

“Indo-US Collaboration in Indo-Pacific and its Implications on the Asian Region”

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Abstract

The rise of a new economic giant in the Asian region i.e., China in the 21st century has made many global and regional powers stressed and the US is one of those countries which is worried about rising China in Asia and therefore, it is taking different measures to counter the rise of China in every manner. For this purpose, they have collaborated with one of the regional powers in the south of Asia i.e., India to counter China in the region. This paper focuses on the collaboration of countries i.e., India, Japan, along with Australia and the US in the Indo-Pacific region and how this collaboration would be able to serve the interests of the US in the region against China.

Key Words:

India, China, US,
Indo-Pacific

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has now become the epicenter of every other state’s foreign policy and debates in the world mainly in the Indo-Pacific region. This region has gained immense importance in the international arena, and because of its strategic position, the region is resulting in giving multiple perspectives and ideas, as this region consists of half of the world population and GDP of the world. This region is also covering the entire Pacific Ocean region and the Indian Ocean; therefore, it is significant for so many states around these oceans. Moreover, the QUAD states have been influencing in this region (India, Australia, USA, and Japan), and the majority of the smaller states are being benefitted by the programs initiated by these states mainly the USA and India.

Still, there are some doubts regarding the influence of major powers in the region. People are having doubts and require clarity regarding the increasing influence of QUAD states.⁵ A survey was conducted by the ASEAN studies center, where a question was asked from the people of southeast Asians regarding their view on the Indo-Pacific region and the increasing influence of major powers so about 60% of the people told that they were not clear regarding this concept and need more clarity about it or the agenda being posed by the major powers in the region. In addition to that, some of the people are having different views regarding the concept of the Indo-Pacific region, about 26% of people thought that this is the agenda of the US and its allies to contain China where 18% of people were having the view that it is the agenda of major powers to dominate the ASEAN states in this region. So, there were multiple views regarding this concept that needs more clarity.

Research Inquiry

How growing Indo-US relations in the Indo-pacific region will take the Asian region to the verge of futuristic wars which can be mainly derived by paroxysm?

Intervening Variables

Intervening variables in this research will include trade, alliances, regional organizations, social movements, and paroxysms. These variables play a different role at different strata of the Indo-US alliance and thus by effect variably.

Objective of the Research

We can see the objectives of this research from the topic and how these objectives can lead to wars and conflict in the Asian region, which can be mainly derived by the paroxysm. But, if we point out the core objectives of the research here, then it includes the collaboration of the US and India in the Asian region to counter or make the region less vulnerable to the conflicts or wars that can occur in the future. To attain the objectives, different

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intervening variables like trade, regional organization, the formation of alliances have been kept engaged to facilitate the research. The objective also revolves around the collaboration of the US and India, and how this collaboration has been evolved in the last decade and what factors have played a vital role in the evolution of these objectives and what factors have brought these two countries to get closed, and what purpose this collaboration will serve to the region and these two countries and their alliance in the Asian region.

Research Methodology

A combined set of methodological manifestations were used here. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used simultaneously to extract and analyze correct narratives present by either western ideology or western dominated occidentals mainly Indians scholars. In this case study, a metatheoretical tool named post-positivism was enforced. But, our research is mainly focused on interpretivism’ school of thought, where the literature review was mainly focused.

Us Interest in Indo-Pacific Region and Strategic Partnership with India:

Indo Pacific Strategy Report

On June 1, 2019, the US Defence Department released an Indo Pacific Strategic Report which is Washington’s approach toward various stakeholders working and present in the Indo Pacific Region. And the report also emphasizes on making of new partners and alliances for “the peace and stability of the region”. The two major points of the report highlight US interests and its foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific Region. The first point is the US sees China as a challenger in this region, a great power competitor, and considers it as a threat to the stability of the region. The second important point is the US sees India as an important partner to the US. We can say that the great power politics is coming back in this region where major emerging powers like China, India, and some smaller powers like Japan, Australia are present. Moreover, the region of Asia Pacific almost covers and connects the whole world so the great powers like the US and Russia have also turned their eyes towards the region of the Indo-Pacific region.

US Interest in Indo Pacific Region

The word “Indo Pacific strategy” was first used by Gurpreet S Khurana who is a marine strategist and executive director of Marine Foundation in New Delhi. Then this term was used again and again by different world leaders especially the US president MR. Trump. It gave us an idea that the US needs and will use Asian partners to pursue its foreign policy in Indo Pacific region most importantly India because India is an emerging power with the world’s greatest market and military. Many of the analysts say that the idea of the Indo-Pacific strategy is just to counter the rise of China, and the US-backed off from India to counter as an economic and military power in the region. But many analysts also have a view that this Indo Pacific strategy is just the provision of “Obama’s rebalancing of Asia Pacific” strategy. Indo Pacific strategy is basically to counter the rise of China by making new alliances and partners and to push back China’s revisionist policy.

The other major interest of the US in the Indo-Pacific Region is to counter China which is now the world's second major economy after the US with total GDP of 34.27 and is a threat to the Superpower United States of America. It is not only rising economically but militarily and politically as well. Its regional influence is also growing day by day so the US wants some strategic partners in the region to counter China.

The other deep interest of the US is that the US wants to maintain and safeguard its world leadership through any means because it is feeling that the great superpower status and influence is going away from its hands. Every major player is playing in the region of Indo Pacific thinking of it as a chessboard, so the US also wants to adopt a strategic pivot to Asia and East policy because it is the region of all world great powers in the future.

Indian Interest in Indo-Pacific Region

“Indian Ocean region” is of great importance and almost 40% of the world trade and out of 16 trillion-dollar club countries 12 do trade through the major portion of this trade which is fuel-based.

India is a newly industrialized state with no personal energy sources to run so it is highly dependent on imported fuel because India imports a major part of its energy sources from the middle east but the middle eastern region is often troubled and in the case of Iran, US sanctions are making headless for fuel and gas imports but it cannot afford any interruption in its continuous import of fossil fuels so it is trying to go for alternatives those mainly are from the Indian ocean

India is there to counter China in the Indian ocean region mainly and for the sake of countering, it is converting its brown water conventional navy into blue water Navy and therefore, they introduced the Indian Ocean Strategy for Modi 2.0, and in this strategy, they revisited their policy of 2004 and claimed that it is going to secure Indian ocean region and for this reason, they opted the SAGA policy (Stability and Growth for all).

According to Indian analysts, the Indian Ocean has a threat from 3 things:

- Piracy
- Separatist's movements
- Islamic fundamentalism

Strait of Malacca and horn of Africa are the most vulnerable ones and Somalian piracy is the biggest threat out of it. Indian policymakers argue that India should bargain with the US on the issue to support:

- Indian stance of the permanent seat.
- Accept India as a legitimate nuclear state.
- Declare LOC as the international border.

Indian hegemonic designs are mainly dependent on its economic stature and its economic stature depends on its control of the Indian Ocean.

Common Interests of US and India in the Indo Pacific Region

Certain interests have brought India and the US on the same page and made them good allays for working in this region. First, both stand for a "free and open Indo-Pacific". Rex Tillerson, US secretary of state said that the US sees India as an important partner in Free and Open Indo Pacific. Moreover, Mr. Trump in his APEC summit speech also recognized India as a major partner in the Indo-Pacific region. For "Free and Open Indo Pacific" the President of the US said that we want a safe, prosperous, free, and open Indo Pacific where the sovereignty of states should be respected, disputes should be resolved and international rules must be followed. He also said that Indo Pacific must not be dominated by any state and should be free for navigation and trade. Therefore, both countries believe in the safety and prosperity of the region and equal treatment.

Other points of convergence include the perception of China and the approach towards non-traditional threats. Both see China as a potential challenger and their concerns are different but the whole crust of their approach towards China is the same. India is more concerned about the Chinese navigation, reach, and activity in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean whereas the US perceives China as a threat to its superpower status. But again, both consider China as a country that should be countered. Both countries have the same concept and approach toward Non-traditional security threats which include piracy, trafficking, climate change, non-state actors' threat, humanitarian Crisis, and disaster relief.

Mutual Initiatives are Taken by the US and India

It would be in the better interest of both India and the USA to have companionship here to gain more popularity in the region. India has been providing skills and workshops to the citizens of the region in various sectors including agriculture, trade, and many other sectors. They have initiated a mega program 'feed the future' which is a triangular program of India along with the African states and America. It is being funded by USAID. In addition to that, India is having a partnership with the African states for various agriculture programs and platforms in the region. Apart from that, India had also initiated various programs in Asia regarding the energy and power projects and cross border electricity projects in south Asia for the sake of development in the region. Moreover, India is conducting various workshops in Nepal and Bhutan for providing trading skills and designing of operations in various sectors.

Asia Pacific region has now become the center of debate and discussion in many communities and states around the world. Many states are outlining their foreign while keeping this region as the center of attention.

This is a heterogeneous region consisting of about 38 states, covering half of the world's GDP and population. Moreover, major powers have been increasing their influence in the region for the sake of maximizing their interest and for some states like the US and India to retain tier status quo and future progress respectively. Therefore, the QUAD states have been increasing their influence in the region making alliances to contain rising China in the region. However, those major powers have not yet given any statement regarding the containment of China but they're focusing their attention towards the development of all the states in the region by calling it free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) where everyone is welcomed.

Economic Cooperation in Indo-Pacific Region

The Indo-Pacific region has become the apex of the foreign policy and debates of any other state in the country, mainly in the Indo-Pacific region. Owing to its geographical role in the region, this region has assumed tremendous significance in the international sphere, contributing to several viewpoints and ideas in the region, as this area has half the world's population and GDP. It is the area that covers the entire region of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean; it is, therefore, vital for so many states across these oceans. In addition, the QUAD states (India, Australia, the USA and Japan) have been dominant in this area, where the majority of the smaller states are getting benefits primarily from the US and from the India. There are still some uncertainties about the dominance in the region of the major powers and people have concerns about the growing power of QUAD states and need clarification. The ASEAN Study Centre conducted a survey where people from Southeast Asia were asked about their views on the Indo-Pacific region and the growing impact of major powers, and it resulted that they were not sure and clear, and therefore required further information about it or specifically, the policy that was being put forward by the major powers in the region.

Military Cooperation in Indo-Pacific Region

As we have discussed earlier that the agenda which put the US and India on the same page is their same stance regarding “Free and Open Indo Pacific Region”. And that's why, along with other sectors, the US is also strengthening its defense ties with India. Most of the scholars have claimed three basic reasons behind this cooperation. First, the huge population and security issues of India have attracted the US and they have found India as a huge market for exporting their defense tools. India is the world's largest importer of arms and also possesses the world second-largest military force in the world. According to *The New York Times*, just in the past decade, the US has made arms deal of \$15 Billion with India. Secondly, some believe that the US wants to mitigate the influence of Russia on India and the basic reason behind the dependence of India on Russia is their arms trade with Russia. Currently, the US is the second-largest exporter of arms to India. So, the US is trying to make India more dependent on them than on Russia, to use them as the strongest ally in the Eastern region. The third and the most important reason is that the US is perceiving threat from the rise of China, so, they are passing the buck towards India to contain China in the region. Therefore, the US is favoring India on every platform and empowering them to use them against China.

2+2 Dialogue

This is the pivotal annual meeting, in which they final many defense agreements. These meetings also revolve around the “Indo-Pacific Region”. The “2+2” means that in these meetings, two ministries take part from both parties. Those ministries are the Minister of External Affairs and the defense minister. These bilateral meetings were initiated in 2018 and the first meeting was held in September 2018. The outcomes of the first “2+2 Dialogue” significantly enhanced their economic and military relations. Some of those outcomes were the following:

1. It was finalized that India will post their representative at the “US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) in Bahrain”.
2. It was confirmed by both US and India that they will cooperate on defense innovative units, specifically between “America's Defense Innovation Unit and The Indian Defense Innovation Organization”.
3. Indian application for the membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was vetoed till today by China, but in this meeting, the US again endorsed their membership in NSG.
4. Both parties signed the “Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)”.

COMCASA

It is a foundational agreement that will facilitate the defense cooperation between the US and India. According to a joint statement about COMCASA, released by both parties after the first 2+2 Dialogue was, “will facilitate access to advanced defense systems and enable India to optimally utilize its existing U.S.-origin platforms. ”COMCASA is the amalgamation of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the “Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)” in 2016. It provides a legal framework for exporting and importing the advanced and highly sensitive communication security equipment between both parties, that will strengthen and play a supportive role in facilitating interoperability between the armed forces of both countries. It also allows the US to export its high-tech equipment such as armed surveillance drones to India. Through this agreement, they can exchange intelligence information related to the military. The US does not sign such agreements with everyone but only with some closer allies. Till today, they have signed such agreements with only NATO allies.

Future Implications

Evolving Situation in Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific is considered as the backyard for many of the developing countries in terms of economies. India comes out as one of the most important and largest countries in the operationalization of the Indo-Pacific thus it is standing at the most important position (center) and taking an immensely important geopolitical position and allies as well. But it is also very important to note that India cannot work in isolation rather it needs allies for cooperation to share maritime domains with the Pacific. India has stayed an essential entertainer in the administration of the Indian Ocean; however, it can't work in confinement. Or maybe it needs participation with other significant Indian Ocean littorals, a considerable lot of whom likewise happen to impart sea areas to the Pacific, in this manner associating the economies of the two seas. India's methodology around the Indo-Pacific, thusly, can be best observed working couple with the sea strategy contemplations of other Indo-Pacific littorals. Henceforth, one must look at the resistance and international strategy white papers of the four huge vote-based systems Australia, Japan, and the US, alongside India to comprehend their origination of the Indo-Pacific as an area and the dangers confronting that locale and their inclinations.

Indo-Pacific Strategy

Last December American administration issued national security strategy 2018, where they explicitly asserted India as a major regional power in USPACOM and categorically persuaded Indian regional alliances. National international like Modi, which is been defined by their ethnic identities and ruled under religious playgrounds. Hindu Apocalyptic theorists are describing Modi's government as the golden age of Hindu's. 1st July US state department released its Indo-pacific strategy which can be considered as the continuation of NNS-18 but at subregion of USPACOM. The main aim was deepening and expanding US partnership with allies and friends around Indian and Pacific littoral states but principal among them was cooperation with India. The main theme which has been described by the state department is the proliferation of ideas called a common outlook and realization of free and open Indo-Pacific oceans. But what is not present is the US-dominated Indo-Pacific region where US outlook will be enhanced from Pacific power to Indian Ocean naval might with his Indian friend. The same paper described India as a major defense partner, Trump administration wants India less inflicted by Russian military exports. According to the US India must be dependent upon American military exports in the future and clear defense cooperation can be seen through extensive military exercises including all three-fractions army, navy, air force. This can also be seen through; the Indian military had performed the joint military exercise with the US military than any military in the world.

The Rift between Policies

Strategic alliances between modern-day states have always been predominated by a balance of power or convergence of national interests in-between states. And this had happened between the cooperation of two nationalist internationalists' leaders Trump and Modi but apart from all good going rifts are present. The general preference system covers 10% of Indian exports in the American market but over 190 million dollars tariffs were imposed on Indian products, the recent issue surfaced when the Chinese threat was considered by the US as an

existential threat and started a trade war. Despite US sanctions and waivers given to the Indian administration, Indian did not halt its extensive imports of Iranian oil. Furthermore, this rift had been mitigated by secret meetings between two governments avoiding the public eye. Turkey was under great pressure to purchase of Russian missile system. Indian administration proposed the purchase of S-400, maybe this can initiate a more powerful statement of trump towards Modi.

Both nations conceptualize the Indo-pacific region differently. For US area which comes under USPACOM is considered as Indo-pacific region which starts from western coasts to Indian shores to the western coast of American lands in the northern Pacific Ocean. But Indian conceptualization of this region contains the whole of the Indian Ocean from the southwestern most tip of the Indian Ocean, lands of South Africa, and Indian dominated islands till eastern tip contains Australia. Which includes USPACOM, CENTCOM, and AFCOM. Maintain a hold on pan commands around the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the US wants a greater Indian role in the Pacific Ocean while India wants to dominate Indian Ocean waters.

Regional Challenges

Iran fears overblown; rift is mitigated in high-level meetings behind the public eye. Moreover, US-supported trilateral relations are formed through the Chabahar seaport. Cooperation in South Asia, state department reports indicate that the US seeks to broaden and strengthen its partnership in south Asia including Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, and countries around the Bay of Bengal, and to mitigate the Chinese growing character of south Asian actor. Coordination in Southeast Asia, a future sub-region where two outside powers will flex their muscles, has been developed as primary theater. Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia were considered by the US as crucial countries for stability and economic growth in the region. Indian look east policy and US rebalancing in region and convergence of interests will play a significant role shortly. Fear of Provo kinging china that if this convergence of interest goes beyond the economic realm then physical confrontation can take place. Not only with china can adverse reaction from other countries be difficult to handle. Pakistan, for us it's the right time to engage with India as India is about to take part in various regional activities, India could not present everywhere, but Indian engaged Pakistan first in Kashmir to settle scores with neighbors then start a regional theme of becoming Asian tiger.

The major powers like the USA and China are also in the race of being dominant in the region, trying to increase their alliances and influence in this region. The USA is the close ally of India is trying to get more benefit from the region because of the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the controversies in the Strait of Malacca between India and China and the ongoing dispute in the South China Sea are creating trouble among all the major powers like the US, China, Japan, and India in the region. They are trying to have greater influence because most of the trade is being done through this passage and no one wants to get out of it, all the states are trying to extract greater benefits from this region.

Conclusion

Asia-Pacific region has now become the center of debate and discussion in many communities and states around the world. Many states are outlining their foreign while keeping this region as a center of attention. This is a heterogeneous region consisting of about 38 states, covering half of the world's GDP and population. Moreover, major powers have been increasing their influence in the region for the sake of maximizing their interest and for some states like the US and India to retain tier status quo and future progress respectively. Therefore, the QUAD states have been increasing their influence in the region making alliances to contain rising China in the region. However, those major powers have not yet given any statement regarding the containment of China, but they were focusing their attention toward the development of all the states in the region by calling it "Free and Open Indo-pacific (FOIP)" where everyone is welcome.

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