

Decoding Power Dynamics in Indo-Pacific: A Rivalry Zone of Big Powers

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Abstract:

The rise of the Indo-Pacific, the confluence of two major oceans i.e., the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, as the epi-centre of various activities has intrigued the attention of many geo-political thinkers, scholars, practitioners, actors, and stakeholders. With various countries and international forums using the term 'Indo-Pacific' in their official statements, this term is gaining currency in recent times. Mapping the rise and significance of the Indo-Pacific as a geo-political construct will form the main thrust of the paper. This article will also attempt to explain various shifts in the centres of geo-political activities starting from the Atlantic to Indo-Pacific with the changing time. The scenario from the middle to the current century will be taken into consideration. Major powers of the world are also interested in the Indo-Pacific which are not only overlapping but also contradicting. In this context, finally, this paper would try to explain how the interests of the major stakeholders make the region vulnerable to competition and cooperation. This paper is descriptive and explanatory in nature and observations are inferred from the phenomenon by reviewing the existing literatures.

Key Words: Geo-Politics, Indian Ocean, Indo-Pacific, Major Powers, Mapping, Most Happening Region, Pacific Ocean

Introduction:

Regions are a recent invention of human history, not something organic, timeless, or fundamental. The question of who discovered them is still up for debate, but the fundamental premise is that until navigation and exploration made links between physically isolated places possible, the concept of distinct, independent regions was impractical. The process of demarcating these areas is one that never stops changing, and without considering two different regions, no sense of unique regional identity or borders is conceivable to distinguish against.

Starting from the Atlantic Ocean region emerged as the geo-political centre of world politics in the early modern centuries due to the discovery of the sea route to the American continent by Christopher Columbus. During the First World War, the US transported its soldiers, supplies, and other military equipment to Europe via the Atlantic, creating the concept of an Atlantic alliance that would eventually result in the formation of NATO. The Pacific Ocean, as Admiral James Stavridis (2008) describes, is the 'Mother of All Seas' due to its size and lack of land mass. The US started to be active in the region after acquiring California (1840), but it was not until Hawaii was annexed (1898) that the US was propelled decisively into the region. Trans-Pacific trade initially surpassed Atlantic trade in the 1980s with the restoration of peace, the Japanese revival, and the rise of China, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong. This trend is still present today due to the Pacific region's coasts being home to the biggest world powers.

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The nomenclature of Asia-Pacific began to emerge in the 1960s due to the US's role in the strategic and economic sphere and East Asian countries' success as US trade partners. In the 1980s, APEC was established and China and India began engaging with Asian multilateralism, leading to the integration of East Asia and the Indian Ocean region. ASEAN accepted India, Australia, and New Zealand as members of the East Asia Summit in 2005, highlighting the beginning of the Indo-Pacific era. But, the advent of the 'Indo-Pacific' is more than recent. The 21st century saw the emergence of a geo-political concept of the combination of two Oceans, the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. It is believed that China's efforts to control the sea lanes of communication and bully the littoral states of the South China Sea and the waters of Asia-Pacific have caused instability and an anti-democratic situation in the region. Scholars like Feng Liu (2020) argue that the US and its allies have started emphasising the concept of 'Indo-Pacific' to contain the growing Chinese dominance in the region. But Rory Medcalf (2018) saw it rather differently and views Indo-Pacific as just the Evolution, not the rejection of the Asia-Pacific. However, there is no consensus on the definition and inter-relation of both concepts. It is generally understood that the Indo-Pacific is much bigger and broader than the Asia-Pacific. This is maddening to China, as a great geo-political rivalry is unfurling in the Indo-Pacific that may dominate the geo-political trajectory of the century.

The Rise and Significance of 'Indo-Pacific':

The emergence of China and India is reshaping our conceptual mapping of Asia. Policymakers and strategists are using the phrase "Indo-Pacific" to describe a growing regional strategic structure, which extends from India to the US in the east and from Japan to Australia in the south. Political and military dynamics configure, shape and reshape geopolitical stretches. In this context, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, concepts resembling the Indo-Pacific gained popularity in the study of geopolitics. In several books on geography and geopolitics, including *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* (1924), *Building Blocks of Geopolitics* (1928), *Geopolitics of Pan-Ideas* (1931), and *German Cultural Politics in the Indo-Pacific Space* (1939), the German geo-politician Karl Haushofer coined the term "Indo-Pacific" in the 1920s. Haushofer provided data from marine biology, oceanography, anthropology, and historical philology to support the merger of the two oceans. He envisioned an "Indo-Pacific" alliance between Germany and anticolonial forces in China and India to oppose the maritime hegemony of Western Europe, the US, and Britain (Li, 2021, p. 809).

The Indo-Pacific was still the focus of the region's strategic policies at least into the 1960s. Even when difficulties in communication arose due to the start of the Cold War and the economic isolation of newly independent India and Communist China, the regional states did not give up on the concept. Up to the 1960s, Australian defence documents evaluated the hazards and difficulties that would face the nation's security in the "Indo-Pacific Basin" (*Commonwealth Responsibilities for Security in the Indo-Pacific Region*, 1965). However, in the modern context, experts began to realize the 'Security' linkage between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans in the 2000s. In this context, The phrase was originally used in an article authored by Gurpreet Khurana that appeared in the January 2007 issue of the *Strategic Analysis Journal*, published by Routledge Publication with the title, "Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India–Japan Cooperation" (Khurana, 2007). In this article, the term 'Indo-Pacific' refers to the maritime space stretching from the littorals of East Africa and West Asia, across the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean, to the littorals of East Asia. The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe adopted the phrase's ethos, as seen by his speech to the Indian Parliament in August 2007 in which he referred to the "Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans" as "the

dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity" in "broader Asia" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2007).

Australian officials took the initiative to rebrand the Indo-Pacific in their defence white paper from 2013 (Defence White Paper, 2013). Australia further, cited the term in its 2016-Defence White Paper and 2017-Foreign Policy White Paper (2016 Defence White Paper, 2016; Office & Australia. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017). In April 2017, Japan officially revealed its regional strategy for an 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) through a speech by Abe at the 6th TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) conference held in Kenya. (Japan.Gaimushō & Kishida, 2017). Since then Indo-Pacific found its way into the official discourse and strategy papers of Japan. Similarly, the US under Trump Administration echoed the spirit of the phrase 'FOIP'. It has been used in official papers from the end of 2017, such as the White House National Security Strategy (2017 National Security Strategy of the US of America, 2017), and since 2018 it has been alluded to as a "holistic and integrated government" approach. The White House, and others, the U.S. Department of Defense, the State Department, and the Department of Commerce have either released their respective strategic documents in this respect or at least made reference to the FOIP in public. Obama through his 'Pivot to Asia' policy made the ground for the Indo-Pacific discourse, but Trump aggressively promoted the FOIP strategy and now Biden is continuing the idea of FOIP.

White papers or the formal defence or foreign policy strategic plans are not often released by India on a regular basis, nevertheless, since 2012, various authorities have embraced the Indo-Pacific concept to identify India's strategic, geopolitical, economic, and cultural zones of Interest (*MEA / Statements: Speeches & Statements*, 2013). Prime Minister Modi also has used identical phrasing to describe his goals for relations with Australia and Japan in many instances (Staff, 2014). In addition, Natalegawa, the former foreign minister of Indonesia, called for an 'Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation' in 2013 (Scott, 2019). It was designed to tackle the region's shifting geo-political and geo-economic structure and to contain the ensuing national rivalries. However, ASEAN recognised the Indo-Pacific in 2019 by adopting 'ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific' after more than a year of negotiations (Saha, 2019). Similarly, one of the major players of European Union, Germany, in September 2020, adopted its policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific with the objective of strengthening Germany's role in the Indo-Pacific in the long term (Ulatowski, 2022). The United Kingdom also in its July 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy report titling 'Global Britain in a Competitive Age' declares of its Indo-Pacific tilt recognising the rise of the concept in the present time (Edwards et al., 2022). France, another important global power recognises itself as one of the stakeholders of Indo-Pacific region and framing its strategic defence and foreign policy along with its allies to deal with the challenges arising in Indo-pacific (Fisher, 2020). All these seem to point to the increasing geo-strategic rise and acceptance of the Indo-Pacific concept.

Now the significance of the Indo-Pacific gets improved due to some important factors that have become apparent due to the changing scenarios of the world in terms of economics, geo-politics, trade and communication etc. The region is home to the world's most populous state i.e. China, most populous democracy i.e. India, and largest Muslim-majority state i.e. Indonesia, and includes over half of the earth's population. Among the ten largest standing armies in the world, seven reside in the Indo-Pacific; and six countries in the region possess nuclear weapons, which automatically reflects that the region is increasingly becoming a centre of great-power competition and is seen as key theatre

of strategic influence. Nine of the world's 10 busiest seaports are located in the region, and 60 percent of global maritime trade transits through Asia, with roughly one-third of global shipping passing through the South China Sea alone. Therefore, this region is a critical driver of trade and commerce accounting for the two-thirds of global growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for 60 percentage of global GDP. This region includes the world's largest economies – the US, China, and Japan – and six of the world's fastest-growing economies – India, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Nepal, and the Philippines (The Department of Defense, 2019). Apart from these characteristics, the Indo-Pacific is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and fisheries. The region's natural resources are vital to the global energy security and economic growth. In terms of positioning, the Indo-Pacific region's geographic inclusion of the eastern coasts of Africa and the Middle East adds to its strategic significance. Significantly handling a large portion of shipments of hydrocarbons and other commodities, the Indian Ocean is also home to the world's principal Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs). Hence, the Indo-Pacific area as a whole enjoys a greater strategic significance that is anticipated to continue in the future.

Indo-Pacific for Various Stakeholders: The Big Picture:

Indo-Pacific is the buzzword that is getting successful in attracting important countries in the world. Among many stakeholders, the US is a crucial state that promotes the Indo-Pacific Vision. The Indo-Pacific is a geopolitical strategic construct for the US that enables them to create a thorough framework for formulating policies and cooperating with partners and allies in the region. The phrases "Asia-Pacific" have been officially substituted with "Indo-Pacific" in official US declarations and military institutions by former President Trump. The US has refocused on the Indo-Pacific in an effort to restrict China's extraordinary rise as a result of Chinese "influence operations" in the area and ambitions to create an alternative to become the dominating power in the region and eventually in the world. Hence, the US considers Indo-Pacific as "the single most consequential for America's future" (The Department of Defense, 2019). As a result, the US is constantly making efforts to revamp its ally system in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US document released by the White House in February 2022 categorically mentions, "We will modernize our long-standing alliances, strengthen emerging partnerships, and invest in regional organizations—the collective capacity that will empower the Indo-Pacific to adapt to the 21st century's challenges and seize its opportunities" (Executive Office of the President, 2022, page. 09). Renaming of the United State's Navy's 'Pacific Command' to 'Indo-Pacific Command', creation of multilateral forums like Quadrilateral Dialogue (QUAD), Australia- the United Kingdom- the United States (AUKUS), withdrawing from engaged conflict zones like Afghanistan to shift the security focus on Indo-Pacific are some of the efforts that fine tune with the US's Indo-Pacific tilt.

The Indo-Pacific region is one that Japan has always supported. In his 2007 Confluence of the Two Seas speech to the Indian Parliament, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pushed for a regional order founded on principles of democracy, human rights, and uninterrupted access to the region's maritime commons. He also mooted the concept of four-country negotiations between Japan, the US, Australia, and India. As discussed earlier, the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" (FOIP), which Japan officially presented in April 2017, addresses Japan's primary security risks from North Korea and China. It seeks to counteract these dangers and engage with allies and partners who share the same values through involvement in the Indo-Pacific. In addition, Japan also requires to secure its SLOCs that cross the South China Sea and East China Sea, where China is bullying the littoral states

by aggressively promoting its historical claims on the waters, islands and thereby posing a direct threat to free trade and supplies in case of a conflictual scenario.

The Australian Foreign Policy White Paper, published in 2017, puts out Australia's vision and perspective on the Indo-Pacific. Australia, for a long, had been struggling between relying on China for its economic needs and being an ally of the US. However, since they contributed to the conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific construct, they intend to operate within the confines of the established Indo-Pacific framework. Unfortunately, the Indo-Pacific strategy of Australia is likely to be unstable and subject to the whims of electoral politics because there is a lack of agreement on foreign policy and the region.

The UK also supports the "Indo-Pacific" tilt. Though being the colonial power, it has been there in the region for centuries, starting from colonial era to present times, its new focus on the Indo-Pacific is the result of primarily two reasons: the significant rise of the new thinking of the Indo-Pacific in the global arena and its concern of not being left irrelevant in defining the future course of geopolitics that is strongly aligned with the region, and its quest for engaging with other major players after quitting European Union. As a result, UK is pressing for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, involved in the US-led AUKUS group to manage its security role in the Indo-Pacific, and permanently sending its Naval Vessels to address security issues in the region (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2022). But, the UK vision for the Indo-Pacific is just similar to that of the US's vision.

France inhabits in the Indo-Pacific. France's overseas territories—Mayotte, La Réunion, Scattered Islands, French Southern and Antarctic Territories, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and French Polynesia—occupy 93% of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. 1.5 million French people and 8,000 soldiers live there. Given this and France's aim of a stable, law-based, multipolar system, the Indo-Pacific is a priority for French diplomacy and an important partner (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, n.d.). Hence, France is engaging with its likeminded countries like India and others to navigate its Indo-Pacific strategy by sharing the vision of a Strategic Autonomy.

ASEAN, an association of ten nations, connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans from its central location in the Indo Pacific. ASEAN's geostrategic importance in the Indo-Pacific affects China and the US-led alliance system. China relies on the SLOCs and ASEAN to project its power and legitimise the Maritime Silk Route's extension into Europe and Africa. As part of a geo-gravitational plan, China is connecting continental South East Asia to vital SLOCs to enhance its influence. ASEAN must maintain balance to prevent China from dominating the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN is weak because its member nations are economically dependent on Beijing, lack coherence, and cannot deter the Chinese challenge. ASEAN's Indo-Pacific strategy is unclear. India's quest for ASEAN centrality is a hidden attempt to calm ASEAN concerns and unify a split ASEAN.

Beijing, the region's key player, sees the US's strategic ambitions in its neighbours as targeting China. After three decades of fast economic growth, China wants to utilise its material power to influence Asia and the world. The US hinders Beijing's goal. China has maintained its Asia-Pacific position in response to the Indo-Pacific plan. In various official pronouncements, Beijing has voiced reluctance to use the phrase "Indo-Pacific" or construct a Chinese "Indo-Pacific strategy." Wang Yi, the foreign minister of China, stated to reporters in March 2018 that the Indo-Pacific idea is "like the sea foam

in the Pacific or Indian Ocean”—that it “may get some attention, but soon will dissipate” (Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press, 2018). According to Chinese experts, the region's states see China as a development opportunity rather than a danger, despite territorial disputes and different goals. However, joining of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific system would isolate China in the region. The Indo-Pacific concept's biggest weakness, according to Chinese analysts, is that it lacks a credible economic dimension or pillar and does not threaten China's attractiveness as a trade and investment partner (including under the BRI). This criticism targets the US, whose Indo-Pacific policy (FOIP) prioritises security. Chinese academicians doubt the concept's long-term viability because the four primary proponents of the Indo-Pacific have conflicting economic interests (Heiduk & Wacker, 2020).

Again, India is central to the Indian Ocean as ASEAN does the Western Pacific. 90% of India's energy imports and 90% of its trade by volume come through these waterways. The Indian Ocean region has 40 littoral states and 40% of the world's population (Jayashankar, n.d., 2015). The Lombok Strait, the Sunda Strait, the Malacca Straits, the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, the Mozambique Channel, and the Bab el Mandeb are all located in the IOR (Indian Ocean Region), along with other significant choke points throughout the world. Two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one-third of the bulk cargo, and half of the container traffic all pass through the IOR (About IORA – Indian Ocean Rim Association – IORA, n.d.). Thus, regional peace, stability, and security make the Indian Ocean region more crucial than ever. China's military deployments, port leasing, and predatory economics in the Indian Ocean pose a strategic threat. These activities may threaten a vital region for international trade. India seeks to establish the "rule of law" and promote a "free and open" Indo-Pacific, whereas China wants to establish international rules that reflect its values. China's Belt and Road Initiative's "Maritime Silk Road" crosses the Indian Ocean. China might control the Indian Ocean with a presence in Bangladesh's Chittagong, Sri Lanka's Hambantota, Sudan's Port Sudan, Somalia's Maldives, Seychelles, and Pakistan's Gwadar. Chinese naval investments in the Indian Ocean suggest dual-use for military operations and infrastructure development. China is swaying Southeast Asia and East Africa to its future goals through its political, economic, and military power.

Different Perceptions of the Stakeholders on the Indo-Pacific:-

Include China Exclude China

Actors	Term/Label	Key Elements	Main Initiatives	View of Regional Order
ASEAN	Indo-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ASEAN at the core of Indo-Pacific regional understanding and cooperation - Maintaining a 'Rules-based Order' in the region for Peace - Bolstering Multilateralism 	None	Multilateralism
QUAD	Free and Open Indo-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining a 'Rules-based Order' in the Region - Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific - No hegemony of any single country in the region - Countering the Unilateral change in the status quo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint Exercises (Malabar Exercise etc.) - QUAD Leaders' Summit - Covid 19 Vaccine Diplomacy - Blue Dot Network (Infra Initiative) - Cyber Security Dialogues 	Multilateralism
United States	Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep China in Check - Uphold International Law - Security cooperation under the QUAD framework to be improved. - Trade that is free, fair, and mutual; - Enhanced connectivity via infrastructure development (an alternative to BRI); - Protection of maritime freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure Projects (particularly Western Pacific) - Expansion of Security Cooperation with Japan, Australia and India - The 2+2 Summit with Japan, Australia, and India - The Revival of QUAD - Updating the United States military; - supplying weapons to allies in Asia - Mutual Economic Assistance Treaty 	Bilateral
Japan	Free and Indo-Pacific Vision (Until 2018: Strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining order based on rules - Security Framework: Enhanced Security Cooperation - Developing fresh trade and investment opportunities - Expansion of existing infrastructure for better connections - Delivering an Alternative to BRI - Protecting the Freedom to Navigate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure initiatives (particularly in East Africa, South and Southeast Asia) - Asia-Africa Development Corridor - Increased security - Cooperation with the United States, India, and Australia - "2+2" dialogues with the United States of America, India, and Australia - Restoration of the Quad - Multilateral and bilateral free-trade accords 	Trade Policy: (Multilateral) Security Policy: (Bilateral, multilateral)

India	Indo-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining an order based on standards that ASEAN is essential to regional cooperation ("ASEAN centrality") - Improvement of connectivity through expansion of infrastructure - Offering substitutes for BRI - Protecting the liberty to navigate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure development (particularly in South Asia) - Asia-Africa Growth Corridor - Enhancing security cooperation with the US, Japan and Australia - engage in 2+2 conversations with Australia, Japan and the USA 	Trade Policy (Bilateral); Security Policy: (Multilateral)
Australia	Indo-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enforcing rules based order - Enhanced Quad security cooperation - Expanding new trade and investment markets - Infrastructure development improves connection. - Alternatives to the "Belt and Road" Initiative - Maintaining navigation freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure projects (particularly in PNG and the South Pacific) - Security collaboration with US, Japan, India - 2+2-dialogues with India, Japan, USA - Quad Strategic revival - Security Dialogues with ASEAN nations - Asia-based arms sales - Free-trade agreements 	Trade Policy: (Multilateral) Security Policy: (Bilateral, Multilateral)
China	Asia-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing Chinese Hegemony in the Region - Aggressive Navigation - Military Modernisation - Assert territorial claims basing on History - Economic cooperation - Debt trap Diplomacy - Expanding BRI and Chinese soft Power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belt and Road Initiative - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank - Exports promotion through Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership - Militarisation of South China Sea Islands - Promotion of '9 Dash Line' - Constructions of New Artificial Island under the 9 Dash Line Claim - Modernising the Blue Water Navy 	(Bilateral)
Russia	Asia-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Cooperation - Military Presence - Diplomatic Engagements with the Pacific nations through Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation - Energy Diplomacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening Trade and Economic Ties - Developing Transport Infrastructure (to Enhance Connectivity to Asia Pacific) - Building Strategic Partnership 	(Bilateral)

		- Arctic Development	- Enhancing Military Cooperation (Especially with China and India) - Promotion of People to People and Cultural exchange	
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(Source: Author's Own Calculation)

The Perilous Path Ahead:

In addition, China and North Korea's disorderly and hostile attitude threatens the security of several states in the region. This is forcing others in the region to either strengthen their capacity or join the US's Indo-Pacific framework, increasing animosity between China and its allies (like Russia and North Korea) and US allies (like Japan, Australia, South Korea, Taiwan, etc.). India, ASEAN, and other important regional players are likewise uneasy with Chinese attitude and advances into their waters, thus they are increasing their engagements with the US. Thus, a great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific will affect regional peace and stability.

Concluding Observations and Policy Suggestions:

The growth of the Indo-Pacific region is the defining development of the twenty-first century. As India's Foreign Minister, Dr S. Jayashankar views, "We are now at the cusp of something big. As we seek to discern the outlines of what emerges next, there is no question that Indo-Pacific would be very much at its core" (The Print, 2021). This remark is significant since it is becoming true with the passage of time. The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a result of the world's changing geopolitical realities where the US is putting efforts to remain the sole superpower of the world, China is rising, India is growing and the larger geo-political focus of the world is shifting towards Indian and Pacific Oceans. In this context, French Novelist Victor Hugo's quote, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come" (*Nothing Is More Powerful Than an Idea Whose Time Has Come*, 2019) appears to be true in the case of the rise of the Indo-Pacific. As today, practically all influential Asian, European, and American countries are not only eagerly pursuing their Indo-Pacific plans in order to be a part of this critical geopolitical evolution but also the countries that oppose the Indo-Pacific notion but support the Asia-Pacific are likewise unable to ignore this development. Though the interests of each stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific are occasionally aligned, there are also many grey areas where different actors' approaches are contradictory. Naturally, this leads to both collaboration and competition among these players. This is because the Indo-Pacific is still in its early stages. As a result, it is reasonable to state that the future of the Indo-Pacific is supposed to be determined by the interplay of bilateral and multilateral relationships among key stakeholders. For example, the resolution to the disputes in the South China Sea will require a recognition of the rights and interests of all countries in the region, as well as a willingness to work towards a peaceful and cooperative solution and adhere to the idea of free navigation in the International waters.

Further, Countries in the region should have equal access to common spaces on the sea and in the air as a right under international law, which would need freedom of passage, unhindered commerce, and peaceful resolution of conflicts in accordance with international law. It is critical to build regional connections on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, consultation, good governance, transparency, viability, and sustainability. For Indo-Pacific security, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is required. MDA entails a thorough awareness of any maritime operation that may have an

influence on security, safety, the economy, or the environment. The region's countries' security, stability, and law-abiding nature are critical. This will also allow for multi-polarity in the region. Smaller states in the region hope for India to step up and assist them in expanding their economic and military options. India, thus, should not only work hard to achieve its objectives but also try to fulfil these hope as far as possible as a responsible power in the region. To solve the Indo-Pacific region's difficulties, India needs strong naval capabilities, international diplomacy, and economic integration with states. India must implement appropriate policies and actions for promoting and defending its own interests in the Indian Ocean. SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region- is India's goal for the Indian Ocean, which focuses both on India's own interests and the interests of the Indian Ocean littoral countries. Likewise, the stakeholders' immediate focus should be on developing shared standards, which could serve as the foundation for broader integration in the future. These standards will address employment rights, environmental standards, intellectual property rights protection, and rules governing the digital economy. The countries' Indo-Pacific plans must focus on building connections with all stakeholder countries. Countries have increasingly emphasised resilience and national security considerations over economic gains from free trade and investment flows in response to geopolitical tensions, but they must proceed with utmost caution before taking dramatic actions.

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