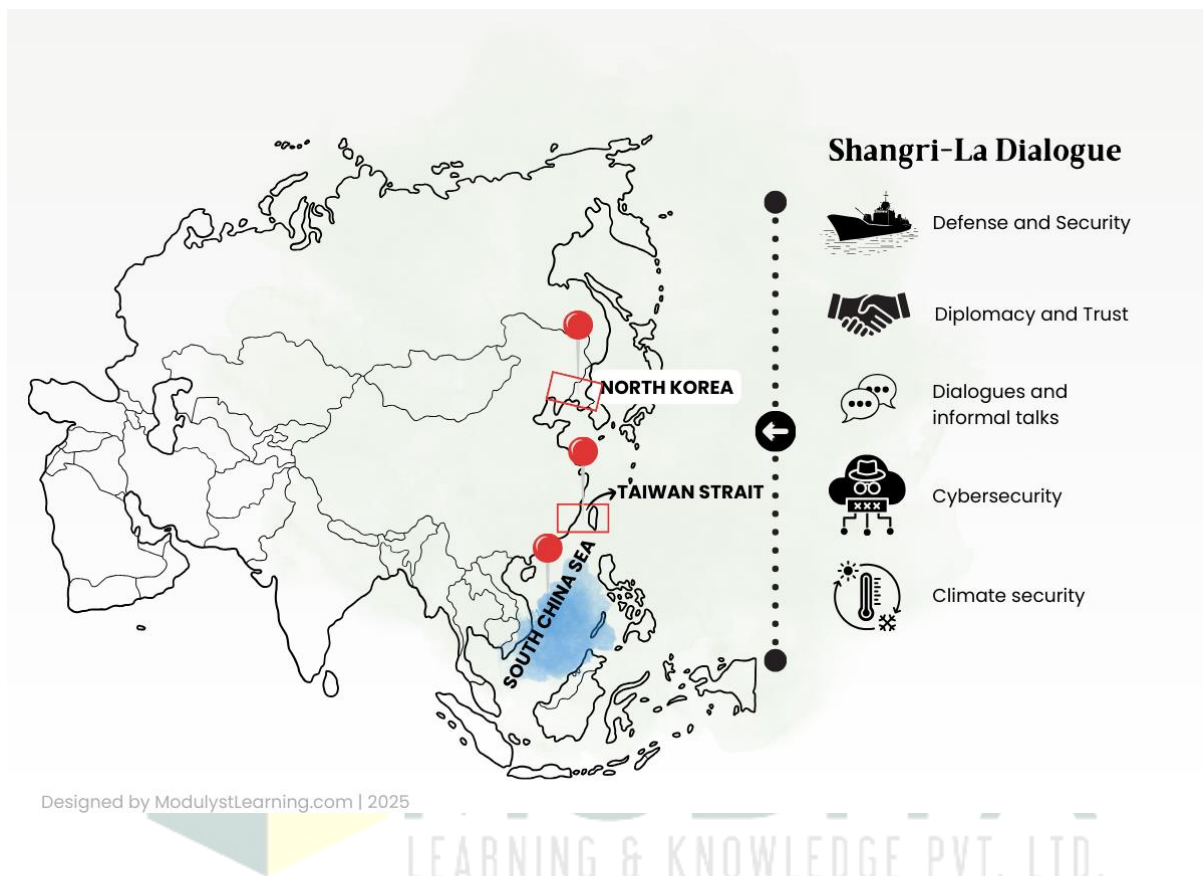


SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE



1. The Shangri-La Dialogue(SLD) is a distinguished intergovernmental forum dedicated to defence and security in Asia. Since 2002, it has been organized annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and is named after its location, the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore. The event's purpose is to facilitate dialogue, enhance confidence, and encourage cooperation on security issues both regionally and globally. Attendees consist of defence ministers, military leaders, policymakers, academics, and representatives from various think tanks.
2. Shangri-La facilitates military-to-military diplomacy and builds strategic trust by offering a neutral venue for bilateral and multilateral defence talks. It addresses regional issues such as—
 - Disputes in the South China Sea
 - Tensions in the Taiwan Strait

- North Korea's nuclear issue
- Counter-terrorism and cybersecurity
- Climate and security issues are interconnected, forming a complex nexus that requires an integrated understanding and response.
- It supports Track 1.5 diplomacy, which involves governments alongside experts and think tanks. This form of diplomacy allows for more informal and candid discussions, as it includes both official government representatives (Track 1) and non-official actors such as academics and think tank experts (Track 2).

3. Structure –

- Plenary Sessions – official speeches delivered by heads of state, ministers, or military leaders
- Special Sessions – Thematic discussions, including maritime security and AI in defence.
- Breakout Groups – Small, informal discussion sessions
- Bilateral and multilateral meetings, often referred to as "corridor diplomacy," are characterised by side meetings.
- Keynote Address – Typically given by a top defence official from a significant power, usually the US Secretary of Defence.

4. Major Participants –

- Asia Pacific nations include Singapore, India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN members.
- Major powers consist of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia.
- Observers comprise international entities such as NATO and the UN, as well as scholars and NGOs.

5. Themes and Issues Discussed –

The regional flashpoints include –

- Tensions in the Taiwan Strait
- South China Sea
- Nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula

Global Challenges –

- Cybersecurity and AI in defence
- Climate change and security
- Maritime governance and UNCLOS
- Counterterrorism and emerging security threats beyond traditional methods

US-China Rivalry –

- The most dominant theme in recent years.
- Both countries use SLD to demonstrate their contrasting views on Indo-Pacific security.

6. Significance –

- The Shangri-La Dialogue is often referred to as Asia-Pacific's "Davos for Defence", drawing a parallel to the World Economic Forum in Davos. Just as the latter sets the tone for global economic cooperation, the former sets the tone for security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It plays a significant role in promoting transparency and fostering trust within military organizations, thereby contributing to regional security.
- It provides a crucial platform for small and medium-sized countries, such as those in ASEAN and the Pacific Islands, to actively participate in international security discussions actively, ensuring their voices are heard.

- It serves as a significant marker for regional security tensions, keeping the audience informed about the current security situation.
- It offers a space for back-channel diplomacy, enabling discreet negotiations out of the public eye.

7. Criticism and Challenges –

Critics argue –

- China's scepticism is primarily influenced by the intense pressure from the US and its allies.
- Outcomes are non-binding and focus on dialogue rather than making decisions.
- It is sometimes seen as symbolic rather than solution-oriented.
- Despite the criticisms, its prestige and active participation guarantee its continued relevance.

8. India's Role –

India actively participates, emphasising –

- Indo-Pacific Strategy
- Counter-terrorism collaboration
- Maritime security in the Indian Ocean
- Maintaining a strategic balance as an answer to China's assertiveness.
- Indian defence ministers and chiefs often utilise SLD to present India as a “Net Security Provider” in the region.

9. Recent Developments –

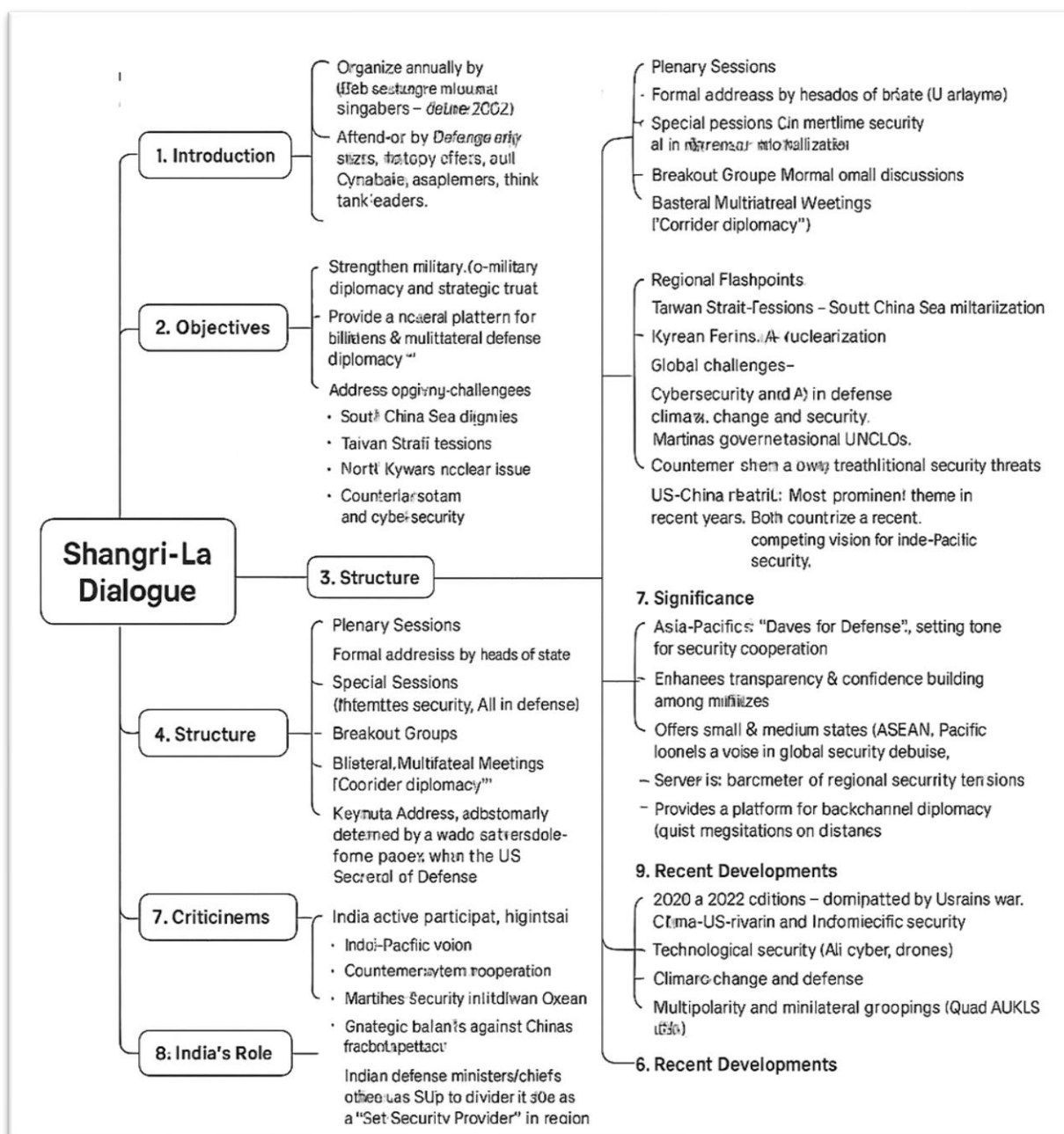
- The 2023 and 2024 editions primarily focus on the Ukraine War, the China-US rivalry, and Indo-Pacific security concerns.

- Growing focus on –
 - A. Technological security (including AI, cybersecurity, and drones)
 - B. Climate Change and National Security
 - C. Multipolarity, alongside minilateral alliances such as QUAD and AUKUS.

10. In brief –

The Shangri-La Dialogue is the most influential Asian defence and security summit in the Indo-Pacific region. Although it is non-binding, it plays a crucial role in promoting transparency, diplomacy, and balancing great power competition.





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