Pacific context, such frameworks have become increasingly significant because they allow like-minded states to coordinate policies in response to evolving regional challenges.

One of the most prominent examples of this approach is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which involves the United States, Japan, India, and Australia. Although the Quad initially emerged in the mid-2000s, it has gained renewed momentum in recent years as strategic concerns about China's growing influence have intensified. The Quad is not formally structured as a military alliance; rather, it functions as a platform for policy coordination on issues ranging from maritime security and infrastructure development to climate change and public health cooperation. By emphasizing shared democratic values and regional stability, the Quad reflects the broader normative framework that underpins the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Another minilateral initiative that has attracted considerable attention is AUKUS, the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Announced in 2021, AUKUS focuses primarily on advanced defense technologies, including the development of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. While the partnership is primarily oriented toward strengthening deterrence capabilities, it also reflects a broader effort to deepen technological and security cooperation among trusted allies. Through initiatives such as AUKUS, the United States aims to maintain a technological edge while reinforcing the strategic cohesion of its closest partners.

The increasing reliance on minilateral frameworks illustrates how the United States is adapting its diplomatic strategies to the evolving geopolitical environment of the Indo-Pacific. Traditional alliance structures remain important, but smaller, issue-specific coalitions provide

additional flexibility and responsiveness. These arrangements enable the United States to collaborate with partners that share particular strategic concerns without requiring the formal commitments associated with treaty alliances. As a result, minilateralism has become an effective instrument for advancing U.S. strategic objectives while accommodating the diverse political realities of the region.

At the same time, the expansion of minilateral initiatives also raises questions about regional inclusivity. Some critics argue that exclusive groupings may inadvertently deepen geopolitical divisions by creating perceptions of containment or strategic blocs. In response to such concerns, U.S. policymakers often emphasize that minilateral arrangements are intended to complement rather than replace broader regional institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Indo-Pacific Strategy repeatedly highlights the importance of ASEAN centrality, acknowledging that regional stability depends on inclusive cooperation and respect for the sovereignty of smaller states.

The emphasis on ASEAN centrality reflects another element of American strategic culture: the recognition that legitimacy in international politics often depends on institutional engagement. By affirming the role of ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum, the United States seeks to demonstrate respect for regional norms while simultaneously strengthening its diplomatic presence. This approach allows Washington to balance the pursuit of strategic competition with the need to maintain cooperative relationships across the region.

In addition to institutional cooperation, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 also underscores the importance of economic connectivity. Infrastructure development, digital connectivity, and sustainable investment are presented as key drivers of regional prosperity. The United States, often working in partnership with Japan, Australia, and international financial institutions, promotes initiatives that support high-quality infrastructure projects. These projects aim to improve transportation networks, energy systems, and digital infrastructure while adhering to principles of transparency and financial sustainability.

Such initiatives are frequently framed as alternatives to China's Belt and Road Initiative,

which has expanded Beijing's economic influence across many developing regions. While the Belt and Road Initiative has financed numerous infrastructure projects, it has also faced criticism regarding debt sustainability, environmental standards, and transparency. In contrast, U.S.-supported initiatives emphasize governance standards and long-term economic viability. By promoting these principles, the United States seeks to reinforce the narrative that its approach to development cooperation is more sustainable and beneficial for partner countries.

The competition between different models of economic engagement reflects the broader ideological dimension of U.S.–China rivalry. Whereas China often emphasizes state-led development and infrastructure investment, the United States promotes market-oriented economic systems and regulatory transparency. These competing models represent not only economic strategies but also distinct visions of international order. Consequently, economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is closely intertwined with questions of political governance and normative influence.

Another critical aspect of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 is the focus on human security. Human security expands the concept of security beyond traditional military concerns to include issues such as health, food security, environmental protection, and disaster resilience. Many Indo-Pacific countries face significant vulnerabilities related to natural disasters, climate change, and economic inequality. By addressing these challenges through development assistance and capacity-building programs, the United States aims to strengthen long-term stability while enhancing its diplomatic relationships.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations have long been an important component of U.S. engagement in the Indo-Pacific. The region is highly susceptible to natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Rapid U.S. response capabilities, including the deployment of naval assets and logistical support, have often played a crucial role in disaster relief efforts. These operations not only provide immediate humanitarian benefits but also reinforce the perception of the United States as a reliable partner in times of crisis.

Education and people-to-people exchanges also contribute to the broader strategic objectives of

the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Academic partnerships, scholarship programs, and cultural exchanges facilitate mutual understanding and strengthen long-term relationships between societies. Such initiatives reflect the soft power dimension of American foreign policy. Rather than relying solely on military or economic influence, the United States seeks to cultivate positive perceptions through cultural engagement and educational collaboration.

Soft power plays a particularly significant role in shaping the perceptions of younger generations in the Indo-Pacific. Programs that bring students, researchers, and young professionals to the United States provide opportunities to experience American institutions and values firsthand. Participants often return to their home countries with greater familiarity with American culture and political ideals. Over time, these experiences can contribute to networks of cooperation that extend across government, academia, and civil society.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy also places strong emphasis on gender equality and inclusive development. Promoting women's participation in economic and political life is presented as a key component of sustainable growth and democratic governance. Initiatives that support female entrepreneurship, education, and leadership development are designed to enhance social resilience while aligning with broader American values regarding equality and human rights. These programs demonstrate how normative principles are integrated into the practical implementation of foreign policy.

Despite these extensive initiatives, challenges remain in translating the strategic vision of the Indo-Pacific Strategy into concrete outcomes. One significant challenge involves the diversity of political systems and economic priorities among Indo-Pacific states. While many countries share an interest in maintaining regional stability, they may also seek to preserve balanced relationships with both the United States and China. As a result, some governments are cautious about aligning too closely with any single major power.

Another challenge concerns the sustainability of U.S. commitments. Changes in domestic political leadership can influence the continuity of foreign policy strategies. Observers have noted that shifts between administrations from Obama's Rebalance to Asia, to Trump's FOIP, and then to Biden's Indo-Pacific Strategy reflect evolving priorities within

American politics. Ensuring consistent engagement over time is therefore essential for maintaining the credibility of U.S. leadership in the region.

Nevertheless, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 represents a comprehensive attempt to integrate diplomatic, economic, technological, and security initiatives into a coherent framework. By combining traditional alliance structures with new forms of cooperation, the strategy reflects an adaptive approach to regional engagement. It acknowledges the complexity of the Indo-Pacific environment while reaffirming the United States' long-standing commitment to preserving an open and rules-based regional order.

Ultimately, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 illustrates how strategic culture continues to shape the orientation of U.S. foreign policy. American policymakers interpret the region through a set of enduring beliefs about the role of the United States in global affairs. These beliefs emphasize leadership, the promotion of liberal values, and the maintenance of international stability through cooperation with like-minded partners. While the specific instruments of policy may evolve, the underlying strategic culture remains a powerful influence on the direction of U.S. engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

In addition to institutional cooperation and economic engagement, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 also highlights the importance of normative leadership in shaping the future of the regional order. The United States consistently presents its engagement in the Indo-Pacific not only as a strategic necessity but also as a moral responsibility to uphold a system based on rules, transparency, and shared principles. This narrative reflects a long-standing element of American strategic culture in which foreign policy is framed as the defense and promotion of universal values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

Within the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, these values are frequently associated with the concept of a "free and open Indo-Pacific." The notion of freedom refers not only to political liberties but also to the ability of states to make independent policy choices without coercion. Openness, meanwhile, is associated with transparent economic systems, secure maritime trade routes, and inclusive regional cooperation. By emphasizing these principles, the United States attempts to construct a normative

framework in which its leadership is perceived as legitimate and beneficial for regional stability.

From a constructivist perspective, such narratives play a crucial role in shaping international behavior. Constructivist scholars argue that international politics is influenced not only by material capabilities but also by the ideas, identities, and norms that guide the actions of states. In this context, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can be interpreted as a discursive effort to define the meaning of regional order and to encourage other countries to adopt similar interpretations. Through diplomatic statements, policy documents, and cooperative initiatives, the United States attempts to reinforce a shared understanding of regional stability that aligns with its own strategic interests.

The emphasis on norms and values also helps explain the strong focus on human rights and democratic governance within the strategy. The United States frequently portrays the promotion of democracy as an essential component of regional security. Democratic institutions are believed to provide transparency, accountability, and political legitimacy, which in turn contribute to long-term stability. Consequently, the Indo-Pacific Strategy includes programs that support democratic resilience, anti-corruption initiatives, and the protection of civil society organizations.

However, the emphasis on normative leadership also reflects the broader ideological competition between the United States and China. While the United States promotes a rules-based order grounded in liberal democratic principles, China often advocates a model that prioritizes state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. This divergence creates a fundamental tension within the regional order. Countries in the Indo-Pacific must navigate between these competing visions while attempting to maintain their own strategic autonomy.

Despite this competition, many Indo-Pacific states seek to avoid being drawn into rigid geopolitical blocs. Instead, they often pursue hedging strategies that allow them to maintain productive relationships with both major powers. For example, several Southeast Asian countries simultaneously engage in security cooperation with the United States while maintaining strong economic ties with China. This balancing approach reflects the complex interdependence that

characterizes the contemporary Indo-Pacific environment.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 acknowledges these realities by emphasizing the importance of inclusive cooperation rather than exclusive alliances. Although the United States strengthens partnerships with like-minded countries, it also stresses that regional institutions should remain open and accessible to all states that support international law and peaceful cooperation. By framing its strategy in this manner, the United States seeks to reassure regional actors that its objective is not to impose dominance but to preserve a stable and predictable environment.

Another key aspect of the strategy involves the integration of different instruments of national power. The concept of integrated deterrence, which appears prominently in U.S. defense planning, reflects the idea that military capabilities must be coordinated with diplomatic, economic, technological, and informational tools. Rather than relying solely on traditional military strength, integrated deterrence emphasizes the importance of alliances, economic networks, and technological innovation in preventing conflict.

Within the Indo-Pacific, this integrated approach is visible in the close coordination between defense partnerships, economic initiatives, and diplomatic engagement. Security alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines provide the military foundation of U.S. presence in the region. At the same time, economic frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and infrastructure partnerships contribute to regional development and supply chain resilience. Technological cooperation, including joint research initiatives and semiconductor partnerships, further strengthens the strategic alignment among partner states.

This multidimensional strategy reflects the evolving nature of power in the twenty-first century. Economic influence, technological leadership, and normative legitimacy are increasingly intertwined with traditional military capabilities. As a result, the Indo-Pacific Strategy seeks to leverage all available instruments in order to maintain a favorable balance of power while minimizing the risk of direct confrontation.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the strategy ultimately depends on the willingness of regional partners to actively participate in its initiatives.

Many Indo-Pacific countries welcome U.S. engagement as a means of balancing China's growing influence, yet they also expect the United States to demonstrate consistent commitment over time. Credibility therefore becomes a critical factor in the success of the strategy. Sustained diplomatic presence, reliable economic partnerships, and predictable security cooperation are essential for maintaining trust among regional partners.

Domestic political dynamics within the United States may also influence the long-term trajectory of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Changes in presidential administrations can lead to shifts in foreign policy priorities, which may create uncertainty regarding the continuity of American engagement. For this reason, many observers argue that bipartisan support for Indo-Pacific policy is essential to ensure strategic stability. When regional partners perceive U.S. commitments as consistent across political cycles, they are more likely to align their policies with American initiatives.

In addition, the evolving strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific may require further adaptation of U.S. policy in the future. The region continues to experience rapid economic growth, technological transformation, and shifting security dynamics. Emerging issues such as cyber security, artificial intelligence governance, and climate resilience will likely become increasingly important components of regional cooperation. The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 therefore represents not a final blueprint but a framework that can evolve in response to new challenges and opportunities.

Ultimately, the discussion above demonstrates that the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 reflects both continuity and transformation within U.S. strategic culture. Core elements such as American exceptionalism, liberal internationalism, and the belief in moral leadership remain deeply embedded in the strategy's narrative. At the same time, the strategy introduces new mechanisms of cooperation, including unilateral partnerships, flexible economic frameworks, and integrated deterrence approaches. These developments illustrate how the United States adapts its foreign policy instruments while maintaining underlying cultural and ideological assumptions about its role in global affairs.

By examining the Indo-Pacific Strategy through the lens of strategic culture, it becomes possible to understand how American values,

historical experiences, and national identity shape the formulation of foreign policy. The strategy is not simply a response to material power shifts but also an expression of how the United States interprets its position within the international system. Through discourse, partnerships, and policy initiatives, the United States attempts to construct a regional order that reflects its preferred norms and interests.

In this sense, the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 represents more than a geopolitical response to China's rise. It also serves as a manifestation of American strategic culture in action—an attempt to reaffirm U.S. leadership, reinforce liberal norms, and shape the evolving architecture of the Indo-Pacific region.

## CONCLUSION

The Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 under the presidency of Joe Biden is fundamentally shaped by the strategic culture of the United States, particularly the values of liberalism, human rights and equality, American exceptionalism, and respect for the rule of law and international order. In addition, elements such as moral crusading, technology- and firepower-intensive warfare, and the concept of natural security combined with global power projection also contribute to shaping U.S. actions in the Indo-Pacific region. These values and strategic elements have historically formed the foundation of U.S. strategic culture, although the Biden administration interprets several of them from perspectives that differ slightly from those of previous administrations. For instance, American exceptionalism is reflected in efforts to restore and strengthen multilateral engagement in the region, while liberal values are applied through a more idealistic yet flexible and pragmatic approach in economic initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). At the same time, the Biden administration tends to avoid an overly confrontational stance toward the People's Republic of China (PRC) while still maintaining strategic competition. Overall, the findings of this research demonstrate that U.S. strategic culture plays a crucial role in shaping the formulation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022, while simultaneously evolving in response to contemporary geopolitical dynamics and the strategic rivalry between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest, either financial or non-financial, related to this research. The authors conducted this study independently and are fully responsible for the content of this article.

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