



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

CHINA'S INDO-PACIFIC AGGRESSION IN 21ST CENTURY: IS IT A THREAT OR A CHALLENGE FOR INDIA?

¹Manabendra Saha,

¹Assistant Professor,

¹Department of Political Science,

¹Rammohan College, Kolkata, India

Abstract: The Indo-Pacific region is one of the foremost crowded and financially dynamic regions of the world which incorporates four continents: Asia, Africa, Australia and USA. 65% of the world's population and 2/3rd of the global financial output makes this region a global financial center. Approximately, 70% of the entire oil and gas reserve of the world are situated in this region. India's special partners, like the USA, Australia, Japan and Indonesia want India's presence in the South China Sea, and East China Sea, basically to counter China. India is looking to democratize the region. In 21st century the rise of People Republic of China as a global financial and military power is a central factor in the Indo-Pacific's importance. India is becoming more militarily and financially aligned with the United States and Europe as a result of China's persistent aggression and ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region.

Index Terms - Indo-Pacific, region, Asia, Africa, Australia, USA, population, financial output, oil, gas reserve, India, Japan, Indonesia, South China Sea, East China Sea, China, military power, aggression, Europe.

I. INTRODUCTION

China and India have a lot of common points; they both have different ethnicity with different dialects. They are also the two only countries to have a population of more than one billion people. China and India have a lot of common points, tensions between the two countries have always been high. It has been nearly one century since the two are battling over the border since they did not negotiate their limitations. This border dispute brought about in a war in 1962, indeed in spite of the fact that they did not enter a new war again since that year, their relations are unsteady. As the two countries are pursuing their own interests and aiming at becoming global powers, it seems like they are ready to confront themselves in the Indo-Pacific region.

The large tangible area that includes the western and central Pacific Oceans, as well as the seas and straits that connect them, is referred to as the Indo-Pacific region. It is an area that stretches from the Arctic to the Antarctic and from the eastern coast of Africa to the western coast of the Americas. In recent years, the term "Indo-Pacific" has become more widely used, especially when addressing geopolitical issues and regional security plans. It is additionally home to a different cluster of cultures and eco-systems, counting coral reefs, tropical rainforests, and parched deserts. The German geopolitician Karl Haushofer Pioneered of the word "Indo-Pacific" in the 1920s in his numerous works. Since 2011 the word "Indo-Pacific" has been used frequently by strategic analysts and high-level government/military leadership in Australia, Japan, and the United States.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF INDO-PACIFIC REGION

- ❖ The Indo-Pacific Region Connects Africa with America: The Indo-Pacific area represents free, inclusivity, and openness to America. It encompasses all of the nations in the region as well as other nations with an interest in it. The US takes into account the region from the coasts of Africa to the US in terms of its geographical boundaries.
- ❖ Opposing the Dominance of an Individual: India wants to see the area become more democratic. It used to resemble an American lake in the past. But there's a worry that the area may turn into a Chinese lake. Like India, the US opposes any player in the region gaining hegemony.
- ❖ Geographical Significance: India, China, Japan, and other nations in the Indo-Pacific area are among the most populated and economically vibrant in the world.
- ❖ Economic Significance: The area has a significant role in propelling the world economy. It has important marine trade routes, such the Strait of Malacca, through which a large amount of global trade is carried out. The Indo-Pacific region is home to many of the busiest and most significant ports in the world, which facilitate trade between Asia, Europe, and Africa.



- ❖ Security and Strategic Concerns: Major countries, including the United States, China, India, and Russia, are engaged in escalating strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific area. Its strategic complexity is increased by the existence of nuclear-armed powers and unresolved territorial conflicts like the South China Sea disputes.

- ❖ Balancing China's Rise: One of the main contributing factors to the Indo-Pacific's importance is China's emergence as a major military and economic force in the world. By fortifying their alliances and collaborations with other like-minded countries, many countries in the area are attempting to counterbalance China's influence and guarantee their own security.

- ❖ Maritime Security: For nations in the Indo-Pacific region, protecting the security of maritime trade routes is a top priority. Maritime security is extremely important because of problems like piracy, territorial conflicts, and the requirement to safeguard sea lanes.

- ❖ Regional Forums and Organizations: A number of regional forums and organizations, like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), QUAD, and ASEAN, are actively involved in addressing regional concerns, fostering economic cooperation, and bolstering security.

- ❖ Infrastructure Development and connection: In the Indo-Pacific region, there is an increasing emphasis on connection initiatives, infrastructure development, and economic integration. The goal of initiatives like the United States' "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is to influence the political and economic climate of the region.

❖ **Environmental and Ecological Significance:** A variety of ecosystems, such as coral reefs and marine biodiversity, can be found throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Global concerns include climate change and environmental problems like plastic waste and overfishing, which impact not only the countries in the region but the entire globe.

III. INDIA'S PERSPECTIVE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

In fact, the US, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia, among other close allies of India, view the Indo-Pacific region as Asia Pacific plus. India is being attempted to be included in the Asia Pacific strategic framework. In order to effectively oppose China, they want India to be present in both the South and East China Seas. Yet, India makes an effort to work with others to establish a framework for national security and peace. The countries must engage in talks to create a shared regulatory framework for the region if they are to enjoy shared prosperity and security. For India, the Indo-Pacific region represents democracy, openness, and inclusivity. It encompasses all the countries in the region as well as those with an interest in it. India views the region as a whole, encompassing the coasts of both Africa and America.

India is advocating for the rule-based, free, fair, and safe trade environment in the Indo-Pacific region, which raises the bar for trade and investment among all countries. It aligns with the nation's expectations on the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (RCEP). India is seeking a one ASEAN, not a split one, in contrast to China. China is attempting a "divide and rule" takeover strategy by pitting certain ASEAN members against others. The US Indo-Pacific version, which aims to restrain Chinese dominance, is not adhered to by India. Instead, India is searching for opportunities to work with China.

India's goal is to democratize the region. Before, the location resembled a lake in the United States. But there's a worry that this may turn the area into a Chinese lake. One instance of this is the fight at Scarborough Shoal. India does not want any player to gain dominance in the region. India is attempting to prevent China from controlling the region by trilateral agreements like those between India, Australia, and France or India, Australia, and Indonesia.

IV. CHINA: A THREAT OR A CHALLENGE

China is becoming a risk to the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and even to the interests of the Indian Ocean. A few hundred kilometers off the coast of India, in the port of Hambantota (Sri Lanka), is under Chinese control. China is encroaching on the region by arming its neighbors with military hardware, including submarines for Myanmar, frigates for Sri Lanka, and gear for Bangladesh and Thailand. Since several ASEAN members were ruled by China, there is a risk that ASEAN's unity in relation to the Indo-Pacific region may be weakened. However, China is ASEAN's biggest commercial partner and is difficult for the rest of the region to eclipse, which puts India's relationships with the grouping at greater risk.

The interests of China and India align on many topics, including globalization and climate change. India and China are members of several international organizations, including the SCO and BRICS. China is therefore viewed as less of a threat to India's dominance in the Indo-Pacific than as a challenge to its position in the area. Regarding the growing Indo-Pacific framework, there are numerous inconsistencies. Similar to India, the United States promotes respect for international norms and the rule of law, along with freedom of navigation and overflight. It complies with numerous UNCLOS principles even if the Treaty hasn't been approved. China is referred to as a geopolitical and economic rival in the 2018 United States Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which favors the Indo-Pacific over the Asia Pacific. Additionally, a significant chunk of it is dedicated to "promoting US values in the Indo-Pacific region." China currently defends its expanding incursions into the Indian Ocean Rim by asserting that it has always had a historical claim to the region. The lack of a vital neighbor like India is undermining China's credibility with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

V. CONCLUSION

International law states that nations in the area should have equal access to and the right to use open spaces in the air and at sea, including unrestricted transit, unfettered trade, and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, consultation, good governance, accountability, viability, and sustainability should be the cornerstones upon which connectivity in the region is constructed. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is critical to the security of the Indo-Pacific. MDA requires a precise grasp of any maritime action that could have an impact on the environment, economy, or safety. The key is security, stability, and rules that all of the countries in the region adhere to. Additionally, this will permit multipolarity in the region. The smaller nations in the area anticipate that India will step up and assist them in increasing their options on the military and economic fronts. India ought to make an effort to meet these standards. India need robust naval capabilities, international diplomacy, and economic integration with other countries to effectively address the challenges posed by the Indo-Pacific region. India must adhere to its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) goal for the Indian Ocean.

REFERENCES

1. BREWSTER David “Japan is back in the Bay of Bengal”, Lowy Institute, September 10th 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/japan-back-bay-bengal>
2. RAMAN Sunil, “The Strategic Importance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands” TheDiplomat.com, January 3rd 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-strategic-importance-of-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/>
3. PATKI Ashutosh.S, “The Andaman and Nicobar: New Delhi’s Bulwark in the Indo-Pacific”, TheDiplomat.com, December 1th 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/the-andaman-and-nicobar-islands-new-delhis-bulwark-in-the-indian-ocean/>
4. PANDA Ankit, “Report: Indian Navy Ejected Chinese Research Ship from Indian Exclusive Economic Zone”, TheDiplomat.com, December 4th 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/report-indian-navy-ejected-chinese-research-ship-from-indian-exclusive-economic-zone/>
5. SINGH Supriya, MARTINEZ Eduardo, “Japan aid for Indian Islands carries China ‘geostrategic overtone’ ” JapanToday.com, April 30th 2022, <https://japantoday.com/category/politics/focus-japan-aid-for-indian-islets-carries-china-strategic-overtone>
6. SANTORA Marc, “What is the “Line of Actual Control” border between India and China” NYTimes.com, June 16th 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/16/world/asia/india-china-border.html>
7. BISWAS Soutik, “India-China clash: 20 Indian troops killed in Ladakh fighting” BBC.com, June 16th 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53061476>
8. Al Jazeera Team, “China, Nepal sign trade, infrastructure and security deals”, AlJazeera.com, October 13th 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/10/13/china-nepal-sign-trade-infrastructure-and-security-deals/>
9. HU Richard W, “China’s “One Belt One Road” strategy: Opportunities and challenges for India”, SAGE Publications, 2017
10. BANERJEE Dipankar , “China’s One Belt One Road: Indian Perspectives” Singapore, March 31st 2016, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2016_14.pdf
11. AHMAS Moonis, “Strategic Meaning of The China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor” Institute of Strategic Studies of Islamabad, 2015

12. DE Prabir, "India's Act East Policy is slowly becoming Act Indo-Pacific policy under Modi government" ThePrint.in, March 27th 2020, <https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/india-act-east-policy-is-becoming-act-indo-pacific/389502/>
13. Sanjeev Miglani, "India deploys warships in South China Sea as part of the 'Act East' Policy" REUTERS.com, August 4th 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-deploys-warships-south-china-sea-part-act-east-policy-2021-08-04/>
14. JAIN Juhi "Deteriorating India-Sri Lanka ties: The Way Out", TheGeopolitics.com, May 12th 2021, <https://thegeopolitics.com/deteriorating-india-sri-lanka-ties-the-way-out/>
15. BAJPAEE Chietigj, "Ukraine Wars Adds pressure points to India's 'Act East' Policy", TheDiplomat.com, March 17th 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/ukraine-war-adds-pressure-points-to-indias-act-east-policy/>

