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Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's Strategic Interests

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Abstract

The Indo-Pacific is becoming as a crucial geopolitical and strategic region for global power dynamics, seas, security, and the economy. The current study uses qualitative secondary source analysis to investigate India's strategic interests and the Indo-Pacific strategy. It emphasizes the evolution of the Indo Pacific idea, India's strategic objectives, important projects like the Act East Policy, SAGAR, and the Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative, as well as partnerships like the QUAD. The report also looks at how India's position in the area is affected by China and the escalating strategic rivalry between the US and China. The analysis emphasizes India's desire to increase economic integration, regional cooperation, marine security, and strategic autonomy. In terms of trade, investment, technology, connectivity, and regional cooperation, as well as geopolitical competition, maritime security, and regional balance, the Indo Pacific presents India with both opportunities and problems. Finally, the study demonstrates how a balanced, inclusive, and partnership-based approach may protect India's national interests and its contribution to the changing Indo-Pacific regional order.

Keywords: *Indo*-Pacific, India, Strategic Interests, Strategic Autonomy, Maritime Security, QUAD, China, Regional Cooperation, Geopolitics

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific is a vital geopolitical and strategic zone in the current world relations. The region connects the Indian and Pacific oceans and has important economic centers, shipping routes and critical countries. However, it has acquired importance in the backdrop of increasing economic interdependencies, marine security concerns, connectivity, regional competition and shifting power equations (Vashisht, 2023). India's geographical location, marine tactics and increasing relations with Southeast Asian and other regional countries make the Indo-Pacific especially significant for India.

India's vision of the Indo-Pacific area is based on a holistic view of Indo-Pacific security and cooperation. Its goal is to build a free, open, inclusive and rules-based regional order, and preserve its own national interests. Therefore, maritime security, economic cooperation, connectivity, defense collaborations and regional security are the core pillars of India's Indo Pacific policy (Vinodan, C., & Kurian, 2024). India's Act East Policy, SAGAR and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative are India's attempts to boost its relations with the area. With the changing power dynamics in the Indo Pacific region, the strategic importance of the region for India has also increased with the development of China. India wants to respond to these new challenges and to maintain its strategic autonomy and create connection with important regional and extra-regional powers. It is also cooperating with the United States, Japan and Australia in the QUAD and in the cooperation with ASEAN and regional partners, which is an example of the multi-dimensional nature of its Indo-Pacific policy. Meanwhile, India's objective is to balance and hedge strategically to resist competing regional interests (Rajagopalan, 2020).

The Indo Pacific also offers immense economic opportunities for India in terms of trade, investment, connectivity, supply chain cooperation and Technology Partnership. These opportunities are also closely related to India's vision of enhancing its regional and global standing. Thus, the area can be considered as a security space as well as an essential platform for India's economic and diplomatic involvement (Baruah, 2022).

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In this regard, the present study seeks to examine the Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's Strategic Interests with the help of the following points: Evolution of the Indo-Pacific concept, India's approach, Key Indo-Pacific initiatives and partnership, China factor and challenges and opportunities for India (Aryal, S. K., & Nair, 2025). It is a secondary source based study, which aims to give an analytical understanding of India's role and interests in the changing regional order of the Indo-Pacific region.

Literature Review

(Liu, H., & Jamali, 2021) examined the Indo-Pacific policy of India from the perspective of "pragmatic balancing" between the United States and China. The study concluded that the Indian government wants to build closer partnership with U.S. on strategic and maritime security issues but would not like to confront China. The elements like strategic autonomy, maritime security in the Indian Ocean and maintenance of economic relations are recognized as being important in the Indian strategy. The study notes that India's Indo-Pacific policy is not just about security cooperation with the big boys; it also means safeguarding its own foreign-policy options. "This is a vital starting point to understanding India's strategic posture in the face of a rising US-China competition.

(Behera, 2023) discussed the consequences of AUKUS for India's Indo-Pacific policy, focusing on the QUAD and India's navy policy. The study argues that AUKUS has changed the regional strategic environment amid increasing Chinese assertiveness. It reflects the need for further cooperation among the major Indo-Pacific players towards India's strategic benefit and bolstering its maritime capabilities. The findings also suggest that advancements in regional security frameworks can shape India's naval planning and strategic alliances. Therefore, the maritime cooperation is a significant part of the Indian Indo Pacific policy.

(Sudan, 2022) has deliberated on the opportunities and challenges for India in regional economic cooperation and integration in the Indo-Pacific region. The study underscores importance of connectivity, trade, infrastructure & regional cooperation for India. It also finds opportunities promote regional connectivity and economic integration through SAGAR, capacity building and technical cooperation. The study suggests that India's engagement with Indo-Pacific is not only about security but also about economics and development. These dimensions are crucial to enhancing India's regional footprint and connectivity with other economies in the Indo Pacific.

(Salil, 2023), the Indo Pacific was explored as a space consisting of multiple strategic players, competing interests and common challenges. The study provides a brief history of the Indo Pacific concept and the key developments which have enabled its growing significance, including the growing influence of the Chinese government and changing regional dynamics. It also points to the growing strategic room for India in the Indo-Pacific. The study indicates that the area offers India possibilities of interaction with various countries and a reaction to power dynamics. This renders Indo Pacific region a vital platform for India's strategic and diplomatic involvement.

In this context, **(Lin, 2024)** studied India's changing strategic relations in the Indo-Pacific region amid China's increasing assertiveness. It examines the shift of Look East Policy towards the Act East policy and India's overall Indo Pacific participation. It highlights India's growing engagement with regional neighbors in various fields, such as security and supply chains, while also balancing security concerns with diplomatic efforts. India's evolving broad-based strategic partnership to face new regional challenges is illustrated. This collaboration has emerged as a critical way to enhance India's strategic posture while maintaining strategic autonomy.

(Pandalai, 2022) analyzed India's vision of the Indo-Pacific and its growing importance in New Delhi's strategic thinking. The study concludes that the area is a geo-strategic and geo-economic opportunity for India. It draws attention to the key characteristics of India's approach such as flexible, issue-based partnerships and cooperation at bilateral, minilateral and plurilateral levels, capacity building, etc. The research underscores the Indian preference for a flexible and inclusive regional architecture, as opposed to relying on any one strategic architecture. This way, India can serve two objectives at once -- its security and economic and diplomatic interests.

(Shah, 2020) The Indo pacific strategy regarding China and the strategic interests of various significant states of Indo Pacific region has been explored.The study takes a look at the QUAD and the dynamics of the interests of India, Japan, the United States and China. It shows that Indo-Pacific is a space of cooperation and competition as well. The study thus offers valuable background to the options that India has in the evolving regional power dynamics. It also underscores the value of partnerships and strategic positioning to address the rising impact of China.

(Sana, A., & Akhtar, 2020) have discussed India's Indo-Pacific strategy in light of the growing influence of China in the Indian Ocean Region and maritime power. The research highlights India's navy modernization and its increasing role in maritime activities and strategic alliances with the U.S.. It says these changes are helpful to the ambition of India to emerge as a more significant regional and global force. The report points to the significance of marine capabilities for India's interests in the Indian Ocean and further in the Indo-Pacific. It also implies that improved maritime cooperation can boost India's strategic influence and regional security.

Research Gap

The preceding studies have examined the Indian approach to the Indo Pacific in terms of strategic autonomy, maritime security, economic cooperation and strategic alliances and the China factor. But these have been considered as independent variables or in more detail in terms of certain facets of India's regional engagement. But there is a chance to go beyond this and to integrate India's security, economic, diplomatic and strategic objectives in the Indo Pacific environment. The present study seeks to address this void by discussing India's strategic interest and its

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significant initiatives, relationships, difficulties and possibilities in the growing Indo-Pacific regional order.

Research Methodology

The study aims to offer an analytical insight into Indo-Pacific strategy and the strategic interests linked to India's engagement in the region. It is a study of existing development, policies, strategic relationships and geopolitical trends, meaning that it is a secondary study. Thus, the methodology adopted is a mix of qualitative approach and descriptive and analytical methods in assessing the major dimensions of India's role in Indo Pacific region.

1. **Research Approach**

Qualitative and analytical secondary research approach is followed in the present study to explore the Indo Pacific Strategy and Strategic interests of India. The method is applied to grasp the significant geopolitical, economic, maritime and strategic developments influencing India's involvement in the Indo Pacific.

2. **Sources of Data**

Only Secondary sources are used for the study. Data and information have been gathered from published research articles, academic journals, books, book chapters and other credible scholarly publications pertaining to Indo Pacific, Indian foreign policy, maritime security, strategic partnerships and the geopolitics of the region.

3. **Research Design**

This study is descriptive and analytical. The relevant secondary material has been collected thematically to comprehend the evolution of the notion of Indo-Pacific; India's strategic interest, significant efforts and collaborations; the involvement of the United States and China and the challenges and opportunities that are unfolding for India.

4. **Method of Analysis**

Thematic analysis has been used for analysing the collected information. Strategic autonomy, maritime security, economic and connectivity interests, defence cooperation, regional partnerships, and China's increasing influence and India's contribution to regional stability are some of the key themes. The purpose of the analysis is to pinpoint the combined effect of these factors on Indo-Pacific strategy of India.

Concept and Evolution of the Indo-Pacific Strategy

The Indo Pacific is a vital geopolitical and strategic region that has gained prominence due to its major commercial centers, sea-lines of communication, strategic resources and the presence of significant nations. This region is a bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and increasingly important for security, trade, connectivity and regional cooperation.

1. **Concept of the Indo-Pacific**

Indo-Pacific is the strategic geographical space linking the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. It includes ASEAN countries and big powers like India, China, Japan, USA and Australia. The notion reflects the growing interdependence of the two oceans and the shifting balance of power in the region.

Indo Pacific is of great significance for India on account of its geographical location, marine interest and commercial relations with the south and east Asian countries. Thus, India has viewed the region not only from the security lens but also from the trade, connectivity, development and regional cooperation lens(Chadha, 2023).

2. **Evolution from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific**

The concept of the Asia-Pacific preceded the concept of the Indo-Pacific and focused on the Pacific Ocean rather than the Indian Ocean (Palavalsa, 2025). Japan, the United States, Australia and India were significant players in the broader concept's evolution and promotion as regional strategic dynamics shifted.

This transition was enabled by the rise of China, increasing maritime rivalry and economic interconnectedness. The evolution of the notion was assisted by India's Look East Policy and then the Act East Policy which strengthened its relations with the Southeast and East Asian countries. Thus the Indo-Pacific has become a vital theater for India's strategic and diplomatic engagement (Singh, 2025).

India's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Strategic Interests

India's Indo-Pacific policy is shaped by strategic interests, economic factors, and its geographical position. India promotes a free, open and inclusive regional system, yet at the same time it seeks to protect its national interests (Zajączkowski, 2021).

India's engagement is on maritime security and economic cooperation and connectivity. India has expanded regional engagements and alliances with its Navy and enhanced economic and connectivity linkages with South East and East Asia (Li, L., & Jiang, 2023).

India also has relations with the US, Japan, Australia and ASEAN without being an ally of any one nation. This is consistent with its goal of managing regional problems, while preserving strategic autonomy.

China's growing power is making the Indo-Pacific increasingly important for India. India has responded by developing strong partnerships and regional engagements and by continuing to be an independent foreign-policy actor (Hu, W., & Meng, 2020).

Table 1: Major Strategic Interests of India in the Indo-Pacific

Strategic Interest	Major Focus
Maritime Security	Sea lanes, maritime stability and naval cooperation
Economic Interests	Trade, investment and supply chains
Connectivity	Regional infrastructure and maritime connectivity
Defence and Security	Defence partnerships and capacity building
Strategic Autonomy	Independent decision-making and flexible partnerships

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Major Initiatives and Strategic Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific

To enhance its Indo-Pacific engagement, India has made several efforts and partnerships. These are centred on maritime security, regional connectivity, economic cooperation and capacity building. Some key elements in this approach are Act East Policy, SAGAR, IPOI and QUAD.

1. **Act East Policy and SAGAR**

The Act East Policy has given a boost to the economic, geopolitical and diplomatic relations between India and the countries of South East and East Asia. It was also a critical stepping stone to India's larger Indo-Pacific policy.

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) is the vision on marine security, cooperation, connectivity and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean. It is an indication that India is willing to contribute to the stability of the area and protect its marine interests (Hu, 2020).

2. **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) aims to cooperate in the areas of maritime security, marine ecology, disaster management, connectivity and capacity building. It indicates India's preference for inclusive and pragmatic regional collaboration, rather than exclusive security relationships(Zeng, X., & Zhang, 2021).

3. **QUAD and Strategic Partnerships**

The QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialog) - India, the United States, Japan and Australia has evolved as an important venue for collaboration in the Indo Pacific area. Its areas of participation are maritime security, key technologies, resilient supply chains, and regional connectivity. There are bilateral and other links for India to grapple with mutual strategic and economic concerns(Purushothaman, 2024).

Table 2: Major Indo-Pacific Initiatives and India's Role

Initiative/Partnership	Major Focus
Act East Policy	Economic and strategic engagement with East and Southeast Asia
SAGAR	Maritime security, cooperation and regional development
IPOI	Maritime cooperation and capacity building
QUAD	Security, technology, connectivity and resilient supply chains
ASEAN Partnerships	Regional cooperation, trade and connectivity

China Factor and India's Strategic Position

India's Indo-Pacific strategy has made China's economic and military growth a major component. Meanwhile, India faces a more complicated regional environment as the US and China engage in increasing strategic competition, maritime presence, and China's expanding engagement in the Indian Ocean (Nguyen, T. B., Hiep, T. X., Co, N. D., & Nguyen, 2024).

India is concerned about China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific area. Such worries have led to India to enhance its marine capabilities and strategic connections with the United States, Japan and Australia (He, K., & Li, 2020). The QUAD has also been used as a forum for collaboration on regional security and other common issues.

At the same time, India does not want to face China face to face. It is founded on cooperation, competition and diplomatic involvement, defending the national interests. This is in keeping with India's broader goal of strategic autonomy and strategic balance amongst major powers (Mohapatra, 2022).

Thus, the Indo Pacific has grown more vital to India strategically due to the China factor. India's approach is based on the need to protect its maritime and economic interests, forge regional alliances and evolve an independent foreign policy stance amid a changing power equation.

Challenges and Opportunities for India

India's increased presence in the Indo-Pacific offers many opportunities as well as challenges of strategic and economic importance. Balancing these competing factors is crucial to ensure India's regional engagement.

Security and Geopolitical Challenges:

China's growing maritime presence, its power competition in region, and rising US–China rivalry are a source of security concern to India. Being ready yet not escalating it is a huge challenge.

Strategic Autonomy:

India must balance ties with the big powers and ensure its sovereignty. Thus, the extent of cooperation with United States and other partners needs to be maintained in keeping with India's strategic interests.

Economic and connectivity challenges:

India's connectivity and economic involvement may be impacted by disparities in economic interests, infrastructure constraints, and regional competition. More regional cooperation and investment are needed to overcome these challenges.

Regional and Economic Opportunities:

The Indo Pacific is a place of opportunity for India in terms of trade, investment, maritime connectivity, technology cooperation and resilient supply chains. By the virtue of its strategic partnerships it can also enhance the defence capability and regional influence.

In sum, India must turn these opportunities into lasting strategic gains, simultaneously navigating geopolitical competition and upholding strategic autonomy.

Policy Recommendations

Going by the analysis, the following steps can enhance India's presence in the Indo-Pacific:

1. **Build Maritime Capabilities:** India needs to further enhance its maritime surveillance and cooperation, and the navy's capabilities, to safeguard India's maritime interests and sea-lanes.

2. **Strengthen Regional Partnerships:** India needs to have more productive engagement with ASEAN, Japan, Australia, the United States and other countries in the region in order to enhance its strategic and diplomatic standing.
3. **Enhance Regional Connectivity:** India needs to pay more attention to maritime infrastructure, connectivity projects and links with Southeast Asia and East Asia to facilitate trade and regional connectivity.
4. **Continue to maintain Strategic Autonomy:** India must continue to balance engagement with key powers with independent decision making in line with its national interest
5. **Promote Economic and Technological Cooperation**: India's increased involvement in resilient supply chains, technology partnerships, trade and investment in the Indo Pacific can help translate its Indo Pacific cooperation into economic gains.
6. **Increase Multilateral Cooperation:** India should encourage inclusive regional forums and tangible cooperation on issues like maritime security, sustainable development and capacity building, disaster management etc.

These steps can help India deal with the regional competition as well as boost its economic, security and diplomatic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

Geopolitics revolves around the Indo-Pacific, and the region's growing strategic importance has led to greater Indian engagement. India's Indo Pacific policy is influenced by its interests in the marine, economic, security, diplomatic domains and its concept of strategic autonomy. The Act East Policy, SAGAR and IPOI, and the QUAD and other regional countries have expanded India's involvement in the area. At the same time, China's influence is on the rise and the US–China strategic rivalry is posing challenges for India's strategic posture.

The analysis suggests that India needs to combine security and economic and diplomatic factors and that foreign policy should be flexible. Strengthened marine capabilities, regional relationships, connectivity, technology collaboration and strategic autonomy will help India respond effectively to the developing regional scenario.

Overall, the Indo Pacific poses both strategic problems for India but also enormous potential for India. A collaboration and an inclusive mindset could allow India to play a major role in establishing a stable and cooperative Indo-Pacific regional order.

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