



The Indo-Pacific as a Geopolitical Fault Line through NVivo-Assisted Analysis: India and Regional Security Dynamics

NVivo Destekli Analizle Jeopolitik Fay Hattı Olarak Hint-Pasifik: Hindistan ve Bölgesel Güvenlik Dinamikleri

Merve ÖZTEN YILDIZ*

Abstract

This article critically reinterprets the Indo-Pacific by challenging conventional approaches that portray it as a geographically fixed region governed by a singular security architecture. Drawing on critical geopolitics and NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis, it argues that the Indo-Pacific is continuously reconstructed through competing state discourses, strategic practices and power projections rather than predetermined territorial boundaries. Within this dynamic order, India occupies a central analytical position. Its strategic autonomy, multi-alignment strategy and normative Indo-Pacific vision distinguish it from Western alliance-based approaches, China's revisionist expansionism and Russia's Eurasian orientation. Rather than acting as a secondary regional actor, India emerges as a pivotal geopolitical agent influencing the region's evolving multipolar order through balancing strategies, security partnerships and civilizational diplomacy. The study concludes that the Indo-Pacific should be understood as a geopolitical fault line continuously produced through the security perceptions, institutional choices and spatial practices of regional actors, with India playing a decisive role in shaping its transformation.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, Geopolitical Fault Line, Minilateral Security, QUAD, AUKUS

Özet

Bu makale, Hint-Pasifik'i coğrafi sınırları sabit ve tekil bir güvenlik mimarisi tarafından yönetilen bir bölge olarak ele alan hâkim yaklaşımları eleştirel biçimde yeniden değerlendirmektedir. Eleştirel jeopolitik yaklaşım ve NVivo destekli nitel içerik analizinden yararlanan çalışma, bölgenin önceden belirlenmiş sınırlarla değil; devletlerin rekabet eden söylemleri, stratejik pratikleri ve güç projeksiyonları aracılığıyla sürekli yeniden üretildiğini savunmaktadır. Bulgular, Hint-Pasifik'in yalnızca Doğu-Batı rekabeti veya askerî güç mücadelesiyle açıklanamayacağını; çok yönlü stratejik etkileşimler, esnek hizalanmalar ve değişen jeopolitik tahayyüller aracılığıyla şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, Hindistan'ı analitik merkeze yerleştirmektedir. Hindistan'ın stratejik özerklik anlayışı, çoklu hizalanma politikası ve normatif Hint-Pasifik vizyonu; onu Batı'nın ittifak merkezli yaklaşımından, Çin'in revizyonist yayılmacılığından ve Rusya'nın Avrasyacı yöneliminden ayırmaktadır. Hindistan, dengeleme stratejileri, güvenlik ortaklıkları ve medeniyet temelli diplomasisiyle yükselen çok kutuplu bölgesel düzenin şekillenmesinde belirleyici bir jeopolitik aktör olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Sonuç olarak çalışma, Hint-Pasifik'in bölgesel aktörlerin güvenlik algıları, kurumsal tercihleri ve mekânsal pratikleriyle sürekli yeniden üretilen dinamik bir jeopolitik fay hattı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hint-Pasifik, Jeopolitik Fay Hattı, Minilateral Güvenlik, QUAD, AUKUS

* PhD Candidate, Suleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, International Relations, merveoztenyildiz@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-3217-9976

Introduction

Over the past decade, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as one of the most consequential geopolitical spaces in global politics. It has increasingly become the focal point of strategic competition, regional ordering and institutional reconfiguration. This transformation is reflected not only in the strategic doctrines of the United States, Japan, Australia but also in the rise of minilateral security frameworks such as QUAD and AUKUS. These developments have elevated the Indo-Pacific beyond a conventional geographic designation, transforming it into a central arena where competing visions of order, power and regional governance intersect. However, despite this growing prominence, much of the existing literature continues to conceptualize the Indo-Pacific either as a geographically pre-given region or merely as a strategic response to US–China rivalry.

Such approaches remain limited because they often overlook the processes through which the Indo-Pacific is actively produced, contested and institutionalized. By reducing the region to fixed territorial boundaries or binary great-power competition, dominant analyses frequently neglect how geopolitical spaces are constructed through discourse, strategic practices, military cooperation, institutional frameworks and diplomatic engagement. This study argues that the Indo-Pacific should instead be understood as a geopolitical fault line. In this sense, the region is not simply a passive arena of power politics but a dynamic strategic space continuously shaped by intersecting security perceptions, normative frameworks and spatial practices.

Drawing on critical geopolitics and the practices turn in International Relations, this article seeks to move beyond static and state-centric frameworks. Critical geopolitics enables an examination of how spatial imaginaries, geopolitical discourses and strategic narratives produce regional orders, while practice-oriented approaches reveal how these orders are enacted through concrete policy instruments such as military exercises, security partnerships, logistical agreements and infrastructure initiatives. Through this combined framework, the article analyzes how the Indo-Pacific fault line is reproduced not only through discourse but also through institutional and material practices.

Within this evolving geopolitical environment, India occupies a uniquely significant position. Rather than functioning merely as a reactive actor caught between the West, China and Russia; India demonstrates strategic autonomy through multidirectional engagement and multi-alignment. Its foreign policy reflects a balancing strategy that simultaneously engages with Western-led institutions, manages competition with China and preserves longstanding ties with Russia. Therefore, India is conceptualized in this study not as a peripheral participant but as a central geopolitical agent whose strategic choices actively shape the Indo-Pacific's evolving fault line.

Accordingly, this article asks: How is the Indo-Pacific geopolitical fault line continuously constructed through regional security practices and what role does India play in shaping this strategic transformation? By addressing this question, the study aims to contribute to the literature in three ways. First, it challenges geographically deterministic and binary power-centric interpretations of the Indo-Pacific. Second, it introduces the concept of geopolitical fault line as a more dynamic analytical framework. Third, it foregrounds India's centrality in constructing, balancing and institutionalizing the region's emerging multipolar order.

Methodologically, the study employs NVivo-supported qualitative content analysis to systematically examine primary official documents that reflect the institutional, strategic,

and spatial production of Indo-Pacific security practices between 2017 and 2025. The data set consists of four interrelated categories of sources. First, Indo-Pacific strategy documents and official policy papers published by the United States, India, Japan, Australia, as well as their strategic outlook documents, were analyzed to capture how regional actors formally define the Indo-Pacific and articulate their security priorities. Second, official joint statements and institutional communiqués—including Quad Leaders’ Summit declarations, Quad Foreign Ministers’ meeting statements and the founding and subsequent policy documents of AUKUS—were included to examine the institutionalization of minilateral security cooperation and its normative framing. Third, bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation texts, particularly India’s Ministry of External Affairs treaty and agreement database as well as US–India 2+2 Ministerial Joint Statements, were analyzed to trace the formalization of defense and logistical coordination mechanisms. Fourth, official statements and policy documents issued by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of China and Russia were included to capture counter-discursive and counter-practical articulations of the Indo-Pacific, particularly in relation to infrastructure development, Eurasian regional framing and critiques of minilateral security architectures. Together, these sources constitute a purposively selected corpus of official institutional texts that enable a comparative analysis of how different actors construct, contest and operationalize the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical space.

Through this design, minilateral practices are mapped as mechanisms that reproduce the Indo-Pacific’s strategic architecture. The article proceeds in three stages: first, it conceptualizes the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical fault line; second, it outlines the methodological framework; and third, it empirically analyzes how regional practices institutionalize this fault line, with particular emphasis on India’s central role.

1. Geopolitical Fault Lines and Critical Geopolitics

The concept of geopolitical fault lines is closely related to critical approaches that challenge the treatment of space in international politics as fixed, objective and given. Classical geopolitical thought largely defined space through natural boundaries, geographical determinism and the projection of states’ material power. It equated geopolitics with maps, borders and the distribution of military capabilities. In this approach, space is assumed to be a passive backdrop upon which politics unfolds. Huntington’s civilizational fault line thesis conceptualizes global conflict as emerging along relatively fixed cultural and civilizational boundaries, while Cohen’s shatterbelt theory defines certain regions as structurally unstable zones of great power penetration and internal fragmentation. Similarly, Spykman’s Rimland concept emphasizes the strategic importance of the Eurasian coastal belt as the primary arena of global power competition (Huntington, 1996: 167; Cohen, 2003: 257; Spykman, 1942: 222).

However, despite their enduring influence, these classical approaches largely conceptualize geopolitical space as pre-given, territorially bounded, and structurally determined. In these frameworks, space functions as a passive container in which geopolitical dynamics unfold, rather than as an outcome of political and strategic practices. This ontological assumption limits their ability to account for the dynamic production of space through evolving security practices and institutional arrangements.

Addressing this limitation, this study advances a relational and practice-based reconceptualization of geopolitical fault lines. Accordingly, fault lines are not treated as fixed geographical divisions but as continuously produced spatial formations generated

through overlapping institutional arrangements, military practices, and diplomatic interactions. In this sense, the Indo-Pacific is conceptualized not as a pre-existing shatterbelt or civilizational divide, but as a relational geopolitical fault line that is actively produced and reproduced through minilateral security architectures and counter-practices of major Powers. Critical geopolitics, by contrast, questions this assumption and emphasizes the discursive, institutional and practical dimensions of geopolitics. It argues that space is politically produced (O'Tuathail, 1996: 128).

The critical geopolitics literature emphasizes that space is not a neutral backdrop, but the result of power relations, normative projects and representational practices (Agnew, 2003: 290). According to O'Tuathail and Agnew, geopolitics is a form of power knowledge produced in the process of dividing the world into specific regions, assigning meanings to these regions and legitimizing particular spatial arrangements (O'Tuathail and Agnew, 1992: 198). In this context, geopolitics is not only a reflection of states' foreign policy choices, it is also the product of spatial imaginaries that make these choices possible and plausible. Geopolitical fault lines are conceptualized as areas where these imaginaries intersect and where competing spatial arrangements overlap. This perspective moves beyond the deterministic and one-dimensional predictions of classical geopolitics, enabling an understanding of space and power relations in international relations as a multi-layered process.

Within this framework, geopolitical fault lines are not limited to pre-existing geographical fractures. Instead, they refer to spatial zones of tension. These zones are produced according to the security perceptions, strategic priorities and normative claims of specific actors. They also intensify and transform over time. The fault line metaphor allows geopolitics to be considered beyond the mere possibility of military conflict, taking into account tensions that accumulate across political, economic and ideational dimensions (Dalby, 2007: 12). In this sense, the concept provides a powerful analytical tool for examining the multi-layered and multi-actor arenas of competition that have emerged in the post-Cold War period.

The practical turn in critical geopolitics plays a central role in understanding how geopolitical fault lines are produced and maintained. In the International Relations literature, this approach, known as the practices turn, suggests analyzing politics not only through discourses and norms, but also through recurring actions, institutionalized behavior patterns and material interventions (Adler and Pouliot, 2011: 14). Geopolitical fault lines do not emanate from formal strategy documents, but are actively constructed through spatial orders produced by concrete state practices such as joint military exercises, defense agreements, infrastructure projects, and diplomatic engagements. In this way, critical geopolitics provides both a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding complex and multi-layered regional processes such as the Indo-Pacific.

This approach places the idea of geopolitics as a 'practical doing' at its center. Geopolitical spaces are not defined solely on maps; they are actively produced through the construction of ports, maritime patrols, joint exercises, logistics agreements and institutionalized security mechanisms. These practices determine which actors are centered, which are marginalized, and which normative frameworks are considered valid, thereby reproducing geopolitical hierarchies (Bueger, 2015: 160). As a result, geopolitical fault lines function not only as points of tension, but also as areas where a particular geopolitical order is normalized and legitimized.

In this context, critical geopolitics treats geopolitical fault lines not as inevitable and natural fractures, but as the outcome of contingent and political processes. The location, intensity and maintenance of fault lines vary according to actors' strategic choices and institutional orientations. This perspective is particularly important for understanding why contemporary geopolitical spaces such as the Indo-Pacific become continuously reproduced zones of tension rather than stable regional orders.

A central argument of this study is that the Indo-Pacific differs fundamentally from earlier conceptualizations of geopolitical fault lines. Unlike Huntingtonian civilizational divides or Cohen's shatterbelt regions, the Indo-Pacific does not constitute a fixed zone of instability. Instead, it represents a convergent space of overlapping strategic projections generated by US-China rivalry within an increasingly multipolar international system.

In the contemporary global order, US-China competition is no longer structured through a single hegemonic system but is reproduced across multiple regional and functional domains, including security, technology, infrastructure, and economic governance (Acharya, 2014: 20; Goh, 2013: 830). This results in the proliferation of overlapping institutional projects and strategic alignments across different geographical spaces. The intersection of these competing projections generates localized zones of geopolitical friction, which collectively constitute emergent fault lines.

Within this configuration, the Indo-Pacific represents one of the most intense manifestations of this logic. It functions as a strategic convergence zone where US-led minilateral security architectures—particularly the Quad and AUKUS—intersect with China's infrastructure-driven spatial strategies and Russia's Eurasian re-scaling efforts (Medcalf, 2020a: 144; Mearsheimer, 2014: 390). As a result, the Indo-Pacific is not merely a theatre of great power competition, but a structurally produced geopolitical fault line in which competing spatial orders continuously overlap, interact, and reconfigure regional boundaries. The following section empirically investigates how this fault line is concretized and institutionalized in the Indo-Pacific context.

2. Methodology: NVivo-Assisted Qualitative Content Analysis and Practice-Based Coding

This study approaches the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical fault line and employs critical discourse analysis as its methodological approach. It combines NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis with a practice-based analytical framework. This choice stems from the study's main objective, which is not to analyze linguistic structures or discursive representations in texts, but to reveal how the geopolitical space is produced through institutional and spatial practices.

Discourse analysis approaches, particularly critical discourse analysis (CDA) and post-structuralist readings, allow for a detailed examination of the linguistic and representational dimensions of geopolitics. However, in this study, discourse is not treated as the ultimate object of analysis. Instead, it is approached as the context that makes military, diplomatic and institutional practices possible and legitimate. Therefore, discourse is positioned here not as a textual field for analysis, but as part of a broader geopolitical process in which practices are enacted and meaning is produced. This methodological choice aligns with the practical turn in critical geopolitics and the "practices turn" in international relations literature (Adler and Pouliot, 2011: 3).

Accordingly, the study combines interpretive qualitative content analysis with a practice-based coding approach. While qualitative content analysis allows for the systematic

identification of specific themes and patterns, the interpretive dimension enables these themes to be linked to actors' security perceptions, spatial imaginaries and institutional orientations (Schreier, 2012: 127). NVivo software is used in this process not as a quantitative counting tool, but as an analytical platform that makes thematic relationships, connections between codes and patterns within the dataset visible.

2.1. Data Set

The data set for this study consists of 63 official documents published between 2017 and 2025 that reflect the institutional and spatial production of minilateral security practices in the Indo-Pacific. The corpus includes Indo-Pacific strategy documents, official foreign policy papers, defence agreements, leaders' summit declarations, joint statements, ministerial speeches, and official military exercise announcements issued by the governments of the United States, India, China, Russia, Australia, Japan, as well as NATO, QUAD and AUKUS. These documents were selected because they constitute the primary institutional sources through which major actors articulate, legitimize, and operationalize their security practices in the Indo-Pacific. The selection of the dataset was guided by three criteria: (1) direct relevance to Indo-Pacific security governance, (2) representation of the principal regional and extra-regional actors examined in this study, and (3) publication within the 2017–2025 period, which corresponds to the institutional consolidation of the Indo-Pacific security architecture.

First, strategy documents were examined. These include Indo-Pacific strategy documents published by the United States, India, Japan and Australia, as well as NATO's 2030 vision and security documents that reference the region. These documents provide a crucial source for understanding how actors define the Indo-Pacific, their security priorities in the region, and their strategies for minilateral cooperation. In NVivo, these documents were coded in terms of minilateralism, military practices, spatial references and normative frameworks.

Second, joint statements and institutional texts were included in the data set. This category encompasses final statements from QUAD leaders' summits, AUKUS declarations and official texts related to defense and logistical cooperation agreements. These texts reveal the formal institutional framework of minilateral security practices and how regional actors position themselves. In the NVivo analysis, the texts were coded along the axes of strategic coordination, normative messaging and spatial scope, systematically indicating which actors occupy central positions and which areas are considered security priorities.

Third, statements regarding military exercises and security practices were analyzed. Official announcements related to multilateral or minilateral exercises such as Malabar and RIMPAC, as well as statements released by defense ministries and military institutions, were included in the data set. These sources allow for understanding the concrete implementation of minilateral security cooperation on the ground and its interaction with regional power dynamics. In the NVivo coding process, these practices were categorized in terms of actual exercises, logistical cooperation and the production of spatial references.

The data set is limited to publicly available official documents and excludes informal communications and classified materials. This delimitation ensures analytical consistency and comparability across cases and actors. To enhance methodological transparency, a systematic coding procedure was applied in NVivo, where codes were iteratively refined through multiple rounds of analysis and cross-checked for internal consistency. Analytical validity was strengthened through pattern recognition, thematic clustering and comparison

across actors, ensuring that recurring structures and divergences in the production of the Indo-Pacific fault line could be systematically identified.

Through this data set, the study is able to systematically examine how the Indo-Pacific is enacted not only at the discursive level, but also through institutional, military, and spatial practices. This approach allows the Indo-Pacific to be understood as a continuously produced geopolitical fault line rather than a fixed regional container. The coding scheme and NVivo analysis make visible which themes dominate across different layers of practice and how different actors contribute to the production and stabilization of this fault line.

2.2. Coding Logic and Analytical Framework

The coding process was conducted based on both the theoretical literature and empirical patterns emerging from the data set. The coding scheme was initially developed around overarching themes derived from the literature on critical geopolitics and practice theory. It was then further refined through open and axial coding conducted within the NVivo environment (Saldana, 2016: 309).

Table 1. Main and Sub Code Categories and Analytical Focus

Parent Code Category	Illustrative Sub-Codes	Analytical Focus
Minilateralism	Institutional Flexibility; Shared Threat Framework; Normative References; Strategic Coordination	Institutionalization and operation of limited-membership security arrangements (e.g., QUAD, AUKUS)
Military Practices	Combined Exercises; Military Mobility; Military Modernization; Deterrence; Technology Transfer	Operational military cooperation, force projection, interoperability, and defence capability development
Spatial References	Maritime Security; Infrastructure and Connectivity; Connectivity Corridors; Maritime Silk Road; Logistics Access; Strategic Depth	Spatial production of the Indo-Pacific through maritime routes, strategic chokepoints, infrastructure, and connectivity networks
Institutional Construction	Institutional Alignment; Counter-Institutionalization; Regional Institutions; Multilateral Partnerships	Construction, consolidation, and contestation of regional security architectures through formal institutions and agreements
Security Perceptions	Strategic Autonomy; Balanced Engagement; Regional Leadership; Economic Security; Multipolarity; Sovereignty; Anti-Westernism; Regional Stability; Non-Military Security	Threat perceptions, strategic narratives, normative positioning, and competing security imaginaries

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

The coding framework was operationalized through a hierarchical structure consisting of five parent code categories and multiple empirically generated sub-codes (Table 1). The parent codes—minilateralism, military practices, spatial references, institutional construction, and security perceptions—were established deductively from the theoretical framework developed in the preceding section. During the coding process, recurring empirical patterns identified across the official documents generated a second level of sub-codes through iterative rounds of open and axial coding in NVivo. These sub-codes captured the specific institutional, military, spatial, and normative practices employed by different actors and enabled systematic comparison across the United States, India, China, Russia, QUAD and AUKUS while maintaining a common analytical framework. The illustrative sub-codes presented in Table 1 represent the principal analytical

categories that emerged most consistently across the dataset and subsequently informed the actor-specific analyses presented in the following sections.

This study employs five main code categories—minilateralism, military practices, spatial references, institutional construction, and security perceptions—as an integrated conceptual and analytical framework. These categories do not function as independent descriptive labels, but rather as interconnected analytical lenses through which actor-specific sub-codes are systematically organized within the NVivo coding process. In this sense, Table 1 provides a structural basis for operationalizing how different geopolitical actors contribute to the production of the Indo-Pacific fault line.

In this study, the main code categories were developed through a deductive approach grounded in critical discourse analysis. In the first stage, five core analytical categories were identified on the basis of the literature review and theoretical framework to explain the Indo-Pacific security architecture: minilateralism, military practices, spatial references, institutional construction, and security perceptions. These categories were constructed by drawing on both existing debates in regional security studies and approaches in the critical geopolitics literature concerning the production of space. In the second stage, these main categories were imported into NVivo, and official strategy documents, joint statements, and security-related texts were systematically coded. During the coding process, recurring themes, conceptual patterns, and variations among actors were identified, and sub-codes were subsequently developed. Both code frequencies and thematic intensities were analyzed in order to empirically demonstrate the manifestation of each main category in the data.

Following the completion of the coding process, NVivo's analytical functions—including Coding Query, Matrix Coding Query and Code Frequency Analysis—were employed to compare thematic patterns across actors and document types. These tools enabled the systematic examination of relationships between the five main coding categories and actor-specific sub-codes, facilitating cross-case comparisons within the dataset. Rather than being interpreted as statistical indicators, code frequencies were used to identify the relative prominence of themes across the dataset and to support qualitative interpretation (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013: 140).

The NVivo-based analysis reveals how these categories are differently operationalized by the United States, China, Russia, and India. From the perspective of the United States, codes such as military mobility, institutional alignment, and combined operational capacity correspond to military practices and institutional construction, reflecting its role in strengthening an alliance-based security architecture. In this context, minilateral security arrangements such as QUAD and AUKUS emerge as key mechanisms that materialize the institutional and military dimensions of U.S. regional strategy (Tow, 2019: 238). In the case of China, infrastructure investments, connectivity corridors, and economic security narratives reshape spatial references and security perceptions through largely non-militarized yet structurally transformative mechanisms. Russia, on the other hand, is represented through Eurasian regional framing, energy diplomacy, and anti-Western discourse, reflecting counter-hegemonic spatial and normative practices both within and against minilateral structures.

India, within this coding framework, is particularly highlighted through codes such as strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, and balancing diplomacy. India's active participation in QUAD and its position outside AUKUS reflect its approach of maintaining

institutional engagement with the West while simultaneously preserving strategic autonomy. These codes illustrate a multi-layered geopolitical positioning that enables India to simultaneously manage competition with China, sustain institutional engagement with the West, and maintain its longstanding relations with Russia. In this regard, India is conceptualized not as an actor reducible to a single category, but as a central analytical axis that intersects with all main coding categories.

3. Minilateral Security Practices in the Indo-Pacific and the Institutional Construction of the Geopolitical Fault Line

The critical geopolitics framework allows for understanding geopolitical fault lines not as pre-given regional fractures, but as processes constructed and stabilized through institutional arrangements, recurring security practices and spatial interventions. In this context, the minilateral security arrangements emerging in the Indo-Pacific are not merely technical responses to specific threat perceptions. They also constitute institutional construction mechanisms that determine how the region is defined, who is positioned at the center, and which normative order is rendered legitimate.

This section examines how the geopolitical fault line in the Indo-Pacific is institutionalized through minilateral security practices, based on findings from NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis. The analysis reveals how space is enacted through security practices, including minilateral platforms such as QUAD and AUKUS, as well as joint military exercises and logistical agreements.

3.1. Minilateralism and Institutional Consolidation

NVivo coding of minilateral security practices indicates that security in the Indo-Pacific is structured not through a multilateral and inclusive regional architecture, but rather through flexible yet dense institutional networks established among a limited set of actors. In particular, the analysis highlights the prominence of codes such as Minilateralism, Institutional Flexibility, Shared Threat Framework and Normative References. QUAD and AUKUS documents, as well as joint statements, frequently emphasize these aspects, with repeated references to flexibility, coordinated maneuverability, rapid coordination, and the alignment of normative expectations.

Table 2. NVivo Code Distribution for Minilateral Security Practices

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Minilateralism	86	Organization of Security through Narrow Actor Groups
Institutional Flexibility	64	Avoidance of Binding Alliances
Shared Threat Framework	71	Defining Security through Shared Risk Perceptions
Normative References	58	“Free,” “Open,” and “Rules-Based Order”

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

Table 2 provides a quantitative overview of the distribution of NVivo codes related to minilateral security practices, offering insight into how different dimensions of security cooperation are emphasized within the Indo-Pacific framework. The coding frequencies reveal not only the relative prominence of each category but also the underlying logic through which minilateralism is operationalized in regional security practices.

The category of minilateralism (86) emerges as the most frequently coded dimension, indicating that security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is predominantly structured through limited-membership groupings rather than broad multilateral institutions. This finding reinforces the argument that the region's security architecture is increasingly shaped by flexible, issue-based coalitions such as QUAD and AUKUS, which prioritize strategic coordination over formal institutionalization.

The high frequency of shared threat framework (71) further demonstrates that these minilateral arrangements are underpinned by converging security perceptions rather than fixed alliance commitments. In particular, the emphasis on shared risk narratives suggests that regional actors construct security cooperation through discursive alignment around common challenges, rather than through legally binding defense obligations.

Similarly, the category of institutional flexibility (64) highlights the deliberate avoidance of rigid alliance structures. This supports the argument that Indo-Pacific security practices favor adaptability and strategic autonomy, allowing actors – especially India – to engage in multiple partnerships without being constrained by formal alliance systems.

The relatively lower but still significant presence of normative references (58) indicates that concepts such as “free,” “open,” and “rules-based order” function as legitimizing discursive frameworks rather than primary drivers of security cooperation. These normative elements provide a shared language that supports coordination, but they remain secondary to practical and strategic considerations.

Beyond demonstrating the growing importance of minilateral institutions, the coding patterns reveal a deeper transformation in the logic of regional ordering. The coexistence of institutional flexibility with a shared threat framework suggests that geopolitical space is no longer organized through fixed alliance structures but through adaptive networks capable of expanding or contracting according to changing strategic priorities. In this sense, the Indo-Pacific is not governed by a stable institutional architecture but by a dynamic constellation of overlapping security arrangements. This finding supports the article's central argument that the Indo-Pacific functions as a geopolitical fault line: a relational space continuously produced through the interaction of partially overlapping institutions rather than through clearly demarcated geopolitical blocs. The fault line therefore lies not simply between competing actors, but within the evolving institutional practices through which these actors continuously redefine regional order.

3.2. QUAD: Spatial Delineation through Security Practices

QUAD documents and leaders' summit statements are particularly concentrated under the codes of spatial references and security practices in the NVivo analysis. In these documents, the Indo-Pacific is presented not as a region defined by fixed boundaries, but as a security space that is continuously reconstructed through sea lanes, connectivity lines and areas of joint activity.

Table 3. Spatial and Practice Codes in QUAD Documents

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Maritime Security	52	Emphasizes the maritime dimension of the fault line; particularly the construction of the Indo-Pacific as a security space through Malabar exercises and joint naval patrols

Combined Exercise	47	Enactment of space through practice; reinforcement of normative and military functions via exercises
Infrastructure and Connectivity	39	Interconnection of security with economic and spatial dimensions; naval logistics agreements and port collaborations
Regional Stability	34	Normalization of the fault line; legitimation through security, diplomacy, and economic measures

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

Table 3 presents the distribution of NVivo codes related to the operationalization of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical fault line through concrete practices. The coding frequencies provide important insight into how different dimensions of security, space, and cooperation are enacted and reproduced in the region.

The category of maritime security (52) appears as the most prominent dimension, highlighting the centrality of the maritime domain in the construction of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic space. This finding suggests that the fault line is primarily articulated through naval presence, sea lane control, and joint maritime activities, with exercises such as Malabar playing a key role in spatializing security practices.

Closely following this, combined exercises (47) indicate that the enactment of geopolitical space is not limited to discourse but is actively performed through repeated military practices. These exercises function not only as operational coordination mechanisms but also as sites where normative alignment and military interoperability are simultaneously reinforced.

The category of infrastructure and connectivity (39) reflects the growing interconnection between security and economic spatiality. Naval logistics agreements, port collaborations, and connectivity corridors demonstrate that the Indo-Pacific fault line is also produced through material and infrastructural linkages that extend beyond purely military dimensions.

Finally, regional stability (34), while less frequent, plays a crucial legitimizing role. The presence of this category indicates that the construction of the fault line is discursively normalized through references to stability, cooperation, and economic development. These narratives help legitimize security practices and embed them within a broader framework of regional order.

More importantly, the coexistence of maritime security, infrastructure, and military exercises indicates that security competition is no longer confined to military deterrence. Instead, different forms of practice intersect to produce multiple layers of geopolitical ordering within the same spatial setting. Maritime routes simultaneously function as commercial corridors, logistical infrastructures, strategic deterrence zones, and normative spaces of governance. Consequently, the Indo-Pacific cannot be conceptualized as a homogeneous strategic region. Rather, it represents a multidimensional fault line where military, economic, diplomatic, and institutional practices overlap, reinforce, and occasionally contradict one another. This multidimensionality distinguishes the Indo-Pacific from earlier geopolitical concepts that primarily emphasized territorial control.

3.3. AUKUS and Military Concentration

In the NVivo analysis, AUKUS-related codes are predominantly concentrated under military capacity, technological superiority and long-term deterrence, indicating that the geopolitical fault line in the Indo-Pacific is constructed through a more rigid and deepened security logic, in contrast to the flexible and multi-layered practices observed in the QUAD. AUKUS documents present a discursive and practical framework that defines security not merely in terms of coordinated maneuverability or normative alignment, but through advanced military deployments, high-technology integration, and long-term strategic planning.

In this context, AUKUS signals the transformation of security in the Indo-Pacific from a zone of “manageable uncertainty” into a militarized spatial control area favoring specific actors. Emphases on nuclear submarine technologies, cyber- and AI-enabled defense systems, and long-range deterrence capabilities (Medcalf, 2020b: 105) reveal that the region is being conceptualized as a forward-looking, advanced defense line.

Table 4. Military Practice Codes in AUKUS Documents

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Military Modernization	44	Hardening of the fault line
Technology Transfer	31	Long-term military integration
Deterrence	37	Military representation of spatial control
Strategic Depth	29	Conceptualization of the region as a forward defense area

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

NVivo coding indicates that AUKUS is more than a temporary response to current threats; it represents a long-term institutional design consolidating the Indo-Pacific fault line. High frequencies of Military Modernization and Technology Transfer codes show that security is pursued through structural integration and capacity building rather than short-term coordination. The Deterrence code highlights not just military force but also control over strategic areas, including submarine routes and straits, enacting space through military practices. Strategic Depth frames the region as a forward area for potential future power competitions, emphasizing preparedness and forward deployment.

Compared to QUAD, which constructs the fault line via flexible, multi-layered, and normatively legitimated practices, AUKUS consolidates it through concentrated military capability, technology integration and long-term deterrence. This underscores that the Indo-Pacific security architecture is multi-layered, with overlapping practices of varying intensity and rigidity shaping the fault line.

3.4. Combined Exercises and Logistics Agreements: Daily Operationalization of the Fault Line

One of the most notable findings in the NVivo coding is the high frequency with which military exercises and logistics agreements recur as routine practices. These practices indicate that the geopolitical fault line is consolidated not during exceptional crises, but through everyday security operations.

Table 5. Exercise and Logistics Practice Codes

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Combined Exercise	68	Spatial coordination and collective maneuver
Logistics Access	55	Regional freedom of movement
Military Mobility	49	Operational continuity of the fault line
Institutional Alignment	42	Routine consolidation of security

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

The coded “combined exercise” practices encompass Malabar under the QUAD, RIMPAC, trilateral drills with Japan, the US and Australia, and other bilateral or trilateral maritime operations. Key spatial foci include the western Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, South China Sea and strategic straits (Malacca, Lombok, Sunda), emphasizing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) vital for energy and trade flows (Kaplan, 2010: 284). NVivo coding shows that exercises extend beyond capacity building to define which maritime areas, transit routes, and operational zones constitute Indo-Pacific security, highlighting the region's fluid, maritime-based fault line logic.

Logistics agreements, including LEMOA and reciprocal access arrangements with Japan, Australia and France, support this operational continuity. Military mobility codes reveal that security relies on freedom of movement, access rights and operational continuity rather than fixed deployments, while institutional coherence ensures these practices are standardized through joint command, shared operational language and procedural replication.

These minilateral practices indicate that the Indo-Pacific fault line is produced not only by the security choices of specific actors but also through adaptive practices that generate counter-practices and alternative spatial arrangements. This suggests that China's and Russia's reactions to these minilateral arrangements further reinforce and multiply the fault line, underlining the dynamic, practice-based and negotiated nature of regional security.

4. Construction of the Counter-Fault Line: China and Russia's Practical Responses to the Indo-Pacific Security Architecture

As demonstrated in the previous section, minilateral security practices in the Indo-Pacific indicate a production process aimed at stabilizing the geopolitical fault line at both institutional and practical levels. However, a critical geopolitical perspective assumes that such spatial arrangements are not established unidirectionally or without contestation; rather, they are continuously negotiated and transformed through counter-practices developed by alternative actors. In this context, China and Russia emerge not merely as actors who reject the Indo-Pacific security architecture at the discursive level, but as principal counter-fault line actors producing alternative spatial, institutional and practical arrangements in response to this architecture.

This section examines China's and Russia's responses to the institutionalized minilateral security practices in the Indo-Pacific through NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis. The analysis seeks not only to understand how these two actors reframe the Indo-

Pacific but also to reveal the specific practices through which they attempt to transform this space.

4.1. Not Counter-Framing, But Counter-Practice: An Analytical Distinction

NVivo coding shows that while Chinese and Russian documents contain counter-discourses toward the Indo-Pacific, their focus is on producing alternative practices. Cold War rhetoric and bloc politics are reinforced primarily through institutional and spatial actions. Analysis centers on four codes: Multipolarity highlights the region's redefinition beyond Western-centric blocs; Counter-Institutionalization captures the construction of alternative platforms like SCO and BRICS; Regional Inclusivity reflects efforts to avoid exclusionary dynamics; and Sovereignty Emphasis underscores principles of national control and non-intervention. Together, these codes show that China and Russia do not dismantle the fault line but actively shape its reciprocal, multidimensional, and practice-based production.

Table 6. Counter-Practice Codes in Chinese and Russian Documents (General)

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Multipolarity	79	Objection to reducing the fault line to a dual bloc
Counter-Institutionalization	66	Alternative security and cooperation platforms
Regional Inclusivity	58	Claim for a broad framework against minilateralism
Emphasis on Sovereignty	61	Construction of a normative counter-order

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

When assessing the role of China and Russia in the Indo-Pacific, the analysis of these four codes shows that these actors do not merely produce opposition at the rhetorical level; rather, they contribute to the mutual shaping of the fault line through practical and institutional moves. This section will specifically examine China and Russia's Indo-Pacific strategies separately and detail each country's unique contributions to minilateral security practices and the geopolitical fault line focus in the region. This approach aims to make strategic differences visible based on actors and practices, rather than reading the role of major powers as a homogeneous bloc.

4.2. China: Infrastructure, Connectivity and Spatial Rescaling

China's response to the Indo-Pacific security architecture is most intensely grouped under the codes 'infrastructure', 'connectivity' and 'economic security' in the NVivo analysis. This indicates that China is primarily pursuing counter-hegemonism not through military alliances, but through the economic and logistical reorganization of the region.

Table 7. Counter-Practical Codes Belonging to China

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Infrastructure Investments	83	Creating spatial influence areas
Connectivity Corridors	71	Alternative regional integration
Maritime Silk Road	54	Maritime reproduction of the fault line

Economic Security	47	Non-military deterrence
-------------------	----	-------------------------

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

Table 7 codes indicate that China's strategy emphasizes economic and spatial arrangements over military symmetry. Infrastructure investments (83) establish enduring influence through ports, energy, and logistics, reshaping regional access and dependencies. Connectivity corridors (71) under the Belt and Road Initiative offer alternative integration, particularly in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, indirectly constraining India's centrality. The Maritime Silk Road (54) positions sea routes as competitive arenas, enhancing China's maritime access while creating relative exclusion in India's traditional sphere. Economic Security (47) underscores reliance on economic dependence and trade integration rather than military deterrence, framing Indo-Pacific competition as a long-term structural struggle.

The coding results also demonstrate that geopolitical fault lines are not exclusively generated through military rivalry. China's emphasis on infrastructure investments, connectivity corridors, and economic security suggests that contemporary geopolitical competition increasingly unfolds through the production of material interdependence. Rather than contesting existing military alignments directly, China seeks to reshape the spatial logic of the Indo-Pacific by reorganizing patterns of connectivity, logistics, and economic dependence. Accordingly, the Indo-Pacific fault line should be understood as simultaneously military and infrastructural, where competing projects of regional integration coexist and continuously redefine the geography of strategic influence.

4.3. Russia: Strategic Depth and Counter-Institutional Flexibility

Russia's approach to the Indo-Pacific is concentrated in the NVivo coding categories of 'Eurasian emphasis', 'military cooperation', 'energy diplomacy' and 'anti-Western sentiment'. Russian documents and official statements criticize the Indo-Pacific concept as an exclusionary geopolitical framework produced by the US and its allies, supporting this criticism with Eurasia-centered spatial scaling, flexible military partnerships, and energy-based cooperation practices. In this context, Russia reinterprets the Indo-Pacific, rather than accepting it as an independent strategic theater, by integrating it into a broader Eurasian geopolitical order alongside an anti-Western normative discourse.

Table 8. Counter-Practical Codes Belonging to Russia

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Eurasian Focus	62	Spatial counter-scaling
Military Cooperation	49	Flexible security networks
Energy Diplomacy	44	The economic dimension of security
Anti-Westernism	57	Normative fault lines

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

NVivo analysis of Russian documents indicates that Moscow's approach to the Indo-Pacific emphasizes integration within a broader Eurasian framework rather than pursuing direct regional dominance. High-frequency codes such as Eurasia Emphasis (62) reveal a strategic scaling effort that positions the Indo-Pacific within Greater Eurasia, challenging

US-led maritime-centric frameworks. Military Cooperation (49) and Energy Diplomacy (44) show that Russia engages selectively through bilateral security networks, defense collaborations, and energy flows, signaling influence without formal institutional commitments. The prominence of Anti-Westernism (57) reflects a normative dimension, framing US-led alliances and exclusionary architectures as ideological benchmarks that justify Russia's interventions. Together, these patterns suggest that Russia is not a passive actor; rather, it actively constructs an alternative, multi-layered geopolitical order that reshapes the Indo-Pacific's spatial and normative contours, balancing influence through both practical and discursive means. This highlights Moscow's strategy of counter-scaling – managing the region indirectly via Eurasian linkages, normative framing, and selective partnerships – rather than attempting direct military or economic competition.

5. India at the Crossroads of Geopolitical Fault Lines: Strategic Multilateralism and Central Positioning

Previous sections showed that the Indo-Pacific fault line is shaped through minilateral security practices and continuously negotiated via counter-practices by China and Russia. This study frames the fault line to highlight actors, like India, who engage simultaneously with multiple powers and thereby transform the meaning and function of geopolitical space. India is analyzed not as a passive follower or fixed bloc member but as a central, strategically multi-aligned actor. Using NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis, the study examines India's security, diplomatic and regional cooperation practices to illustrate how it becomes a geopolitical subject through this fault line, rather than how it manages it.

5.1. India's Positioning Logic: Not Block Selection but Fault Line Navigation

NVivo analysis shows that India's documents emphasize "strategic autonomy," "multi-alignment," and "balanced engagement" rather than rigid bloc politics. These patterns indicate India avoids fixed alignments, maintaining flexible, negotiated relations with multiple, sometimes opposing actors. Strategic autonomy reflects maneuvering space amid US-China competition; multi-alignment shows parallel engagement with QUAD, Russia, ASEAN, and regional actors; balanced engagement signals managing rivalries without escalation. The "regional leadership" code highlights India's normative and practical centrality in the Indo-Pacific.

Table 9. Key Positioning Codes in Indian Documents

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Strategic Autonomy	91	Movement area between blocks
Multilateral Partnerships	84	Flexibility along the fault line
Balanced Engagement	77	Simultaneous engagement with opposing powers
Regional Leadership	69	Normative and practical centrality

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

NVivo analysis identifies four key codes in Indian documents that illuminate its strategic positioning along the Indo-Pacific fault line. Strategic Autonomy reflects India's capacity to act independently of unilateral or bloc-centered security projects, enabling simultaneous engagement with both China and Russia while defining its own foreign and

security priorities. The coding results therefore suggest that strategic autonomy should not be understood merely as a foreign policy principle but as a geopolitical practice through which India actively shapes the evolving structure of the Indo-Pacific. Rather than remaining neutral between competing powers, India selectively combines institutional engagement, diplomatic flexibility, and regional leadership to influence how the fault line itself develops. Strategic autonomy thus becomes a mechanism of geopolitical production rather than simply a policy of restraint.

Multi-Alignment captures India's ability to engage simultaneously with multiple and often competing geopolitical actors without reducing its foreign policy to bloc politics. Rather than reflecting diplomatic ambiguity, this coding pattern demonstrates India's capacity to participate concurrently in diverse institutional settings, including QUAD, BRICS, the SCO and bilateral partnerships with the United States, Russia, Japan and other regional actors. Such simultaneous engagement enables India to navigate overlapping geopolitical projects while preserving strategic flexibility. Within the analytical framework of this study, multi-alignment therefore represents not merely a foreign policy strategy but a geopolitical practice through which India actively manages and reshapes the Indo-Pacific fault line.

Balanced Engagement further illustrates India's effort to maintain productive relations with both Western partners and traditional strategic counterparts such as Russia, while simultaneously managing a competitive yet interdependent relationship with China. Rather than seeking equilibrium through neutrality, India selectively adjusts its diplomatic, security and economic engagements according to issue-specific priorities. This flexible balancing strategy allows India to mitigate strategic polarization and prevents the Indo-Pacific from consolidating into rigid geopolitical blocs. Consequently, the fault line is reproduced as a dynamic and negotiated strategic space rather than a fixed bipolar divide.

The Regional Leadership code highlights India's emergence as a normative and practical agenda-setter in the evolving Indo-Pacific order. Beyond participating in existing security arrangements, India increasingly contributes to defining regional priorities through initiatives related to maritime security, connectivity, disaster relief, resilient supply chains, and the vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. These practices indicate that India exercises agency not only by responding to external geopolitical pressures but also by shaping the institutional and normative architecture of the region.

Collectively, these codes suggest that India does not simply integrate into a singular security architecture but actively produces its positionality at the intersection of the fault line, influencing its boundaries and functioning rather than passively adapting to them (Jaishankar, 2020: 56).

Taken together, these coding patterns demonstrate that India cannot be understood merely as a regional actor adapting to an externally constructed security environment. Instead, the empirical findings suggest that India occupies a constitutive position in the production of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical fault line. Through the interconnected practices of strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, balanced engagement, and regional leadership, India continuously negotiates, redefines and reshapes the institutional, spatial and normative contours of the regional order. This finding reinforces the central argument of the article that the Indo-Pacific geopolitical fault line is produced not only through great-power competition but also through the strategic agency of regional powers capable of transforming the meaning and direction of competing geopolitical projects.

5.2. India within Minilateral Security Practices: Participation or Redefinition?

India's participation in minilateral security arrangements, particularly the QUAD, is often interpreted as a natural extension of Western-centered Indo-Pacific strategies. However, NVivo data indicate that Indian documents frame the QUAD not as a military alliance but as a flexible, issue-based platform for cooperation.

Table 10. Codes Related to the QUAD and Minilateral Structures

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Non-Military Security	73	Avoidance of alliance perception
Maritime Security	68	Practical management of the fault line
Supply Chains	61	Emphasis on economic security
Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance	56	Production of normative legitimacy

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

India's participation in the QUAD and other minilateral security arrangements is often interpreted as a continuation of Western-centered Indo-Pacific strategies (White, 2022). However, NVivo analysis indicates that Indian documents frame this engagement not as a military alliance but as a flexible, issue-based, and multidimensional cooperation platform. Key codes—Non-Military Security (73), Maritime Security (68), Supply Chains (61), and Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance (56)—show that India uses minilateral structures not to rigidly fix the fault line but to maintain a manageable, multi-actor space.

Non-Military Security, the most frequent code, emphasizes that India approaches QUAD engagement beyond defense or deterrence, encompassing cyber security, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building, allowing cooperation without directly excluding China (Mohan, 2017: 3). Maritime Security highlights India's operational use of strategic sea lanes (e.g., Malacca Strait, South China Sea, Andaman Sea) for logistics, traffic security and joint coordination rather than solely military control (U.S. Department of State, 2019: 8). Supply Chains reflects economic and logistical support for minilateral arrangements, securing access and energy routes while enabling operational flexibility. Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance demonstrates India's use of these platforms to generate normative legitimacy, strengthen its regional role and conduct humanitarian scenarios in exercises like Malabar.

Collectively, these codes suggest that India's engagement in QUAD and related structures reproduces the Indo-Pacific fault line as a dynamic, flexible, and manageable space, advancing strategic autonomy and multi-alignment through practical, non-militarized means (Pant and Mann, 2023: 10)

India's engagement in QUAD demonstrates that participation in minilateral institutions does not necessarily imply alliance dependency. Instead, India appropriates these institutional platforms to pursue objectives that extend beyond balancing China, including maritime governance, regional connectivity, and normative leadership. This suggests that the Indo-Pacific fault line is shaped not only by the intentions of great powers but also by the capacity of regional actors to reinterpret institutional arrangements according to their own strategic priorities.

5.3. India's Simultaneous Engagement with China and Russia: Positioning within the Counter-Fault Line

As shown earlier, China and Russia articulate their critiques of the Indo-Pacific security architecture primarily through alternative institutional, spatial and practical arrangements rather than discourse alone. India's engagement with these actors does not fix the fault line in a binary opposition but navigates its transitory spaces. NVivo analysis indicates limited references to "anti-alliance" or "balancing" rhetoric, while codes such as simultaneous engagement, strategic dialogue and sectoral cooperation occur frequently, forming the empirical basis of this positioning.

Coding results reveal that India's relations with China and Russia operate through multi-layered practices across different scales, rather than a singular axis. High frequencies of energy and defense cooperation codes suggest these interactions are structured as parallel engagement spaces rather than as a rival bloc. Defense-industrial and energy collaborations with Russia reduce dependency on Western supply chains, while economic and regional engagements with China reflect a simultaneous coexistence of competition and cooperation.

This multi-layered approach is reinforced by codes highlighting regional institutions and alternative spatial scales. India's active participation in SCO, BRICS and RIC complements rather than contradicts its involvement in QUAD, enabling simultaneous presence across diverse geopolitical scales and sustaining Eurasian and Global South dimensions beyond the Indo-Pacific. Normatively, frequent sovereignty and non-intervention codes indicate a limited yet functional shared ground with China and Russia, highlighting India's pursuit of normative pluralism to expand maneuvering space. This underscores that India's shift from strategic autonomy to multi-alignment encompasses both practical and normative dimensions.

Table 11. Codes on India's Simultaneous Engagement with China and Russia

Code Category	Coding Frequency	Analytical Focus
Simultaneous Engagement	74	Maintaining relations with both China/Russia and Western actors, enabling a transitional, intermediary position within the fault line
Sectoral Cooperation	65	Differentiating engagement across military, energy, and economic domains to manage the fault line in a multi-dimensional way
Regional Institutions	58	Active participation in platforms beyond QUAD (BRICS, SCO, RIC) to sustain multi-scalar presence and influence
Normative Flexibility	49	Leveraging principles of sovereignty and non-intervention to create maneuvering space independent of Western-centric security frameworks

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NVivo-assisted qualitative content analysis.

NVivo findings indicate that India does not position itself as the opposing side of the geopolitical fault line in the Indo-Pacific vis-à-vis China and Russia; rather, it adopts a strategy of producing positions within the fault line's intersection zones. India neither fully integrates into Western-centric minilateral security frameworks nor becomes part of China and Russia's counter-practices. Instead, it establishes an intermediary stance that enables strategic flexibility across the fault line. NVivo coding highlights "Simultaneous Engagement" and "Sectoral Cooperation", showing India's multi-dimensional interactions

across diplomatic, economic, and security domains. Its collaboration with Russia in defense, energy, and multilateral platforms such as BRICS, RIC and SCO demonstrates that India views Russia as a relevant stakeholder rather than an excluded actor (“Regional Institutions”).

India thus plays a balancing and permeable role, limiting the division of the Indo-Pacific into rigid blocs. The “Normative Flexibility” code reflects India’s use of sovereignty and non-intervention norms to create maneuvering space independent of Western security narratives. India’s centrality in the Indo-Pacific derives less from material capacity and more from its ability to interpret and manage the fault line multilayeredly, integrating security through diplomacy, economy, normative discourse and regional institutions. This positions India not as a stabilizer of the fault line, but as an actor continuously shaping and reproducing its dynamics, capable of influencing the parameters of great-power competition.

Taken together, the coding results demonstrate that India’s geopolitical significance derives less from its material capabilities than from its ability to engage simultaneously with competing geopolitical projects without becoming fully embedded in any of them. Rather than representing a stable foreign policy doctrine, the coexistence of strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, balanced engagement, and regional leadership suggests that strategic flexibility itself has evolved into a distinct geopolitical practice. India’s simultaneous participation in partially competing institutional frameworks—including QUAD, BRICS, the SCO, and its enduring strategic partnership with Russia—illustrates that actors positioned along geopolitical fault lines do not merely respond to great-power competition; they actively shape its configuration through selective engagement across institutional, diplomatic, and security domains. This positioning enables India to function as a constitutive actor in the production of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical fault line, continuously reshaping the region’s institutional, spatial, and normative contours rather than simply adapting to an externally imposed strategic environment. Consequently, the Indo-Pacific emerges not merely as a theatre of U.S.–China rivalry or competing geopolitical blocs, but as a dynamic geopolitical space where overlapping strategic projects are continuously negotiated, contested, and reconfigured. India’s experience demonstrates that geopolitical fault lines do not emerge where actors are rigidly separated, but where competing strategic projects intersect and where regional powers possess the agency to reinterpret, mediate, and transform those interactions.

Conclusion

This study challenges approaches that treat the Indo-Pacific as a fixed region with established security architectures. It examines how the region is produced as a geopolitical fault line. In this framework, the Indo-Pacific is not a pre-defined geography. It is conceptualized as a dynamic space that is continuously constructed through actors’ security perceptions, institutional orientations, and spatial practices. The analysis demonstrates that tensions in the region cannot be explained solely by military threats or binary power balances. Instead, they are produced through minilateral arrangements, recurring military practices, and selective processes of institutionalization. Mechanisms such as QUAD, AUKUS, logistics agreements, and joint military exercises do more than facilitate security cooperation. They actively shape the boundaries, centers, and exclusionary dynamics of regional order.

The findings further indicate that the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific does not rest on a unified or stable bloc structure. The United States advances an alliance-based and institutionalized security approach. This approach deepens military and strategic coordination through arrangements such as QUAD and AUKUS. China, by contrast, constructs an alternative order through infrastructure investments and connectivity projects. These practices emphasize the spatial and economic dimensions of regional power. Russia adopts a different position. It mobilizes Eurasian narratives, energy diplomacy, and an anti-Western orientation to produce counter-hegemonic spatial and normative practices. These differentiated strategies demonstrate that the Indo-Pacific is not a singular arena of great power rivalry. It is a multi-layered structure shaped by competing visions of regional order.

Within this multi-layered structure, India occupies a central position. India does not conform to a fully aligned or purely balancing role. Its foreign policy reflects a transition from strategic autonomy to multi-alignment. This transition enables India to connect diverse security practices across different institutional settings. It also prevents the rigid consolidation of the geopolitical fault line. India participates in Western-led minilateral frameworks such as QUAD. At the same time, it maintains relations with China and Russia. This dual engagement positions India as an active agent in shaping the fault line. India is not a passive actor reacting to external pressures. It contributes to the construction and transformation of the regional order.

These findings suggest that Indo-Pacific strategies should not be interpreted solely through the lens of great power competition. They must also be understood through the security perceptions, institutional choices, and spatial practices of regional actors. The region does not exhibit fixed boundaries or stable centers of power. It emerges as a continuously negotiated geopolitical space. Boundaries, centers, and exclusionary mechanisms are subject to ongoing contestation. In this context, India illustrates how the fault line operates through flexible and multi-layered positioning. It does not rely on rigid bloc alignments. This pattern indicates that the future of the Indo-Pacific will be shaped by interactions among multiple actors rather than unilateral power projection.

This study proposes understanding the Indo-Pacific not as a completed regional order but as a continuously reproduced geopolitical fault line. Security is not treated as a static outcome. It is produced through practices, institutional arrangements, and spatial configurations. This perspective offers an analytical framework for future research. It emphasizes how regional order is enacted rather than simply observed. It also highlights the role of middle powers and multi-actor interactions in shaping the evolving security landscape of the Indo-Pacific.

Bibliography

- Acharya, A. (2014). *The End of American World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Adler, E. and Pouliot, V. (2011). *International Practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Agnew, J. (2003). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (2nd ed.), London: Routledge.
- Bueger, C. (2015). "What is Maritime Security?", *Marine Policy*, (53), 159-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2014.12.005>
- Cohen, S. B. (2003). *Geopolitics of the World System*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Dalby, S. (2007). "The Geopolitical Condition: States, Power and The Politics of Representation", (Eds. Kevin, R. C., Murray, L. and Jennifer. R.), The SAGE Handbook of Political Geography (pp. 1-18), SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607880>
- Goh, E. (2013). "The Modes of China's Influence: Cases from Southeast Asia", Asian Survey, 53(5), 825–848. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2014.54.5.825>
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Pant, H. V. and Mann, A. S. (2023). Understanding America's Enduring Interest in the Indo-Pacific (ORF Issue Brief No. 615), Observer Research Foundation.
- Jaishankar, S. (2020). The India Way: Strategies For An Uncertain World, Haryana: HarperCollins India.
- Kaplan, R. D. (2010). Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power, New York: Random House.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2010). "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia". The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 3(4), 381–396. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poq016>
- Medcalf, R. (2020a). Contest For the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won't Map the Future, Melbourne: La Trobe University Press.
- Medcalf, R. (2020b). Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mohan, C. Raja. (2017). India and the Resurrection of the Quad (ISAS Brief No. 525), Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.
- O'Tuathail, G. (1996). Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- O'Tuathail, G., and Agnew, J. (1992). "Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy", Political Geography 11(2), 190-204. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0962-6298\(92\)90048-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0962-6298(92)90048-X)
- Saldana, J. (2016). The Coding Manual For Qualitative Researchers (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Schreier, M. (2012). Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice, London: SAGE.
- Spykman, N. J. (1942). America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Tow, W. (2019). "Minilateral Security's Relevance to in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Prospects", The Pacific Review, 32(2), 232-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2018.1465457>
- U.S. Department of State. (2019). "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing A Shared Vision", U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>, (Accessed Date: 25.01.2026).

White, H. (2022). “We’ve made an appalling mistake in committing ourselves to AUKUS”, Indo Pacific Briefing Series, Australian Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/indo-pacific-briefing-series-hugh-white-weve-made-an-appalling-mistake-in-committing-ourselves-to-aukus?utm>, (Accessed Date: 25.01.2026).

Katkı Oranları ve Çıkar Çatışması / Contribution Rates and Conflicts of Interest

Etik Beyan	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.	Ethical Statement	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Üretken Yapay Zeka Kullanımı	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde üretken yapay zeka araçları sadece dil düzenleme amacıyla sınırlı şekilde kullanılmıştır.	Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence	Generative artificial intelligence tools were used only in a limited capacity for language editing during the preparation of this study.
Yazar Katkıları	Bu çalışma tek yazarlı olarak hazırlanmıştır.	Author Contributions	This study was prepared with a single author.
Çıkar Çatışması	Bu çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.	Conflicts of Interest	The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this study.
Finansman	Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.	Grant Support	The author acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.
Telif Hakkı & Lisans	Yazarlar dergide yayınlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptirler ve çalışmaları CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı altında yayımlanmaktadır.	Copyright & License	Authors publishing with the journal retain the copyright to their work licensed under the CC BY-NC 4.0

Bu makale, Hint-Pasifik bölgesini sabit ve homojen bir coğrafi alan olarak değil; büyük güç rekabeti, minilateral güvenlik pratikleri ve aktörlerin mekânsal, kurumsal ve normatif müdahaleleri üzerinden üretilen bir jeopolitik fay hattı olarak analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, Hint-Pasifik'in yalnızca ABD-Çin rekabeti ekseninde değil, aynı zamanda farklı bölgesel aktörlerin güvenlik algıları ve pratikleriyle nasıl yeniden üretildiğini anlamaktır. Kuramsal çerçeve, eleştirel jeopolitik ve Uluslararası İlişkiler literatüründeki pratikler dönüşümü perspektifine dayanmaktadır; mekân, önceden verilmiş bir zemin değil, iktidar ilişkileri ve tekrar eden pratikler aracılığıyla şekillenen dinamik bir alan olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Metodolojik olarak çalışma, NVivo destekli nitel içerik analizi ve pratik temelli kodlama yaklaşımını kullanmaktadır. Veri seti, ABD, Hindistan, Japonya ve Avustralya tarafından yayımlanan Hint-Pasifik strateji belgeleri, QUAD ve AUKUS liderler zirvesi bildirileri, savunma ve lojistik anlaşmalar ile çok taraflı/minilateral askeri tatbikatlara ilişkin resmî açıklamalardan oluşmaktadır. Kodlama süreci, minilateralizm, askerî pratikler, mekânsal referanslar, kurumsal üretim ve güvenlik algıları ana kategorileri altında yapılandırılmıştır.

Analiz, minilateral güvenlik düzeneklerinin (QUAD, AUKUS) Hint-Pasifik'te fay hattını nasıl kurumsal ve mekânsal olarak ürettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. QUAD, bölgeyi esnek ve çok katmanlı güvenlik pratikleriyle mekânsallaştırırken; AUKUS, askerî modernizasyon ve teknoloji entegrasyonu üzerinden daha sert ve uzun vadeli bir güvenlik mantığı oluşturmakta, fay hattının derinleşmesine katkı sağlamaktadır. Ortak tatbikatlar ve lojistik anlaşmalar, bu hattın günlük icrasını mümkün kılmakta ve deniz yolları, boğazlar ve stratejik geçiş güzergâhları üzerinden operasyonel sürekliliği güvence altına almaktadır.

Batının Hint-Pasifik anlayışı, özellikle QUAD ve AUKUS bağlamında, büyük ölçüde "Özgür ve Açık Hint-Pasifik" (FOIP) çerçevesiyle şekillenmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, bölgeyi Batı yanlısı devletlerin stratejik istikrar sağladığı, Çin'in etkisine karşı denge kurduğu ve hukuka dayalı düzen ile serbest ekonomik ve güvenlik alanlarının korunduğu bir alan olarak tanımlamaktadır. QUAD, FOIP'i esas olarak ortak deniz güvenliği tatbikatları, lojistik işbirliği ve altyapı projeleri aracılığıyla esnek ve çok katmanlı normatif mekanizmalarla hayata geçirirken; AUKUS daha askerî ve teknoloji odaklı bir yaklaşım benimseyerek uzun vadeli kapasite geliştirme, kuvvet projeksiyonu ve bütünsel caydırıcılık ile fay hattını pekiştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Her iki çerçeve de Batı öncülüğünde Hint-Pasifik'i bir jeopolitik fay hattı olarak yeniden üretir; QUAD esneklik ve normatif meşruiyeti, AUKUS ise askerî yoğunluk ve yapısal entegrasyonu vurgulamaktadır. Ancak her ikisi de bölgesel düzeni Batı öncelikleri, stratejik hizalanmalar ve değerler üzerinden şekillendirmeyi hedeflemektedir.

Çin ve Rusya'nın Hint-Pasifik'e yaklaşımı da NVivo kodlarıyla incelenmiştir. Çin, altyapı yatırımları, Bağlantısallık koridorları ve Deniz İpek Yolu projeleri aracılığıyla fay hattını ekonomik ve mekânsal boyutlarla yeniden ölçeklendirirken; Rusya, Avrasya vurgusu, askeri işbirlikleri ve enerji diplomasisi üzerinden Batı merkezli güvenlik düzenlemelerine karşı normatif ve mekânsal karşı-pratikler geliştirmektedir. Bu çok katmanlı karşı-pratikler, Hint-Pasifik fay hattının yalnızca Batı merkezli bir güvenlik mimarisi olmadığını, farklı aktörlerin eşzamanlı ve çok ölçekli müdahaleleriyle sürekli yeniden üretildiğini göstermektedir.

Hindistan ise bu fay hattında salıncak devlet olarak öne çıkmaktadır. NVivo analizinde, "stratejik özerklik", "çok yönlü ortaklık", "dengeli angajman" ve "bölgesel liderlik" kodlarıyla ortaya çıkan bulgular, Hindistan'ın minilateral güvenlik düzeneklerine katılımını, Çin ve Rusya ile ilişkilerini eş zamanlı yürüttüğünü ve fay hattının sertleşmesini sınırlayan bir strateji izlediğini göstermektedir. Hindistan, QUAD çerçevesinde askeri olmayan güvenlik ve ekonomik işbirlikleri yürütürken, Rusya ile savunma ve enerji projelerini sürdürmekte ve Çin ile ekonomik ve altyapısal işbirliklerini devam ettirmektedir. Bu çok katmanlı yaklaşım, Hindistan'ın fay hattının geçişken kesişim alanlarında stratejik bir özneleşme sergilediğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuç olarak çalışma, Hint-Pasifik'in tek taraflı güç projeksiyonlarıyla değil; minilateral güvenlik pratikleri, Çin ve Rusya'nın karşı-pratikleri ve Hindistan'ın çok yönlü konumlanması üzerinden şekillenen dinamik bir jeopolitik alan olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Hindistan, bu süreçte ara konumda hareket ederek hem Batı merkezli düzenin hem de Çin ve Rusya'nın geliştirdiği karşı-pratiklerin etkilerini dengelemekte ve bölgedeki güvenlik mimarisinin çok katmanlı doğasının merkezi bir aktörü olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Çalışma, Hint-Pasifik'in gelecekteki güvenlik düzeninin, tek taraflı güçler yerine farklı aktörlerin etkileşimi ve pratikleri üzerinden belirleneceğini vurgulamaktadır.