



**AUSTRALIA  
INDIA  
INSTITUTE**  
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prosperous Indo-Pacific

# **AUSTRALIA INDIA DEFENCE CONCLAVE**

**FROM CONCEPTS TO CAPABILITY:  
NEXT STEPS FOR THE DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP**

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**CANBERRA**

**PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES**

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**Dr Victor Abramowicz** has worked for over 20 years in the national security sector across government, industry, and academia. He specialises in Australian defence policy, strategy, and industry capability; advanced military technologies; and Indo-Pacific security relations. He is an Adjunct at Melbourne's La Trobe University and the Principal of Ostoya Consulting, which provides advisory services to the defence sector. Victor started his career with 13 years in the Australian Department of Defence in a range of intelligence, international policy, and capability development areas. His qualifications include a master's degree in Strategy and Policy from the University of New South Wales, and a Doctorate in International Relations from Curtin University.



**Col (Retd.) Shailender Arya** is a retired Indian Army Colonel, a former Advisor in the India's Ministry of Defence (2020-2025), and currently a Senior Advisor with The Asia Group. His military service includes operational appointments in India, and as a Staff Officer with UN in Sudan. He commanded a Regiment along the Line of Control and has been a faculty at Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. He was awarded Vishisht Seva Medal by the President of India for distinguished service. As an Advisor in Ministry of Defence, he focused on external engagements across the globe, working closely with Raksha Mantri and Defence Secretary. As Senior Advisor in The Asia Group, a Washington D.C. based Strategic Advisory with focus on Asia, he advises clients on geopolitics, defence, and aerospace, assisting to navigate the Indian policy and regulatory framework while developing their market access strategies.



**Dr Samuel Bashfield** is Research Fellow in Global Security at La Trobe University, where he studies geopolitical and defence trends across the Indo-Pacific. Sam speaks and publishes on national security and defence issues in leading international disciplinary journals and influential media outlets. His research examines how Australia and its partners respond to global geopolitical developments, new technologies and changing power distributions, with particular focus on maritime security, digital flows, and Indian Ocean strategic dynamics. Sam is a Fellow at the University of Melbourne's Australia India Institute and Expert Associate at the ANU National Security College. Sam leads two major Australian Commonwealth Government-funded research projects as chief investigator and has contributed to numerous successful grant applications across defence, home affairs and foreign affairs portfolios.



**Mr Simon Bateman** is a retired senior naval officer. Whilst in the Royal Australian Navy he specialised as a helicopter pilot and fulfilled several command roles. His final position in the Australian Defence Force was as the Australian Defence Adviser in New Delhi, India. During this time he directly contributed to the development of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries and oversaw a significant increase in the depth of the defence relationship. Simon is currently an Expert Associate at the Australian National University's National Security College and works as a consultant specialising in maritime security, particularly in the field of maritime domain awareness.

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**Dr David Brewster** is a Senior Research Fellow with the National Security College and a Distinguished Research Fellow with the Australia India Institute. He is one of Australia's leading experts on the Australia's security relationships in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Dr Brewster's books include *India as an Asia Pacific power*, about India's strategic role in the Asia Pacific and *India's Ocean: the story of India's bid for regional leadership* which examines India's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean. His edited volumes include *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean* and *Cross Currents: the New Geopolitics of the Indian Ocean*.



**Ms Grace Corcoran** is the Senior Policy and Projects Manager – Geopolitics and Security at the Australia India Institute. Prior to joining the Institute, Grace managed DFAT-funded social protection programs across the Asia-Pacific at Development Pathways. As Program Lead – Diplomacy at Asialink, she directed over 100 strategic initiatives, including the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit Emerging Leaders Dialogue, the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue, and bilateral forums on digital health, green economy, and strategic engagement across India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Grace was a member of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) External Advisory Group in 2024. She was the first NCP Scholar to the Federated States of Micronesia and has undertaken fieldwork and policy roles in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, the Maldives, and Canada. In 2023, she was named one of Australia's Young Women to Watch in International Affairs, and has held leadership positions with Amnesty International Australia and the Victorian Pride Lobby.



**A/Prof Shubhamitra Das** works for the Center for Indo-Pacific Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She specialises in defence and security, politics and society of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Island Countries. She has published a book and several articles on these topics in national and international journals, newspapers, and online platforms. She has also worked as a consultant with various national and international non-governmental organisations. Her work in documentation, advocacy, and lobbying in rural and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa which became the foundation to work further on gender, governance, and climate change in the Pacific Island countries.



**Adm R.K. Dhowan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd.)** served as the 22nd Chief of the Naval Staff of the Indian Navy, completing a distinguished 42-year career marked by strategic foresight, capability building, and leadership of mission-critical operations. As Naval Chief, he championed self-reliance and indigenisation, overseeing the design and construction of over 40 ships and submarines, while steering the publication of the Indian Maritime Security Strategy 2015. Post-retirement, he led the National Maritime Foundation (2016–2019), launching the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue and contributing to India's National Maritime Policy and Blue Economy framework. In 2020, he founded the Society for Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Studies (SAMDeS), a think tank driving discourse on defence, maritime, and aerospace issues in collaboration with global institutions. Currently, Admiral Dhowan spearheads SAMDeS's Global Maritime Accord initiative, promoting international cooperation, sustainable ocean development, and climate action under the vision: Save the Oceans for a Safe Earth.

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**Prof Ian Hall** is a professor of International Relations at Griffith University and Academic Fellow of the Australia India Institute at the University of Melbourne. Earlier, he taught at the University of St Andrews, Adelaide, and the Australian National University, and served as a co-editor of the Australian Journal of International Affairs. His research focuses on India's foreign and security policy and India's relationships with China, the US, and other Indo-Pacific regional powers. His works have been supported with multiple grants from the Australian Research Council and the Department of Defence. He is a regular participant in policy dialogues across the region and contributor to various media outlets. Aside from his normal teaching responsibilities, he is engaged in various professional education programs for Australian and overseas officials. He is currently meant to be writing books on the drivers of change in India's foreign policy and on India's grand strategy under the Modi government.



**Mr Kim Heriot-Darragh** is a strategic and defence analyst. He joins All following a 14-year career in government. While posted to the Australian High Commission in New Delhi (2019-23), he became the first Australian civilian to graduate from India's year-long National Defence College course. He previously served with the Australian government in Washington D.C. and deployed as a civilian on military operations in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan. A former Indonesian linguist, he holds a Master of International Law.



**CMDE Rajneesh Kumar** joined the Indian Navy in June 1994. He gained extensive experience in his early days in the Navy after qualifying as a Helicopter Controller, Ship Diver, and General Service Watchkeeping Officer onboard ships. Commodore Rajneesh specialised as a Gunnery and Missile Specialist during the Surface Warfare Course and served onboard Fleet Ships as a specialist Gunnery officer for many years. He had the distinction of being Executive Officer onboard a Missile Corvette and commanding a Fast Attack Craft and Missile Boat prior to the Staff Course in 2012. As graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington (India) and Naval War College, Goa, Capt Rajneesh holds three Master's Degrees in Defence Subjects. With experience serving onboard ships for nearly 17 years and having been deployed extensively in the IOR, his last command was of a frontline destroyer. Before DSSC, Cmde Rajneesh handled naval operations as a Director at Naval Headquarters, New Delhi.



**Dr Troy Lee-Brown** is a researcher in regional security, maritime security and international relations with a focus on defence and security issues in the Indo-Pacific. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Defence and Security Institute at the University of Western Australia and is also the Program Manager for the Blue Security Program, a DFAT funded project which focuses on issues of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Troy is the editor of the DSI Black Swan Strategy Paper and Blue Security: A Maritime Affairs Series. His research interests include maritime security, defence and security policy, with a focus on the Indian Ocean and broader Indo-Pacific.

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**SQNLDR Michael Lane** is a logistics officer with more than 35 years' experience in the Royal Australian Air Force and Australian Army. He currently serves at the A4 (senior logistics officer) to Headquarters 96 Wing. SQNLDR Lane is an alumnus of the Indian Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), having attended as part of the 77<sup>th</sup> SC in 2021-22. For his efforts at DSSC, SQNLDR Lane was awarded the inaugural Cavalier Trophy for Critical Thinking and was the valedictorian for International Students. He holds master's degrees in Business (University of New South Wales - UNSW), Logistics Management (UNSW), Capability Management (UNSW) and Science - Defence and Strategic Studies (University of Madras).



**Dr Iain MacGillivray** is an experienced Australian strategist, academic, political analyst, and researcher. His specialties include land power and military strategy, US politics and security, international issues in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, and Australian foreign and defence policies. Currently, he is a researcher at RAND Australia, specialising in defence, foreign policy, and national security research. Iain previously served in the Chief of Army's Initiatives' Group within the Australian Army, where he was the Chief of Army's personal researcher and deputy speechwriter. He also worked as the UK and US adviser in the International Division at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). He was a founding member of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Washington D.C. (ASPI DC), the first Australian think tank in the US. Iain was a 2021-2022 Yale Fox International Fellow at Yale University and has previously engaged in academic research and teaching at the University of Melbourne.



**Ms Shruti Pandalai** is a Fellow at the South East Asia and Oceania centre at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India's premiere think tank under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence. She works on India's Foreign & Security policy with a focus on evolving geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, Quad and sharp power contestations. She also maps developments in the India-China relationship framing it in the realm of information operations. Shruti at IDSA, has worked on projects for the National Security Council Secretariat, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs & the Indian Military. She frequently presents her research in track 1.5 meetings, lectures and engages with the think tank, academic, and military community both at home & abroad. Honoured with IDSA' President Award 2015 (Defence Minister's Award), Shruti is also part of emerging leaders fora like the Munich Young Leader prog (2019) and Raisina Young Fellow (2017) and The Shangri La Dialogue.



**Capt (Retd.) Sarabjeet S Parmar** is a retired Indian Naval Officer whose main areas of research include national and maritime strategy and security related aspects in the Indo-Pacific, piracy, HADR, and international maritime law with a focus on lawfare. He has written and spoken extensively at various national and international conferences in these areas. He has been a Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and worked in the Indian Navy's strategic apex level offices, where, as Director Strategy, was part of the core team that published the Indian Navy's 2015 unclassified maritime security strategy document titled Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy. He was the Executive Director and Senior Fellow at the National Maritime Foundation prior retirement and presently is a Distinguished Fellow with the Australia India Institute, Melbourne.

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**Ms Jennifer Parker** is the principal and founder of Barrier Strategic Advisory. Having served over two decades in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as a warfare officer, she holds a number of university and think tank affiliations, including as an Expert Associate at the National Security College, Australian National University and an Adjunct Fellow in naval studies at the University of New South Wales Canberra. Jennifer is also an International Fellow at the London based Council on Geostrategy. During her time in the RAN Jennifer specialised as a Principal Warfare Officer, including undertaking deep specialist training with the Royal Navy in Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer. Jennifer's last appointment in the RAN was as Director of Operations in Bahrain of the Combined Maritime Forces, a 47-nation coalition promoting maritime security in the Middle East and Indian Ocean region.



**Dr Teesta Prakash** is an expert on the strategic affairs of the Indo-Pacific, specialising in geoeconomics of India, Southeast Asia and the Quad. She was previously an analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute leading the Australia-India Cyber and Critical Technology Program between 2022 and 2023. Before that, she was the inaugural Southeast Asia Research Associate at the Lowy Institute between 2021 and 2022. She completed her PhD in 2021 from Griffith University, the focus of her thesis was Australia-India strategic and economic relations during the Cold War.



**Dr Rajeswari (Raji) Pillai Rajagopalan** is a Resident Senior Fellow with ASPI's Cyber, Technology and Security Program. Prior to joining ASPI, she was the Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy & Technology (CSST) at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. In 2020, she was Co-chair for a thematic group on "Strategic Technologies" for Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (STIP 2020) Report, Office of Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India and Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. In 2018-19, Dr Rajagopalan was the Technical Advisor to the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS). She was also a Non-Resident Indo-Pacific Fellow at the Perth US Asia Centre from April-December 2020. She was also a Visiting Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Politics, National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan in 2012.



**Col Prateek Roy** is an Indian Army officer with over 20 years of service. He is an infantry officer by trade with experience in tactical, operational and plans roles. He is currently studying Defence & Strategic Studies course at the Australian Defence College.

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**Ms Rushali Saha** is a recipient of a 2025 Maitri Fellowship and will be based at the United States Studies Centre until February 2026. She is an independent researcher and analyst with Horizon Intelligence, a Belgium-based threat intelligence firm. She is a foreign affairs columnist and her key areas of interest are Indian foreign policy and Indo-Pacific geopolitics. She holds a master's degree in Politics and International Relations from Jadavpur University and graduated summa cum laude from the same university with an undergraduate degree in political science. Rushali's research examines how Australia and India, as maritime democracies, can leverage shared capabilities and resources to enhance maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean.



**Dr Gaurav Saini** is the Co-founder of the Council for Strategic and Defense Research (CSDR), a leading New Delhi think tank focused on foreign policy, defense, and strategic affairs. At CSDR, he leads on project design and implementation, crafting frameworks that explore India's foreign policy evolution, assess technological impacts on national security, analyse internal security challenges, and examine India's relations with East Asia, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific. His expertise extends to designing annual geopolitical assessments, scoping defence industry collaborations, facilitating Track 1.5/2 dialogues, and leading multi-stakeholder research programs. With a PhD in International Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, focusing on India's strategic culture toward China (1998-2014), Dr Saini has been an Emerging Quad Think Tank Leader and a European Union exchange fellow.



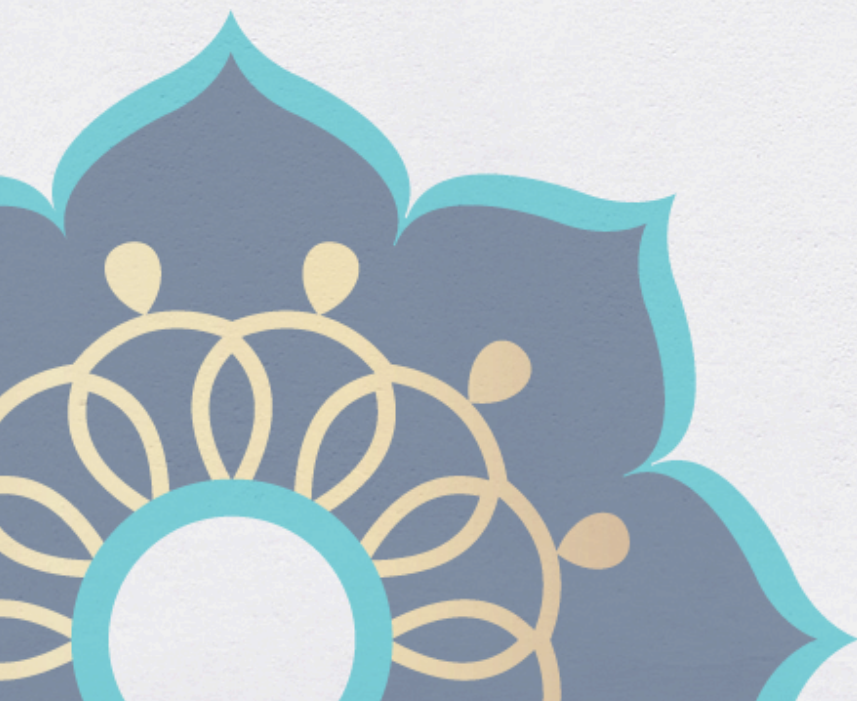
**The Hon. Lisa Singh** is the CEO of the Australia India Institute at the University of Melbourne, with a professional focus on Australia-India geopolitical and economic relations, sustainability, development and gender equality. She is also a former Australian Senator and the first woman of South Asian heritage to be elected to the Australian Parliament. She is also a former Tasmanian Member of Parliament and Minister in the Tasmanian Government. In 2014 she was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman by the President of India for building friendly relations between Australia and India. She previously served as Deputy Chair on the Australian Government's Australia-India Council and currently sits on the advisory board of Asialink at University of Melbourne and is also a Board Director of Beyond Blue, Australia's well known mental health organisation. She is also a Cricket Australia multicultural ambassador.



**Ms Ambika Vishwanath** is the Co-founder and Director of Kubernein Initiative and currently serves as a DFAT funded Principal Research Fellow at La Trobe Asia, Melbourne. She is a geopolitical expert and works at the intersection of climate, security and non-traditional aspects of security. While in Australia, she is exploring opportunities for deeper engagement between India and Australia in the Pacific region.

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