

Indo-Pacific

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Indo-Pacific: India's Role in a Changing Geopolitical Landscape

Context:

The Indo-Pacific has become a central geopolitical and strategic region. **India reaffirms its commitment** to ensuring a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

Background:

- The Indo-Pacific encompasses the **Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean** along with the surrounding countries and vital maritime routes.
- Key waterways include the **Strait of Malacca, Taiwan Strait, Bab-al-Mandeb, Straits of Lombok and Sunda**, and the **South China Sea**.

What is the Indo-Pacific?

- Different countries define the extent of the Indo-Pacific differently:
 - **India's conception** stretches from the **shores of Africa to the Americas**, making it more inclusive, as outlined by **Prime Minister Modi**.
 - The **U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS)** under Trump defined the Indo-Pacific as extending from the **west coast of India to the western shores of the USA**.
 - **Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper** described the Indo-Pacific as ranging from the **eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific**, including India, Southeast Asia, North Asia, and the U.S.

From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific

- The concept of the Indo-Pacific has evolved, especially in the last decade, replacing the term "Asia-Pacific."
- **Shinzo Abe**, former Japanese Prime Minister, was one of the early proponents of viewing the **Indian and Pacific Oceans together** as a "broader Asia." His speech at the Indian Parliament, titled "Confluence of the Two Seas," highlighted this.
- The **"Pivot to Asia" policy** under former U.S. President Obama reflected a shift towards focusing on the Pacific region, moving away from the Middle East.

Shifting and Converging Strategic Interests

- The past decade has seen a shift in policy from "Asia-Pacific" to "Indo-Pacific" due to **China's aggression**, threats to key maritime routes, and emerging **non-traditional security challenges**.
- This shift also allowed for the **inclusion of India**, a growing major power, in the frameworks of global actors.
- During Trump's presidency, the U.S. pushed for a **"Free and Open Indo-Pacific"**,

formalizing the concept by renaming the **U.S. Pacific Command to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in 2018**, thus increasing resources and diplomatic focus on the region.

India and the Indo-Pacific

- India's **strategic position** in the Indian Ocean grants it a **pivotal role in counterbalancing China**.
- Through its **"Act East" policy**, India is enhancing ties with **Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific** while mitigating **China's influence**.
- Under Modi, India's shift from **"Look East" to "Act East"** policy, along with the **SAGAR policy (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**, forms the cornerstone of its Indo-Pacific strategy.
- The Indo-Pacific contributes to **62% of global GDP** and **50% of global trade**, with **40% of global oil shipments** passing through its waters. Additionally, **90% of India's trade** and **80% of its critical freight** transit through the region.

Conclusion

- The Indo-Pacific is not limited to traditional security concerns but holds immense potential for addressing **non-traditional security threats** like **climate change, maritime piracy, illegal fishing, natural disasters, and cybersecurity**.
- The region is becoming a hub for **bilateral and multilateral cooperation** on **economic, political, and security issues**.
- Institutions like **ASEAN**, the **Quad**, and frameworks such as the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** highlight the Indo-Pacific's role in **economic integration, technology cooperation, and infrastructure development**.
- By engaging in the Indo-Pacific, **India secures its interests** and contributes to the creation of an **inclusive, cooperative, and sustainable regional order**.

