

# India's Regional Strategy for Economic Integration: Policy Lessons from the EU and Asean

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## INTRODUCTION

India's foreign policy has shifted from post-independence non-alignment to a more pragmatic, economically driven, and regionally focused approach, especially after the 1991 economic reforms (Mukherjee & Malone, 2011). Despite its growing global influence, South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions, with India facing challenges such as weak institutions, low intra-regional trade, and inadequate connectivity. While initiatives like SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN, and the Act East Policy reflect India's efforts to promote regional cooperation, progress has been limited compared to successful models like the EU and ASEAN. This paper examines how these regions achieved deeper economic integration and identifies lessons that can help India strengthen its institutional capacity, improve connectivity, harmonize regulations, build resilient regional value chains, and adopt more effective cooperation mechanisms. The study is relevant to India's current strategic priorities ranging from supply-chain resilience to Indo-Pacific engagement and aims to provide policy recommendations for a more cohesive and forward-looking regional integration strategy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship on regional integration highlights a shift from traditional, institution-driven models toward more flexible and multi-layered forms of cooperation. Studies on the European Union emphasize the role of strong institutions, legal frameworks, and policy harmonization in sustaining deep economic integration (Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2021). In contrast, research on ASEAN, particularly by Amitav Acharya, underscores the importance of informality, consensus-building, and gradualism in managing political diversity while advancing economic cooperation. This comparative literature suggests that there is no single pathway to regional integration; instead, outcomes depend on regional contexts and political conditions. More recent contributions focus on the Indo-Pacific as an emerging space of economic and strategic interaction. Scholars such as Harsh V. Pant and Prabir De argue that India's regional strategy is increasingly shaped by supply chain resilience, connectivity initiatives, and competition with China. These studies highlight the growing importance of frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and BIMSTEC in redefining regional cooperation beyond traditional trade agreements.

In addition, literature on global value chains and new regionalism emphasizes the role of non-state actors, digital infrastructure, and production networks in shaping contemporary integration processes. Scholars such as Gereffi and Baldwin point out that integration today is less about tariff reduction and more about participation in value chains, logistics networks, and digital ecosystems. This evolving understanding is particularly relevant for India, which seeks to position itself as a hub in regional and global production systems.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design, combining conceptual analysis, comparative institutional analysis, and policy evaluation to examine India's regional strategy for economic integration. The research is primarily based on secondary data, including academic literature, policy reports, institutional publications, and government documents related to regional cooperation, trade agreements, and Indo-Pacific strategies. The paper employs a comparative approach by analyzing two prominent models of regional

integration the European Union and ASEAN to identify key institutional, economic, and strategic features that have contributed to their relative success. This comparison is not intended as a direct replication model for India but as a framework to extract adaptable policy lessons relevant to India's regional context.

In addition, the study uses conceptual analysis to interpret major theoretical frameworks such as Regionalism, New Regionalism, Liberal Institutionalism, and Economic Integration Theory, linking them to India's evolving foreign policy strategy. A policy-oriented analytical approach is further applied to evaluate India's existing regional initiatives including BIMSTEC, BBIN, IORA, and Indo-Pacific frameworks by assessing their effectiveness in terms of connectivity, trade facilitation, institutional capacity, and regional cooperation. The analytical framework is therefore interdisciplinary, integrating insights from international relations, political economy, and development studies. Rather than relying on quantitative measurement, the study focuses on qualitative interpretation, comparative insights, and policy relevance, with the objective of proposing a hybrid model of regionalism that combines institutional strength with strategic flexibility.

### **Theoretical Perspective:**

The theoretical framework for this paper combines Regionalism, New Regionalism Theory, Liberal Institutionalism, and Economic Integration Theory to explain India's evolving approach to regional economic cooperation. Regionalism Theory (1950s–1980s) views regional integration as a state-led, politically driven project aimed at building stability after conflict or decolonization (Hettne, 1999). It emphasizes formal institutions, political solidarity, and collective security elements that shaped India's early engagement with SAARC, where the focus remained on political cooperation but economic outcomes were limited. In contrast, New Regionalism Theory (post-1990s), emerging alongside globalization, highlights open, flexible, and multi-layered forms of cooperation driven by states, markets, private actors, and civil society (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000). This framework aligns closely with India's contemporary strategy, which prioritizes connectivity, trade facilitation, digital public infrastructure, supply-chain linkages, and multi-platform cooperation through BIMSTEC, the Act East Policy, and Indo-Pacific frameworks such as IPEF. Liberal Institutionalism further strengthens this understanding by arguing that institutions help reduce transaction costs, build trust, and create stable expectations among states. For India, this underscores the importance of developing stronger regional rules, mechanisms, and dispute-resolution platforms to ensure predictable, long-term economic cooperation. Economic Integration Theory particularly Balassa's model provides another critical layer by outlining the sequential stages of integration from Preferential Trade Agreements to Free Trade Areas, Customs Unions, Common Markets, and Economic Unions (Balassa, 1961). This model helps assess India's current position in South Asia, where integration remains shallow, and highlights the lessons that can be drawn from more advanced regional models such as the EU's deep institutional integration and ASEAN's flexible, market-led cooperation. Collectively, these theories offer a comprehensive analytical foundation for understanding India's regional strategy and its policy direction.

Integrating these theories with foreign policy analysis reveals that economic regionalism has become a vital pillar of India's contemporary diplomatic engagement. Regional economic cooperation is now viewed not merely as a developmental tool but as a strategic instrument for enhancing India's geopolitical influence, strengthening neighbourhood relations, and ensuring long-term economic resilience.

The relevance of these theoretical approaches becomes clearer when applied to India's evolving regional strategy. Elements of classical Regionalism are reflected in India's early engagement with SAARC, where political considerations and state-led cooperation dominated, but economic integration remained limited due to weak institutionalization. In contrast, New Regionalism Theory provides a more accurate lens for understanding India's post-1990s approach, which emphasizes connectivity, market-driven integration, and multi-actor participation through initiatives such as BIMSTEC and the Act East Policy. Similarly, Liberal Institutionalism highlights the importance of rule-based frameworks and institutional mechanisms areas where India continues to face challenges, particularly in ensuring compliance, dispute resolution, and policy coordination within regional platforms. Finally, Economic Integration Theory, particularly Balassa's stages, helps situate India at a relatively shallow level of integration, largely confined to preferential and limited free trade arrangements, thereby underscoring the gap between India and more advanced models such as the

European Union. Together, these frameworks not only explain the trajectory of India's regional engagement but also reveal the structural constraints and policy choices shaping its current strategy.

### **India's Regional Strategy: Shifts And Emerging Trends:**

India's regional strategy has undergone a marked transformation over the past three decades, shifting from a primarily political-security orientation toward a multifaceted, economics-driven approach. This evolution responds to globalization, the reorganisation of global supply chains, the rise of China, and changing geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific (Palit, 2019). India's transition toward pragmatic regional engagement represents a fundamental reorientation of its foreign policy priorities. Historically, India's interactions with neighbouring states in South Asia were grounded in political diplomacy shaped by security concerns, geopolitical rivalries, and the legacy of non-alignment. This approach often produced cautious, slow-moving regional cooperation and limited economic integration. However, the post-1990s era of globalization, liberalisation, and the growing salience of geo-economics pushed India to rethink its regional strategy (Mukherjee, 2014). As global supply chains expanded and regional trade blocs became more influential, India recognised that political influence cannot be sustained without strong economic linkages.

This gradual but decisive shift reflects India's belief that regional stability and strategic leverage are best achieved not through political declarations alone, but through tangible economic interdependence (Desai, 2020). Consequently, India now places greater emphasis on trade facilitation, cross-border connectivity, energy and digital networks, and regulatory harmonisation (Chakraborty & Chaisse, 2020). Projects such as the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement, coastal shipping initiatives, power-grid connections, UPI digital-linkage proposals, and maritime corridor development illustrate this new orientation. India also seeks to strengthen supply-chain resilience with neighbouring countries to reduce dependence on external powers and to integrate itself more deeply into Indo-Pacific economic structures.

Additionally, economic diplomacy enables India to build goodwill, reduce historical mistrust, and create mutually beneficial partnerships with smaller neighbours who may otherwise rely heavily on China's economic influence. By presenting itself as a provider of public goods such as infrastructure finance, capacity-building, and digital public infrastructure India enhances its soft power and strengthens regional leadership (Mukherjee, 2020). Thus, economic collaboration has evolved into a central driver of India's foreign policy, allowing it to combine strategic interests with developmental outcomes. This broader shift underscores India's emerging vision of a more interconnected, economically vibrant, and politically stable regional order aligned with its long-term national and geopolitical objectives.

### **Key Regional Initiatives:**

India's regional economic strategy is increasingly defined by a set of key initiatives designed to enhance connectivity, deepen market integration, and strengthen regional stability. BIMSTEC has become a central pillar of this approach, especially following the stagnation of SAARC, offering India a platform to promote trade facilitation, energy cooperation, and technology-driven development while acting as a strategic bridge between South and Southeast Asia (Chakraborty & Chaisse, 2020). Complementing this, the Act East Policy expands India's economic and strategic engagement with ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific by emphasising infrastructure corridors, digital partnerships, and integration with regional and global value chains. Alongside these broader regional platforms, the Neighbourhood First Policy focuses on India's immediate periphery through cross-border electricity grids, transport linkages, and economic assistance to Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, thereby reinforcing interdependence and regional goodwill.

Other subregional and maritime initiatives further reinforce India's evolving regional strategy. The BBIN framework aims to facilitate seamless cross-border mobility through the Motor Vehicles Agreement, reducing logistics costs and boosting trade across the eastern subcontinent (Chakraborty & Chaisse, 2020). India's active engagement in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) supports its Indo-Pacific vision by advancing maritime cooperation, blue economy initiatives, and connectivity with African and Southeast Asian littoral states. Meanwhile, participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) reflects India's interest in

new-age economic domains such as digital trade, clean energy transitions, resilient supply chains, and fair economic standards, even outside traditional FTA structures. At the bilateral level, India's recent FTAs with the UAE, Australia, and the EFTA states and its ongoing negotiations with the EU and the UK, demonstrate a shift toward strategic, high-value trade agreements that enhance market access, strengthen supply-chain linkages, and elevate India's global economic positioning. Together, these initiatives illustrate India's transition from politically driven cooperation to a more dynamic, diversified, and economically oriented regional strategy.

### **Flagship Policies:**

India's regional economic strategy is driven by flagship policies that strengthen connectivity, trade, and integration into regional value chains. The Act East Policy expands engagement with Southeast and East Asia through enhanced trade, infrastructure, and maritime cooperation, while the Neighbourhood First Policy prioritizes economic and developmental partnerships with neighbouring states. Make in India supports integration into global production networks by boosting manufacturing and attracting FDI (Palit, 2019). Maritime initiatives under SAGAR promote blue economy cooperation and port connectivity, and Digital India advances regional digital integration through fintech and e-governance systems. Domestic frameworks such as PM Gati Shakti and the National Logistics Policy improve multimodal infrastructure, facilitating smoother cross-border trade. Together with India's Indo-Pacific Vision, these policies position India as a proactive and influential actor in regional economic architecture.

### **Focus Areas:**

India's regional economic strategy is anchored in a set of interconnected focus areas that aim to enhance connectivity, deepen interdependence, and strengthen India's position within regional value chains (Mukherjee, 2020). A major priority is the development of physical, digital, and energy connectivity through initiatives such as the India–Myanmar–Thailand Highway, the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement, and expanded cross-border power trade, all of which support seamless regional integration. Alongside infrastructure, India emphasizes trade facilitation by streamlining customs procedures, harmonising standards, and promoting economic corridors to reduce trade costs and increase cross-border investments. The integration of India's manufacturing sectors particularly electronics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, automobiles, and renewable energy into regional value chains further reinforces India's economic engagement (Palit, 2019). Digital cooperation has also emerged as a significant pillar, with India advancing fintech linkages, digital public infrastructure, and cybersecurity frameworks to position itself as a regional leader in digital transformation. Additionally, India prioritizes maritime cooperation and the blue economy through port-led development, logistics networks, fisheries partnerships, and sustainable ocean initiatives, reflecting the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. Energy security and green transitions constitute another key area, as India expands electricity trade, hydro-power collaboration, LNG supply chains, and renewable energy partnerships with neighbouring states and ASEAN. Finally, India adopts an integrated security economy approach by addressing non-traditional security challenges such as climate risks, pandemics, cyber threats, and supply-chain disruptions recognizing that sustainable regional development depends on both economic cooperation and broader stability.

### **The European Union Model: Institutional Depth And Policy Coordination:**

The EU stands as the world's most advanced example of regional integration, demonstrating how deep institutionalization, rule-based cooperation, and policy harmonization can sustain long-term economic and political stability. For India, analyzing the EU model provides valuable insights into the importance of structured governance, shared frameworks, and coordinated economic policies within a region. Beyond its common market and supranational institutions, the EU's success lies in its emphasis on predictability, regulatory alignment, and collective decision-making, which significantly reduce transaction costs and strengthen investor confidence. The existence of dedicated institutions such as the European Commission, European Court of Justice, and various policy councils ensures that integration is not dependent on political cycles or individual governments but is instead guided by long-term, legally binding commitments (Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2021).

For India, these characteristics illustrate why South Asia has struggled to achieve similar outcomes through SAARC: the absence of strong institutions, inadequate dispute-resolution frameworks, and limited policy coordination hamper meaningful cooperation. The EU therefore highlights the need for institutional depth, not just political declarations. India can draw lessons from the EU to design more robust regional structures within platforms like BIMSTEC, IORA, and BBIN. This could include developing stronger secretariats, establishing standardized regulatory mechanisms, and creating councils focused on trade, connectivity, energy, and digital governance. Even if South Asia cannot replicate the EU model entirely—given differences in political diversity and economic asymmetry—it can adopt selective elements such as shared standards, coordinated infrastructure planning, and rule-based cooperation. Ultimately, the EU model underscores that sustainable regional integration requires more than economic incentives; it demands institutional commitment, policy alignment, and long-term vision. These lessons are highly relevant for India as it seeks to strengthen regional economic ties and build platforms that can withstand political disruptions.

**The Asean Model: Flexibility And Consensus-Based Cooperation:**

The ASEAN model offers an alternative pathway to regional integration one that prioritizes political sensitivity, mutual respect, and gradualism over rigid institutional frameworks. Unlike the EU’s deeply institutionalized and rules-driven system, ASEAN’s approach is rooted in the principles of non-interference, informality, consensus, and incremental decision-making (Acharya, 2001). This makes ASEAN particularly effective in a region characterized by political diversity, varying levels of economic development, and differing governance structures. ASEAN demonstrates that meaningful economic cooperation is possible even without supranational authority. Through mechanisms such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and a series of connectivity masterplans, ASEAN has created an integrated economic space while preserving national sovereignty .The “ASEAN Way” thus proves that flexibility and trust-building can serve as powerful tools for sustaining long-term regional cooperation .

For India, the ASEAN model provides a practical template for navigating the complexities of South Asia and the extended Indo-Pacific. Many of India’s neighbouring states have divergent political systems, security priorities, and economic capacities making EU-style integration difficult to implement. In such a context, ASEAN’s emphasis on consensus-building, step-by-step integration, and informal diplomacy is particularly relevant. India’s Act East Policy already reflects this influence through its pragmatic, partnership-based engagement with Southeast Asia. Rather than pursuing rigid commitments, India focuses on sectoral cooperation, connectivity, geo-economic linkages, and gradual trade liberalization mirroring ASEAN’s strategy of flexible, issue-based cooperation. Furthermore, ASEAN’s experience suggests that India’s regional platforms such as BIMSTEC, IORA, and BBIN could benefit from adopting similar principles. Incremental agreements on transport, energy, digital connectivity, disaster management, and standards harmonization may yield faster results than pushing for comprehensive regional compacts. By encouraging trust-building, dialogue mechanisms, and practical cooperation, India can cultivate a stable foundation that allows deeper economic integration to emerge over time. In essence, the ASEAN model highlights that regional integration does not require uniformity or supranational governance; it requires shared purpose, adaptability, and sustained engagement all of which align closely with India’s evolving regional strategy.

Table:1 Comparative Analysis of EU and ASEAN Models of Regional Integration: implication for India

Dimension	European Union (EU)	ASEAN	Implications for India
Institutional Structure	Strong supranational institutions (Commission, ECJ)	Weak institutionalization, intergovernmental	Strengthen BIMSTEC/IOA institutions gradually
Decision-Making	Rule-based, legally binding	Consensus-based, informal	Combine rules with flexibility
Integration Level	Deep (Single Market,	Moderate (FTA,	Move beyond shallow FTAs

	Monetary Union)	sectoral cooperation)	toward sectoral integration
Sovereignty	Partial pooling of sovereignty	Strong respect for sovereignty	Maintain sovereignty sensitivity in South Asia
Approach	Top-down, institutional	Bottom-up, gradual	Use incremental integration strategies
Dispute Resolution	Formal legal mechanisms	Informal negotiation	Develop regional dispute-resolution mechanisms
Economic Focus	Market integration + policy harmonization	Trade facilitation + connectivity	Focus on connectivity and regulatory alignment
Flexibility	Low	High	Adopt “variable geometry” (multi-speed integration)

**Policy Lessons For India:**

India can draw important lessons from the EU and ASEAN to refine its regional economic strategy. The EU highlights the value of strong institutions, rule-based cooperation, and regulatory harmonization, while ASEAN demonstrates the effectiveness of flexibility, consensus-building, and gradual integration among diverse states. Combining these insights, India can pursue a hybrid approach. Strengthening regional institutions such as BIMSTEC and IORA secretariats, policy councils, and technical working groups is essential for reducing reliance on political goodwill and ensuring continuity. At the same time, India must remain flexible by promoting sector-specific, issue-based cooperation in areas like transport, energy, digital connectivity, and health security, rather than pushing for comprehensive agreements that may be politically difficult. Enhancing physical and digital connectivity through multimodal corridors, power grids, and digital public infrastructure should remain central to India’s strategy, forming the foundation of integrated regional markets. India must also involve the private sector more actively, encouraging investment in regional value chains, logistics, and technology partnerships to strengthen its role as a production hub. Sustained political dialogue, trust-building measures, and people-to-people exchanges are equally important for maintaining stability and enabling long-term cooperation. Finally, India needs pragmatic diplomacy that balances national interests with shared regional goals, manages geopolitical competition, and responds to China’s influence through inclusive and flexible cooperation frameworks. Together, these steps support a balanced integration model that combines EU-style institutional strength with ASEAN-style adaptability.

Table:2 Policy Translation for India

Lesson Source	Key Lesson	Application to India
EU	Institutional depth	Strengthen BIMSTEC secretariat
EU	Regulatory harmonization	Standardize trade & digital rules
ASEAN	Flexibility	Use sectoral agreements
ASEAN	Consensus-building	Avoid coercive leadership
Both	Connectivity	Invest in corridors & logistics

**Towards A Hybrid Model Of Regionalism:**

A hybrid model of regionalism offers India a practical strategy to deepen regional cooperation by combining the EU’s institutional strength with ASEAN’s flexibility. From the EU, India can adopt stronger institutions,

regulatory harmonization, and rule-based mechanisms to enhance predictability and coherence within BIMSTEC, IORA, and BBIN. From ASEAN, India gains a model of gradual, consensus-based, and sector-specific cooperation suited to the political diversity and developmental asymmetries of South Asia and the Bay of Bengal region. This blend supports “variable geometry regionalism,” allowing countries to integrate at different speeds and enabling minilateral initiatives among willing partners.

Implementing this model requires institutional reforms in regional bodies, improved trade facilitation, customs harmonization, and regulatory convergence, especially in digital trade and logistics. India must also deepen cooperation in sectors like renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, maritime security, and education while promoting innovation through research hubs, startup networks, and digital corridors. Strengthening crisis-response systems, regional value chains, infrastructure financing, and people-to-people linkages is equally important (Mukherjee & Malone, 2011).

The expected outcomes include a more integrated and investment-friendly regional environment, stronger connectivity, expanded trade, and India’s emergence as a hub in resilient Indo-Pacific supply chains. This hybrid approach also enhances India’s strategic autonomy and enables regional platforms to articulate common positions on global issues, reinforcing India’s leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Challenges:**

Despite India’s growing commitment to regionalism, several structural and political challenges continue to hinder effective economic integration. A major obstacle is the persistent trust deficit among South Asian neighbours, driven by historical conflicts, border disputes, and political sensitivities that limit cooperation even in non-security areas. Economic asymmetry between India and smaller states often creates fears of dominance, making it difficult to establish consensus-based frameworks similar to ASEAN. Furthermore, weak institutional capacities in regional organizations such as SAARC and BIMSTEC restrict their ability to implement agreements, monitor progress, or coordinate large-scale initiatives. Non-tariff barriers, poor logistics performance, and fragmented regulatory systems also impede trade flows and undermine the creation of regional value chains. Infrastructure gaps especially in transport, energy, and digital networks further slowdown connectivity projects despite policy commitments. Domestic political priorities within member countries frequently overshadow regional goals, resulting in slow decision-making and inconsistent implementation of agreements. Additionally, external geopolitical competition, particularly involving China’s growing influence in South Asia, complicates India’s regional strategies and affects the willingness of smaller states to align with Indian-led initiatives. These challenges collectively illustrate why India requires a hybrid, pragmatic model of regionalism that balances ambition with flexibility.

### **Prospects:**

Despite the existing challenges, the prospects for India’s regional economic integration remain strong and increasingly promising. India’s rising economic power, demographic advantage, and expanding digital ecosystem position it as a natural hub for regional growth. Ongoing initiatives under the Act East Policy, Neighbourhood First Policy, and Indo-Pacific frameworks provide renewed momentum for cross-border cooperation, especially in connectivity, energy, and trade facilitation. Emerging platforms such as BIMSTEC, IORA, and the Indo-Pacific Economic initiatives offer alternative avenues for India to advance regional integration beyond the limitations of SAARC. The rapid expansion of digital public infrastructure such as UPI, Aadhaar-based services, and digital trade systems creates opportunities for India to export its technological models to neighbouring countries, fostering deeper economic linkages. Increasing private sector engagement and the emergence of regional value chains in sectors like pharmaceuticals, textiles, and services further enhance the potential for integrated growth. Moreover, shared interests in climate resilience, maritime security, and disaster management encourage collaborative action among regional partners. With strategic leadership, institutional strengthening, and sustained political will, India has the potential to shape a dynamic and inclusive regional architecture that supports long-term economic prosperity and stability in the wider South Asian and Indo-Pacific region.

## CONCLUSION

India's regional strategy increasingly requires a careful balance between institutional strength and strategic flexibility. Lessons from the European Union highlight the importance of rule-based governance, regulatory harmonization, and institutional depth, while ASEAN demonstrates the effectiveness of gradual, consensus-driven cooperation in politically diverse regions. A hybrid model that combines these complementary approaches offers India a practical and context-sensitive pathway for advancing regional economic integration. From a policy perspective, India must prioritize strengthening regional institutions such as BIMSTEC and IORA by enhancing their administrative capacity, decision-making mechanisms, and implementation frameworks. At the same time, adopting flexible, sector-specific cooperation in areas such as connectivity, digital trade, energy, and health security can yield faster and more politically feasible outcomes. Expanding physical and digital connectivity, improving trade facilitation, and promoting regulatory convergence should remain central to India's integration strategy. Greater involvement of the private sector and investment in regional value chains will also be critical for sustaining long-term economic interdependence. At the broader Indo-Pacific level, India's approach has significant strategic implications. By positioning itself as a provider of connectivity, digital public infrastructure, and development partnerships, India can contribute to shaping an inclusive and resilient regional economic architecture. A hybrid regionalism model allows India to navigate geopolitical competition particularly in relation to China while maintaining strategic autonomy and fostering cooperative frameworks with ASEAN and other regional partners. Despite persistent challenges such as political mistrust, economic asymmetries, and institutional limitations, the prospects for regional integration remain strong. With sustained political will, pragmatic diplomacy, and a clear policy direction, India has the potential to emerge as a central node in Indo-Pacific supply chains and a leading architect of a stable, interconnected, and economically vibrant regional order.

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