



## Significance of Indo-Pacific

**For Prelims:** [South China Sea](#), Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships, [Paris Peace Accords](#)

**For Mains:** The impact of USA's venture into Asia Pacific on Asian Giants and South-East Asian countries vis-a-vis China

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

The General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the U.S. President met in Vietnam during the visit of the US President, marking a new phase in the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

- Both nations **elevated their cooperation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** from a Comprehensive Partnership forged in 2013.

### How were the US-Vietnam Relations in the Past?

- The **United States and Vietnam have a complex history** marked by the [Vietnam War](#), which lasted from 1955 to 1975. The conflict arose during the [Cold War](#) when North Vietnam, backed by the [Soviet Union](#) and China, sought to reunify with South Vietnam, supported by the United States and other Western allies.
  - The war resulted in significant loss of life and widespread destruction in Vietnam and had a profound impact on U.S. society.
- In 1975, the war ended with the **fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces**, leading to the **reunification of Vietnam** under communist control. This marked a low point in U.S.-Vietnam relations.
- In 1995, the United States **normalized diplomatic ties with Vietnam**, and the two countries have since engaged in economic cooperation and increased people-to-people exchanges.
- Today, while the Vietnam War remains a part of their history, the **United States and Vietnam have developed a more positive and constructive relationship**, focusing on trade, security cooperation, and addressing common regional challenges.

### What is the Indo-Pacific?

- **About:**
  - [Indo-Pacific](#) is a recent concept. It was about a decade ago that the world started talking about the Indo-Pacific; its rise has been quite significant.
  - One of the reasons behind the popularity of this term is an understanding that the **Indian and the Pacific Oceans are a linked strategic theater**.
  - **Each and every nation perceives** the concept of the Indo-Pacific with its own benefits

and concerns and there are no absolute concepts and geographical boundaries of the Indo-Pacific.

▪ **Present Context:**

- The Indo-Pacific region is one of the most populous and economically active regions of the world which includes four continents: Asia, Africa, Australia and America.
- The dynamism and vitality of the region are self-evident, **60% of the world's population and 2/3rd of the global economic output** makes this region a global economic center.

▪ **India's Perspective of the Indo-Pacific:**

- **Cooperate with Others for Security Architecture:** A lot of India's special partners, the US, Australia, Japan and Indonesia want India's presence in the **South China Sea**, and East China Sea, basically to counter China.
  - **India**, however, seeks to cooperate for an architecture for peace and security in the region. The common prosperity and security require the countries to evolve, through dialogue, a common rules-based order for the region.
- **Equal Share in Trade and Investment:** India supports a rule-based, open, balanced and stable trade environment in the Indo-Pacific Region, which lifts up all nations on the tide of trade and investment.
  - This is the same as what the country expects from the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**.

▪ **Importance of Indo-Pacific for ASEAN countries Like Vietnam:**

- **Unified ASEAN:** Unlike China, India seeks a unified **ASEAN**, not a divided one. China tries to play off some ASEAN members against others, thereby in a way executing a 'divide and rule' conquest strategy.
- **Work in Collaboration with China:** ASEAN does not comply with the US version of Indo-Pacific, which seeks to contain Chinese dominance. ASEAN is rather looking for ways through which it can work together with China.



## What is the Significance of the Indo-Pacific?

▪ **Indo-Pacific Extends from Africa to America:**

- For America, Indo-Pacific stands for a free, open, inclusive region. It includes all nations in the geography and also others who have a stake in it.
- **In its geographical dimension**, the US considers the area from the shores of Africa to the shores of the US.

▪ **Against Dominance of a Single Player:**

- India is **looking to democratise the region**. Earlier, the region used to be almost like an American lake. However, there exists a fear that the region will become a Chinese lake. The US, like India, doesn't want the hegemony of any player in the region.
- **Geopolitical Importance:**
  - The Indo-Pacific region is home to some of the world's most populous and economically dynamic countries, including India, China, Japan, Australia, and Indonesia.
    - This concentration of economic and political power makes it a critical center of global geopolitics.
- **Economic Significance:**
  - The region is a major driver of the global economy. It contains key maritime trade routes, such as the Strait of Malacca, through which a significant portion of the world's trade flows.
    - Many of the world's busiest and most important ports are located in the Indo-Pacific, facilitating trade between Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- **Security and Strategic Concerns:**
  - The Indo-Pacific is a region of increasing strategic competition among major powers, notably the United States, China, India, and Russia. The presence of nuclear-armed states and unresolved territorial disputes, such as the South China Sea disputes, add to its strategic complexity.
- **Balancing China's Rise:**
  - The rise of China as a global economic and military power is a central factor in the Indo-Pacific's significance.
  - Many countries in the region are seeking to balance China's influence and ensure their own security by strengthening alliances and partnerships with like-minded nations.
- **Maritime Security:**
  - Ensuring the security of maritime trade routes is a major concern for countries in the Indo-Pacific.
  - Issues such as piracy, territorial disputes, and the need to protect sea lanes make maritime security a top priority.
- **Regional Organizations and Forums:**
  - Various regional organizations and forums, such as ASEAN, **QUAD**, and the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, are actively engaged in addressing regional issues, promoting economic cooperation, and enhancing security.
- **Connectivity and Infrastructure Development:**
  - There is a growing focus on infrastructure development, connectivity projects, and economic integration in the Indo-Pacific.
  - Initiatives like **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and the U.S. "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy aim to shape the economic and political landscape of the region.
- **Environmental and Ecological Significance:**
  - The Indo-Pacific is home to diverse ecosystems, including coral reefs and marine biodiversity.
  - Climate change and environmental issues, such as plastic pollution and overfishing, are of global concern, as they affect not only the region's nations but also the entire planet.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. With reference to "Look East Policy" of India, consider the following statements: (2011)**

1. India wants to establish itself as an important regional player in East Asian affairs.
2. India wants to plug the vacuum created by the termination of the Cold War.
3. India wants to restore the historical and cultural ties with its neighbors in Southeast and East Asia.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

**(a)** 1 only

- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (d)**

### **Mains**

**Q1.** The new tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario. **(2021)**

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