

# Strategic Autonomy For Asia in a Decoupling World

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## 1. Abstract

This study investigates Asia's path to strategic autonomy in a rapidly decoupling global economy. It looks at the historical transition of Asia from a hub for the USA and Europe to a self-reliant economy. The paper explores the process of economic decolonization, stressing the difficulties Asian nations had to experience such as underdevelopment, governance issues, and social problems. It further explores the role played by important economic institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO to promote Asia's economic growth. The study examines how regional trade agreements such as RCEP, SAARC, and APTA promote regional cooperation throughout the continent. This research aims to shed light on the strategic efforts and policies Asia as an economy has implemented to create its space in the international markets and support economic growth and resilience.

**Keywords:** Strategic Autonomy, Asia, Global Economy, Regional Cooperation, Trade Agreements

## 2. Introduction

Asia's economic growth has experienced a historic trajectory from its emergence as a major manufacturing hub for the colonial powers to a globally independent and powerful economy. Economic dependency, political instability, and a lack of wealth are some of the difficulties faced by the nation's post-independence.

Asia has shown a transition from a colonial economy to a powerhouse. Colonial powers exploited the nations and their resources. These colonial powers extracted raw materials like spices, silk, tea, rubber, and minerals, and shipped these resources to their home countries. During this period, they controlled local industries and global trade. However, the Asian nations followed the path of self-reliance and took steps towards economic independence and industrialization.

The emergence of regional trade agreements such as APTA, SAARC, and RCEP shows Asia's dedication to promoting economic integration and collaboration within the areas. These agreements helped in rapid regional development and boosted trade, investment, and technological upgradation. Despite facing issues like infrastructure backwardness and governance, the Asian nations stayed strong to achieve strategic autonomy.

### 3. Historical Context

#### I. Asia as a Manufacturing Unit for the US and Europe

Colonial powers began emerging in the first few decades of the sixteenth century. From the 16th to 20th century, the main colonizers of Southeast Asia were British, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. During this period, colonial powers used violence to gain control over the colonies. They imposed their laws, languages, and culture while taking the resources and wealth for their benefit. This has resulted in the loss of traditional languages, norms, and cultures, followed by the discrimination and marginalization faced by several communities worldwide.

Labor exploitation was common during these years. Colonial powers used forced labor to extract valuable commodities such as gold, silver, and diamonds from the colonized areas to build wealth. They also established trade networks that benefited their economies by imposing tariffs and trade restrictions on goods. The effects of this step continue in the form of global economic inequality, and various economies struggle with underdevelopment, poverty, and political instability.

#### II. Economic Decolonisation of Asia

Independence movements have gained momentum post-Second World War. Following World War II, the European nations' weakened military and economy made retaining control over their colonies challenging. With the rise in feelings of nationalism among the colonized people, the European powers were forced to leave their colonized colonies.

**Challenges:** The Asian economies were exploited under colonial rule for a long time. Post-independence these economies faced various challenges like wealth shortage, economic dependency, global inequalities, political instability, religious conflicts, and issues to maintain effective governance.

Newly independent nations faced political instability and governance issues. Many countries faced challenges in establishing effective governance structures, managing religious conflicts, and improving the divide-and-rule policy implemented by the colonizers.

**Development Strategies:** To resolve the economic dependency, the Asian nations started making strategies for industrialization and fostering development. The government invested in the local industries to boost the manufacturing of goods and services to meet domestic demands. Alongside meeting domestic demands, the focus was expansion in the international markets.

The focus was also kept on infrastructure development. Transport infrastructure such as ports, highways, railroads, and bridges were constructed and invested in to improve communication.

Colonial powers promoted Western culture in Asian countries but post-independence, the Government aimed to bring back the traditional culture and language. The educational structure was reformed to focus on local history, languages, and challenges faced during colonial rule.

### **III. Asia: A Self-Reliant Economy**

In 1820, Asia accounted for two-thirds of the world population and more than one-half of the global income but it experienced a significant decline due to colonialism. By the late 1960s, Asia was the poorest continent in the world regarding income and social indicators.<sup>1</sup>

To become self-reliant, different economies had different strategies as South Korea aimed at economic diversification, Malaysia focused on the New Economic Policy to promote entrepreneurship and reduce economic disparities, China on technological advancements and energy independence, Vietnam on agricultural development, and India on technological advancements, agriculture development, and energy independence.

#### **1. South Korea: Economic Diversification**

During 1961-66, South Korea underwent rapid economic development to transform into an industrial society. Under the military government of Park Chung Hee, it focused on state planning and private entrepreneurship. With time, it shifted from a labor-intensive economy to a capital-intensive economy to focus on heavy equipment, automobiles, steel, petrochemicals, and

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<sup>1</sup> [World Economic Forum, 2019](#)

electronics. In 1966, South Korea joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and was recognized as a ‘developed economy’.

South Korea strategized its development process and focused on export-oriented policies, research and development, and technology. However, it faced challenges such as Chinese competition, geographical size, natural resources, an aging population, and a lower workforce. It has to focus on sustainability, technology, and business growth to maintain economic growth.

## **2. Malaysia: New Economic Policy**

The British colonial rule divided the Malaysian economy into 3 ethnic groups- Malays, Chinese, and Indians. To address this issue, Malaysia introduced the ‘New Economic Policy’ that encouraged Malay entrepreneurship and eliminated the notion that race and economic function are related. Since its independence in 1957, Malaysia has transitioned its economy from agriculture to manufacturing and service sectors. Malaysia is now a significant player in the global export of electrical appliances, parts, and components.<sup>2</sup>

This economic growth and development of the country improved the standard of living of the people and helped raise the global economic standing of the country. Malaysia with its growth strategy became an example of economic diversification and inclusive growth.

## **3. China: Technological Advancements**

After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong emphasized self-reliance and its importance to the Chinese economy. However, under his guidance, economic policies failed due to their focus on communal self-reliance. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping introduced a household responsibility system in agriculture. This gave farm families the freedom of choice and to obtain personal economic rewards to be more efficient in the communal system.

They focused on critical sectors like high technology, electrical products, and automotive manufacturing and reduced imports. Due to the rise in geopolitical

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<sup>2</sup> [World Bank, 2024](#)

tensions and foreign restrictions across cross-border trade, China was motivated to follow the self-reliant goals to boost its economic development.

#### 4. **India: Agricultural Productivity**

During the independence movement, India's symbol of self-reliance was the spinning wheel (Charkha). Post-independence, India adopted a policy framework to build a strong industrial base where public sector enterprises played a crucial role. Land reforms and green resolutions enhanced agricultural productivity and helped India to become self-reliant in food production and reduce its imports.

It also focused on achieving self-reliance in modernization and heavy industries. In 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' scheme to enhance effectiveness among the sectors and reduce imports.

In the half-century since the late 1960s, Asia has experienced significant growth. **By 2016, it accounted for 30% of world income, 40% of world manufacturing, and one-third of world trade.**<sup>3</sup> The transformation was the result of consistent efforts of the Asian countries however, the growth was unequal across countries and within the country.

#### 4. **The Dual Role of Global Economic Institutions**

Global economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank have played a crucial yet complex role in supporting the economic development of Asia, involving both hindrances and aid to development.

The strict conditions the IMF and World Bank applied to countries requiring loans hindered the development of various countries. These conditions involved reducing public spending and the fiscal deficit and reducing investment in the healthcare and educational sectors. They affected the development of the countries.

The trade liberalization policies affected the developing countries and their global competitiveness. Local industries needed help in establishing and competing in the global

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<sup>3</sup> [World Economic Forum, 2019](#)

market. This affected the nation's growth leading to the downfall of the local businesses and the loss of jobs, thereby raising the unemployment in the countries.

### **I. International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

The IMF played a mixed role in the development of Asian nations. **To stabilize the economies, the IMF implemented exchange rate policies. However, the effect of these policies did not come out well. It resulted in rapid depreciation, increased cost of imports, higher interest rates, and higher inflation rates in the Asian nations.** The most affected out of all the nations were Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea. The currencies of these countries depreciated around half the value against the US Dollars.

**IMF also played a crucial role in assisting Asia during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98. During the global crisis, the IMF extended its funds to the nations, reducing their financial burden.** They helped South Korea with a \$58 billion bailout package<sup>4</sup>, and Indonesia with \$23 billion.<sup>5</sup> The IMF helped India with \$2.2 billion for economic relief.<sup>6</sup>

*Example:* In July 1997, the Thai government faced a huge foreign debt, impacting the economy, and political and social implications. During this difficult time when the Indonesian rupiah was continuously depreciating, the presence of the IMF worsened the situation. The IMF provided Thailand with a \$43 billion resume plan for regaining market trust in the Indonesian rupiah. There were recommendations to raise interest rates by the central bank, closure of 16 privately owned banks, and reduction in food and energy subsidies. However, this rescue plan came out to be a failure.<sup>7</sup>

It is interpreted that the IMF has helped Asian economies during their bad times. It also provided expertise to the nation's policymakers to anticipate the risks in the future and take certain policy actions beforehand to avoid any major loss or downfall to the economy.

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<sup>4</sup> [IMF, 2002](#)

<sup>5</sup> [AsiaPacific Issues, 1998](#)

<sup>6</sup> [South Asian Voices, 2023](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Indonesia Investments](#)

## II. World Trade Organization (WTO)

**WTO's alignment with Western countries has occasionally been an obstacle to Asian countries.** These challenging policies included Intellectual property rights and domestic trade policies.

The WTO established an Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). The TRIPS agreement is considered a new framework for the protection of intellectual property standards and offers substantial intellectual property protection in trade-related regions. The Western countries held most of the global patents and trademarks, creating difficulties for the Asian nations as they lacked the infrastructure and financial resources to fulfill these standards.<sup>8</sup>

*Example:* TRIPS is often criticized for limiting access to generic medicines. Countries like India had a large generic pharmaceutical industry but due to the strict patent requirements of TRIPS, it faced challenges in acquiring the rights and establishing itself in the global markets.

**Domestic trade policies and tariff reductions became challenging for the developing Asian economies.** Western countries like the European Union provided subsidies to their sectors like agricultural sectors. This helped the farmers and organizations in those nations export goods cheaply. Asian countries like India and Thailand found it difficult to compete with those low-cost imported goods, leading to poverty, and unemployment among the rural economies.

WTO promotes trade liberalization policies by reducing tariffs, exaggerating the problem in Asian countries. This led to intense competition in the global markets and job losses.

Besides challenging the development process of the Asian nations, **WTO also provided a platform for the member countries to negotiate and establish trade relations and agreements that boost international trade. It ensured trade negotiations were conducted transparently and inclusively, fostering cooperation among nations.** It also provided the nations with monitoring compliance to regularly check whether the set rules and commitments mentioned

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<sup>8</sup> [iPleaders, 2022](#)



during the trade agreements are being followed. The dispute settlement policies of WTO promote stability and predictability in the global trading system.

It is analyzed that WTO was more inclined towards Western countries but has also helped Asian economies to connect and trade. This helped the economies to establish themselves in the international market and raise their economy and domestic industries.

### **III. World Bank**

The World Bank helped the Asian economy to grow by lending loans at lower interest rates. **Besides monetary help, the World Bank provided expertise, regional knowledge, and resources to different nations to continue their activities and achieve significant economic growth.** To resolve difficulties related to sub-global development and address common regional public goods issues, Regional Development Banks in Asia collaborated with the World Bank to assist in finance. The World Bank invested in the regional infrastructure and financial markets to assist them in management activities.

It is examined that the World Bank helped Asian economies with the funds. It helped the economies focus on infrastructure development. This reduced the financial tensions among the economies, and they were able to boost their internal economy. The funds helped the economies to develop infrastructure, creating relations with other nations through their goods and services.

Even after challenging the development of the developing nations, these economic institutions also played a role in the development of nations. The IMF financially supported the economies to stabilize themselves from the balance of payment crisis, and the World Bank financially supported economies for infrastructure, healthcare, and education development. These institutions provided technical assistance, policy advice, workshops, and training programs to boost the skills of the nation's people. WTO helped by reducing trade barriers, bringing transparency in trade, and resolving trade disputes within the countries.

## **5. Challenges**

### **I. Underdeveloped Economies**

Many Asian economies such as India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, after independence, were agrarian economies with no or little industrial base. India was dependent on agriculture, making it vulnerable to global market fluctuations. Any decline in commodity prices affected the economy.<sup>9</sup> The Indonesian economy depended on rubber, tin, and oil exports and had to import other commodities, leading to trade deficits. Malaysia experienced income inequality as the wealth from exports of rubber and tin was concentrated among elite groups and a large population remained poor and was dependent on subsistence farming.<sup>10</sup>

They had to begin from the start to set up a manufacturing base. Many economies relied on primary commodities such as rubber or tin to follow exports and imported other items. This led to fluctuations in the global price of goods and services.

## **II. Governance Issues**

Transitioning from a colonized economy to a self-reliant economy involved various governance issues like conflicts and internal power struggles. This hampered the creation of an adequate policy system for the nation's long-term stability. India faced various internal challenges such as politics and communal tensions. Vietnam faced post-war conflicts and delays in the reconstruction of governance structures. Myanmar got delayed in the establishment of governance institutions thus causing conflicts in legal and public service institutions.

Many Asian countries faced religious tensions and conflicts to unify the diverse population of the nation. The formation of adequate governance institutions like law firms, public service, and more got delayed.

## **III. Social Challenges**

A large section of the nation's population was struggling with poverty and forming adequate reforms and programs to reduce poverty and raise the standard of living for people was a challenging task. India faced communal tension and religious conflicts, and Malaysia experienced ethnic conflicts.

Economic growth raised income inequality, creating economic and political tensions for the administration. Newly independent nations also worked on education,

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<sup>9</sup> [InsightsIAS](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Malaysian Independence and the Creation of Malaysia, 2015](#)

healthcare, and human development from scratch. Colonial administration neglected these sectors. It was crucial to work on these sectors to ensure sustainable and equitable growth of the nation.

#### **IV. Inadequate Infrastructure**

Limited access to modern technology and energy resources slowed down industrial activities and innovation. India, South Korea, and Malaysia experienced poor transportation facilities like roads, and bridges, limited access to modern technologies, and required heavy investment in modern technology and infrastructure.

Poor transportation facilities impacted the movement of goods and services across different places leading to disparities in regional growth. The nations required heavy investment to boost economic growth and improve the standard of living of their people.

#### **V. Global Tensions**

Developed economies had trade barriers and protectionist policies, making it difficult for underdeveloped or developing nations to export their goods to those nations. India's agricultural exports faced heavy tariffs and quotas in the global markets, Indonesia faced trade barriers and competition with subsidized agricultural products, and South Korea's industrial products like automobiles faced high tariffs in the global markets.

The new industries faced difficulties in competing with the established industries and making their place in the markets.

### **6. Asia United for Trade and Independence**

The impact of Asia on international relations and the global economy is rising. Several regions of the continent see significant GDP growth due to technological innovation and trade development. Besides innovation, challenges such as persistent climate change, financial exclusion, and healthcare problems must be addressed. Despite facing challenges, Asia is engaged in developmental progress while addressing the issues.

## **I. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

Since 2012, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) members have been negotiating on the mega-regional economic deal, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RCEP aims to boost economic growth and equitable economic development to encourage advanced economic cooperation within the regions of RCEP.

The idea for RCEP emerged during the 2011 ASEAN summit in Bali, Indonesia. **This aimed to enhance resilience in East Asia after the Asian Financial Crisis.** The formal negotiations for the agreement began in 2012 between ASEAN partners and FTA members, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, South Korea, Australia, China, India, Japan, and New Zealand. The 16 participating countries focused on activities related to trade and investment.

**India was also a part of the negotiations but it dropped out in November 2019. The major reasons why India pulled out of RCEP are as follows-**

### **a. Influence of China**

India has a free trade agreement with all RCEP members except China. According to the trade data, India's trade deficit with China is larger than the combined deficits of all the countries of RCEP. The trade deficit is the primary concern of India for RCEP as this would have led to a flood of cheaper Chinese products in the Indian markets. This would have led to the downfall of the domestic Indian markets.

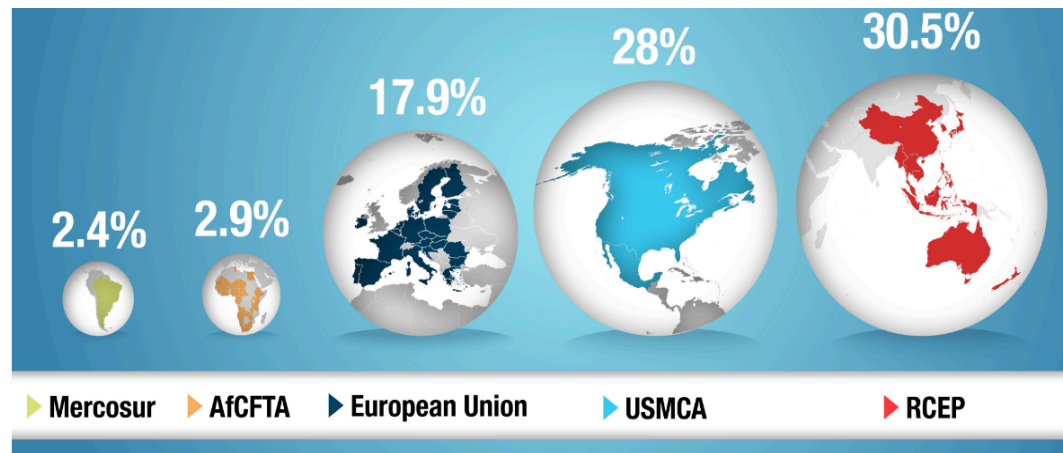
### **b. Non-approval of Auto-trigger mechanism**

India looked for an option to raise the price of products imported after a certain threshold. This step was taken to safeguard the local industries and also prevent the nation from running into a higher trade deficit. However, the RCEP members did not approve the auto-trigger mechanism.

As India pulled out of RCEP, it was left with 15 participating nations. RCEP officially took place on January 1, 2022. **The total membership accounts for over one-third**

of the global population, and 29% of the global GDP.<sup>11</sup> RCEP is expected to emerge as the largest trade agreement globally.<sup>12</sup>

Selected regional trade agreements by economic size  
(Share of global GDP)



Source: [Union Trade and Development Secretariat](#)

RCEP will become one of the largest trade agreements compared to the other trade agreements such as the South American trade bloc Mercosur (2.4%), Africa's continental free trade area (2.9%), the European Union (17.9%) and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (28%).<sup>13</sup> It will impact international trade as it accounts for almost 1/3rd of the world's GDP.

RCEP included several areas of cooperation such as a range of tariffs on imports, e-commerce, telecommunications, financial services, intellectual property, and professional services. It will have a significant positive impact on the Asian economy which follows-

**a. Tariff Reduction**

RCEP liberalizes trade through tariff reduction. It eliminates tariffs on approximately 91% of the goods to promote smooth trade within the member countries.<sup>14</sup> Tariff reduction will boost the trade opportunities within the RCEP member nations while focusing on simplification of customs procedures and reduction in trade costs.

<sup>11</sup> [BBC, 2020](#)

<sup>12</sup> [UN Trade and Development, 2021](#)

<sup>13</sup> [UNCTAD, 2021](#)

<sup>14</sup> [World Economic Forum, 2021](#)

**b. Investment Opportunities**

RCEP provides preferential market access to countries like China, Japan, and South Korea for products such as chemicals, plastic, food preparations, and mineral fuels. It promotes Foreign Direct Investment by creating an open and predictable environment.

**c. Economic Growth**

RCEP will raise trade within the countries by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, providing business opportunities to the businesses. It will encourage regional production networks and supply chains. Opportunities for advanced technologies, research, and development will get a boost, helping the economies to become stable and manage fluctuations. Japan expects a 2.7% boost in its GDP and the creation of half a million jobs due to RCEP.<sup>15</sup>

However, the members need to face various concerns such as agricultural concerns to balance the interests of the farmers. The farmers are concerned about the rise in imports of agricultural products due to low trade barriers. Regularity in coordination will be required to maintain balanced economic growth within all the member nations and promote equitable development.

**II. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**

SAARC is an economic and political organization for eight South Asian countries, namely, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, formally formed in 1985 after the agreement was signed in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Afghanistan joined it in 2007. There are 9 observer countries in SAARC- Australia, China, the European Union, Iran, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Myanmar, and the USA. Nepal's Kathmandu serves as home to SAARC's headquarters and secretariat.

**SAARC aims to advance economic growth, social improvement, and cultural development.** It focuses on improving the living standard of South Asians, encourages South Asian countries' collective resilience, and fosters understanding, trust, and

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<sup>15</sup> [World Economic Forum, 2021](#)

respect among the nations. It encourages active participation and mutual aid among nations in economics, science, technology, and society.

**SAARC accounts for 3.8% of the world's GDP and 21% of the world's population. The SAARC nations face common issues such as low GDP, poverty, malnutrition, natural disasters, illiteracy, technological backwardness, internal turmoil, and social backwardness. The nations have been able to work on common solutions to face these problems.**

SAARC faces challenges in regional cooperation such as political differences, historical tensions, and bilateral conflicts. **The major roadblock to SAARC's development is the disputes within the member countries.** The disputes could be river disputes, border conflicts, lack of confidence, or other problems, impacting the peace and progress in South Asia.

The member nations need to cooperate to face these challenges and ensure equitable development in all nations. A climate of trust is to be created to resolve the differences and work on economic development altogether. Despite facing challenges, it has collaborated to reduce food problems, promoted sustainable agriculture, reduced trade barriers, discussed climatic issues, and also had collaborative efforts to reduce poverty.

### **III. Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**

Previously known as the 'Bangkok Agreement', APTA was formed in 1975 between Bangladesh, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka. Following the notifications of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs in 1976, APTA also came into effect in the same year. China became part of APTA on January 1, 2002, and Mongolia was accepted as a part of APTA in 2020.

APTA spans East and South Asia, and it is open to expand to other countries, that is, Central Asia and the Pacific. APTA is the longest preferential trade agreement that is operational between Asia and the Pacific.

**Aim:** APTA aims to liberalize interregional trade, enhance economic cooperation, and promote economic development. Due to diversification in imports and exports, the local industries get an opportunity to expand. APTA is considered one of the most

important trade agreements as it is the only agreement directly connecting India and China.

**Impact:** It is interpreted that APTA by reducing the trade barriers among the member countries, facilitates trade and increases the purchasing options for the consumers residing in the member countries. As the countries cooperate, it would lead to better economic policies and the transfer of technological advancements. Also, it would provide expansion opportunities for the local industries in different countries, raising job opportunities.

## **7. A New Era for Asia**

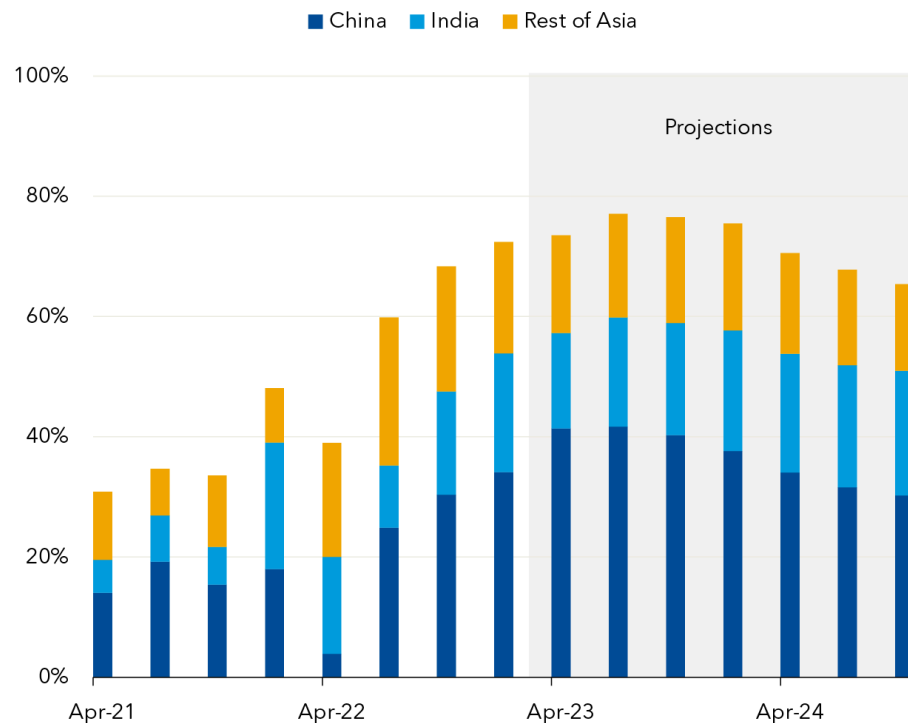
Inclusive growth is essential for both developed and developing economies to drive equal opportunities and sustainable development. Asia experienced rapid growth due to public investment and sector-specific developments.

**Countries like China and Myanmar experienced high GDP growth as they primarily focused on industrial development and followed export-oriented strategies. Public investments helped Asian countries to develop their key sectors of education, healthcare, and infrastructure.**



## Sources of momentum

Asia is propelling a larger share of global economic growth.  
(contributions to global quarterly year-on-year growth, in percent)



Source: [World Economic Forum, 2023](#)

Global financial conditions have shown improvement, and Asia's inflation which rose at a worrying rate showed a downfall, helping Asian currencies to rebound and erase half of their losses.

**Rising investment and savings rates helped to stabilize Asia's condition, and the rise in per capita income transformed social indicators where the life expectancy rate and literacy rate saw a rise.** The government played a crucial role in Asia's 50-year economic transition, serving as regulators and supporters besides being the leaders. They managed dynamic conversations between the markets and the states to maintain a balance between different functions for Asia's growth.

## 8. Recommendations

### I. Prioritizing Quality over Quantity in Production

The government should focus on developing and enforcing strict national quality standards. There could be a centralized quality standards body that works with industry experts to develop, implement, and monitor these quality standards. The product quality standards shall meet international benchmarks.

The government policies can focus on tax reductions and subsidies for businesses prioritizing quality production over mass production. Tax incentive programs can be designed to reward companies based on the quality of their products instead of the volume of production.

Campaigns should be launched nationwide to highlight the benefits of quality products. It can be through media outlets, influencers, or educational institutions that conduct awareness programs. The focus should be on raising consumer demands for high-quality products, which would further drive industries to meet the industry standards.

## **II. Enhance Implementation of Existing Trade Agreements**

A dedicated team should be set up to oversee the implementation of the trade agreements. They can conduct regular impact assessments and develop strategies to address emerging challenges. To maximize the benefits of the trade agreements, the team could regularly follow up with the agreements and whether or not they are contributing to the national interests.

Quarterly meetings should be set up to address the country's progress and challenges. Chairmanship representation can be rotated to ensure equitable representation and accountability. The goal of meetings should be to resolve the conflicts and continue cooperation among the member states.

## **III. Investment in Tourism and Simplification of Process**

The focus should be on developing and modernizing tourist destinations, and transportation and accommodation facilities. The government can allocate funds for the tourism sector and collaborate with private firms for better outcomes.

To ensure tourists enjoy hassle-free, the government can simplify the visa processes. The cross-border travel restrictions can be reduced. The government can also organize and fund cultural exchange programs such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and educational workshops by collaborating with cultural institutions and international organizations. It will increase tourism and lead to cultural exchange

## **IV. Industry-Specific Training Programs and Digital Literacy**

The government can initiate vocational training programs targeting the needs of the industry and technological advancements. They can partner with industry leaders and educational institutions to design and implement the relevant programs to meet future industry demands.

Digital literacy is to be promoted in the school curriculum. Scholarships and financial support can be provided for vocational training programs for low-income earners. The focus should be to promote equitable economic growth, reduce income inequalities, and enhance job opportunities.

## 9. Conclusion

Asia's efforts to achieve strategic autonomy in the global economy are evidenced by its efforts to escape economic dependence, establish a strong industrial base, and promote economic cooperation and regional trade.

Asia's capacity to overcome challenges including underdevelopment, governance issues, and social inequality contributed to its rise in the global economy. The Asian nations have emphasized equitable development, technological advancements, and economic diversification that helped them grow faster to promote equitable and sustainable development.

This study emphasized the importance of strategic autonomy for Asia in the current global economic environment. By emphasizing on the current strengths and challenges, the Asian economy can encourage regional collaboration by resolving any internal or global problem.

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