



# India's Indo- Pacific Policy and China

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# Regions Imagined and Re-imagined

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- Regions are social and political constructions.
- Region vs regionalism
  - ✓ Region: a geographical identity shaped by historical “interaction and interdependence”.
  - ✓ Regionalism is a political agenda and ideology in a given period.
- The Indo-Pacific: strategy, geopolitical theatre, re-discovery of a region and envisaging a new regionalism

# Re-discovering Indo-Pacific: Intellectual Genesis (1850-1900)

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- Anthropological, ethnographic, marine biology and marine geology
- Augustus Henry Keane, C. Staniland Wake, F. Bruggemann, J.R. Logan, J.E. Ives, Robert E. C. Stearns and W. H. Dall
- J.R. Logan, *Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands* [1850], in *Journal of Indian Archipelago*, April 1851.
- *American Anthropologist*
- *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
- *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*
- *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*
- *Science*
- *The American Naturalist*
- *The Journal of Geology*
- *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*

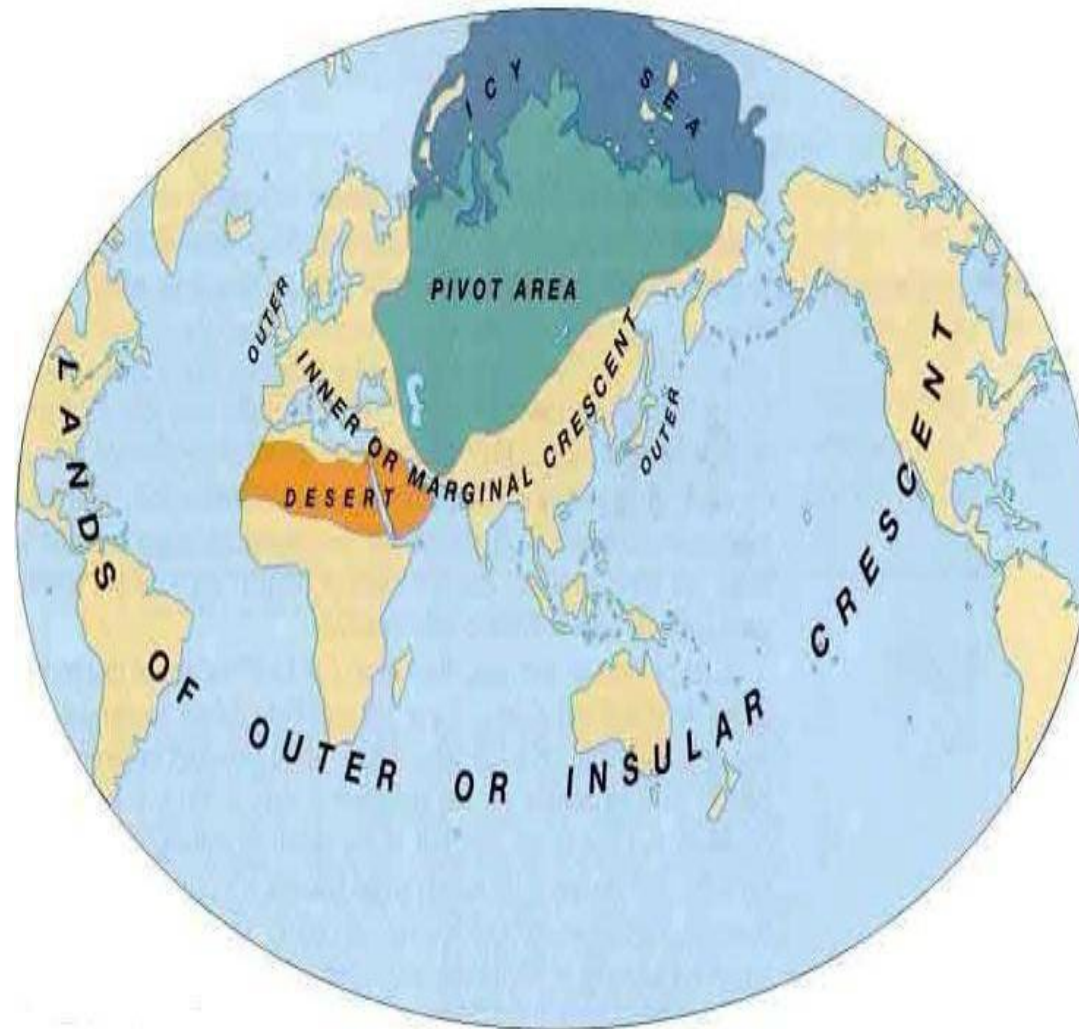
# Re-discovering Indo-Pacific: Intellectual Genesis (1850-1900)

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- “...Indo-Pacific Ocean, which is bounded on three sides by the great land-masses of the Old and New Worlds. Disjointed fragments of land separate the Indian from the Pacific division of the great ocean, and stretch like so many stepping-stones between the Malay peninsula and Australia, the latter, semicontinental mass of land lying, almost halfway between Africa and South America.” T. H. Huxley, “On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Mankind,” *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1869-1870.
- “...[species] that are widely distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific or Oriental Region (which includes the eastern coast of Africa, the south and east of Asia and islands adjacent, Australia, and the islands of Polynesia),..” Edward J. Miers, “Crustacea”, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 168, 1879, p. 485.
- *Report on the Zoological Collections made in the Indo-Pacific Ocean during the Voyage of H.M.S. ‘Alert,’ 1881–82*. London: Printed by order of the Trustees [of the British Museum], 1884.

# Mackinder's Asiatic Monsoon Land as Indo-Pacific (I)

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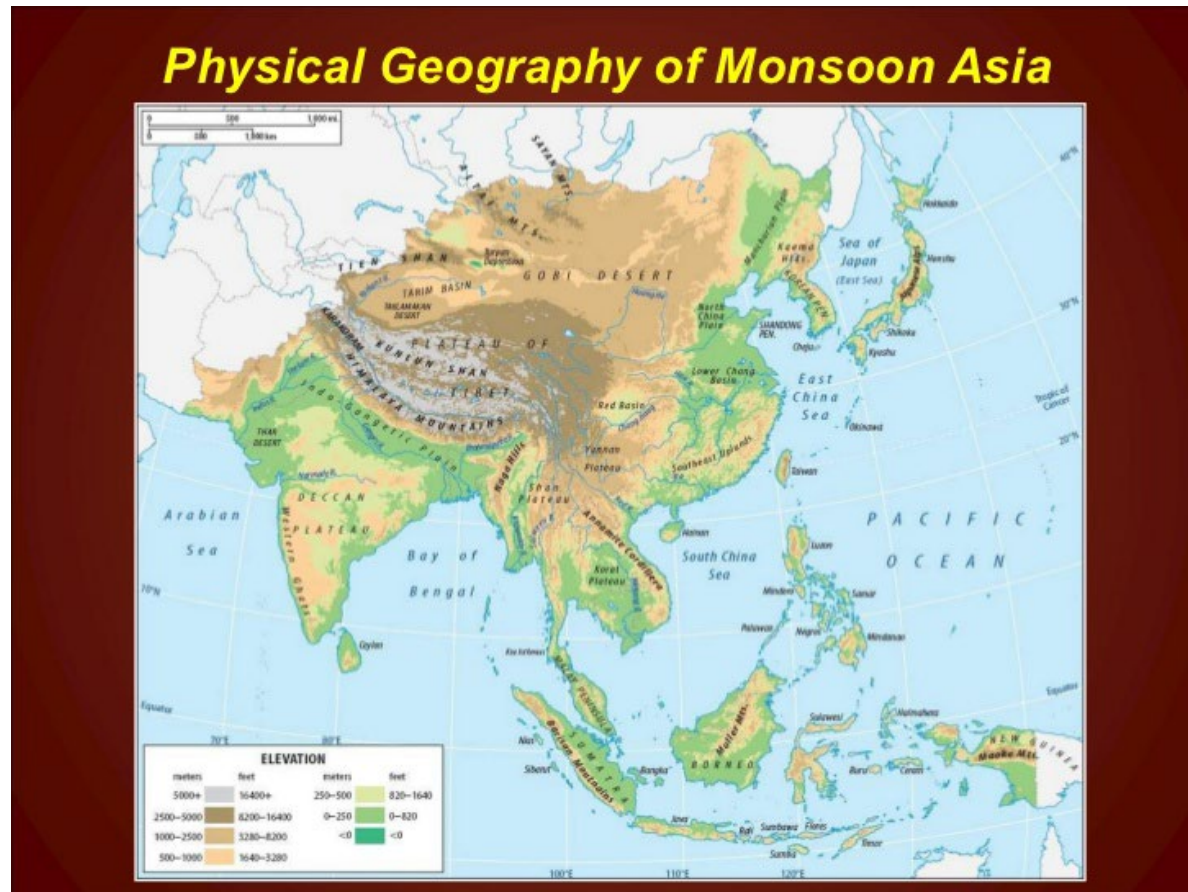


# Mackinder's Asiatic Monsoon Land as Indo-Pacific (II)

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- Landlocked northern Eurasia as the “heartland”
- Around this is the marginal or inner crescent, which has both maritime and land features:
  - ✓ European Coast Land
  - ✓ Arabian Desert
  - ✓ Asiatic Monsoon Land = Pacific-ward Buddhist and Indian Ocean-ward Hindu “sphere of influence”
- Lands of outer crescent

# Haushofer's Monsoon Countries as Indo-Pacific



# Haushofer's Monsoon Countries as Indo-Pacific (II)

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- Karl Haushofer first used the term Indo-Pacific in geopolitical context in his writings in the 1920s and 30s.
- He investigated the likely geopolitical “impact of the dense Indo-Pacific concentration of Humanity and cultural empire of India and China.”
- Monsoon countries “[extend] from the mouth of the Indus to that of the Amur and taking in the littoral of Southeast Asia as well as the divides of the central highlands of Asia.”
- Monsoon countries as the mainstay of international geopolitics.



# Spykman's Asiatic Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific (I)



## Spykman's Asiatic Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific (II)

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- Nicholas Spykman underlines the importance of rimland around the heartland “for the control of Eurasian continent.”
- He critiqued the concept of Monsoon land.
- However, he argued that the geopolitical importance of and interaction between Indian Ocean littoral and Asiatic Mediterranean would increase.
- His Indian Ocean littoral and Asiatic Mediterranean together form today's Indo-Pacific construct.

# Evolving *Asianism* and the Indo-Pacific

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- Early Pan *Asianism*:
  - ✓ Tagore, Nehru, Okakura, Aung San and Sukarno
  - ✓ Asian Federation in India in 1920s
  - ✓ Aung San's Asiatic Federation
  - ✓ Ho Chi Minh's Pan-Asiatic Community
  - ✓ Asian Relations Conference in 1947 & 1949
  - ✓ Bandung Conference in 1955
- The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (1947)
- The UNFAO's Indo-Pacific Fishery Council (1948)
- Cold War Sub-regionalism:
  - ✓ MAPHILINDO, SEATO, ASPAC, ASA, ASEAN
- Asia-Pacific : PAFTAD, PECC and APEC
- APEC: Pacific Century
- China's rise and India's growth
- Pacific to Asian Century: geopolitical shift from West to East
- ARF in 1994 and Summit (2005) landmarks in the Indo-Pacific process.

# Contemporary Indo-Pacific Discourse

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- Post Tsunami Cooperation among Quad countries in 2004
- India's Maritime Doctrine 2004
- Taro Aso's "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" & Shinzo Abe's "Confluence of Two Seas" Speeches in 2007
  - ✓ Two seas and US, Australia form an Arc of Freedom & Prosperity along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent
- Hillary Clinton's 2010 speech in Honolulu
  - ✓ The importance of Indo-Pacific region to global trade and commerce
- Australia: Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2012/2013
- Shinzo Abe in 2012: Asia's Democratic Security Diamond
- Shinzo Abe's 2016 keynote address TICAD VI in Kenya: "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"
- The first official-level (assistant secretary level) Quad in Manila, 2017
- The US NSS (2017), NDS (2018), Vision of FOIP and Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (2019)

# A Framework of Contemporary International Relations

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- Japan: Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2016
- France: Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2019
- Germany: Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific, 2020
- Netherlands: The Indo-Pacific Guidelines for strengthening Dutch and EU cooperation with partners in Asia, 2020
- The UK: Indo-Pacific Tilt, 2021
- The EU: Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2021
- The Czech Republic: Strategy for Cooperation with the Indo-Pacific, 2022
- Canada: Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2022
- Republic of Korea: National Security Strategy, 2022

*“Asia-centric definition of an Asia-centric strategic and economic system,... replacing the late-twentieth-century idea of the Asia-Pacific... a strategy of incorporating and diluting Chinese power within a multipolar order reflecting respect for rules and equal sovereignty.” (Rory Medcalf)*

- Centrality of maritime Asia
- Accommodation of restored pre-colonial status of China and India
- Strategic concerns: Chinese unilateralism
- Economic and developmental partnerships

# Indians' Self-View of the Indo-Pacific

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- “This momentous drama of the migration of the earliest races of the world was staged on the vast expanse of water extending from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific...India played a very important role in this drama of ethnic and cultural diffusion in the Indo-Pacific domain.” Kalidas Nag, *India and the Pacific World*, 1941.
- “The Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as a nerve centre of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the centre of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in South-East Asia and right up to the Middle East. Her position gives an economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop rapidly in the future.” Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 1946

# **The Indo-Pacific Concept:**

## **A New Intellectual Framework of Indian Foreign Policy**

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- Indian foreign policy faced a serious intellectual challenge post-Cold War.
- A struggle between Nehruvian foundationalist and pragmatist/realist views.
- The Indo-Pacific Concept emerged in diplomatic discourse around 2011, provided an overarching foreign policy framework.
- It provided a synthesis of foundationalist and pragmatist/realist views.
- Strategic autonomy, power aggregation and quest for great power status.
- An independent and consequential pole in the Indo-Pacific.

# India's Vision of the Indo-Pacific: Official Articulations

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- Culmination of India's Look & Act East Policy
- Integration of Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean regions:
  - ✓ "A free, open, inclusive and peaceful Indo-Pacific built on a rules-based order and on sustainable and transparent investments in infrastructure.
- A Framework for Contemporary International Relations
- Rebalancing of the International Order
- Inclusive Institutional Frameworks
- Connectivity Initiatives
- Protection of Global Supply Chains
- Security in the Indo-Pacific
- Relation between the Indo-Pacific and the Quad



# India's Relations with Major Indo-Pacific Powers

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- US crucial for next level of India's development trajectory.
- Indo-US defence deal (2005), four foundational agreements and increasing defence procurement partnerships, deepening collaboration in high-technology.
- US sees India as a long-term hedge against China.
- Japan is India's most mature strategic partnership with least frictions.
- Australia is viewed as a partner whose importance is growing rapidly.

# China's Approach towards the Indo-Pacific

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- Chinese official literature does not use the term 'Indo-Pacific', at least not approvingly. Dismissive, critical and suspicious tone.
- Initially ignored but later began debunking the concept, which it conflated Quad with.
- Varieties of critiques: 'old wine in a new bottle' re-circulation of 'China threat theories,' American strategy to contain China's rise through alliances and US promoting 'rivalry' with China for status, influence, economic & high-tech leadership.
- The US has invested in partnerships and alternative supply chains in Indo-Pacific, such as Quad, ICET and IPEF.
- China has become more and more critical of the Indo-Pacific, instead promoting 'Community with a Shared Future for Mankind', Three Global Initiatives.

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations: Differing Interpretations

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- In India's understanding, China is an Indo-Pacific power.
- Its Belt and Road Initiative operates truly at the Indo-Pacific scale.
- AIIB, BRICS and SCO like Quad and IPEF are equally Indo-Pacific mechanisms.
- However, China's America-centric understanding of the Indo-Pacific colors its views on India heavily.

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations: Inherent Contradictions

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- Swinging between a desire for friendship and suspicion.
- Friction has been inherent in relations of these two Asian giants and neighbors.
- Economic interdependence, *Chindia*, and twin-engines of Asian century.
- Boundary dispute, Tibet issue and Dalai Lama's presence in Dharamshala, and China-Pakistan *all-weather friendship*.
- Two reciprocal perceptions of containment:
  - ✓ India part of a superpower containment of China.
  - ✓ China's containment of India in South Asia.

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations: Papering Over the Cracks

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- The Indo-US Nuclear Deal 2005: a turning point.
- China strived to prevent India from gravitating towards the US.
- China succeeded in tempering India's enthusiasm towards Quad in 2007/2008.
- Frictions persisted, but they did not see each other as an existential threat.
- However, divergences took over convergences rapidly from 2013.

# **The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations:**

## **China's Re-hyphenating of India and Pakistan**

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- China's unilateral push to the CPEC-BRI
- Vetoing Indian resolutions in the UNSC 1267 Committee
- Blocking India's application for the NSG
- Interceding on behalf of Pakistan in UNSC post Article 370 abolition and bifurcation of the J&K

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations: India Sheds 'Historical Hesitations'

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- Modi introduces an assertive and aspiring foreign policy.
- Demands reciprocity for India's support of One China.
- Modi makes it a point to deepen relations with the US.
- A message of power aggregation through Quad.
- India's intensified engagement with Southeast Asian countries:
  - ✓ Subtle shift in its position on the SCS.
  - ✓ Selling Brahmos missile systems to the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia.
- India leading from the front for creating alternative supply chains.

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations:

## The Collapse of the *Modus Vivendi*

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- Three military stand-offs: 2013 (Depsang), 2014 (Chumar), 2017 (Doklam)
- The Galwan Valley clash (2020): collapse of the 1988 Consensus and written agreements.
- Abnormal situation prevailed on the border for more than 4 years, till last year.
- India took punitive measures by restricting investment, visas, banning apps and direct flights etc.
- China maintained that overall situation is normal and the boundary dispute should be kept at its appropriate place.
- India demanded disengagement, de-escalation and de-induction of troops in border areas.



# **The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations: Restoration of Normalcy**

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- India's three mutuals: mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests.
- China's five mutuals: mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual accommodation and mutual accomplishment.
- Troop disengagement and de-escalation is reported to have been completed.
- Both countries are now addressing the residual issues of resuming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, lifting of the app ban and resuming direct flights etc.

# The Indo-Pacific and India-China Relations:

## What Led to the Deterioration and then Normalization?

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- No one certain reason why China changed the status quo in eastern Ladakh in 2020.
- Probably India's tilt towards the US too pronounced for China.
- China lost hope for India and attempted to secure tactical advantages.
- The standoff entered a deadlock and became a drag on both sides.
- India's position on the war in Ukraine once again convinced China that India's foreign policy was still independent, and its move towards the US was not inevitable.
- India seems to have convinced China to revert to its old position that India does not pose an existential threat.

# Conclusion

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- The Indo-Pacific is here and it will stay. It denotes the concentration of economic & strategic forces in the area, whose peripheries may not be well-defined but the core is well-settled.
- At present, it is more of a geopolitical theatre, but may move towards becoming a regional identity by the habit of interaction (cooperative as well as frictional).
- India sees it as a potentially natural & coherent region.
- China may not like to be termed as an Indo-Pacific power, but already is one according to prevalent understandings of the concept.
- The eventual nature of the Indo-Pacific region and regionalism will crucially depend on India-China cooperation, which may proceed non-linearly along paths of cooperation and friction.

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- **Thank you**