IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

India's Indo-Pacific Connectivity Agenda: Balancing Security Concerns with Economic Engagement

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Abstract

This study examines India's strategic move in the Indo-Pacific, specifically focusing India's Economic interest, maritime security and stability and to counter China expanding footprint in indo pacific. India seeks to foster deeper economic, strategic, and cultural ties with Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific, transitioning from passive "Looking" to active engagement. India Central aim is to protect and promote its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision which provides a strategic framework aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation, economic integration, and security across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It focuses on fostering collaborative partnerships, building capacity for regional neighbors, and ensuring a secure, sustainable maritime domain to strengthen India's position as a net security provider vision . India also stressed Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), to maintain Free and open maritime navigation. Malaca street provides a strategic position to India to blockade this route to neutralize Chinese naval aggression. India promotes sustainable infrastructure and resilient supply chains to offer a credible economic alternative to debt-driven models. Ultimately, the agenda reflects India's evolution from a regional player to a leading power, aiming to secure its sovereign interests while fostering collective prosperity in a contested geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: SAGAR, Malacca street, Quad, Maritime Security, India, Economic interest.

Introduction

Indo-Pacific is very significant for its Geo political and Geo economics position. It covers from the eastern coast of Africa to the western shores of the Pacific Ocean. The region accounts for over 60% of global maritime trade and two-thirds of the world's container shipping. The sea lanes of communication particularly the South China Sea, the Malacca Strait, and the Indian Ocean—form the arteries of global commerce. The region is both the world's largest consumer of energy (with China, India, and Japan as top importers) and a critical transit route for Middle Eastern oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) destined for East Asia and beyond. Any disruption in these waters directly impacts global energy prices. India is a big player in the indo pacific, 90% of India's energy imports come through this route. India holds the Malacca strait that gives India a strategic position to counter China aggressive naval dominance and expanding footprint in the indo pacific region.India's "Act East" policy, aimed at strengthening economic and security ties with Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) to integrate further into the global value chain. India SAGAR Vision promotes and defends free Navigation and open access in the maritime sea route. India also actively coordinated with the United States and other Allies to counter China's build and road initiative (BRI) project.

India's Economic interest

Trade access to world largest market : approximately 90% of India trade is done through maritime sea route of Indian Ocean and wider indo pacific. Nearby 80% India's crude oil imports primarily from the Middle East and Africa through indo pacific maritime sea route. India purchased a vast number of natural gas from Middle East countries through this sea route. Indo pacific gives a platform to the Indian diaspora to work in Middle East countries and India receives the world's largest remittances, exceeding $100 billion annually. A substantial portion originates from Indian workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. India gets Trade access to the world's largest market through the IMEC corridor in which India connects with the Middle East and Europe for economic benefits.

Blue economy :- India gets advantage to use sustainable use of ocean and coastal resources to drive economic growth, improve livelihoods, and support jobs while preserving the health of marine ecosystems. India's economy is reliant on the blue economy. Large scale of Indian fishermen get engaged in fisheries and Aquaculture, Maritime shipping transport, coastal tourism, Renewable Energy,Utilizing marine organisms for medicine, food, and industrial products.

Act east policy :India's "Act East Policy" was launched in 2014 that aimed at deepening economic integration with ASEAN, a bloc that collectively represents India's fourth-largest trading partner. Act east policy centre to achieve 4Cs like Culture,commerce,Connectivity,capacity-buildings. ASEAN has become India's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching over $131 billion in 2022-23 . India seeks deep economic Trade access, open investment, Infrastructure development, security and defence with Asian countries. That will enhance India's economic growth. The India and Asean bloc developed the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project that enhanced India's economic growth.

India's Maritime Security interests.

SAGAR Vision:- SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) is India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region. Introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2015. It serves as a maritime doctrine to promote cooperation, security, and sustainable development with neighboring littoral states. With free Navigation and open access maritime sea route. Its core objective is to safeguard the India main land and island while fishing, shipping and various energy supplies and seeking share information, coastal surveillance, and infrastructure building. Promotion of Joint action to natural disaster, terrorism and piracy, illegal Drug supply.

Active presence in Malacca strait

The Strait of Malacca is a narrow stretch of water located between the Malay Peninsula (Malaysia) and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. That connects the Indian ocean to the pacific ocean. Malacca strait play a very crucial role for India national security. It gives a strategic position to India to blockade China in the Indian Ocean. China's 80% energy supplies come through this Malacca strait. So India can easily get advantage to block China's energy needs through Malacca strait. China Belt and roads initiative (BRI) creates a naval trap for India so to counter China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean region Malacca strait play a very vital role. Malacca strait gives a platform to trade with Japan, South Korea , Vietnam and ASEAN countries . Malacca strait like a mountain that safeguard the Andaman Nicobar Islands.

QUAD:-Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) is a strategic diplomatic group consisting of four major democracies: India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. Some Chinese political scholars called it an Asian Nato against China.main objective is to secure free, open and inclusive indo pacific. Quad is committed to maritime security, safe supply chain, collaboration 5G,6G network , semiconductor and cyber security. Information sharing in Natural Disaster.Providing high-quality, transparent infrastructure alternatives to the region, often seen as a counter to China's BRI.

Research Objectives

- Analysis India's economic interest in indo pacific region
- Analysis India's Maritime Security interests in indo pacific
- Analysis China expanding policy towards indo pacific
- Analysis significant of Malacca strait for india national interest
- Analysis significant of act east policy for india
- Analysis Quad presence in indo pacific

summary of Finding

Indo-Pacific is the core focus area of India's foreign policy. The Indo-Pacific is the lifeline for the Indian economy. Through the indo pacific india will have the advantage to trade access in the world largest market.india imports crude oil from the route. India connects with the Middle East and Europe through the IMEC corridor. The Indo pacific gives a huge opportunity to India to connect the ASEAN countries and Japan, South Korea and Africa. Indian people get engaged in various jobs through fisheries, shipping, tourism through the Indian ocean. Malacca strait gives natural protection against China and various nations. The Indian Government gets the largest number of remittance from the Indian diaspora through strategic geographical position.

Conclusion

India's Indo-Pacific connectivity agenda represents a delicate balancing act between economic engagement and security imperatives. While initiatives like the Act East Policy, IMEC, and Quad partnerships demonstrate India's proactive approach to building alternative infrastructure and resilient supply chains, persistent implementation challenges and strategic constraints remain. Successfully navigating this complex landscape requires India to enhance domestic capacities, deepen regional partnerships, and maintain strategic autonomy without compromising sovereignty. Ultimately, India's ability to shape the Indo-Pacific order will determine its trajectory as a global power in the twenty-first century.

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