



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDO-PACIFIC: A STUDY OF THE GEOPOLITICAL EFFECTS ON CHINA AND INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific region is currently a catchphrase that various nations use to describe their outlooks or visions of the future. India will need to manage its ties with China and Japan if it hopes to achieve its goal of a stable Indo-Pacific. The centres of the world's economic growth have shifted to Asia, first to the Asia-Pacific region and then to the Indo-Pacific region, which includes South Asia. One could argue that the more expansive Indo-Pacific definition of Asia and the Asia-Pacific prefer the natural evolution of commerce, investment, and energy flows over the more restrictive boundaries. The significance of the Indo-Pacific area is the study's main topic. The majority of these problems are geopolitical in nature, like domination in the area. We mostly relied on secondary data for this analysis, which we acquired from a variety of books, journals, reliable internet sources, academic literatures, and websites. The report attempts to outline ways to reduce the strategic issues that India is now facing. This study will be beneficial to academics, decision-makers in foreign policy, security, and border influence strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

It's a modern idea; the Indo-Pacific region first came up for discussion around ten years ago, albeit its emergence was hardly remarkable. The Indian and Pacific Oceans' association as tactical theatres is one of the most important factors in this phrase's popularity. (Academy, S. 2019-04-07). Additionally, the centre of gravity shifted toward Asia (Kamraju, M. 2019). The Indian and Pacific Oceans, which offer the sea lanes, are the cause of this. A large portion of the world's commerce travels through these routes. The universe's centre of gravity once lay across the Atlantic, meaning that trade still largely came from that region, although that was before the Cold War. India was previously not included in the term "Asia Pacific," which was widely used during the Cold War. India's importance to the new structure is demonstrated by the switch to the phrase "Indo-Pacific." Given its geopolitical and geostrategic significance, the Indo-Pacific region evolved into a hub of power politics in the twenty-first century. Due to its marine connectivity between the Pacific and Indian regions, it continues to be a centre. Meadows (Chacko, P. 2016). The phrase "Indo-Pacific" is interpreted variably by various groups. India views the area as being inclusive, transparent, integrated, and impartial. India is still concentrating on the potential, difficulties, and tactical links between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The United States of America views the Indo-Pacific as free and open, highlighting the importance of the regional laws or moral standards in an effort to restrain China's influence there. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations views the Indo-Pacific region as a

consociative model that offers China both stakeholders and opportunities for cooperation. (Academy, S. September 7, 2019) Gurpreet Khurana, a marine strategist and executive director of the New Delhi National Marine Foundation, coined the phrase "indo-pacific" in 2007. He recently stated in the Washington Post that the new phrase has changed the new strategic mind map since China's "reform open up" in the 1980s (Japan. N.d.) 6 (Khurana, G. 2017)

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This essay's main goal is to highlight how important the Indo-Pacific area is to both China and India.

3. INFORMATION AND TECHNIQUE

Secondary data from a variety of sources, including books, published journals, newspapers, government regulations, reliable websites, and the internet, has been used to write this research. An effort has been made to consider the general goal of the research when analysing this publication.

4. STUDY SUBJECT

The Indo-Pacific region, sometimes known as the Indo-Western Pacific or Indo-Pacific Asia, is a biogeographical area of the Earth's oceans that includes the tropical waters of the Indian, Western, and Central Pacific Oceans, as well as the seas that connect them in the general area of Indonesia. It excludes the temperate and polar regions of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as the tropical eastern Pacific along the American Pacific coast, which is likewise a separate maritime domain.



Indo Pacific Region



Source: Wikipedia

5. CONCEPTUALIZING THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

The Indo-Pacific is often a newly coined term in the realm of international law. It expresses the interests of the Indian and Pacific Oceans' littoral regions. Establishing the federal integrated system's legitimacy in the area. Understanding the architecture of the Indo-Pacific region is crucial for answering questions about the area between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. An estimated 35.7% of the world's population lives in the Indian Ocean region, which takes approximately 20% of the planet's ocean surface. It is the third-largest Ocean, behind the Pacific and the Atlantic. It is somewhat smaller than the Atlantic Ocean and half the size of the Pacific Ocean. (Braun, 1982). The Indian subcontinent, the Arab Peninsula, and the African Continent all share borders with the northwest portion of the Indian Ocean Region. Thailand, Indonesia, and North West Australia border the eastern portion. Australia's coast and Antarctica's boundaries are both shared by the south. Additionally, the Indian Ocean region has marine boundaries with almost 38 coastal states (Michel & Sticklor, 2012).

Despite having maritime boundaries together, the area was overlooked throughout the Cold War era due to rivalry over superpowers. Due to the naval advancement of other regional countries, the region is currently at the focus of global politics (Prabhakar, 2016). Major checkpoints are also located in the Indian Ocean region, including the Suez Canal/Horn of Africa, the Strait of Hormuz, Bab Al- Mandeb, the Strait of Malacca, the Sunda Strait, and the Lombok Straits (Michel, & Sticklor, 2012). Thus, the Indian Ocean is the centre of interest in Asian politics due to its powerful regional influences and its geostrategic and economic significance.

German geographer Karl Haushofer coined the phrase "Indopazifischen Raum" in 1920 as part of the geopolitical and geographical debate (Saha, 2016). However, the phrase was

frequently used by the Australian Fisheries Council after the Cold War to establish the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council (hence, IPFC) in 1948. (Singh, 2014).

Similar to how China has emphasised the term "Indo-Pacific," India has done the same. Former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had foreseen this since World War II. According to his 1944 book "The Discovery of India," India would play a crucial role in the emerging regional dynamics as the Asia-Pacific region becomes a geostrategic entity in world politics (Mishra, 2014).

Additionally, in 2011, the word was used by former foreign secretary Shyam Saran to express US acknowledgment of the Pacific and Indian Oceans as a connected geopolitical region. India, however, has quite different goals for the Indo-Pacific than do the United States, Japan, and Australia. It sees the Indo-Pacific as a geostrategic chance to establish Indo-Pacific region regionalism and update its own prior foreign policy plan (Chacko, 2012).

Even though it is only one of the world's major oceans, India depends heavily on the Indian Ocean. This region is where India's marine safety is focused, and its independence is reliant on the water's surface. India cannot achieve industrial advancement, economic expansion, or a stable political system unless its coastlines are protected (Ballabh, 2013).

Man Mohan Singh, a former prime minister, used this phrase during the 2012 India-ASEAN summit. Additionally, former American Indian ambassadors like Nirupama Rao and later Jai Shanker have used the expression in diplomatic contexts.

Arun Prakesh and Devendra Joshi, both former naval officers, have also spoken the statement at various points in time. The former director of the Defense and Intelligence Agency, in a similar vein, also focused Indian interests outside the Indian Ocean region on establishing geostrategic proximity



to Indo-Pacific coastline states. (Scott, 2012) Over the past two decades, India has mostly faced non-traditional security concerns from the area. It has so taken steps to revive the historical, cultural, economic, and maritime linkages of the area. Due to its proximity to the region and its current bilateral and multilateral littoral responsibilities, it is likewise stepping up its protection and defence. However, the geostrategic importance of the Indo-Pacific area also attracts other international and regional powers, including the US, China, Russia, Japan, and Australia. In this scenario, regional countries like Australia and Japan are likewise increasing their geostrategic and security engagement with the South East Alliance.

6. INDIA'S VIEW ON THE INDO-PACIFIC

The US, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia are just a few of India's particular allies that view the Indo-Pacific as Asia Pacific plus India (Academy, S. 2019, September 07). India is being incorporated into the strategic Asia Pacific framework. In order to effectively combat China, they want India to be present in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. India does its best to work with other nations to provide a framework for national security and peace. For there to be shared wealth and security, the nations must negotiate a regional regulatory framework. The Indo-Pacific region represents a free, open, and welcoming space for India. All of the regional countries are included, as well as those who have an interest in it. India takes into account the region's physical dimensions, from the coasts of Africa to those of America.

The rule-based, free, equitable, and secure trade environment in the Indo-Pacific region, which raises all countries on the tide of trade and investment, is promoted by India. The nation's expectations for the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (RCEP) 22 are the same. India is working toward a united ASEAN rather than a fractured one, in opposition to China. China pursues a conquest strategy of "divide and rule," pitting some ASEAN members against one another. India disagrees with the US Indo-Pacific version, which aims to restrain Chinese dominance. Instead, India is searching for opportunities to work with China.

The region is being democratized by India. Before, the location resembled a lake in the United States. However, there is worry that the land will now turn into a Chinese lake. One instance of this is the battle surrounding Scarborough Shoal. India opposes any participant in the area seizing power. India is seeking to prevent China from having influence over the region by trilateral alliances with nations like France-Australia-France and Indonesia-Australia-Indonesia.

7. CHINA: A CHALLENGE OR A THREAT

China now poses a threat to the countries of the Asia Pacific and even the interests of the Indian Ocean. A few hundred miles off the coast of India, China still controls the port of Hambantota (Sri Lanka). China colonises the region by providing military hardware to its neighbours, including submarines to Myanmar,

frigates to Sri Lanka, equipment to Bangladesh, and equipment to Thailand.

Because several ASEAN members were ruled by China, there is a risk that ASEAN's unity in the Indo-Pacific region will be compromised. However, given that China is ASEAN's biggest commercial partner and cannot be eclipsed by the entire organisation, India's relations with the grouping are further jeopardised.

India and China's interests align on matters like globalisation, climate change, etc. despite many differences. India and China are also a part of other international organisations including the BRICS, SCO, etc. China is therefore perceived as more of a threat to India's influence in the Indo-Pacific than a challenge to its role in the area.

The growing Indo-Pacific framework is riddled with inconsistencies. The US supports respect for the rule of law and international conventions, as well as freedom of navigation and overflight. Despite the Treaty not having been ratified, it upholds several UNCLOS principles.

China is referred to as an economic and strategic rival in the 2018 United States Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which emphasises the Indo-Pacific vs Asia Pacific. However, it also contains a substantial portion devoted to "promot[ing] US values in the Indo-Pacific area." China currently defends its expanding excursions into the IOR by asserting a historical right to the Indian Ocean. The lack of an important neighbouring nation like India is eroding the legitimacy of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

8. CONCLUSION

International law stipulates that nations in the area should have equal access as a right to use open areas in the air and on the water, including unrestricted trade, freedom of movement, and the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, consultation, good governance, accountability, viability, and sustainability should be the cornerstones on which connectivity in the region is constructed. MDA is crucial for the security of the Indo-Pacific region. MDA presumes thorough knowledge of any maritime-related operation that might have an impact on the environment, economics, or safety.

The region needs security, stability, and rules that all the nations in it follow. Additionally, this will enable multipolarity in the region. The smaller states in the area hope that India will step up and provide them more alternatives, both militarily and economically. India should make an effort to meet its standards.

India requires strong naval capabilities, multilateral diplomacy, and economic integration with other countries to tackle the challenges of the Indo-Pacific region. SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region is one example of how India should continue to pursue its vision for the Indian Ocean.



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