

**INDIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY AND COMMERCE IN THE INDIAN
OCEAN REGION IN THE POST-LIBERALISATION ERA:
A STUDY IN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

Thesis submitted to Jadavpur University, West Bengal for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (in Arts)

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Certified that the Thesis entitled **INDIA’S MARITIME STRATEGY AND COMMERCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION IN THE POST-LIBERALISATION ERA: A STUDY IN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Imankalyan Lahiri, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

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Preface

The strategic and geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean Region is increasingly recognized, turning it into a prominent maritime area where the ambitions, interests, and strategic priorities of multiple actors converge. This complex landscape involves multiple stakeholders, heightening the risks of competition. Consequently, India's role and its aspirations have undergone a significant transformation in response to these evolving dynamics. We have observed that beginning in the early 2000s, India's approach to the Indian Ocean has shifted from a stance of isolationism to one characterized by active engagement. This new approach seeks to ensure that the Indian Ocean remains free from military expansion by both coastal states and major global powers. Simultaneously, India aims to leverage the strategic advantages offered by the ocean to benefit its own interests. A key aspect of this transformation has been the development of naval capabilities capable of projecting power into the critical choke points within the Indian Ocean.

This study aims to analyze the factors, both domestic and global/regional, that have influenced India's transition in foreign policy from a predominantly continental orientation to one that prioritizes maritime engagements and the enhancement of domestic maritime capabilities. To investigate this shift comprehensively, the study concentrates on India's foreign policy outreach and naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region, starting from the post-economic liberalization era. Additionally, it delves into the reciprocal effects of this foreign policy adjustment on commercial interactions within this maritime sphere. Due to the emergence of aspiring economies with growing political influence in the eastern Indian Ocean Region, the study confines its scope to this specific area. Although various commentaries and articles exist on this subject, there is a noticeable absence of in-depth, organized research, particularly from the perspective of India. Against this backdrop, this

study seeks to explore how India's role and aspirations concerning its maritime domain have evolved from a continental approach to a maritime-focused one, and how these shifts have influenced the region's geopolitical landscape in the context of maritime commerce dynamics.

In enabling me to successfully complete my doctoral thesis, I owe a debt of gratitude to the many individuals who have supported and inspired me along the way. Their unwavering encouragement, guidance, and constant support have been instrumental in my academic and personal growth.

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Chapter I:

Introduction

The Indian Ocean Region is increasingly gaining salience as its strategic and geo-political significance becomes acknowledged globally. As a strategic maritime space, it is witness to the play of geo-political interests of the many actors that are part of it. While the rise of Asia has been a topic of much deliberation over the past few decades, it is now that the presence of this rise is being felt stronger than ever not only within the region but also worldwide.

Although the 20th century saw nations focus more on continental rather than maritime power, throughout history, maritime prowess has been an important measure of a country's strength. It was in 1893 when Alfred Mahan indicated the possibility of a struggle for power in the Asia-Pacific region in the wake of an increasingly assertive China. The importance of this ocean space was further emphasized by Nicholas Spykman¹ who considered the region to

¹ Spykman, Nicholas J. "Geography and Foreign Policy, I." *The American Political Science Review* 32, no. 1 (February 1938): 28–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1949029>

be the “circumferential maritime highway” which links the whole area together in terms of sea power.

Maritime trade and maritime connectivity have been one of the oldest forms of cross-cultural and cross-civilisational interactions and the Indian Ocean waterways have been used as a primary medium of trade and have provided the impetus for the growth of maritime enterprises for densely populated littoral countries like, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia. As the Indian Ocean’s role as a conduit of vital resources grows, so does the propensity for regional powers to exert their influence in this arena. This ocean space is of vital strategic, economic and maritime importance as the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Straits link South and Southeast Asia. Since major actors are largely dependent on Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) for their energy supply, the protection of those routes and competition over other resources has assumed considerable strategic significance. This involves many stakeholders and consequently, the risks of competition have been heightened. In this regard, India’s role and its own ambitions have undergone a major transformation.

Robert Kaplan, in his work on the examination of the prevailing geopolitical dynamics and the possible future of the Indian Ocean - *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* observes that – “India stands dramatically at the commanding centre of the Indian Ocean, near to where the US and China and headed for a tryst with destiny. Just as America is evolving into a new kind of two-ocean navy – the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, rather than the Pacific and the Atlantic – China... may also be evolving into a

two-ocean navy – the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, too. The Indian Ocean joined to the western Pacific would truly be at the strategic heart of the world.”²

Regional dynamics have posed a number of issues ranging from apprehensions regarding a rising and increasingly assertive China, to bolstering maritime and energy connectivity across the Indo-Pacific. On its part, it would appear that India has been willing to take up a more prominent role and has made considerable efforts as a provider of ‘public goods’ to Southeast Asian states³ along with bilateral naval meetings and exercises, energy exploration collaborations and encouragement of freedom of navigation.⁴ Since the turn of the millennium, India’s policy towards the Indian Ocean has transformed from an isolationist approach to one of engagement⁵ with an attempt to keep the Ocean free from military expansion by both littoral states and great powers while at the same time trying to harness the ocean’s strategic benefits to its advantage. The development of naval capability to project power into the main choke points in the Indian Ocean has been important in this regard.⁶ In an earlier work⁷ David Scott examined the continental outlook that characterized Nehru and his successors and the subsequent strategic vision which came to the fore from the late 1990s and has been more or less continued since then.

The Indian Ocean comprises the busiest and most significant shipping route in the world and is home to a rich reservoir of minerals, oil and gas, fisheries and marine life. It has been little more than a couple decades that the requirement of a maritime focus and a

² Kaplan, Robert D. *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*. New York: Random House, 2010

³ Brewster, David “An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?” *Security Challenges*, Volume. 6, No. 3 (2010): 1-20 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459796>

⁴ Scott, David. “India’s Aspirations and Strategy for the Indian Ocean – Securing the Waves?”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 36:4 (February 2013), 484-511, doi: 10.1080/01402390.2012.728134

⁵ Mohan, C. Raja. “India and the Balance of Power”, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1, 2006, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2006-07-01/india-and-balance-power>

⁶ Panikkar, K.M. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*. New York: Macmillan Company. 1945

⁷ Scott, David. “India’s “Grand Strategy” for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions.” *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (November 2006), pp. 97-129

maritime outreach was realized by the Indian government. However, this realization has been an incremental one with a gradual shift from acknowledgement and rhetoric to a more tangible assertion of maritime capability. The new Indian Maritime Security Strategy (2015) report titled “Ensuring Secure Seas,”⁸ is the first instance of the government’s acknowledgment of the Indo-Pacific as an unassailable part of its maritime strategy. Countries in the West, especially the U.S. have been actively involved in maritime affairs since the Cold War and post-cold War period while the Indian engagement is fairly new.

The characteristic and nature of the ocean space itself is also prudent to consider in this regard as it is this fluid space that has allowed interactions to flourish in both historical and contemporary times. Martin Lewis in his work – ‘Dividing the Ocean Sea’⁹ notes that “new conceptions of sea space differed in accordance with changing intellectual fashions and therefore an examination of hydrography can help us see the world afresh and discover new connections obscured by conventional geographic divisions.” Talking about the issue of nomenclature of maritime spaces he says: “the changing names assigned to the (more or less) same bodies of water. Although naming is seemingly the least complex issue at hand, it can have significant political and ideological ramifications; the demise of the “Ethiopian Ocean” in the nineteenth century, for example, perhaps reflects the denigration of Africa that occurred with the rise of racist pseudoscience.” Indeed, the term – ‘Indo-Pacific’ was born out of apprehensions regarding Beijing’s rising presence and influence in these waters.¹⁰

⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Defence. *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*. Naval Strategy Publication, 2015

https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

⁹ Lewis, Martin W. “Dividing the Ocean Sea.” *Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 188–214.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/216086>

¹⁰ Kuo, Mercy A. “The Origin of ‘Indo-Pacific’ as Geopolitical Construct,” *The Diplomat*, January 25, 2018.

<https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/>

While historical research on the Indian Ocean Region has delved into the interaction and resulting changes in the fortune of maritime exchanges, recent literature in the domain of international relations has most often been confined to a strategic approach. In today's intersected and interdependent world, commercial exchanges form the fulcrum. Consequently, commercial exchanges have a significant impact on maritime politics and geopolitical dynamics.

Steinberg, in his article '*Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions, Atlantic Studies*'¹¹, draws attention to the fact that despite an increase in the number of maritime studies, there remains a dearth of sufficient attention on the political and economic relations that span ocean systems. He observes that even studies that do focus on these connections, tend to appreciate the ocean as a metaphor only instead of a material space. The article therefore attempts to understand the ocean not just as a space that permits the flow of political and economic relations but one that gives dimension to it and asserts the ways in which the maritime space shapes these relations as opposed to being shaped by the same.

Earlier, in *The Social Construction of the Ocean*¹², Philip Steinberg acknowledged the vital role that oceans have played in the development of and communication between societies. He writes about the ways in which political geography and international relations have been utilized in understanding ocean spaces. Steinberg points out that social scientists have typically perceived oceans as a resource while overlooking their significance in terms of

¹¹ Steinberg, Philip E. "Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions". *Atlantic Studies*, 10:2 (April, 2013) 156-169 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2013.785192>

¹² Steinberg, Philip E. *The Social Construction of the Ocean*

Volume 78 of Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001

being a physical space with political and economic implications that underpin global interactions.

Maritime shipping routes are comprised of what is referred to as maritime chokepoints (Dots), Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) and natural ocean resources (Stocks). And the most crucial 'dot' in the eastern Indian Ocean is the Strait of Malacca through which all trade bound for China and the Far East have to pass along the east-west SLOC. The Strait of Malacca is fundamental to China's imports of energy and is also therefore central to Beijing's area of influence in the region. Together with this, the competing claims over sovereignty that also characterize these waters, a sense of apprehension regarding Beijing's advances and long-term motives has grown among the littoral countries. Another vital aspect that has contributed to the unease is what is known as 'debt trap diplomacy.' In other words, China's attempts to position itself in host countries like Sri Lanka through large-scale infrastructural investment which the host country is eventually unable to pay; following which China takes control of said projects in the host country/countries. This has provided further reason for countries in South and Southeast Asia to look forwards India as a more reliable option in the efforts towards maintaining freedom of the seas and the preservation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of which India is a supporter. Signed in 1982, the UNCLOS, also referred to as Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea treaty, established the rules in accordance with which states can interact with regard to matters maritime. It is important to note that in a dispute in 2016 over territorial sovereignty between the Philippines and China, the latter disregarded the verdict delivered by the International Court of Justice which ruled in favour of Manila. This is an important case in point as it indicates the license with which Beijing has been conducting itself in the maritime domain.

Corbett and Winebrake discuss the “symbiotic relationship between globalization and maritime shipping, whereby globalization has increased the demands for maritime shipping, while maritime shipping has more fully enabled globalization” and observe that the “global goods movement is a critical element in the global freight transportation system that includes ocean and coastal routes, inland waterways, railways, roads, and air freight.”¹³ This is precisely why economic exchanges, which have formed a very fundamental and unassailable part of global functioning, have had a vital bearing upon the sustenance of nation-states and therefore on maritime politics.

Consequently, the smooth functioning of commerce coupled with a degree of control over the resources and their acquisition has been a key driver of countries, especially those with growing economies. And this driver has had a big influence on regional as well as global political relations. As Sanjaya Baru writes – “the intellectual roots of geo-economics are embedded in seventeenth-century European, largely French, mercantilism. The military pursuit of markets, resources and bullion intended to allow a country to export more and import less, and to buy cheap and sell dear, preceded the advent of modern economics based on ideas of free trade and laissez-faire... The rise of China and indeed of other emerging economies both in Asia and elsewhere denotes a structural shift in the locus of growth in the world economy, one that has already had, and will continue to generate, geopolitical consequences, along with political risks and opportunities.”¹⁴

Commerce has a vital role in the preservation of the security of the maritime space as a connectivity pathway. In his work titled - *Scholars and the Sea: A Historiography of the*

¹³ Corbett, James J. and Winebrake, James. The impact of globalisation on international maritime transport activity: Past trends and future perspectives, *OECD*, 2018

¹⁴ Baru, Sanjay. “Geo-economics and Strategy, Survival: Global Politics and Strategy,” *Taylor and Francis* (May 2012): 47-58 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.690978>

Indian Ocean, Prange discusses the different ‘periodizations’ that reflect the primary themes of scholarly focus on the Indian Ocean and emphasizes the utility of network studies as a new approach in considering the interconnections that span the Indian Ocean. He observes that – “The study of networks has underpinned new attempts at defining the Indian Ocean world-system, but also thrown up its own set of core-periphery questions. Within networks, cores are often defined in terms of origins, be it of a kinship group, religious movement or trade good. However, as the network expands and evolves, its centre of gravity may shift.”¹⁵

While any direct large-scale clash or conflict may not occur in the near future in the Indian Ocean region, there are several reasons for these waters to be restive. As a common resource, keeping the oceans from becoming a sovereignty frontier is of common interest for littorals and major powers alike. While much literature exists on the geo-strategic dynamics of the region, there are gaps in the understanding of the significance of commerce on the strategic contour of maritime politics, especially from India’s standpoint.

In this respect, India’s enhanced maritime role has been welcomed by littoral countries. India has gradually been expanding its maritime outreach and naval diplomacy with Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Singapore, among others including deepening military and bilateral ties with Japan and the U.S. The perception regarding India is favourable – that India’s actions and motives are non-threatening and in keeping with the rules and interests of the global maritime order.

Steinberg, in 2013,¹⁶ wrote that the maritime space is characterised by either under-theorisation or over-theorisation. While a section of work on the subject look at political and economic connections they tend to discount the sea as an individual component of study

¹⁵ Prange, Sebastian R. “Scholars and the Sea: A Historiography of the Indian Ocean.” *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (September 2008) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00538.x>

¹⁶ Steinberg. “Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions”

altogether. Another section of work highlights the sea as a ‘site for challenging modernist notions of identity and treat the ocean as a metaphor.’ Steinberg argues that ‘the ocean must be engaged as a material space characterized by movement and reformation.’ Here, Stenberg cites the work of Arif Dirlik (cited in P. Steinberg) who said: “The material basis [of the Pacific rim] is defined best not by physical geography but by relationships (economic, social, political, military, and cultural) that are concretely historical . . . [by] motions of people, commodities, and capital.’ And therefore, the ocean region thus comes to be seen as a series of (terrestrial) points linked by connections, not the actual (oceanic) space of connections.”¹⁷

This study will attempt an estimate of the domestic as well as global and regional factors that shaped India’s foreign policy shift from a primarily continental approach to one in which maritime engagements have been accorded a key place in terms of foreign policy outreach and also the augmentation of domestic maritime capabilities. In mapping and understanding this shift, the study focuses on foreign policy outreach and naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region since the post-economic liberalization period. The study will also explore the ways in which such a foreign policy shift impacted and was impacted by commercial interactions in this maritime space. Given that the eastern Indian Ocean Region is made up of aspiring economies that are also assuming political presence, the scope of the study will be limited to this part of the Ocean. While a lot of literature exists in the form of commentaries and articles, there is a lack of in-depth organized research on this subject, especially from India’s standpoint. Against this backdrop, this study intends to assess how India’s role and ambitions in relation to its maritime space have undergone a shift from a continental approach to a maritime one and how the dynamics of maritime commerce have impacted the geopolitics of the region.

¹⁷ Steinberg. “Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions.”

Scope of research:

The scope of research would comprise an understanding and analysis of the different ways in which the geo-strategic interests of India and other littorals in the Indian Ocean Region are shaped by increasing economic engagements and activities in the region. In this respect, the nature and role of maritime trade along with the expansion of the maritime industry and services will be considered in the study to estimate the changing compass of geo-strategic interests and determinants. To carry out this research, a comprehensive analysis of the various economic activities and engagements in the Indian Ocean Region was required. This included an examination of the trade patterns and flows of goods and services, as well as the growth and development of the maritime industry and associated services such as shipping, logistics, and port infrastructure.

The research considered the role of key actors in the region, including governments, businesses, and other stakeholders, and how they are shaping the geo-strategic interests of their respective countries. Factors such as geopolitical rivalries, security concerns, and environmental sustainability were also taken into account. The research adopted a multi-disciplinary approach that draws on insights from fields such as geography, political science, economics, and international relations. The research findings provide insights into the changing nature of the Indian Ocean Region which can inform policy decisions aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth and stability in the region, while also taking into account the geo-strategic interests of key stakeholders.

There are several other key considerations were taken into account in this study of the geostrategic interests of India and other littorals in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). First, the historical and cultural context was considered. The Indian Ocean has been a key site of human interaction and exchange for centuries and has shaped the histories and cultures of the

countries situated around it. An understanding of this historical and cultural context is important in order to appreciate the complex relationships between the various actors in the region. Second, the impact of resource exploitation and how it impacts and shapes geostrategic considerations was analysed. The Indian Ocean is home to a range of natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, minerals, and fish stocks. The exploitation of these resources has important implications for the environmental sustainability of the region, as well as for the geostrategic interests of the countries involved. Third, the infrastructure development cooperation frameworks were studied. The expansion of maritime trade and industry in the IOR is driving significant investments in infrastructure, including ports, shipping lanes, and logistics facilities. The location and design of these infrastructure projects stand to have important geo-strategic implications, particularly in terms of how they shape trade patterns and access to key resources. Fourth, and most importantly, the security challenges that shape interstate interactions in the region have a significant impact on economic considerations. The Indian Ocean is home to a range of security challenges, including piracy, terrorism, and interstate conflicts. These challenges can have important implications for the geostrategic interests of the countries involved, particularly in terms of how they impact trade and economic activities. Finally, the role of regional governance and institutional frameworks in the context of changing geopolitical dynamics was studied. The Indian Ocean is governed by a range of international and regional institutions, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). An analysis of the geostrategic interests of India and other littorals in the IOR considered the role of these institutions and how they are shaping the regional landscape.

Research questions:

This study delves into the fundamental factors that have influenced India's approach to the maritime domain. It seeks to understand how India's unique geographical location and the geopolitical dynamics of the region have shaped its maritime policy and the interplay between India's expanding trade and commercial relations with its eastern and southeastern neighbors and its maritime policy. The study will explore how economic ties and commercial interactions have influenced India's strategic thinking in the Indian Ocean Region and identify the multifaceted factors that have led to India's foreign policy shift from a continental-centric approach to one that places a strong emphasis on the maritime domain and the enhancement of maritime capabilities. In doing so, this study encompasses both domestic and international influences, including political, economic, and security considerations.

In the context of the premise of this study, this thesis would seek to answer the following three research questions –

1. What is the role of geography and geopolitics in India's maritime policy?
2. How has the expansion of trade and commercial relations of India with her eastern and southeastern neighbours impacted the country's maritime policy?
3. What factors have shaped the shift in India's foreign policy from an entirely continental approach to one that acknowledges and accords significance to the maritime domain and to the augmentation of maritime capabilities?

Methodology:

The post-liberalization era in India witnessed significant changes in its economic and geostrategic landscape. As India's engagement with the global economy intensified, so did the country's maritime activities. This dissertation explores the shift in the country's foreign

policy outlook from one that accorded little to no importance to the development of maritime engagements and capabilities to one that gradually acknowledged the primacy of the maritime domain in diplomatic engagements and began to reorient diplomatic efforts towards the Indian Ocean Region. To accomplish this, discourse analysis emerges as a robust research methodology, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the discursive practices surrounding India's maritime pursuits.

- **Theoretical Framework: Discourse Analysis and Geostrategy**

Discourse analysis offers a useful framework to investigate the relationship between language, power, and the formation of geostrategic narratives. In the context of geostrategy, discourse analysis enables a critical examination of the discourses surrounding maritime policies and practices, revealing how they shape India's perception of its maritime interests, security concerns, and regional aspirations.

- **Methodological Approach**

1. **Data Collection:** The research will involve collecting a diverse range of textual sources, including policy documents, government speeches, media reports, academic articles, and expert interviews. These sources will provide a rich corpus of discursive materials through which the discourses surrounding India's maritime geostrategy can be analysed.

2. **Textual Analysis:** The first step in discourse analysis is a close examination of the textual sources. This involves identifying key concepts, discursive formations, and rhetorical strategies employed to articulate India's maritime interests and aspirations. Attention will be given to how discourses have evolved over time and how they are influenced by economic considerations. This will comprise three elements -

(a) Analysis of government policies and related documents: This involves a detailed examination of official government policies and related documents, such as white papers, strategy documents, and reports, in order to identify key trends and patterns in India's maritime and naval policies over time. This type of analysis can provide valuable insights into the motivations and priorities of policymakers, as well as the factors shaping the evolution of India's maritime strategy.

(b) Analysis of primary documents from other major powers: In addition to analyzing Indian government policies, the methodology also involves an analysis of primary documents from other major powers in the Indo-Pacific region, such as the United States, China, Japan, and Australia. This could include government policies and statements, as well as official reports and strategic documents. By comparing and contrasting the policies of different powers, the analysis can help to identify areas of convergence and divergence, as well as potential areas of conflict or cooperation.

(c) Analysis of secondary documents: The final component of the methodology involves an analysis of secondary documents, such as books, articles, and commentaries written by scholars and analysts working on maritime politics. This type of analysis can provide valuable insights into the broader context of maritime politics in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as the debates and controversies surrounding specific policy issues.

3. Power Dynamics: A critical aspect of discourse analysis is uncovering power dynamics embedded within the discursive practices. By analysing the language used by various stakeholders, including policymakers, industry leaders, and academics, the research will explore power relations and the ways in which economic interests influence India's maritime geostrategy.

4. Contextualization: Discourse analysis emphasizes the importance of contextualizing language use. The study will consider the broader socio-political and economic context of India's post-liberalization era, including the role of globalization, regional dynamics, and strategic imperatives. This contextualization will provide a deeper understanding of how commercial interests shape India's maritime policies.

5. Critical Discourse Analysis: Building upon the principles of critical discourse analysis, the research will explore the underlying ideologies, power differentials, and geopolitical implications present in discursive formations. It will uncover the discursive strategies employed to legitimize economic interests and evaluate their impact on India's maritime geostrategy.

- Significance and Expected Findings

By employing discourse analysis as the research methodology, this dissertation aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex relationship between commerce, maritime activities, and India's geostrategic aspirations. It is expected that the study will throw light on the discursive constructions of India's maritime geostrategy, highlighting the influence of economic interests on policy formulation, regional alignments, and security considerations. Furthermore, the analysis will illuminate the power dynamics, ideological formations, and geopolitical implications underlying India's post-liberalization maritime pursuits.

Discourse analysis provides a robust and nuanced research methodology for examining the impact of commerce on India's maritime geostrategy in the post-liberalization era. By closely analyzing the discursive practices surrounding India's maritime policies and practices, this research aims to uncover the complexities and power dynamics that shape the country's strategic interests.

Chapter II

From Geography to Geopolitics:

Understanding India's Place

India's maritime geography is one that lends itself favourably to the cultivation and expansion of maritime ties. However, it remained overlooked for much of the country's recent history. As the world decidedly reengages with and acknowledges the advantages and opportunities offered by the ocean space, India too has emerged as a country both willing and capable to participate in the maritime domain. This chapter provides an overview of the evolution in the country's maritime outlook as it transforms from a largely continental-oriented focus to one in which maritime engagements form a vital component of foreign policy outreach. In doing so, the chapter accounts for the advances in New Delhi's strategic and diplomatic capacity, the attendant impediments and imperatives with respect to the same,

and contends that going forward, India's maritime role is set to shape and also be shaped by developments in the Indo-Pacific.

India straddles a unique maritime geography with a 7,517 km long coast line and nine coastal states with ports handling about 1400 million tonnes of cargo ever year.¹⁸ As a peninsular nation, trade, religion and culture formed pillars of the country's maritime linkages in the past resulting in a vibrant history of maritime associations which nonetheless were severed over time. Especially after independence, the focus of foreign outreach was almost entirely continental. The reforms of 1991 can be regarded as an inflection point for India's priorities with port development being accorded attention and the country's maritime position becoming an important part of the national agenda. Since 2014, the focus on maritime capacity development and outreach has grown manifold with national policies being dedicated to the development of the maritime sector.

While policy directives and naval engagements began to steadily take shape and expand since the early 1990s, the maritime conversation around them has become perceptibly visible and gained prominence largely over the latter half of the last decade. This has undoubtedly contributed to the raising the maritime outlook of the country as increasingly a greater range and number of stakeholders engage in dialogue around maritime geopolitics, commerce, infrastructure, ecology and defence.

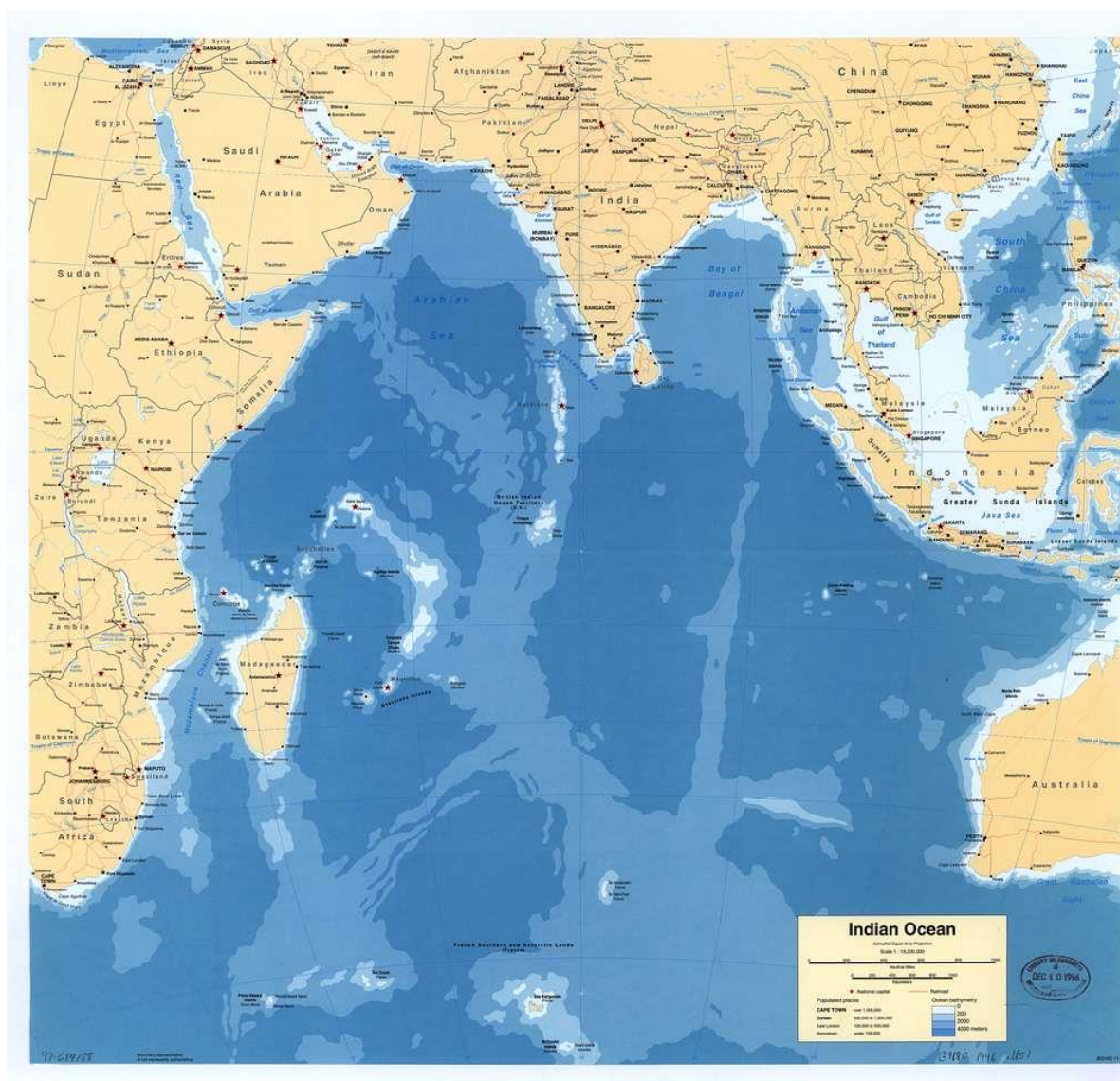
Kenneth McPherson in his book *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea*¹⁹, advocates for the existence of a distinct Indian Ocean maritime space characterized by trade and communication networks which operated for centuries. And these networks had a

¹⁸ Government of India, Economic Advisory Council to the PM. *India's Blue Economy: A Draft Policy Framework*. New Delhi, September 2020. https://incois.gov.in/documents/Blue_Economy_policy.pdf

¹⁹ Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea*, OUP India, 1997

substantial influence on the communities which dotted the coastlines of the littoral countries. The spread of trade, religion, culture and ideas formed vital components of these networks. McPherson states that this maritime space remained largely insulated till the 18th century which was followed by a transition from commercialism to capitalism which in turn altered the network of regional interconnections. Ultimately the waters ceased to be the key binding force that it previously was.

Figure 1: The Indian Ocean Region



Source: The United States Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/>

This chapter traces the evolution of contemporary India's maritime outlook with reference to diplomacy and strategy and argues that this shift has been simultaneous to and in many respects prompted and accelerated by the strategic imperatives posed by the Indo-Pacific. In doing so the chapter traces the shift of New Delhi from an almost entirely continental focus to the acknowledgement of and engagement with its neighbouring maritime space and subsequently the transformation from a characteristic participatory reluctance to active engagement via informal groupings as well as institutional platforms.

Fait accompli: From geography to strategy

The peninsular geography of the country has long been acknowledged as conducive for the establishment and development of maritime connections towards both the west and the east. In fact, the peninsular shape of the country almost divides the Indian Ocean into eastern and western halves which has in turn contributed to corresponding policy approaches, strategic understandings and naval positioning on both sides of the peninsula. Indeed, this geographical feature has also to an extent contributed to the understanding that the Indian Ocean is 'India's Ocean' leading to the view that India should be the rightful maritime security provider to the littorals of this ocean space.²⁰ It was in the 1940s that renowned historian, K.M. Panikkar wrote about the peninsular shape of India being the defining feature which differentiates the Indian Ocean from the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans with the continent of Asia serving as a land roof for this ocean expanse. Classifying the Indian Ocean as a 'landlocked sea', he underscored the importance of the Indian Ocean for the country and advocated the development of requisite maritime power to harness attendant opportunities

²⁰ Brewster, David "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?", *Security Challenges*, Volume. 6, No. 3, 2010, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459796>

and wield leverage in times of crisis.²¹ Considering these geographical attributes, Panikkar concurs with the Mahanian axiom – “Whoever rules the waves, rules the word” – when he observes that “A true appreciation of Indian historical forces will show beyond doubt, that whoever control the Indian Ocean has India at his mercy” and goes on to add that “...the sea routes available to India from her ports from Kandla to Calcutta, take her easily to all parts of the world.”²²

Nonetheless, despite the acknowledgement of the scope of the country’s maritime geography, in the years leading up to and in the decades after independence India lost touch with the maritime space due to the overarching imperatives and significance of its continental challenges. Indeed, New Delhi’s reorientation towards the necessities of reviving its maritime linkages has not been plain sailing given that generations of foreign and defence service personnel have been focussed and trained on continental matters.²³ While the last couple of decades have witnessed an increase in the naval budget, it has been the recipient of less than a quarter of the defence budget clearly indicating the level of priority accorded to the maritime domain. It is true however that the deepening of defence collaborations has to in tandem with the expansion of diplomatic and strategic engagements in order to catch up with the years of inattention.

With the reforms beginning from the early 1990s and as India became a trading nation, the country’s maritime interests grew exponentially.²⁴ New Delhi began to engage more with its neighbourhood and increasingly realised the significance of reviving ancient

²¹ Panikkar, K.M. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*. New York: Macmillan Company. 1945 <https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.2745>

²² Panikkar. *India and the Indian Ocean*.

²³ Baruah, Darshana M. “It is time to reimagine the Indian Ocean,” *Hindustan Times*, March 30, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/it-is-time-to-reimagine-the-indian-ocean-101617111891839.html>

²⁴ Mohan, C. Raja. “Raja-Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi,” *The Indian Express*, February 09, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/international-fleet-review-maritime-india-versus-continental-delhi/>

maritime connections – both political and commercial. Indeed, India’s maritime imperative can be compared with that of the US at the turn of the 20th century when it became an industrial power and turned to the sea for global markets and exercising its maritime capabilities and China at the beginning of the 21st century when it emerged as the workshop of the world and began to announce its maritime destiny, to develop a blue water navy and affirm what it considered its maritime rights.²⁵

- **Post-Independence and Pre-1991 Reforms**

The Indian Navy which was created under the British rule, deeply felt the presence of seaborne perils after World War II resulting in naval plans being largely military-oriented. The overall goal was to safeguard shipping on the high seas, to ensure supplies can leave and reach India and to prevent any enemy landing on Indian shores.²⁶ The first Plan included two light fleet carriers, three cruisers, eight destroyers, four submarines and smaller ships. But this Plan was never implemented due to the overarching priority of continental concerns.

Nehru acknowledged the significance of the maritime sector and stressed the need to have a certain capacity of sea defence to aid overall defence and trade development.²⁷²⁸ But during that time, India lacked economic and industrial resources to fully realise a strong maritime presence. Nehru was aware about this and was not

²⁵ Mohan. “Raja-Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi”

²⁶ Parmar, Commander Sarabjeet Singh. “Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean,” *Journal of Defence Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014): 49-63, https://idsa.in/system/files/8_1_2014_MaritimeSecurityintheIndianOcean.pdf

²⁷ In a note to his defence minister, he stated, ‘We have been brought up into thinking of our land frontier during British times and even subsequently and yet India, by virtue of her long coastline, is very much a maritime country.

²⁸ “Note to K.N. Katju, 22 September 1955,” *SWJN-SS* 30 (2001): 346–48

willing to link sea power with India's regional foreign policy.²⁹ The approach remained exclusive to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

India's naval policy and outreach in the period between post-independence and pre-1991 reforms can be divided into two distinct phases: the early years after independence and the period from the 1970s to the early 1990s.

In the early years after independence, India's naval policy focused primarily on ensuring territorial integrity and securing the country's maritime boundaries. This was necessary due to the fact that India inherited a long coastline and a vast maritime area from its colonial past. In 1947, India had a small naval force comprising six sloops, four frigates, and 26 minesweepers. Over the years, India gradually increased its naval strength by acquiring more ships and expanding its naval bases.

One of the key challenges that India faced during this period was to secure its territorial waters from poaching by foreign fishing vessels. India responded to this challenge by declaring a 12-nautical-mile territorial limit in 1958. The Indian Navy was tasked with enforcing this limit and protecting the country's fishing grounds. This led to several clashes between Indian Navy vessels and foreign fishing trawlers.

The period from the 1970s to the early 1990s saw a shift in India's naval policy towards a more outward-looking approach. This was driven by several factors, including India's growing economic and strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region, the increasing presence of external powers in the region, and the need to protect India's sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).

²⁹ Singh, Zorawar D. "Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India's Maritime Role Flux," *Journal of Defence Studies* 11, no. 4 (2017): 21-49, https://idsa.in/system/files/jds/jds_11_4_2017_foreign-policy-and-sea-power-india-maritime-role-flux.pdf

In 1971, India played a key role in the liberation of Bangladesh, which had a significant impact on the country's naval policy. India's success in the war highlighted the importance of naval power in achieving strategic objectives. This led to a greater emphasis on developing a blue-water navy capable of operating in the open ocean.

One of the key initiatives taken during this period was the establishment of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008. The IONS was a forum for naval cooperation among Indian Ocean littoral states and provided a platform for discussing maritime security issues in the region. India also conducted several joint naval exercises with other countries, including the United States, Japan, and Australia.

India's naval outreach during this period was also driven by its growing economic interests in the Indian Ocean region. India became increasingly dependent on oil imports from the Middle East, and securing its SLOCs became a key priority. In 1983, India established a naval base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which provided a strategic foothold in the region and helped to secure the country's eastern seaboard.

It was only the wars of 1962, 1965 and 1971 that shifted the focus towards the development of sea power, which also incidentally, coincided with India's initial attempts to develop a regional identity. The Indian Navy was even used in the 1971 war;³⁰ in 1986, India deployed its INS Vindhyagiri in the Seychelles to help abort a coup, amounting to its first military intervention in the IOR; and in 1988, the navy helped rescue President Gayoom from Male.³¹ Here, one can see foreign policy goals being linked with sea power as India asserts its role through resolution of regional

³⁰ Parmar. "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean"

³¹ Singh. "Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India's Maritime Role Flux"

disputes in the IOR. At the same time, it was also helpful in preventing IOR states from falling into an external power's influence.³²

- **Post-1991 Reforms**

With the 1991 reforms, India finally had the space for the resources to develop that could support maritime growth. The stance of non-existent presence in maritime policies was set to change with new possibilities of developing economic and industrial resources. The emphasis slowly shifted to the IOR as an arena featuring important Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs), maritime trade protection and security infrastructure and other assets in the maritime zones.³³ India also transitioned to reducing its leadership role in South Asia and the IOR by aiming for common, equal and cooperative security in the region. This is a sign of neo-liberal ideas of interdependency and connectivity taking shape after the reforms.³⁴

The time also came for the role of the Indian Navy to redevelop for a dynamic sphere since the Navy is a fundamental element of any country's maritime policy. Maritime frontiers contribute to the overall social and economic well-being of a nation and their safety is also essential to achieve growth in trade. Hence, the Navy serves as a catalyst for peace, security and stability in both economic and political aspects. A closer look at its strategy can disclose the status of a nation in dealing with its external environment beyond the context of foreign policy.

Post the 1991 economic reforms, India underwent a significant transformation, and its naval policy and outreach saw a marked shift. India's economic growth and stability

³² Singh. "Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India's Maritime Role Flux"

³³ Parmar. "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean"

³⁴ Singh. "Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India's Maritime Role Flux"

led to a renewed focus on strengthening its maritime capabilities and expanding its naval outreach.

The primary objective of India's naval policy post-1991 has been to safeguard its maritime interests and secure its coastal borders. India's expanding economy and energy requirements also necessitated a stronger naval presence to secure the country's maritime trade routes. The Indian Navy was modernized and strengthened to meet these objectives.

The Indian Navy's maritime outreach and engagement with other countries also increased post-1991. India began to build partnerships and cooperation with other countries in the region and beyond. The Indian Navy actively engaged in joint naval exercises with the US, Japan, Australia, and other countries in the region to improve interoperability and strengthen regional security. India also expanded its maritime diplomacy and increased its naval presence in international forums.

In 1995, India adopted a Look East Policy, which sought to strengthen economic and political ties with Southeast Asia and East Asia. The Indian Navy played a significant role in this policy by expanding its engagement with the Southeast Asian countries. India has since developed a robust naval relationship with the ASEAN countries, with maritime security being a key area of cooperation. India also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indonesia in 1997 for maritime cooperation and has since been conducting joint naval exercises with the Indonesian Navy.

In recent years, India has been focusing on strengthening its naval cooperation with other Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries. In 2015, India launched its Maritime Security Strategy, which called for greater engagement with IOR countries to enhance maritime security and stability in the region. India has since been strengthening its

maritime cooperation with its neighbors in the region, including Seychelles, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.

In 2018, India hosted the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Goa, which brought together the navies of the Indian Ocean region to discuss regional maritime issues and foster greater cooperation. India has also been working on strengthening its maritime partnership with the Gulf countries and has been conducting joint naval exercises with the UAE, Oman, and Qatar.

India has also been increasing its maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region. In 2018, India launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) to promote sustainable development and enhance maritime security in the region. The IPOI has since been endorsed by several countries, including the US, Japan, and Australia.

India's economic growth and energy requirements have led to a renewed focus on strengthening its maritime capabilities and expanding its naval outreach. India has been actively engaging with other countries in the region and beyond to promote regional security and stability. India's naval diplomacy and partnerships have been key to strengthening its maritime influence and promoting peace and stability in the region.

The 1991 liberalisation reforms were a watershed moment in the history of India as India opened its economy while staying firm on its own domestic preferences. This was evident from its negotiations with the World Bank during India's acceptance of the structural adjustment loan in 1991. Despite its acceptance of the conditionalities which were part of the loan, India's rapid economic recovery and strategic alliances reduced its dependence on bank's

material resources and allowed it to resist World Banks' attempt to reshape India's liberalisation policies. The shift in India's foreign policy was in lines with geoeconomics ideas as it began recognising the growth models of the East Asian countries which were referred in Indian Economic Surveys since the early 1990s. This was extended into India prioritising international economic collaborations as part of its international engagements. These priorities included: working towards a peaceful periphery in South Asia; securing access to essential resources in Asia and Africa; creating an enabling international environment for India's economic growth; establishing domestic and regional infrastructure to facilitate trade and cooperation; and consolidating a defence capability "to protect India's ability to continue its own transformation."³⁵

While the process of transformation in India has largely been slow, the past decade has witnessed an increased level of acknowledgement, interest, emphasis, and enthusiasm with matters maritime which has also translated into more definite policy and diplomatic approaches towards not only the immediate neighbourhood but also the wider Indian Ocean region. The belief and understanding that the country's locational advantage needs to be leveraged both in terms of developing maritime connections as well as the augmentation of security networks is now perhaps rooted more firmly than ever before. New Delhi has become gradually mindful about providing public goods in the maritime sphere and has assisted smaller littoral nations in managing their exclusive economic zones and in natural disaster while cultivating special relationships with key partners across the IOR.³⁶ This transformation from a principally continental outlook to the undertaking of measures to re-engage with the ocean space has occurred across a range of sectors from infrastructure to foreign policy outreach to the strengthening of maritime defence collaborations. In doing so

³⁵ Menon, S. 2011b. "India and the Global Scene: Prem Bhatia Memorial Lecture, 11 August 2011." *National Maritime Foundation*. Accessed January 20, 2012. <http://maritimeindia.org/article/india-and-global-scene>

³⁶ Mohan. "Raja-Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi"

India's ocean strategy has been informed by four key elements³⁷ - historical and societal factors, maritime geography, political geography/jurisdiction and the China factor.

India's position in the geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific

In the book *ReOrient*³⁸, Andre Gunder Frank encourages readers to move away from the Eurocentrism because, he argues, in ancient times, it was Asia which was at the heart of the world and is once again becoming so. There has been much discussion about whether the 21st century will be an Asian century and Frank observes that the economic balance is tipping back in favour of South and East Asia. The author draws parallels between the past and future in this endeavour providing insights into how and why the dynamics are changing.

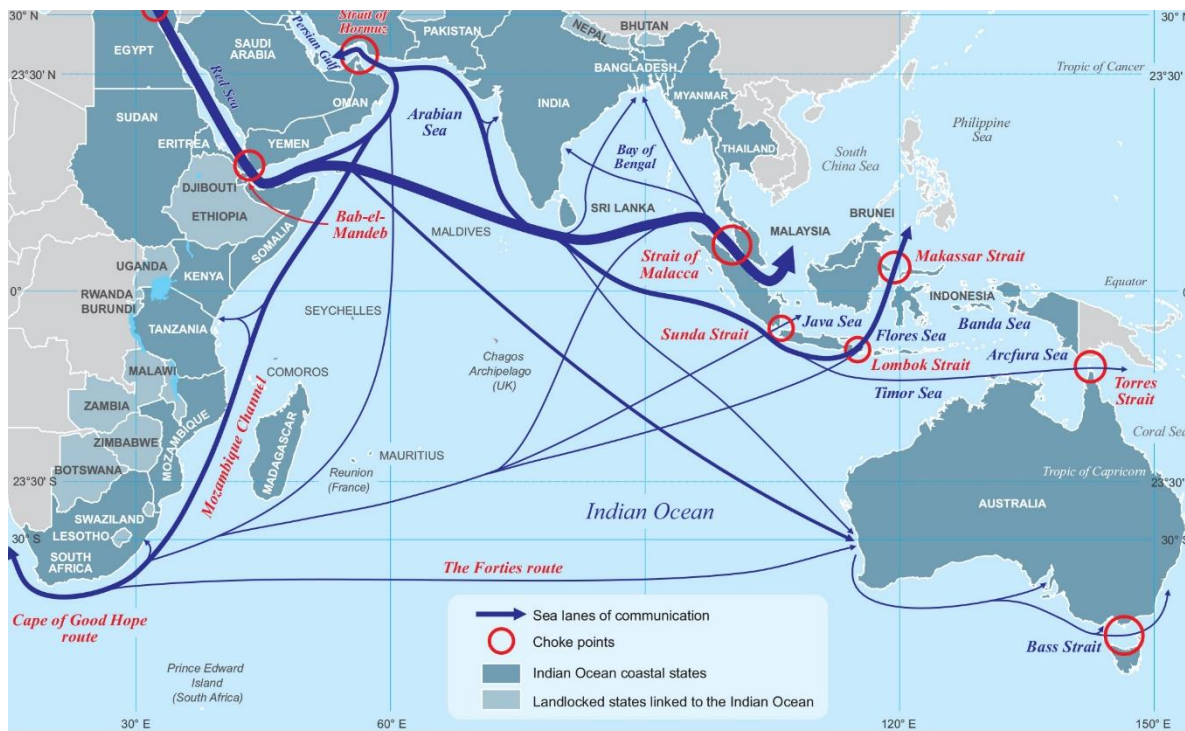
In order to understand the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific', it is important to acknowledge its precursor, the 'Asia-Pacific'. Until around a decade ago, the term 'Asia-Pacific' was widely used in Washington and was comfortable for many countries in the region. However, the term 'Indo-Pacific' has gained more popularity since then and is now the preferred term for discussions related to the region. This is because it represents the changes in strategic behavior and diplomatic relations brought about by the economic and security connections between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean.³⁹ China's objections to the term are understandable, given their perspective on power projection. They view the Indo-Pacific as undermining China's influence over East and Southeast Asia and its immediate maritime space.

³⁷ Khurana, Gurpreet S. "India's Maritime Strategy: Context and Subtext," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 13 (2017): 14-26, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09733159.2017.1309747><https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09733159.2017.1309747>

³⁸ Frank, Andre G. *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, University of California Press, July 31, 1998

³⁹ Medcalf, R. (2013, October 10). "The Indo-Pacific: What's in a Name?" *The American Interest*, 9(2). <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/10/10/the-indo-pacific-whats-in-a-name/>

Figure 2: Sea Lanes of Communication and Chokepoints in the Indian Ocean Region



Source: Walker, I., Ramos, M. J., & Kaarsholm, P. (Eds.) 2017. *Fluid Networks and Hegemonic Powers in the Western Indian Ocean*. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Internacionais. Retrieved from <http://books.openedition.org/cei/416>

The Indo-Pacific region is home to some of the world's fastest-growing developing economies, busiest seaports, and accounts for 60% of global maritime trade. With the rise of global value chains connecting multiple countries over the past few decades, the Indo-Pacific has become a prominent player in this transformation, acting as an engine for growth.⁴⁰ Although the region encompasses vast geography with sub-sets of regions having their own unique socio-economic and strategic templates, it holds significant geopolitical and geo-economic importance due to the interconnections it has with these sub-sets and with the rest of the world. The Indo-Pacific is a witness to exchanges and interdependencies of trade,

⁴⁰ Runde, D., Savoy, C. and Murphy, O. (2020, November 02). "Post-pandemic Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity in the Indo-Pacific." Center for Strategic & International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/post-pandemic-infrastructure-and-digital-connectivity-indo-pacific>

security, environment, and technology that characterize global politics. The uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding China's role in the region have resulted in significant apprehension among countries within and outside of it. This is why the Indo-Pacific has become the center of gravity in the world economy, with many stakeholders and subscribers due to their interests being intertwined with the region's status in some way or another.

To understand the Indo-Pacific's rising significance in the current global scenario, it is important to consider the region's geopolitical landscape. This landscape is intricate, with close economic relationships between China and nations in South, Southeast Asia, East Asia and Oceania, as well as strategic concerns among these countries. Over the years, China has provided financial and political aid to its neighbors, often with strings attached. This has led to the realization that countries must diversify their dependencies and balance their overreliance on China by engaging with other countries within and outside the region. For example, countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka have sought to expand their ties with India and Japan to reduce their economic and financial dependence on China. However, this approach is not always straightforward due to factors such as changes in domestic political regimes, pressure from Beijing, and other internal considerations.

Many Southeast Asian nations have refrained from openly opposing China's actions in the South China Sea due to concerns about how China will react. Despite the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has established the international maritime boundaries of this body of water, China has repeatedly tested these boundaries and insists on resolving what it calls "disputed maritime boundaries" bilaterally, where it holds the advantage. The ASEAN, the most significant institution in the region, has also avoided naming China directly, although it has frequently mentioned issues such as protecting maritime freedoms such as navigation in its official statements. However, since 2019, there have been instances of previously reluctant countries, such as Malaysia and

Indonesia, voicing their grievances against China. Even the ASEAN has changed its previous position by releasing its Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which takes a stronger stance than before and sends a clear message to China about where it stands in the narrative, although it does not explicitly denounce China's many violations of legally established rules.

India faces the challenge posed by China in both the continental and maritime domains. While Beijing has tested India's land borders, including the recent clashes in the Galwan valley during the pandemic, it has also challenged India's interests in the Indian Ocean region. Despite India's ongoing maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific, some argue that the protection of its land borders against China's repeated hostility at the Line of Actual Control is the immediate concern for India.⁴¹ As a result, India has invested in boosting infrastructure at the borders, increased funding for the Border Roads Organisation, and mountain assault exercises. However, following the Galwan incident, India deployed a warship to the South China Sea and maintained contact with US vessels in the area as a clear indication of its willingness to use its capacities and diplomatic and strategic networks to respond to threats, signaling an asymmetric response to China's actions.

Since the start of the 21st century, the Indian Navy has played a more significant role, and India has attempted to adopt a more nuanced maritime position in the Indian Ocean region. As the Indo-Pacific region gains prominence, New Delhi acknowledges the need to invest in resources and policy frameworks to expand India's engagement in the region. According to Marianne Peron-Doise, “The projection of Indian policy in an Indo-oceanic and Pacific interconnected space is translated by an active naval diplomacy, which aims to secure the main shipping routes and the maritime domain while offering an alternative to the

⁴¹ Sagerstrom, T. “Interpreting India’s Maritime Priorities: Lessons for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy”. *South Asian Voices* (June 2020). <https://southasianvoices.org/interpreting-indias-maritime-priorities-lessons-for-the-u-s-indo-pacific-strategy/>

Chinese silk route projects, and by strengthening the Indian influence in the area.”⁴² As a result, India's regional policy is now informed by a more constructive maritime policy, an increased role for the navy, and the fostering of ties with partners who share similar interests.

Nonetheless, the Indo-Pacific as a region is perhaps a certainty – a geo-economic reality providing the context within which China has been rising⁴³ – although it is not a consequence of China's rise as it is often perceived to be. As a result, collaborations and deepening of both intra- and extra-regional interdependencies are natural. Japan, Singapore, and Australia have already played their parts, with varying levels of enthusiasm. However, the increasing capacity and desire of India to play a more active role in the region correspond with the growing significance of the Indo-Pacific.

India's Indo-Pacific strategy is centered around its vision for a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific region is defined as the area encompassing the Indian Ocean and the western and central Pacific Ocean, including the seas around East Asia. India's Indo-Pacific strategy aims to build on its existing partnerships in the region and engage with other countries to promote peace, stability, and prosperity.

India's Indo-Pacific strategy has several key components. The first is to strengthen India's maritime capabilities and infrastructure, including the modernization of its navy, the development of its ports, and the promotion of coastal shipping. The second component is to deepen India's engagement with other countries in the region, particularly in Southeast Asia, through economic and security partnerships. This includes the development of regional connectivity initiatives, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor and the

⁴² Péron-Doise, M. “India's maritime policy: Strengthening its Indo-Pacific identity.” *Hérodote*, 173, No. 2, (April 2019) 121-136. <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal--2019-2-page-121.htm>

⁴³ Medcalf, R. and Mohan, C. R. Responding To Indo-Pacific Rivalry: Australia, India, And Middle Power Coalitions. *Lowy Institute*. (August 2014) <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/responding-indo-pacific-rivalry-australia-india-and-middle-power-coalitions>

Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, as well as the promotion of trade and investment linkages with countries in the region.

India's Indo-Pacific strategy also aims to promote a rules-based order in the region, including the respect for international law and freedom of navigation and overflight. India has been a vocal advocate of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and has sought to use international legal mechanisms to address maritime disputes in the region. In addition, India has also been promoting the concept of "ASEAN centrality" in regional security architecture, which emphasizes the importance of ASEAN as the primary regional organization for security cooperation.

Another key aspect of India's Indo-Pacific strategy is the development of strategic partnerships with like-minded countries in the region, particularly the United States, Japan, and Australia. These partnerships have been strengthened through joint military exercises, intelligence-sharing agreements, and diplomatic dialogues. In addition, India has been a key participant in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a strategic grouping of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India that seeks to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

India's Indo-Pacific strategy has also been influenced by its growing concerns about China's assertiveness in the region, particularly its actions in the South China Sea and its Belt and Road Initiative. India has been critical of China's "debt-trap diplomacy" and has refused to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative due to concerns about its strategic implications. India has also sought to balance China's growing influence in the region through its strategic partnerships and economic initiatives in Southeast Asia.

New Delhi's Indo-Pacific strategy is therefore aimed at promoting a peaceful and stable regional order through economic and security partnerships, the development of infrastructure and connectivity, and the promotion of a rules-based order. While the strategy has been

influenced by growing concerns about China's assertiveness in the region, India has also sought to balance China's influence through its partnerships with other countries in the region.

The Indo-Pacific region is home to emerging economies, a vast market, and some of the busiest maritime shipping lanes in the world. Not only countries within the region, but also countries outside of it, have a deep interest in maintaining peace and stability in the area. As a result, various forms of cooperation, including bilateral, mini-lateral, and multi-lateral forums, have emerged to address shared concerns and interests. This has led to a greater demand for countries like Japan, Australia, and India to increase their visibility and engagement in the region, while also providing alternative sources of collaboration to countries that have traditionally relied heavily on China. Against this backdrop, India's role in the Indo-Pacific has been steadily growing, and its significance has increased further due to the pandemic. Before an assessment of the expansion of New Delhi's role and the factors that shaped it is undertaken it is important to assess and understand the historical evolution of India's role in the region. The following chapter estimates the historical roots of strong maritime linkages across the eastern Indian Ocean Region and draws a parallel with the contemporary period which is witnessing a resumption of the earlier networks in the context of a fast-changing geopolitical landscape in the region.

Chapter III

Networks of Trade Flows:

Mapping Trade Networks in the Indian Ocean

Region

In *Geo-economics and Strategy*, Sanjay Baru⁴⁴ discusses the role of geo-economics in determining geo-strategic directions adopted by countries and the notion – “that ‘trade follows the flag’ (that the projection of national power has economic consequences) and that ‘the flag follows trade’ (that there are geopolitical consequences of essentially economic phenomena).” Much of the engagement among countries in the Indo-Pacific region over the last decade especially, has been shaped by economic factors which have in turn been influenced by geopolitical and geostrategic considerations. The course of maritime interactions between communities of South and Southeast Asia and Africa over the Indian

44 Baru, Sanjaya. “Geo-economics and Strategy, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Taylor and Francis (May 2012): 47-58 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.690978>

Ocean shows how trade prospered in these regions in the early colonial period and established communication networks through boat-building technologies, religious exchanges and craft and craft production. An understanding of these linkages is essential for the examination of the renewed emphasis on maritime connections that have been witnessed together with the fact that maritime remains the most inexpensive and preferred mode of trade in the world even today.⁴⁵

Indian Ocean routes link Western European countries to East Asian countries. India occupies a central position in the Indian Ocean, with a long coastline that facilitates interaction with Europe, Africa, and West Asia to the west, and South-East Asia and the Pacific to the east. India's location plays a key role in ensuring unhindered traffic.⁴⁶ The peninsular topography of our country holds historical significance in evolving trade links that developed over a long period of time. The geographical setting of the Indian Peninsula has supported the development of seaports all along its coastline from antiquity.⁴⁷

India's Maritime links date back to roughly the third millennium BCE. The Indus valley civilization was the first in the region to establish maritime trade with Mesopotamia. The first tidal port in India was constructed at Lothal circa 2300 BC during the Indus Valley Civilisation, near the present-day harbour of Mangrol on the Gujarat coast, according to a Kutch mariner's log book from the 19th century. The first ships were single logs carrying small cargo which eventually developed into modern ships.

⁴⁵ Ray, Himanshu P. and Alpers, Edward. *Cross Currents and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean World*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2007

⁴⁶ Jacob, Dr. .Devkumar. "India's Maritime Heritage and its Milestones". *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 2014)

⁴⁷ J. Deloche. *Transport and Communication in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994

Archaeological finds suggest long-distance contacts for trade in goods including Harappan seals, weight, dice, and beads. Other major trading items were carnelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold, and varieties of wood. Various Harappan seals are also found in Mesopotamia, Bahrain, and Oman suggesting maritime trade between these regions. As early as the middle Harappan Phase (2600-1900 BCE), an extensive maritime trading network connected the Harappan and Mesopotamian civilizations, with much of the trade handled by "middlemen merchants from Dilmun".⁴⁸ For the first time in the history of the region, long-distance maritime trading became possible. According to the Mesopotamian records dated 2350 BC onwards, trade relations with Meluha which is the ancient name of the Indus region also gives us insight into two intermediate trading stations called Dilmun and Makan which lay between Mesopotamia and meluha; Dilmun is modern-day Bahrain on the Persian Gulf.

Ancient India also had commercial links with Afghanistan and Iran with silk being the item most in demand initially with spices also being traded later on. Spices however surpassed the demands of Indian silk.⁴⁹ The discovery of the benefits of seasonal monsoon winds on ship sailing enabled India to carry on trade and establish cultural contacts with Western Asia and the Mediterranean as well as with Southeast Asia. The southern peninsular region, particularly, the coastal state of Tamil Nadu had trade links with China, Egypt, parts of Europe, and South East Asian countries and had more than 16 functioning ports. Imports of horses from Arab countries, as well as finished commodities from Indonesia and Sri Lanka, are documented at Poompuhar in the Nagapattinam district. The latter was also a key hub for the export of South Indian spices. Evidence about the existence of these ports and

⁴⁸ Dokras, Dr. Uday. "Maritime History of Ancient Hindu Traders". *Journal of the Indo Nordic Author's collective* (2020)

⁴⁹ Seland, Eivind H. 2010. "Networks and social cohesion in ancient Indian Trade: Geography, ethnicity, religion." *Journal of Global History* Vol. 8, No. 3 (October, 2013)

overseas trade is found extensively in Tamil literature.⁵⁰ Between the second century BC to the third century BC, archaeological evidence of gold in the southern parts of the country offers proof of direct contact with the Roman empire.

With improvements in communication and a sound financial system based on silver *tanka* and copper *dirham*; trade was made considerably easier during the Delhi Sultanate period. India's exquisite muslin and textiles aided its trade with countries along the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.⁵¹ India also imported high-end satin fabrics from the West and brought in porcelain and raw silk from China. In exchange for Indian textiles, ivory was imported from Southeast Asia. There was a division in Asian maritime trade between the eastern and western segment. There were different kinds of vessels: the 'Dhow' in the West, which is constructed of teakwood, and the 'Junk' in the East, which is made of bamboo raft. These *junks* according to Marco Polo carried a load of 679 tons. They controlled a vast empire and under their rule, India supplied sugar, rice and textiles like cotton, teak woods which helped attract many foreign travellers to set up trade in India.⁵² On the other hand, India imported tin, copper, spices, war horses and luxury items like ivory from its neighbouring countries. There are many pre-existing trade links in the Indo-Pacific, such as from Formosa to Vietnam, from Siam to Sumatra, from Malacca to Malabar and from Gujarat to Hormuz.⁵³ During British rule, the East India company capitalised on these Indian Ocean Region trade networks and expanded trade with countries in Southeast Asia with Odisha was a significant outpost for this purpose.

⁵⁰ Tripathi, Sila. "Seafaring Archaeology of the East Coast of India and Southeast Asia during the Early Historical Period." *Ancient Asia: Journal of the Society of South Asian Archaeology*. Vol. 8 (July 2017) doi: 10.5334/aa.18

⁵¹ Chandra, Satish. *History of Medieval India*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, 2007

⁵² Chandra, Satish. *History of Medieval India*. Hyderabad : Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, 2007

⁵³ Jaishankar, Dhruva "Maritime connectivity and security in the Indo-Pacific," *Brookings*, January 09, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/maritime-connectivity-and-security-in-the-indo-pacific/>

A Brief Look at the Seafaring Networks of Ancient and Modern India

Ancient India had a rich maritime history dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization (2600 BCE - 1900 BCE) and the Mauryan Empire (322 BCE - 185 BCE). The country's maritime policy was largely influenced by its geographic location and trade relations with neighbouring countries. The civilization's maritime policy was shaped by its geographic location, situated along the banks of the Indus River and the Arabian Sea which allowed a thriving trade network with neighbouring regions, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf. The civilization's primary maritime activities were centered around the coastal cities of Lothal and Sutkagen Dor, which were major ports that facilitated trade with other regions. Lothal was a significant centre of maritime trade during the Indus Valley Civilization. It was located near the Gulf of Khambhat and had a well-developed dockyard that was used for shipbuilding and repairing vessels. The city also had a complex system of canals that allowed for easy transportation of goods between the harbour and the city.

The Indus Valley Civilization's maritime policy was focused on promoting trade and cultural exchange with other regions. Traders sailed across the Arabian Sea to Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf, and exchanged goods such as cotton, spices, pearls, and copper. The civilization's maritime policy was also influenced by its need to protect its coastal cities from foreign invasions. The cities of Lothal and Sutkagen Dor were fortified with walls and defensive structures to protect them from attacks by pirates and rival kingdoms. The civilization also had a strong navy that patrolled the Arabian Sea and protected its trade routes from piracy. The Indus Valley Civilization's maritime policy had a significant impact on the development of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean region. The civilization's ships were the earliest known examples of ocean-going vessels in the Indian Ocean, and they paved

the way for the development of trade networks between the Indian subcontinent and other regions.

During the Mauryan Empire, Chandragupta Maurya had a strong navy and maintained good relations with the neighbouring Seleucid Empire, establishing strong trade and cultural exchanges. The Mauryan Empire also created a strong maritime trade network with Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. In the later centuries, the Chola Dynasty (9th to 13th century CE) was known for its extensive naval power and trade activities in the Indian Ocean establishing a maritime empire that controlled trade routes between India and Southeast Asia and also made several overseas expeditions to Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago. India's maritime policy during both the Mauryan Empire and the Chola Dynasty was characterized by a strong focus on trade and naval power, as well as a desire to establish cultural exchange with other regions. Chandragupta Maurya is known to have recognized the strategic importance of the country's coastlines and established a strong navy to protect its trade routes and coastal cities. The Mauryan navy was primarily used for defensive purposes, and its ships were equipped with advanced weapons and technologies, such as iron-tipped arrows and catapults. Under the Chola Dynasty, India's maritime policy shifted towards a more proactive approach to naval power and trade. The Chola navy was one of the most advanced naval forces of its time, and its ships were equipped with what were then advanced technologies such as grappling hooks and fire arrows.

The Chola Dynasty established a maritime empire that controlled trade routes between India and Southeast Asia, and the dynasty's ships regularly made voyages to countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cambodia. The dynasty's trade networks were not limited to Southeast Asia, and its merchants also conducted trade with China, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea. In addition to its focus on trade and naval power, the Chola Dynasty also had a keen interest in cultural exchange with other regions. The dynasty's kings were

patrons of the arts and sciences, and they encouraged the exchange of ideas and knowledge between India and other countries. The Chola Dynasty also played a significant role in the spread of Indian culture to other regions. The dynasty's temples were centers of learning and attracted scholars from across India and Southeast Asia. The dynasty's influence on the region's culture and religion can still be seen today, with the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

The country's maritime policy under the Mughal Empire (1526-1857) continued the legacy of building a strong navy to protect its coastline from foreign invaders. The Mughal navy was primarily used to defend the country's coasts against Portuguese, Dutch, and British naval forces, who were seeking to establish trading posts in India. The Mughal navy was primarily composed of ships known as gallivats, which were small, fast-moving vessels that could quickly intercept pirate ships and protect the empire's ports.

Nonetheless, trade and commerce formed the primary areas of focus during the Mughal reign as well with the empire's ports serving as major centres for the exchange of goods between India and other regions. The empire's ports were located along the western and eastern coasts of India, and they played a significant role in the trade of textiles, spices, precious metals, and other goods. The Mughal Empire's patronage of cultural exchange was reflected in its architecture, art, and literature, which drew influences from a variety of cultures, including Persian, Turkish, and European. The empire's cities, such as Delhi and Agra, were centers of learning and attracted scholars from across India and other regions.

India's maritime policy during the Mughal Empire had a significant impact on the country's history and its relationship with other regions. The empire's focus on trade and commerce laid the foundation for India's later maritime history, and its establishment of a strong navy helped protect the country's coastal regions from foreign invasions and piracy.

The empire's cities were centers of learning and attracted scholars from across India and other regions, and the exchange of ideas and knowledge helped shape the country's arts, sciences, and literature.

The early modern period in India's history (c. 1500-1800) therefore saw significant changes in the country's maritime policy, as India became increasingly integrated into the global economy and faced new challenges from European powers. One of the most significant developments during this period was the arrival of European powers, particularly the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British. These powers established trading posts and colonies along India's coastlines, leading to a significant shift in the country's maritime policy. India's maritime policy during this period was characterized by a complex network of alliances and rivalries with these European powers. The country sought to maintain its sovereignty and protect its interests, while also engaging in trade and diplomacy with these new powers.

One of the key elements of India's maritime policy during this period was the use of naval power to protect the country's coastal regions and trade routes. India's rulers recognized the importance of maintaining a strong navy, and they invested heavily in building up their naval forces. The Maratha Empire, which emerged in the 17th century as a major power in India, had a particularly strong navy and used it to dominate the waters around the country's western coast. The Marathas engaged in piracy and privateering against European powers, while also protecting India's own trade routes and coastal regions.

Another key element of India's maritime policy during this period was the use of diplomacy and alliances to protect the country's interests. India's rulers formed alliances with European powers, such as the French and Portuguese, in order to protect their interests and maintain their sovereignty. The Mughal Empire, which remained a major power in India

during the early modern period, also had a complex relationship with European powers. The empire's rulers engaged in diplomacy with these powers, allowing them to establish trading posts and conduct business in India in exchange for political and economic concessions. At the same time, the Mughal Empire was wary of European influence and sought to limit its power and control over India. The empire's naval forces engaged in battles with European powers, particularly the Portuguese, who were seen as a threat to India's sovereignty.

India's maritime policy during the early modern period was also characterized by a focus on trade and commerce. India's ports continued to be major centers for the exchange of goods, particularly textiles, spices, and precious metals. The arrival of European powers brought new opportunities for trade, as Indian goods were in high demand in Europe. However, it also brought new challenges, as European powers sought to control India's trade routes and dominate its economy. India's rulers responded by seeking to maintain control over their own trade routes and promoting the growth of Indian industries, particularly textiles. The country's textiles were in high demand in Europe, and Indian rulers sought to protect their textile industry by restricting imports of European cloth and promoting the growth of domestic production.

From Ancient to Modern: The Importance of India's Contemporary Maritime Trade Links across the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean containing 20% of the water on the Earth's surface⁵⁴. It is the only 'non-open-ended ocean' for it is surrounded by Asia to the north, Africa to the west, and Australia to the east. The Indian Ocean witnesses the transport of a major proportion of the world's trade since it hosts the most important trade route

⁵⁴ National Centres for Environmental Information, "*Volumes of the World's Ocean from ETOPO1*," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/etop01_ocean_volumes.html

connecting the Far East with Europe. It passes through the South China Sea (a region of disputes), the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal etc.⁵⁵ which are all critical passages for trade.

The Indian Ocean is not only the passage for all important trade, but it is also one of the most politically unstable zones in the world and also has vital deposits of minerals that are essential to the world's economy making the ocean of utmost importance.⁵⁶ The reasons for the Indian Ocean being critical are many and the first of them is its resource-rich nature. The Indian Ocean holds 16.8% of world's oil reserves and 27.9% of natural gas reserves. It has globally significant deposits like Bauxite, Chromite, Coal, Copper, Gold, Iron Ore, Nickel, Zinc, Phosphates to name a few.⁵⁷ Economies in the Indian Ocean Region accounted for 35.5% of global iron production and 17.8% of world gold production in 2017. The region is also responsible for 28% of global fish capture. As mentioned earlier, the Indian Ocean is home to major sea routes connecting various continents like Asia, Africa etc. It consists of some of the top container ports and according to Lloyd's list, the top Indian Ocean container ports are- Singapore, Dubai and Malaysia. The stronger intra-regional trade and connectivity has strengthened ties with external trading partners.⁵⁸

The Indian Ocean basin is of particular importance for India, as the region's most populous country and geopolitical keystone⁵⁹. 95% of India's trade by volume and 68% trade by value come via the Indian Ocean. 80% of India's crude oil is imported via the Ocean and the country is also the fourth largest importer of Liquefied Natural Gas with about 45%

⁵⁵ Katarzyna Kaszubska comment on "Indian Ocean," The Observers Research Foundation website, comment posted on Jan 6, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indian-ocean/>

⁵⁶ Pandya, Amit A., Rupert Herbert-Burns, and Junko Kobayashi. *Maritime commerce and security: the Indian Ocean*. Henry L. Stimson Center, 2011

⁵⁷ Pandya, Amit A., Herbert-Burns R. and Kobayashi, J. *Maritime commerce and security: the Indian Ocean*. Henry L. Stimson Center, 2011

⁵⁸ Kannangra comment on "The importance of Indian Ocean"

⁵⁹ Jaishankar, Dhruva comment on "Indian Ocean Region: A pivot for India's growth," The Brookings blog, comment posted on September 12, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/indian-ocean-region-a-pivot-for-indias-growth/>

coming by maritime routes. The Indian Ocean Region has always played a vital role in India's foreign policy strategy and successive Prime Ministers have attempted to ensure that India remains the dominant regional power in the area⁶⁰. One of the prime examples is the Look East Policy of the 1990s which was modified to Act East Policy in 2014 as a diplomatic initiative based on culture, commerce, connectivity and capacity-building. In the last few decades, India has had year-round deployments and acquired maritime surveillance aircrafts specifically for furthering its interests in the Indo-Pacific. The main aim of this policy is to focus on strengthening relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Pacific Rim islands. In addition, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative as a part of the SAGAR mission was specifically aimed to facilitate regional cooperation with India's maritime neighbours.

- **India and China**

At the beginning of the eleventh century, Sino-Indian relations were largely dependent on the Buddhist exchanges, however, later, trade assumed the central stage of the Sino-Indian bilateral exchanges as Indian traders vowed to expand business by using opportunities offered by the Chinese market and expanding intercontinental trade.⁶¹ While the exact timeline for the beginning of bilateral exchanges remains debated, it is estimated that both countries commenced notable cultural and economic exchanges from the 1st century A.D. onwards. However, historians do not entirely reject the idea that both countries had trade and cultural exchanges even before this period. Ancient Chinese scriptures and texts, authored well before 1st century A.D., such as Tianzhu, Xindusi, Yindou, Shendu, Xindou, and Poluomen Guo, include references of India. Similarly, the word "Cheena," probably referring to China, occurs

⁶⁰ Vijay, Aditya. "India's Trade and Maritime Policy in the Indian Ocean Region." *Centre for Public Policy Research* 1 (2018)

⁶¹ Sen, Tansen. *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of India-China Relations, 600-1400*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015

in Indian epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharatha and also in Kautilya's Arthashastra, drafted before the Christian era.

- **Major Trade Routes Between India and China**

Between 206 B.C.- 220 A.D., three major trade routes (via land) existed between India and China.

The Western Path

The Western path was one of the three major land routes connecting India and China during the Han dynasty. It is the Western path that later emerged popular as the "Silk Road." The Western path rose to prominence since the explorer cum diplomat Zhang Qian identified it during his mission to Western regions in 138 B.C. It is also said that the route was in use way back when Qian recognized it. However, the Western Path has made substantial contributions to Sino-Indian trade and communications.

The Southern Silk Route (Burma Road)

The Southern Silk route connected India and China, transiting Burma through roads. This route witnessed exponential growth in trade and economic activities during the period of Eastern Han, also known as Later Han (25 A.D.-220 A.D.). It is believed that the Southern Silk Route had been active since the 2nd century B.C. Capitalizing this vital trade link, commodities from Southwestern provinces of China, such as Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou, had been reaching India and then were redirected to faraway Central Asian destinations such as Bactria.

The Southern Sea Route

By the beginning of the first century A.D., Indian and Chinese mercantile communities had started exploring the possibility of maritime trade routes. However, only

after the first century A.D., the Indian mercantile class could open up a maritime route linking both countries.⁶² The expertise in sailing they gained from the voyages throughout these periods largely benefitted the Indian mercantile class in that mission. Chinese commodities such as bamboo, silk, and cloth have reached India by the first century A.D. or even prior to that. Professor Ji Xianlin, an eminent Chinese historian, had argued that the Chinese silk reached multiple locations in India from multiple points in China, rather than from a single point in China to a single point in India. Robust economic relations between India and China date back to the end of the twentieth century when both the countries signed a trade agreement in 1984 which provided the status of Most Favoured Nation (MFN). In the next decade, a double Taxation Agreement was signed by the two nations. In 2003, the Bangkok Agreement provided the two countries trade preferences for themselves. In the same year they entered into another agreement to initiate open border trade via the Silk Route. As dialogue partners in ASEAN, the strengthening of economic ties was affirmed due to the regional focus on bilateral negotiations between the two countries.

In recent years, Indian and Chinese economies have been expanding while trade relations between them have increased in geometric proportions. In the first 5 months of 2021, trade between the two neighbours soared by more than 70% year-on-year to over \$48 billion⁶³ while India's trade deficit with China hit a \$77 billion record in FY22.⁶⁴ The Chinese state media interpreted that, "*increase in bilateral trade is a sign of resilience in trade ties*

⁶² Kumar, Yuktेशwar. A History of Sino-Indian Relations: 1st Century AD to 7th Century AD: Movement of Peoples and Ideas Between India and China from Kasyapa Matanga to Yi Jing. APH Publishing, 2005

⁶³ Patranobis, Sutirtho. "Trade with India jumped by over 70% in 2021, shows China's custom data", Hindustan times, June 08, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/trade-with-india-jumped-by-over-70-in-2021-shows-china-s-customs-data-101623143023368.html>

⁶⁴ Krishnankutty, Priya. "The long road to Atmanirbhar Bharat: India's trade deficit with China hit record \$77 bn in FY22", The Print, April 25, 2022, <https://theprint.in/economy/the-long-road-to-atmanirbhar-bharat-indias-trade-deficit-with-china-hit-record-77-bn-in-fy22/926987/#:~:text=Total%20bilateral%20trade%20between%20India,by%20ThePrint%20from%20the%20GACC>

between the two nations despite conflict at the border and political differences."⁶⁵ However all is not well, due to rivalry amongst the two nations based on territorial and border tensions, especially in eastern Ladakh.

India for a few years has been attempting to reduce its dependence on Chinese imports but it was only in 2018 that US surpassed China⁶⁶ which was not long enough. Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, trade between US and India declined. Despite the standoff between the Indian and Chinese armies, trade has continued and some of the largest imports were- electrical equipment stood at \$17.82 billion, nuclear reactors stood at \$12.35 billion. Exports were iron and steel. Despite the health emergency, the overall figure showed their dependence on each other. India's refusal to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was seminal to India and China's trade relations in the Indo-Pacific as India cited the reason for the threat of cheap Chinese imports flooding Indian markets. Therefore, a full-fledged Indo-Pacific trade agreement, in the truest sense of the term, is still pending.

- **India and ASEAN**

India's trade and economic relationship with Southeast Asia or the present-day ASEAN has been prosperous and dates back to ancient times. As G.V.C. Naidu, a Southeast Asian expert at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, says, no other country in the world has influenced the Southeast Asian region as India did, in terms of "religion, language, culture and civilisation" and concrete evidences back India-ASEAN trade and economic ties prior to the

⁶⁵ Patranobis, Sutirtho. "Trade with India jumped by over 70% in 2021, shows China's custom data", *Hindustan times*, June 08, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/trade-with-india-jumped-by-over-70-in-2021-shows-china-s-customs-data-101623143023368.html>

⁶⁶ Raghavan, Prabha. "In a tense year, India-China trade stayed robust," *The Indian Express*, February 27, 2021, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-in-a-tense-year-china-trade-stayed-robust-7206718/>

colonial invasion.⁶⁷ The land routes via Burma⁶⁸ (present-day Myanmar) and the readily accessible Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) through the Bay of Bengal have helped shoot up the economic and trade ties. A land route connecting Bengal and Burma, transiting through India's Northeastern states such as Assam and Manipur, existed from ancient times. Priests from China's Szechuan reportedly entered India in the 3rd and 4th Centuries of A.D. from upper Burma through these land routes extending from India to East and Southeast Asia.

Historical evidence suggests that a prosperous maritime trade route thrived between the Coromandel Coast (or the coast of Bay of Bengal) and the Malay peninsula, traversing through the Strait of Malacca. Under the then Kingdom of Funan (present-day Vietnam), Funan port in the Mekong delta was the first trading point from where the Indian mercantile class commenced their trade with the region. Residing at Funan, Indian traders expanded the business to the entire Southeast Asia.

India's ancient mercantile community, who was eager to capitalize the economic and trade incentives Southeast Asia offered, often described the region with names such as "Narikeldeep" (land of coconuts), "Swarnabhumi" (land of Gold), "Tokola" (land of cardamoms). During the period of Gupta, India possessed great expertise in crafting artistic objects, jewelry sculptures, and textiles of high quality.⁶⁹ Thus, the Indian goods generated huge demand across Southeast Asian countries and became a matter of pride among the royal

⁶⁷ Naidu, G. V. C. "Whither the look east policy: India and Southeast Asia." *Strategic Analysis* 28, no. 2 (2004): 331-346

⁶⁸ Chowdury, A.M. "Bengal and Southeast Asia: Trade and Cultural Contacts in Ancient Period," *UNESCO*, January 21-22, 1991, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/knowledge-bank/bengal-and-southeast-asia-trade-and-cultural-contacts-ancient-period>

⁶⁹ Sengupta, Jayashree. "India's cultural and civilisational influence on Southeast Asia" *ORF*, 30 August 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-cultural-and-civilizational-influence-on-southeast-asia/#:~:text=India's%20civilisation%20and%20culture%20spread,peaceful%20and%20without%20forced%20conversions.&text=Funan%20in%20the%20Mekong%20Delta,trading%20post%20of%20Indian%20traders>

families. Renowned economist Jayashree Sengupta notes that "The kings of the region wore Indian made silk and brocade textiles during ceremonious occasions and donned jewels imported from India" and that "Printed and woven textiles were eagerly sought after by the common people."

Export of textiles was a vital aspect of the India-Southeast Asia trade since imported Indian textile remained a highly sought-after product in the region for a long time. Jayati Bhattacharya, specializing in Indian business history at the National University of Singapore, points out that "Though Indonesia had an age-old tradition of local weaving for more than 4,000 years, Indian textiles were highly acclaimed and continued to be imported" to the region. As Bhattacharya notes, beyond gifts and premier clothing for special occasions and events, Indian textiles were opted to "decorate images in temples and ceilings, or in manuscript covers."⁷⁰

It is imperative to refer to the deep socio-cultural and religious ties while explaining India's trade and economic ties and the region. The Hindu and Buddhist monks who accompanied Indian traders to Southeast Asia received a warm welcome from the native people, thereby leading to the export of Indian culture and religion to the region. The spread of Indian cultural and religious values to the region has had a positive impact on trade relations between both. Consequently, cultural and religious ties expanded rapidly between India and Southeast Asia in parallel to the trade and economic links in a mutually benefiting way. However, the colonial invasion halted the unhindered socio-cultural and economic exchanges between India and Southeast Asia. Even after the expulsion of colonial powers from the region, the Cold War politics constrained New Delhi from rejuvenating the political,

⁷⁰ Bhattacharya, Jayati. "Ties That Bind: India and Southeast Asia Connectivity," Association for Asian Scholars, Vol. 25, No.3, 2020, <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/ties-that-bind-india-and-southeast-asia-connectivities/>

diplomatic, and economic links with the ASEAN member states.⁷¹ Since the majority of ASEAN member states viewed India with the Soviet bloc, this cloud of mistrust limited India's engagement with the ASEAN (Vietnam was an exception to this). ASEAN has engaged economically in terms of the free movement of goods, services and capital. This is quite evident from the export-import data. India's exports to ASEAN in 2019-20 were USD 31.49 billion while its import from them touched USD 55.37 billion⁷².

The Act East Policy which has served as a catalyst for India's proactive involvement in the ASEAN region. The forthcoming summit of the G-20 is an opportunity for India to strengthen its influence and gain support of 20 important nations of the world. The Indian Ocean Region remains India's primary area of responsibility. India has established a robust information sharing mechanism to monitor the region. Despite India's abstention from the RCEP, ASEAN has shown interest in enhancing its trade relations with the country. India's Indo-Pacific policy has highlighted it as an area of convergence for ASEAN and India. ASEAN's and India's values with regards to maintaining and promoting peace, stability, safety and security in the South China Sea in particular freedom of navigation and overflight are similar, therefore creating more motivation for cooperation between the two parties.

The region is constrained by its inherent inadequacy of resources for nations to address these individually, thus necessitating a comprehensive and inclusive capacity building approach towards mitigating these vulnerabilities collectively. India's maritime primacy in

⁷¹ Yong, Tan Tai, and See Chak Mun. "The evolution of India-ASEAN relations." *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 20-42

⁷² Kapur, "India -ASEAN trade and investment prospects."

the region is also likely to face a challenge. Hence an inclusive and cooperative approach led by India is an imperative to mitigate these vulnerabilities.⁷³

- **India and the US**

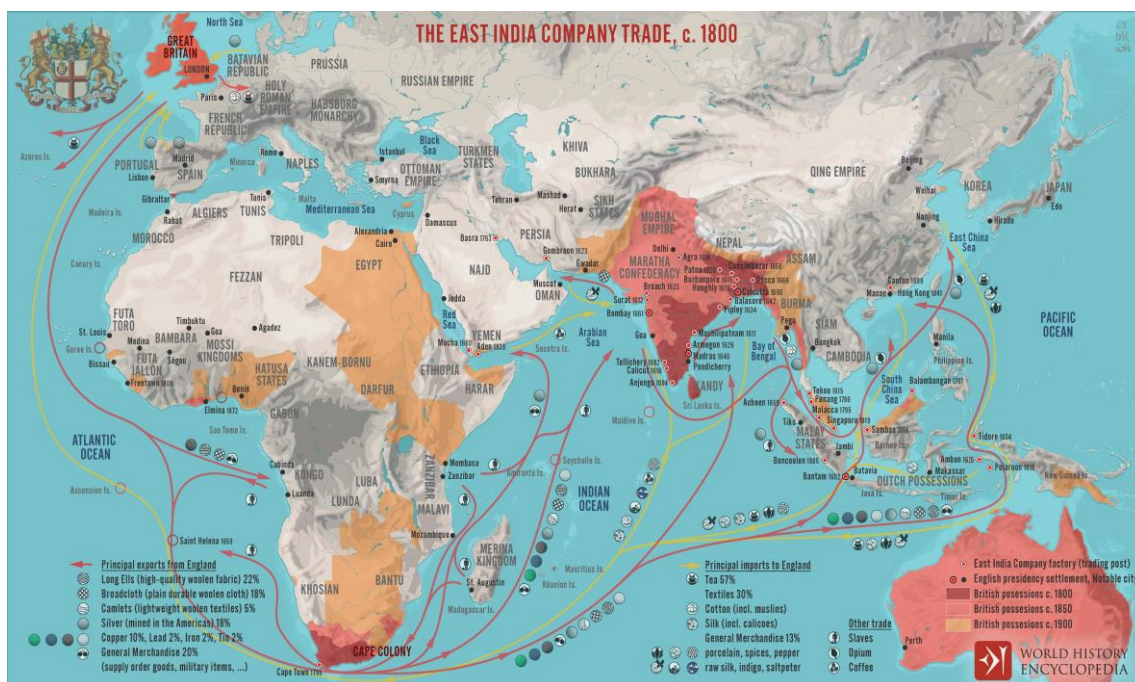
Ever since obtaining independence from the British in 1783, the United States' mercantile community had a keen interest in developing trade relations with India. Towards this objective, the American traders successfully established connections with French and Dutch ports operating in India. Besides, in a short time, the Americans neared forging direct trade arrangements with a wide range of princely states in South India, such as that of "Marathas in the Western province" and "Mysore of Tipu Sultan." In December 1784, an American vessel, owned by a Philadelphia-based merchant, Thomas Willing, arrived at Pondicherry with around 400 tonnes of stock.⁷⁴ The ship brought commodities such as "tobacco, Virginia ginseng, naval stores, copper, miscellaneous hardware" and a large amount of cash in USD. Although displeased with American's arrival, the British East India Company granted substantial trade concessions for Americans to trade with India by the 18th century. The British move was mainly out of compulsion since the East India Company realized that American traders had developed enough connections and capabilities on their own and thus were unstoppable from entering the trade with India. However, once the East India Company gained control of India and established their empire, the British repealed those favors and complicated the business for American's. In words of historian Panchanand Misra, "The protective duties imposed by" the British, "their refusal to give police protection to the U. S. consuls in India in times of naval mutiny on board, American ships and the arbitrary interference of the High Court of Bombay, all points to the British attempt to thwart the Indo-

⁷³ Singh, Commodore Anil Jai. "India's maritime engagement with Africa set to grow", *The Financial Express*, June 17, 2021, <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/defence-indias-maritime-engagement-with-africa-set-to-grow-2273105/>

⁷⁴ Furber, Holden. "The Beginnings of American Trade with India, 1784-1812." *The New England Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1938): 235-265

American trade. According to Misra, the British intent was to gain a monopoly over the Asian trade.

Figure 3: Markets and goods traded by the East India Company with East and Southeast Asia and India around 1800 C.E.



Source: Simeon Netchev, The East India Company trade, c. 1800, World History Encyclopedia, <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/16446/the-east-india-company-trade-c-1800/>

As part of attempts to thwart the Indo-American trade that went against their interests, the East India Company took all measures to blockade the Indo-American trade in subsequent years and denied all sorts of assistance to the American traders. Consequently, prior to the mid-19th century, no U.S. consulates in India received recognition or support from the British authorities. Even after the British government assumed direct control over India, this policy remained essentially unchanged.

In spite of all the trade barriers imposed by the British government and East India Company, Indo-American trade witnessed a substantial rise by 1860.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the outbreak of deadly U.S. civil war (1861-1865) severely hampered the positive momentum that the bilateral trade gained as the American merchants massively suspended trade out of fear of being attacked. Adding to the fear, an attacker vessel, Alabama, had sunk several cargo ships in Indian waters. The British took maximum advantage of the American reluctance. The Indo-American trade has largely recovered from the damage inflicted by the American civil war by 1875. However, the bilateral trade underwent a dire predicament again as the three successive famines plunged India's purchasing capacity. As a result, India's import of American goods steeply declined.

Besides, even after the Civil war ended, it created enduring ramifications for the Indo-American trade relations. Aimed to recover from the economic blow of civil war, the American administration embraced protectionism and sharply increased tariffs on all imported goods. As a result, the Indian exports to the U.S. touched the bottom line and almost entirely cut the export of woolen clothes.

Notwithstanding the short-term disruptions caused by the American civil war and the obstacles posed by the British, Indo-American trade continued to mark growth. Within the 1880-81 period, India's exports to the U.S. stood at USD 53,838,000, and Indian imports from the U.S. amounted to USD 17,510,000. These figures might have been better if the British interference was resisted using diplomatic channels. The American merchants received little or no support from the government's side. Since the U.S. could achieve rapid

⁷⁵ Misra, Panchanand. "A Century of Indo-American Trade Relation 1783-1881." In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 27, pp. 351-358. Indian History Congress, 1965

industrialization and domestic growth, the economy became more inward-looking. Thus, the promotion of external trade received little attention from the administration.

India is currently the ninth largest trading partner of the US with \$92 billion in total good trade during 2019⁷⁶. Goods export was \$34.3 billion whereas import stood at \$24.3 billion. The United States and India view each other as very important strategic partners to advance their trade and hence, boost their economy. Both the countries are members of Quad, which depicts the clear strategy and relation they wish to share.

However, there are some issues between the two countries when it comes to their trade relations. Firstly, both these countries cite market barriers, especially tariff barriers that disadvantage other foreign companies. The GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) Programme is another such issue wherein the USA decided to withdraw duty-free benefits to Indian exporters. Another problem is USA's temporary visa policy which affects Indian nationals in the state.

India and the US have a bilateral investment initiative focusing on trade and investment. US firms are lead partners in developing Allahabad, Ajmer as smart cities. The two countries in 2014-15 decided to boost their trade to \$500 billion. The main motivation for this goal was the shared anti-China sentiment between the two countries.

Trade relations between India and US, in the last few years, have been contingent on the trade war between the latter and China. This has led to short-term and myopic targets being set with regards to the Indo-Pacific region. It has been suggested by various experts and commentators that in order to trigger economic growth beyond the trade war, the two

⁷⁶ Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive office of the US President, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/india>

countries should aim to enter into an economic partnership focussed on advancing supply chain networks and multilateral economic partnerships holding India and the US as the heads.

- **India and the EU**

During the early historical period, India and the Roman empire had extensive trade relations. According to historian Srabani Datta, the Indo-Roman trade would have taken place "from the end of the first -century BC or from the beginning of the first century AD to third century AD." In this period, Roman ships had arrived at the South Western and Southeastern Coasts of the Indian subcontinent for trade.⁷⁷

Text and archeological evidence confirm the Indo-Roman trade exchanges. Roman coins have been extensively found from Tamil Nadu and also from many other parts of India. The Roman coins discovered in this manner involve the original Western-made Roman coins and imitations. It is assumed that the Roman coins were locally manufactured to resolve the supply shortages.⁷⁸

Both the traders and others, such as artisans, from the Roman empire, had maintained extensive trade and cultural linkages with the Coromandel Coast, particularly with the present state of Tamil Nadu. Arikyamedu, one of the UNESCO approved Silk Road Sites, located in the union territory of Pondicherry, was once a major destination of Indo-Roman exchanges. An anonymous Greco-Roman text of the first century CE, Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, comprises references of Arikamedu.⁷⁹ Extensive archeological evidence citing Roman trading

⁷⁷ Datta, Srabani. "Changing perspectives of the Bengal trade: Its connections with the Indo-Roman trade." In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 66, pp. 135-146. Indian History Congress, 2005

⁷⁸ Rohini Ramakrishnan, "Connecting with the Romans", *The Hindu*, 24 January 2011, <https://www.thehindu.com/features/kids/Connecting-with-the-Romans/article15531706.ece>

⁷⁹ "Did You Know? The Port Trade Centre of Arikamedu and Roman Exchange with the Indian Subcontinent," UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-port-trade-centre-arikamedu-and-roman-exchange-indian-subcontinent>

settlements such as lamps, glassware, glass and gold, and amphorae had been discovered from the site.

Through trade, Romans had acquired from India commodities such as spices, horses, and pearls.⁸⁰ While India enjoyed substantial trade asymmetry with Rome, India also imported many commodities from Rome. From Rome and West Asia, Datta notes that India had procured "Laodicean wine, embroidered cloth, glassware, copper, tin, gold, silver, Roman coins, ornaments" and "pottery slaves."

The Indian commodities had tremendous demand in Rome, and the empire had deep pockets for extensive purchases from India. This growing demand from the roman side also catered to the financial interests of Indian traders. India accounted for around half of the Roman empire's worrisome trade deficit with the East. Thus, it is believed that the fall of the Roman empire somewhat risked the financial prosperity of India, and subsequently, it compelled Indians to search for new markets in the far East and Southeast Asia.

The trade with eastern countries, particularly China and India, and subsequent revenue from taxes was also crucial for the roman empire from the political and military dimensions. Historian Raoul McLaughlin⁸¹ identifies military capabilities as "both unique and crucial to the long-term security and success of Roman civilisation." McLaughlin says that the troop strength even reached 300,000 at the height of the empire. Since financing such a colossal military institution meant to defend the empire's territories and interests had imposed a heavy burden on the exchequer, tax revenue generated from trade with countries, including India,

⁸⁰ "Did you know?: Interactions between Indian Subcontinent and Western Land during Roman Empire," UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-interactions-between-indian-subcontinent-and-western-land-during-roman-empire>

⁸¹ McLaughlin, Raoul. *The Roman Empire and the Indian Ocean: the ancient world economy and the kingdoms of Africa, Arabia and India*. Pen and Sword, 2014

was instrumental in meeting those expenses. At the beginning of the early modern period, European powers were reliant on Arab intermediaries to trade with India in the absence of a direct sea route. Europe's relentless search for a direct trade route with India, thus effectively cutting the Arab middlemen, marked success by the arrival of Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama, in 1498, in Calicut (Coast of Malabar).⁸² Gama's invention of the new "all water trade route" through the Cape of Good Hope to India triggered a new revolution in Indo-European trade, as it enabled Europeans to trade with India directly. By the discovery of an all-water route, the Europeans could eliminate their dependence on Arab intermediaries and capacity constraints of the old route.

Throughout the 16th century, both the old and new routes were in use, mainly since the Portuguese had enjoyed the monopoly over the newly discovered way. This scenario had reversed by the 17th century as the Dutch and English companies could successfully challenge the Portuguese monopoly over the new route. Hence, since the new route became increasingly accessible for more players like the Dutch and English, the old route essentially lost its significance.

During these periods, all major European powers, such as the English, Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, had established trade links with India up to varying degrees.⁸³ For a longer period, Europeans made payment for Indian commodities using high-priced metals as the Europeans lacked commodities suitable for selling in large quantities in Asia. Besides, European trade became vital for many Indian kingdoms. Historian Andre Gunder Frank notes that India's Mughal empire had crucial dependence on the import of Spanish American silver

⁸² Henriques, Martha. "How Spices Changed the Ancient World," BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/future/ bespoke/made-on-earth/the-flavours-that-shaped-the-world/>

⁸³ Datta, K. K. "India's Trade with Europe and America in the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, no. 3 (1959): 313-323

during the 16th and 17th centuries. In a stage that followed, the British dominated a substantial chunk of Indo-European trade.

The India and European Union partnership started with the signing of the strategic partnership in 2004. Right now, the EU is India's third largest trading partner accounting for \$74 billion worth of trade goods in 2020 or 11.1% of total Indian trade after China and the US. The EU is now the second-largest destination for Indian exports after the US.⁸⁴ Apart from trade, EU's foreign direct investment in India is also showing an increasing trend. The EU not only benefits India in trade or investment perspective but also provides employment with approximately 5 million jobs in all the sectors combined.

Recently, a virtual summit was held between India and all 27 countries of the EU. The two sides decided to resume free trade talks which were paused for 8 years and as a result to join hands for connectivity partnerships in Africa and Central Asia⁸⁵. *“Connectivity, data, technology, even the climate challenge- all of this is going to require us to work together more closely,”* Jaishankar said.

The EU made it quite clear during the summit that its focus is India and not China as far as Asia is concerned. In 2022, India and the EU began a fresh round of negotiations in June towards a broad-based trade and investment agreement⁸⁶ in order to resolve a nine-year deadlock. The EU and India have helped each other during the pandemic by supplying

⁸⁴ European Commission, European Union, <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/india/>

⁸⁵ Roche, Elizabeth. “Resumption of India-EU free trade talks strategic: Jaishankar,” *livemint*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/resumption-of-india-eu-free-trade-talks-strategic-jaishankar-11624448004212.html>

⁸⁶ Nandi, Shreya. “India, EU look to make a fresh start for a trade deal in Brussels”, *Business Standard*, Ju16, 2022, https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/india-eu-look-to-make-a-fresh-start-for-a-trade-deal-in-brussels-122061501200_1.html#:~:text=India%20and%20the%20EU%20agreed,move%20past%20the%20negotiating%20stage

vaccines, medical equipment etc. This bond is expected to grow and strengthen in the coming months.

- **India and Japan**

From the ancient period, the Japanese had an intense desire to visit and trade with India. As Buddhism had gained popularity in Japan, it further motivated the Japanese motivation to visit India. However, the Japanese were ignorant of the sea route to India and had perceived India as a faraway destination. Although there has been evidence suggesting the visit of some Indians, such as the South Indian Buddhist Monk, Bodhisena,⁸⁷ to Japan by 8th century A.D., both countries had only minimal trade and cultural engagements during these times. This scenario underwent drastic changes as the Japanese expanded their trade and maritime activity in the South China Sea by the 16th century. The Japanese traders interacted and established contacts with the Indian mercantile community in Southeast Asia (India had active trade and cultural presence in Southeast Asia by this time.) and realized that India was not as distant as they had thought.

In between 1639-1854, India played a crucial intermediary role in Japan's trade with the rest of the world. From 1639-1854 was an era of self-isolation in Japanese history, minimizing Japan's trade and other engagements with the rest of the world via a policy of "national seclusion."⁸⁸ Fear of falling into European influence mainly fuelled this isolationist policy. However, the Japanese rulers granted an exclusive exemption to the Dutch East India

⁸⁷ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. "India-Japan Relations," https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/14_Japan_Nov_2017.pdf

⁸⁸ Camfferman, Kees, and Terence E. Cooke. "The Profits of the Dutch East India Company's Japan Trade." *Abacus* 40, no. 1 (2004): 49-75

Company to trade with Japan.⁸⁹ As the Dutch East India Company used India as an intermediary hub in the Japanese trade, India served as a window of Japan's engagements with the West.

Japan had an abundant gold and silver supply for export from the mid-16th century to the mid-17th century. The excess supply was due to the opening of new mines throughout Japan during this period. While the production of Gold and Silver slowed down by the mid-17th century, the mining of copper surged by then.⁹⁰ The Dutch East India Company (This does not mean that others such as the British had not) had procured enormous quantities of precious metals such as Silver, Gold, and Copper from Japan in exchange for commodities, which had been in demand in the Japanese market.

Japanese copper was shipped to Indian destinations such as Surat, Coromandel, and Bengal and had been exchanged for sought-after commodities in Japan in return. During the 17th century, under the Mughal Empire, copper was extensively used in India to manufacture items such as coins, ships, and arms. As the production in Northern India significantly dropped during this period and the demand surged, Japanese copper was widely imported to meet needs.⁹¹ The Dutch East India Company reaped enormous profits by importing Japanese copper as Japanese copper used to be priced double that in Japan.

First Silver, then copper, predominantly flowed to India from Japan and had extensively imported Indian textiles. The "Bengal raw silk and silk and mixed textiles"

⁸⁹ Glamann, Kristof. "The Dutch East India company's trade in Japanese copper, 1645–1736." *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1, no. 1 (1953): 41-79

⁹⁰ Kobata, Atsushi. "The production and uses of gold and silver in sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Japan." *The Economic History Review* 18, no. 2 (1965): 245-266

⁹¹ Kondo, Osamu. "Japan and the Indian Ocean at the Time of the Mughal Empire, with special Reference to Gujarat," i- repository, <http://www.i-repository.net/contents/outemon/ir/301/301851207.pdf>

comprised an integral part of the Dutch East India Company's export to Japan. Historian Om Prakash notes that Bengal had played an instrumental role in the Dutch East India Company's trade with Japan in the 1660s. During this period, Japan was the major consumer of Indian textile after the Malay-Indonesian archipelago block of Southeast Asia. Prakash says that the Bengal goods covered around 50% of the company's export cargo destined to Japan from Batavia (Netherlands), and this trend lasted until the 1670s.⁹²

According to German-American Economic historian Andre Gunder Frank, "India's balance of trade surplus with west Asia and Europe was settled by the inflow of Silver from the west and some from Japan, as well as of gold from China and south-east Asia." Between the end of the 16th century to the mid-17th century, Japan had accounted for 20% of the silver flow to India.⁹³ The Dutch East India Company was behind the lion's share of this Indo-Japanese trade.

By the 16th and 17th centuries, the Japanese traders had established direct and indirect links with the Indian traders, particularly with the Gujarati merchants. Yet, the direct trade with both countries was short-lived, and the Indo-Japanese trade took place predominantly under the Dutch East India Company. Besides, compared with India's rich and longstanding trade exchanges with Europeans, Indo-Japanese trade did not endure long.

Japan and India are both members of the Quad and share similar views when it comes to maritime and oceanic trade. The countries strongly believe that the sea should be free from domination of any one country and there should be a law based global order. The economic

⁹² Prakash, Om. "Indian Textiles in the Indian Ocean Trade In the Early Modern Period" London School of Economics and Political Science, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Economic-History/Assets/Documents/Research/GEHN/Helsinki/HELSINKIPrakash.pdf>

⁹³ Frank, Andre Gunder, "India in the world economy, 1400-1750." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1996): PES50-PE64

relations between the two countries, in recent years, are at a suboptimal level. But what is important to note is that both India and Japan are anti-China and are against Chinese desire to dominate the sea, especially the South China Sea and East China Sea. One of the most important reasons for the re-emergence of Quad would be the anti-China sentiments. Both countries oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and are cooperating for the Asia-Africa growth corridor. India also supports deepening Japanese involvement in South Asian states' infrastructure building⁹⁴ which has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. India, in several sectors like automobiles, pharma, electronics, chemicals, textiles, food processing etc., not only acts as a manufacturing base for the Japanese but also provides them with a market.

Due to the pandemic, the US-China trade war has started which is forcing large global players including Japan to take a look at its supply chain. Many Japanese companies have tried to move their bases from China and establish it somewhere else. India is seizing this opportunity and aiming to welcome these foreign companies. Owing to its large population and a possible cheap labour, India is indeed a desirable choice for many of these global players including Japan. It is not a one sided relationship, but Japan on the other hand has also provided us with infrastructure like speed trains.

Japan along with Australia has been advocating for India's participation in the RCEP as they believe it will strengthen the Indo-Japan-Australia security network and effectively counter Chinese presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Recently there has also been the formation of a trilateral relationship. Italy has decided to enter the geopolitics of the Indo-

⁹⁴ Mehta, Rajesh and Mishra, Anand. "India-Japan are top strategic partners but the sub-optimal economic relationship needs fixing," *Financial express*, August 07, 2020, <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-japan-are-top-strategic-partners-but-the-sub-optimal-economic-relationship-needs-fixing/2047745/>

Pacific and has joined hands with India and Japan for this. The reason, according to Italy, is that China is 'unfair'. This can be a great opportunity for India to establish its relations with Italy and develop and maintain the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Cohering the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region offers a useful geographical space for outlining geopolitical imperatives and for addressing global requirements. Governance structures with respect to oceans and seas are devised in accordance with the interests and power relationships among countries involved. This is why it has been argued that pan-Indian Ocean or pan-Pacific Ocean governance structures have not really evolved for these ocean spaces separately, but instead as the Indo-Pacific construct which offers a meaningful template for understanding the region's challenges and opportunities and is conducive to the formulation of approaches to addressing or harnessing the same.⁹⁵ The governance of ocean spaces, the management of threats arising from these spaces, and the sustainable exploitation of resources form the traditional basis of ocean governance structures and in recent years these bases have expanded to comprise climate change, piracy and other trans-national crime, illegal fishing, and so on.⁹⁶

While it is true that India's connections with sub-regions and countries in the Indo-Pacific date back to centuries, New Delhi's position on the present geopolitical template assumed by the latter has been some time in the making. In strategic literature, the term has been used since the 2000s with references to it at the diplomatic level occurring intermittently

⁹⁵ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

⁹⁶ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

since 2010.⁹⁷ The Prime Minister's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018 is frequently referred to as the first clear articulation of India's approach towards the Indo-Pacific. At the dialogue, themes that were underscored include⁹⁸ – the vision of a 'free, open and inclusive' region; a 'free and open' maritime order; the preservation of strategic equilibrium; freedom of navigation; the promotion of a rules-based international order and adherence to international law while emphasizing that the networks of partnerships that India is already involved in and the ones which the country looks to build and expand upon are in no way 'alliances of containment.'

The articulation of New Delhi's stance towards the region while at the same time highlighting that the position is not directed against any other player has become a characteristic feature of India's official position. But India has not shied away from censuring instances which point towards the infringement of the above values. Hence, while on the one hand New Delhi is disinclined for regional groupings to be identified as an exclusive club of nations designed to keep out another, it is keen on building constructive partnerships across the landscape. This nuanced approach is in keeping with the belief that although it cannot be denied that apprehensions regarding Beijing have been a key driver of expanding the networks of cooperation in the region, in order to make such networks sustainable, the agenda for collaboration must be a positive one and not a precipitate one.

India's erstwhile Look East Policy and current Act East Policy have played a crucial role in enabling India to establish a stronger geopolitical presence in the Indo-Pacific region. The Look East Policy, initiated in the early 1990s, aimed to strengthen India's ties with

⁹⁷ Sakhuja, Vijay. "India and the Indo-Pacific", SWP Working Paper, *German Institute for Security and International Affairs*, October 2018, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/Sakhuja_BCAS_2018_Indo-Pacific_5.pdf

⁹⁸ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

Southeast Asia and East Asia, with a focus on economic and strategic cooperation. This policy helped India to establish stronger economic and trade links with the region, and it led to the expansion of India's strategic partnerships with countries like Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. The Look East Policy also helped India to engage more actively in regional forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit, which provided opportunities for India to contribute to regional security and stability. India's participation in these forums helped to promote greater cooperation on a range of issues, including maritime security, counterterrorism, and economic integration.

The Act East Policy, launched in 2014, builds upon the earlier Look East Policy and seeks to deepen India's economic, political, and strategic ties with the countries of Southeast Asia and East Asia, as well as with the Pacific Island countries. The Act East Policy has enabled India to take a more proactive role in the region, through initiatives such as the development of infrastructure projects, such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. The Act East Policy has also enabled India to strengthen its defense cooperation with countries in the region. India has been involved in joint military exercises with countries like Japan, Australia, and the United States, and it has provided training and equipment to countries in the region. India's defense cooperation has helped to enhance regional security and has contributed to efforts to maintain freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.

As David Scott, while drawing a comparison between India's Look East Policy (LEP) and its maritime engagement, observes that while initially the LEP was directed towards the immediate eastern neighbours, over time the country's engagements have expanded much further east – to the “wider East Asia (Pacific Asia) and Pacific Basin (southern Pacific) settings.” The nature of this engagement has also diversified with India employing military, strategic power projection in addition to diplomatic tools. Scott argues that the country has

thus assumed a role in the Pacific balance of power.⁹⁹ Scott focuses on India's rising aspirations in the Indian Ocean Region made evident by politicians, naval officials and other policy practitioners. He discussed a sixfold strategy that is informing and shaping the country's engagement with the region in the quest to establish its own presence and also to balance its position with respect to other players in these waters.¹⁰⁰

With maritime commerce becoming a vital component of globalisation, strategic interests in the maritime space have come to comprise "freedom of navigation and overflight across narrow oceanic chokepoints, safety and security of sea lines of communications, illegal exploitation of the resources of maritime zones, security threats from the seas, naval rivalry between powers big and small, and the efficacy of governance mechanisms for the seas to meet and wider challenges such as the negative impact of climate change, sustainable use of marine resources and the overall health of the oceans."¹⁰¹

There has been a dedicated shift to increasing India's presence in the Indo-Pacific region. This approach¹⁰² geared towards the need for an alternative security provider in the region over the last decade. There is a growing power interest in the maritime sphere, fuelled by the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific'.¹⁰³ The region is often perceived as the world's response to Chinese unilateralism for instance, in its dealing with issues in the South China Sea. The policy also fits India's 'new' strategy in response to a fast-rising China by choosing a more

⁹⁹ Scott, David. Strategic Imperatives of India as an Emerging Player in Pacific Asia. *International Studies*, 44(2), (2007): 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170704400203>

¹⁰⁰ Scott, David. "India's Aspirations and Strategy for the Indian Ocean—Securing the Waves?." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 4 (2013): 484–511

¹⁰¹ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

¹⁰² Baruah, Darshana M. "India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>

¹⁰³ Jacob, Happymon. "Time to shift focus to the maritime sphere," *The Hindu*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/time-to-shift-focus-to-the-maritime-sphere/article32735777.ece>

assertive role for itself.¹⁰⁴ In his speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in 2018, Modi made India's thought process very clear to the world with regards to its maritime priorities, "...the destiny of the world will be deeply influenced by the course of developments in the Indo-Pacific region... India's global strategic partnership with the United States has overcome the hesitations of history and continues to deepen across the extraordinary breadth of our relationship. It has assumed new significance in the changing world. And an important pillar of this partnership is our shared vision of an open, stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region."¹⁰⁵

A new Division for the Indo-Pacific was established by the Ministry of External Affairs in April 2009. The matters it has taken under its command include the Indo-Pacific, India-ASEAN relations, East Asia Summit, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). However, this division needs a comprehensive vision document with plans and guidelines for implementation, considering that India is being considered as a key player of the region by many countries including Australia, Japan and the United States. It is definitely a new domain of foreign policy engagement and requires some adjustment to fully take on a more constructive role.

Till the turn of the millennium maritime threats or maritime competition had not assumed the degree of prominence that has been accorded to it since. In the absence of any such impending scenario, it is not unnatural for Delhi to have overlooked engagements in the maritime domain. By comparison, the country's land borders have been restive and requiring

¹⁰⁴ Baruah, Darshana M. "India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2020,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>

¹⁰⁵ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. *Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue*. New Delhi, June 2018.

<https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>

immediate attention which in turn led to the urgent outweighing the important.¹⁰⁶ Later on, as the Indo-Pacific construct started gaining prominence, there were initial apprehensions about the Indo-Pacific project being a treaty-based alliance instead of it being an identification of the unfolding challenges and potential prospects in a geography that directly or indirectly connects almost the rest of the world. While the first factor continues to hold sway, the second has not only proven to be unfounded, it has also transitioned into a geographical space which is increasingly solidifying existing cooperation mechanism and simultaneously creating new networks of engagement.

Nonetheless, despite the country's expanding maritime engagements, whether continental challenges surpass maritime ones continues to be a matter of debate. Be that as it may, it is also incontrovertible that it is the maritime space that is set to witness an expansion in the country's role in diverse forms. The belief that an expansion in the country's strategic influence can only take shape in the maritime domain is based on an estimation of the tactical limitations which characterise its lands boundaries and which by comparison are absent in the country's oceanic neighbourhood. India's former Secretary, Rajiv Sikri observed that: "If India aspires to be a great power, then the only direction in which India's strategic influence can spread is across the seas. In every other direction there are formidable constraints."¹⁰⁷ The country's immediate continental neighbourhood attests to this fact given that the country's northwest, north and north-north eastern geographies as well as political relationships are complicated and fractured at best. On the other hand, the Indian Ocean Region presents a prospective template in which New Delhi continues to be an important player. Despite the fact that India's continental challenges may be arguably more intense and

¹⁰⁶ Mohan, C. Raja. "Raja-Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi," *The Indian Express*, February 09, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/international-fleet-review-maritime-india-versus-continental-delhi/>

¹⁰⁷ Brewster, David. "An Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean?." *Security Challenges* 6, no. 3 (2010): 1-20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459796>

often more imminent than its maritime ones, the country is opting for asymmetrical responses to the conflicts marking its land borders by utilising the ocean space which comprises of naval positioning towards the creation of deterrence. For instance, after the Galwan valley clash and repeated incidents on the Ladakh border, India chose to include the maritime sphere as it responded China's aggressions on its northern land borders.

The reason¹⁰⁸ for this is that on the border the best outcome that can be achieved is a stalemate but, on the ocean, India has a distinct advantage over China as it controls one of the largest navies and sits astride a vast expanse of waterways which are crucial for China's energy supply and trade. Moreover, the extensive maritime links that the country has fostered over the years across littorals of the western and eastern Indian Ocean space together with its strategic links with the US, Japan and Australia provide New Delhi with a responsive geographical terrain and diplomatic network and the same cannot be reasoned about China. The employment of the ocean space in this form of asymmetrical response is a dynamic approach and one that conveys definitively, that reticence and qualms no longer mar the country's foreign engagements.

Examining the Contemporary Initiatives of 'SAGAR' and 'Sagarmala' in India's Maritime Policy Outreach

The concept of SAGAR was articulated in 2015 as a quest for economic prosperity and part of larger efforts towards transforming India. SAGAR aims to streamline mutual capacities for collective well-being while utilizing the Indian Ocean as an engine of growth

¹⁰⁸ Trofimov, Yaroslav. "India seeks naval edge as China penetrates Indian Ocean", *The Wall Street Journal*, September 24, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/india-seeks-naval-edge-as-china-penetrates-indian-ocean-11600945203>

and prosperity not only within the region but also beyond it. The elements of SAGAR include:¹⁰⁹

- Enhancing capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories & interests
- Deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral
- Promoting collective action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism and emergent non-state actors
- Working towards sustainable regional development through enhanced collaboration
- Engaging with countries beyond the country's shores with the aim of building greater trust and promoting respect for maritime rules, norms and peaceful resolution of disputes

The Indo-Pacific in India is viewed as a positive construct of development and connectivity¹¹⁰ in which India is well positioned to play a vital role because of its geographical location. And SAGAR is important for India because it offers potentials for a more expansive engagement¹¹¹ with its western and eastern neighbourhood along with the scope to be more responsive as a net security provider in the region. Realizing the elements of SAGAR therefore calls for synergizing partnerships with countries in the region as well as other countries which have a common interest in the region. For India, the two most important partnerships in promoting the vision of SAGAR would be the U.S and Japan and

¹⁰⁹ Swaraj, Sushma. 'SAGAR – India's Vision for the Indian Ocean Region', inaugural address at the 2nd Indian Ocean Conference at Colombo, Sri Lanka, 31 August 2017

¹¹⁰ 'Address by Foreign Secretary at the Regional Connectivity Conference: South Asia in the Indo-Pacific Context', 1 November 2018, Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/30556/Address+by+Foreign+Secretary+at+the+Regional+Connectivity+Conference++South+Asia+in+the+IndoPacific+Context>

¹¹¹ Chopra, Anil. 'Sagarmala or SAGAR: a maritime dilemma', Gateway House, 14 April 2016, <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/sagarmala-or-sagar-our-maritime-dilemma/>

although the America's involvement in the Indo-Pacific has been fairly recent, Japan has been engaged in infrastructure development in the region for decades.

The Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Trilateral Forum with Japan, Australia and the US has been launched to locate innovative and efficient ways of powering the private sector to meet infrastructure and connectivity gaps.¹¹² The forum was launched by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) together with the US-Japan Business Council and is part of the efforts towards involving the private sector in infrastructure initiatives. The rationale, as pointed out by the president of the USIBC is that to remain relevant to the geo-political dynamics of the Indo-Pacific, it is imperative to be involved in the geo-economics of the region as well.¹¹³ The USBIC highlighted that progress can only be made on addressing the infrastructure gap and the infrastructure financing gap by leveraging the assets and resources of the private sector through sustained dialogue between governments and industry to identify areas for meaningful partnership and attracting private capital.¹¹⁴

The aims of the trilateral initiative are in sync with the broader concept of SAGAR as both emphasize free and open sea lanes of communication, infrastructure projects which are sustainable and community-driven, and shoring up investment in the region. It strongly encourages cooperation between public and private sectors in meeting required finances with the active involvement of local stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure projects are followed through. It also highlights the role that bilateral and multilateral institutions can play in supplementing funds and the usefulness of tapping into national savings from government

¹¹² 'Indo-Pacific infrastructure forum launched to tap private sector in India, US, Japan', The Economic Times, 15 May, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/indo-pacific-infrastructure-forum-launched-to-tap-private-sector-in-india-us-japan/articleshow/64171805.cms>

¹¹³ 'Indo-Pacific infrastructure forum launched to tap private sector in India, US, Japan', The Economic Times, 15 May, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/indo-pacific-infrastructure-forum-launched-to-tap-private-sector-in-india-us-japan/articleshow/64171805.cms>

¹¹⁴ 'India-Japan Fact Sheets: India-Japan Development Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including Africa', October 29, 2018, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/india-japan-fact-sheets-india-japan-development-cooperation-in-the-indo-pacific-including-africa/

programs to augment available finances. The passing of the BUILD Act has also made way for the establishment of an International Development Finance Corporation which gives shape to the public-private partnership model and creates further opportunities for connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

India and Japan have also strengthened their endeavours as far as infrastructure and connectivity are concerned. Both countries have shared views regarding the region including the need to adhere to international regulations in the preservation of a free and open Indo-Pacific. In fact the Act East Initiative of India which seeks to expand and deepen ties with the country's eastern and south-eastern neighbours is in consonance with the Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative of Japan.¹¹⁵ The two countries are set to establish an India-Japan Business Platform which would be involved in the development of industrial corridors and networks in the region and are already looking to collaborate in different capacities in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.

Besides these, there are also a host of other areas where Tokyo and New Delhi plan to work together or are already engaged in such as next-generation technologies, the Make-in-India initiative, disaster management, skill development, and so on. Japanese financial and infrastructure involvement in India and the Indo-Pacific region as a whole has been in existence for decades and it is often said that Japan is present in region for the long haul. In

¹¹⁵ 'India-Japan Fact Sheets: India-Japan Development Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including Africa', October 29, 2018, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/india-japan-fact-sheets-india-japan-development-cooperation-in-the-indo-pacific-including-africa/

terms of infrastructure investments, Japan is in fact ahead of China with investments of around USD 230 billion, as compared to China's USD 155 billion.¹¹⁶

The other Indo-Pacific country which has gradually entered in this domain is Australia. In 2018, Australia announced¹¹⁷ the creation of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) which would contribute to strengthening the infrastructure of the Indo-Pacific region and expressed its willingness to partner with India. AIFFP will comprise grant funding and loans to support high-priority infrastructure projects in energy, telecommunications, transport, and water supply.

Connectivity and infrastructure in the region would also benefit from new financing institutions such as the New Development Bank and the AIIB. India is a founding member of these institutions for which infrastructure is a key mandate. In addition, multilateral cooperation organizations such as ASEAN, BIMSTEC and BBIN are also spearheading the push towards enhancing connectivity and upgrading infrastructure. Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) have been working well in India and may be incorporated by financial institutions as well as it is believed that such funds would be successful in dispelling concerns of institutional investors. The creation of a sufficient number of counterparties who would be able to absorb large amounts of capital and allocate it accordingly is also important to supplement the efforts of international investors.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Choong, William 'Can Japan be a force for stability in the Indo-Pacific?', *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, November 6, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/11/japan-stability-indo-pacific>

¹¹⁷ Roy Chaudhury, Dipanjan. 'Australia looks to partner India in the pacific region for joint projects amid Chinese inroads', *The Economic Times*, December 6, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/australia-looks-to-partner-india-in-the-pacific-region-for-joint-projects-amid-chinese-inroads/articleshow/66972157.cms>

¹¹⁸ Pandey, Aparajit. 'Constrained capital: Paving the path for infrastructure investments in India and other emerging economies', *Raisina Debates*, Observer Research Foundation, 18 December 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/constrained-capital-paving-the-path-for-infrastructure-investments-in-india-and-other-emerging-economies-46233/>

While SAGAR is largely about the country's external engagement, the government has also initiated the Sagarmala project in parallel. The Sagarmala programme is a massive endeavor that aims to augment and boost the country's commercial maritime capacity by refurbishing the port and port-led logistics and infrastructural development and modernization and focusing on the development of coastal communities. The programme is scheduled to be developed over a period of twenty years. The mention of Sagarmala is in this regard important because the internal capacities must be strengthened for effective engagement with the external. Sagarmala is therefore set to complement the efforts and objectives of SAGAR.

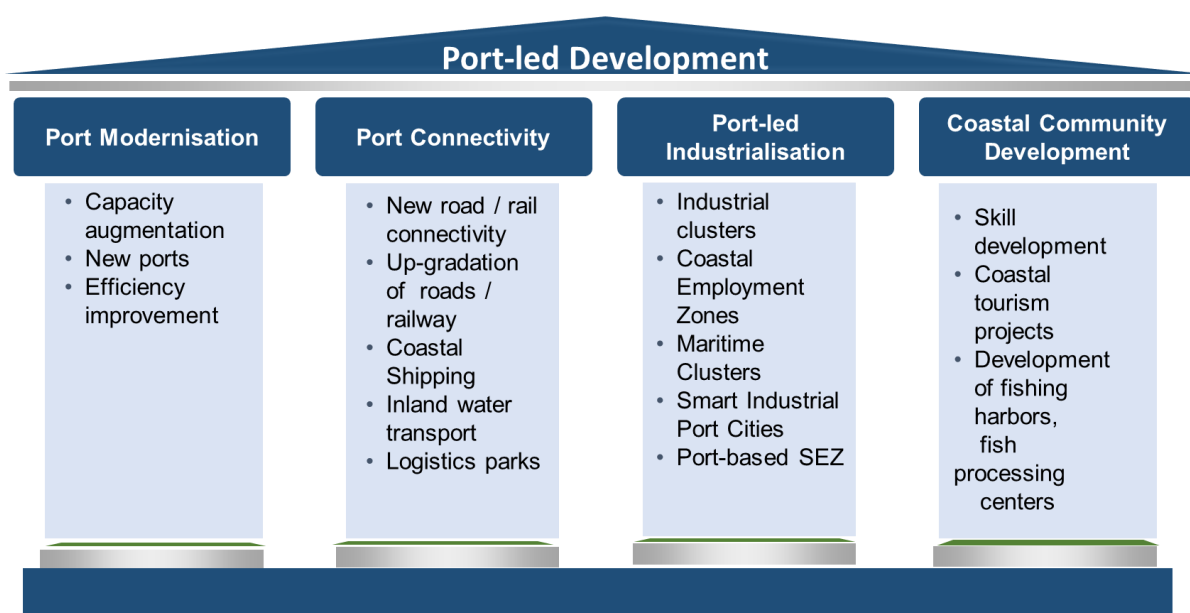
The Indian government's Sagarmala programme aims to boost the country's commercial maritime capacity. Launched in 2015 and to be developed over a period of twenty years, the initiative represents the government's single most essential recognition that ports handle 90 per cent of the country's exit cargo by volume and 70 per cent by value. The main driver of the project is port-led development (which indicates a much larger scope and scale than port development alone). This involves a massive upheaval of port infrastructure, modernisation, industrialisation and enhanced connectivity.¹¹⁹

While privately owned ports in India have been augmenting their performance and facilities in recent years, the capacities of public ports have also been steadily increasing. This has been made possible by the removal of obsolete cargo procedures coupled with an influx of investment in technology and automation. Still, the gap between public and private ports in terms of modernised infrastructure and pace of operations will remain a challenge unless considerable and tangible changes occur in both policy and operations at public ports.

¹¹⁹ Government of India, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Need for Port-Led Development in India, Sagarmala, <https://sagarmala.gov.in/about-sagarmala/background>

The enhancement of port capacities and efficiency is a vital component of the Sagarmala initiative, especially since India is projected to handle an estimated 2.5 billion tonnes of cargo by 2025. To bridge the gap between demand and supply, six new greenfield ports have been identified for expansion and development. The digitisation of port operations has been another important feature with manual forms eliminated.

Figure 4: The Four Pillars of Sagarmala



Source: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, “About Sagarmala”, Government of India, <https://sagarmala.gov.in/about-sagarmala/vision>

Sagarmala is also targeting poor road and rail connectivity, which increases both time and expenses involved in cargo movement. To improve hinterland connectivity, the Indian Port Rail Corporation (IPRCL) was set up. The IPRCL is undertaking a range of projects across ports on the west and east coast of the country, which include proving railway tracks for enabling faster transport, extending existing tracks, up-grading railway station platforms and so on. Many projects under the Sagarmala initiative are being implemented in conjunction with other connectivity and infrastructure projects of the government to ensure that

transportation systems are realised in a holistic manner. Some of these projects include dedicated freight corridors, highway development programmes, industrial corridors and special economic zones.

So far, 89 projects under the Sagarmala programme have been completed with another 443 in different stages of completion. The traffic handled at ports has increased steadily, along with an increase in cargo-handling capacity. The government indicates that efficiency parameters such as the average turnaround time and average output per ship have also improved. India witnessed a leap of 23 ranks in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index from 100 in 2017–18 to 77 in 2018–19. Although the methodology associated with such indicators has been challenged, the rankings remain persuasive for foreign investors.¹²⁰ While Sagarmala has achieved several of its objectives over the three years that it has been in force, challenges to timely progress still exist. Infrastructure projects in India often witness completion delays and it is estimated that less than a fifth of the initiative has been completed since it was launched in 2015. Another area where Sagarmala faces problems is fund mobilisation. According to reports, the development of industrial clusters and coastal communities are the two areas where greater investment is most needed. Sagarmala should encourage foreign investment along public–private sector participation models to mitigate funding constraints. Yet foreign investment will be slow coming in the absence of an enabling environment unencumbered by barriers in tax and duty structures. Greater autonomy for industrial clusters and coastal regions in determining financial and administrative matters, along with flexibility to determine tariff levels, should be beneficial in attracting funding.

Another complex area of concern is land acquisition for projects, which has already faced opposition and protests from locals and political parties. Finally, the progress of Sagarmala

¹²⁰ Kumar, Rajiv and Jain, Palakh. "How easy is it to do business in India?", *East Asia Forum*, December 2016, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/12/01/how-easy-is-it-to-do-business-in-india/>

initiatives depends considerably upon coordination among the 60 agencies involved in implementation. It is imperative that coordination be as seamless as possible to avoid unnecessary delays and the escalation of project costs. The progress made by Sagarmala has met almost equal amounts of appreciation and criticism. No doubt India still has a long way to go in modernising its shipping industry and the overall maritime sector. Its ports have fared poorly compared to other leading ports in the region such as Hong Kong and Colombo.

The Sagarmala initiative has often been dubbed as being too ambitious. But for a country like India, an initiative of such scale must be tackled in one go rather than rolled out incrementally. Incremental development would require a great amount of discipline and would arguably take the country much longer than a push from all relevant sectors simultaneously. The pitfall is the likelihood of setbacks if the implementation of projects is not carried out consistently. Additionally, it may prove difficult to bring together the scale of resources necessary for wholesale implementation.¹²¹

Undertaking the Sagarmala initiative will be a long and arduous process, but it is one that is required. Maritime commerce is an unassailable aspect of economic growth and development. Although we are at a time when global maritime shipping has in many cases plateaued, it is a cyclical process that can be expected to gather pace in due course. It is consequently important for a growing economy such as India to streamline, modernise and augment its maritime industry. This is precisely what Sagarmala sets out to do.

There are diverse challenges related to financing infrastructure projects on a regional scale. A very vital aspect regarding difficulties in project implementation is the shortage of bankable projects or in other words, projects which become mired in issues such as land

¹²¹ Basu, Pratinashree. "Can India beat the clock in modernising maritime commerce?", East Asia Forum, April 27, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/04/27/can-india-beat-the-clock-in-modernising-maritime-commerce/>

acquisition, inept and corrupt bureaucracies and state-owned firms, ineffective project studies, and legal and regulatory frameworks that discourage private sector involvement.¹²² It's a cyclical process in which these factors affect the availability and securing of requisite funds which in turn result in delays and escalation of costs.

Another challenge is with respect to the need for synergy among relevant associated projects. This is because connectivity encompasses digital and technological links and seamless flow of information in addition to physical infrastructure. It is therefore important to consider that these aspects be in sync for optimization of infrastructure projects. Enabling this would pave the way for greater efficiency and more effective utilization of finances. In a broader sense, it is also beneficial if geo-political attitudes among the countries involved coexist. The different economic, political, fund mobilization and regional cooperation alliances that populate the Indo-Pacific mark the elemental need to maintain balance. It is only important to understand whether these efforts are directed towards constructive development which would be meaningful and beneficial for all parties concerned.

¹²²Rajah, Roland. 'An emerging Indo-Pacific infrastructure strategy', The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, August 3, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/emerging-indo-pacific-infrastructure-strategy>

Chapter IV

Assessing the Interface Between Commerce and Strategy in the Evolution of India's Maritime Role

In this chapter India's entry into the Indo-Pacific region and is traced with the argument that going forward, despite attendant impediments, the Indo-Pacific is likely to witness an expansion in India's maritime participation. Geopolitics and geoeconomics are two concepts that have played a significant role in shaping the international system throughout history. Geopolitics refers to the study of the relationship between geography, power, and international politics, while geoeconomics refers to the study of the relationship between economics, resources, and international politics. In this dissertation, we will explore the history of geopolitics and geoeconomics, examining how these concepts have evolved over time and how they have influenced international relations.

The relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics has evolved significantly over time. Geopolitics refers to the use of political power and influence to shape international relations, while geoeconomics refers to the use of economic power and influence to achieve political objectives. The origins of geopolitics can be traced back to the late 19th century. The term was coined by the Swedish political scientist, Rudolf Kjellén, who used it to describe the relationship between geography, politics, and power. Kjellén believed that geography played a crucial role in shaping international relations, and that states with favorable geographic positions would be more likely to succeed in their geopolitical ambitions.¹²³ The German geographer, Friedrich Ratzel,¹²⁴ also played a significant role in the development of geopolitics. Ratzel believed that the state was an organic entity that was shaped by its environment. He argued that states needed to expand their territories in order to ensure their survival, and that the acquisition of territory was a necessary part of geopolitical strategy.

Geopolitics continued to evolve in the 20th century, particularly in the aftermath of World War II. The United States emerged as a dominant global power, and its foreign policy was heavily influenced by geopolitical considerations. The containment policy, which aimed to contain the spread of communism, was a key example of this. During the Cold War, geopolitics was largely dominated by the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both countries pursued a strategy of nuclear deterrence, which was based on the assumption that the threat of mutual destruction would prevent either side from using nuclear weapons. In the post-Cold War era, geopolitics has become more complex. The rise of China as a global economic power has led to a shift in the balance of power, and the

123 Björk, Ragnar, and Thomas Lundén, eds. *Territory, state and nation: The geopolitics of Rudolf Kjellén*. Vol. 41. Berghahn Books, 2021

124 Stogiannos, Alexandros. "The Genesis of Geopolitics and Friedrich Ratzel." *Dismissing the myth of the Ratzelian geodeterminism*. Cham, CH: Springer Nature (2019)

emergence of new geopolitical challenges. The competition for resources, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, has become a key focus of geopolitical strategy.

The origins of geoeconomics can also be traced back to the late 19th century. The concept was first introduced by the American economist, Henry George, who argued that economic considerations played a crucial role in shaping international relations. In the 20th century, geoeconomics became more prominent, particularly in the aftermath of World War II. The Bretton Woods Agreement, which established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, was a key example of geoeconomic cooperation. The agreement aimed to promote international economic stability and prevent another global economic crisis.

Geoeconomics has evolved significantly since the Bretton Woods Agreement. The rise of globalization and the emergence of new economic powers, such as China and India, have led to a shift in the balance of economic power. Economic considerations have become increasingly important in shaping international relations, particularly in the areas of trade and investment. Regional trade agreements, such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have become more common in recent years. These agreements aim to reduce trade barriers and promote economic integration between countries.

The relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics has become increasingly intertwined in recent years. Economic considerations, such as the pursuit of energy security or access to markets, can shape geopolitical outcomes. At the same time, geopolitical considerations, such as the pursuit of territorial expansion or the containment of rival powers, can shape economic policies. The competition for resources and markets, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, has become a key focus of both geopolitical and geoeconomic strategy.

The 21st century has seen the emergence of new trends in geoeconomics. One of the most significant trends is the rise of China as a global economic power. China has become the world's second-largest economy, and its economic policies have had a significant impact on global trade and investment. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to promote economic cooperation and infrastructure development, has been viewed by some as a challenge to the existing global economic order.

Holmes observes in his 2004 essay that while the tenets and teachings of maritime strategist A.T. Mahan continue to find relevance in present day world affairs, they are probably not being utilised in the way that he anticipated. Holmes discusses how the ideas of Mahan have influenced Chinese naval strategy and how they may therefore be deployed against US interests. Holmes therefore cautions against the influence that Mahan's work has on Beijing and the motives that would drive the country's naval engagement in the years to come. He also mentions that Beijing should instead be encouraged to focus on maritime issues of common interest such as piracy terrorism instead of entering into "a needless naval arms race."¹²⁵

Another trend is the growing importance of digital technologies in geoeconomic competition. The rise of e-commerce and digital platforms has led to the emergence of new forms of economic power, and has given rise to new challenges in areas such as data privacy and cybersecurity.

Institutions play a crucial role in shaping geoeconomic outcomes. They can provide the necessary framework for international economic cooperation and facilitate the smooth functioning of markets. The World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, is a key institution that promotes free trade and works to reduce trade barriers. The International

¹²⁵ Holmes, James. *Mahan is Alive in China*, *The National Interest*, July 7, 2004. <https://nationalinterest.org/article/mahan-is-alive-in-china-2703>

Monetary Fund (IMF) is another important institution that provides financial assistance to countries in need and promotes global economic stability. Institutions can also help to mitigate economic tensions and conflicts. For example, the European Union (EU) was created in the aftermath of World War II to promote economic cooperation between European countries and prevent future conflicts. The EU has been successful in reducing economic tensions between member states, as well as promoting economic growth and stability in the region. Moreover, institutions can facilitate economic integration between countries. Regional trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), are examples of institutions that promote economic integration between countries. These agreements can help to reduce trade barriers, increase market access, and stimulate economic growth.

Institutions also play a significant role in shaping geopolitical outcomes. They can provide a framework for international cooperation and help to resolve conflicts between states. The United Nations (UN), for example, was created in the aftermath of World War II to promote international peace and security. The UN Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and it has the power to authorize military action to enforce its decisions.

Institutions can also provide a forum for states to negotiate and resolve disputes peacefully. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is a judicial body that settles legal disputes between states and provides advisory opinions on legal questions. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) is another institution that provides a forum for states to resolve disputes peacefully through arbitration.

Moreover, institutions can promote cooperation between states on global issues, such as climate change, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. The Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2015, is an example of an institution that promotes international cooperation on climate change. The agreement sets out a framework for countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and limit the rise in global temperatures. Similarly, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an institution that promotes international cooperation on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Institutions play a crucial role in shaping the relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics. They can provide a framework for international economic cooperation, promote geopolitical stability, and facilitate the resolution of disputes between states. In turn, geopolitical considerations often shape economic policies, and economic interests can influence geopolitical outcomes.

For example, institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) promote economic cooperation between countries and help to mitigate economic tensions and conflicts. At the same time, economic considerations, such as the pursuit of energy security or access to markets, can shape geopolitical outcomes. The competition for resources and markets, as seen in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), can also drive geopolitical tensions and shape the international system.

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Geopolitics and Geoeconomics

The advent of the 21st century has been marked with the methods of economics and commerce displacing the military methods with disposable capital in lieu of firepower, civilian innovation in lieu of military-technical advancement and economy-market linkages in lieu of military bases and all. This doesn't mean that the military engagements that occupied

the geopolitical terrain have faded, but they have surely taken a backseat with military wars and occupations not being as rampant as economic sanctions and protectionism. With the rise of Globalisation in the early post-Cold War era, traditional geopolitical rivalries were expected to be replaced by harmonious economic competition. The “harmonious” expectation of orthodox neoclassical economists and technocratic policymakers failed to account for the weight of history, civilisations’ propensity for confrontation and interplay of irreconcilable interests marked by ideological preferences which give rise to uncertainty in the global world order. In this sense, the “harmonious” aspect also becomes “fierce” with ideological economic alliances, protectionist measures, restricting sanctions and the growing ambition of dominating the regional sphere of dominance. This what was highlighted broadly by Edward Luttwak in his pioneer article “From Geopolitics to Geo-economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce” written in 1990 where “Goeconomics” entered the lexicon for the first time. According to Luttwak, geoeconomics could be understood as the fusion of logic of conflict with the methods of commerce which constituted an important component of state behaviour. This is what made Luttwak theorise that geopolitics is replaced by a new form of conflict embedded by economic means, coined as geo-economics.¹²⁶

Luttwak’s understanding is placed within the laissez faire attitude which was backed in the 1990s by the US and other states which supported a freer world. In the current globalised economic world order, the economic interests and ambitions of nations extend beyond the economic space that they occupy geography¹²⁷. This results into confrontation which is largely economic in nature, where states with monetary preoccupations with the most important of them being the condition where other nation states could be in a position to earn something that is taken away from them. The zero-sum paradigm is the source of

¹²⁶ Luttwak, Edward N. "From geopolitics to geo-economics: Logic of conflict, grammar of commerce." *The national interest* 20 (1990): 17-23

¹²⁷ Baracuh, Braz. "The evolving geo-economics of world trade." *Adelphi Papers* 54, no. 450 (2014): 121-138

conflict amongst states and their behaviour towards economic activities such as deregulation, industrial policy choices, construction of infrastructure projects and the pursuit of free trade agreements must be strategically thought to compete for economic gains.

Another important work that gave an apt definition of economics that we can see currently in the current world order is Robert Blackwill and Jennifer Harris' work "War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft".¹²⁸ In the book geoeconomics is defined as:

"The use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results; and the effects of another nation's economic actions on a country's geopolitical goals."

The definition gives a starting point in the conceptualisation of geoeconomics with examples of economic instruments like trade and investment policies, sanctions, aid and development assistance, research and technology policies. Such a geoeconomics framework can be used to critically evaluate the economic actions by governments which are pursued partially to achieve a strategic (non-economic) objective, or when they affect the geopolitical interests of other states.¹²⁹ One example would be when a new tariff is implemented on national security grounds, rather than (purely) for domestic industry protection. Likewise, foreign aid may be allocated to a particular country with twin objectives: to stimulate economic development as well as to strengthen democratic processes and build influence. The concept of geopolitics is applied to the globalisation process to study the management of natural resources leading to comparative advantage.

¹²⁸ Blackwill, Robert D., and Jennifer M. Harris. *War by other means: Geoeconomics and statecraft*. Harvard University Press, 2016

¹²⁹ Baru, Sanjaya. "Geo-economics and Strategy." *Survival* 54, no. 3 (2012): 47-58

This is what makes Geoeconomics as an extension and replacement of geopolitics deeply embedded within the paradigm of realism. In International relations, realism supposes that the international system is an anarchy without a supranational authority that could safeguard the sovereignty and security of the state. This is why nation states find it important to equip themselves with all necessary capabilities to reaffirm its autonomy, safety and economic progress through various policies designed to assert their dominance while others targeted at influencing the control over other nations' resources and policies.¹³⁰

India and The Interplay of Geoeconomics & Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-pacific has been a significant centre where geopolitics and geoeconomics have closely flourished. The term Indo-Pacific was first introduced by Karl Haushofer who coined the term “Indopazifischer Raum” while expounding how dense was the concentration of humanity and culture in the region due to present of India and China protected by offshore island arcs.¹³¹ This starts an everlasting usage of the term Indo-Pacific in strategic documents like, Australia's defence white paper in 2013,¹³² USA's National Security Strategy released in 2017,¹³³ etc. In India's case, this term has been prominent in the strategic literature that has come up since the 2000s. The Indo-Pacific has symbolised the ‘confluence of Indian and the Pacific Ocean’ and has ignited stronger stronger politico-military and diplomatic-economic debates around the maritime sphere.¹³⁴ Countries in the region have utilised soft, hard, and

¹³⁰ Csurgai, Gyula. "The increasing importance of geoeconomics in power rivalries in the twenty-first century." *Geopolitics* 23, no. 1 (2018): 38-46

¹³¹ Li, Hansong. "The “Indo-Pacific”: intellectual origins and international visions in global contexts." *Modern Intellectual History* 19, no. 3 (2022): 807-833

¹³² The Australian National University, *Geoeconomic Brief #1- Context and Concepts*. <http://ciw.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Geoeconomic%20Brief%20%231%20FINAL.pdf>

¹³³ President of the United States, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, *The White House*, December, 2017. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

¹³⁴ The Australian National University, *Geoeconomic Brief #1- Context and Concepts*.

digital infrastructure connectivity considerations, maritime security to map out their foreign policy decisions.

The region is not a geographical space where power struggles with the sole purpose of dominance are witnessed, instead, it sees the participation of responsible stakeholders coming together and reaching a collective realisation of sharing common goals materialising through connectivity, infrastructure development, supply chain resilience, sustainable development, and protecting global commons.¹³⁵ One of the most significant development in the recent times has been the coming up of QUAD, a four way alliance between India, Japan, Australia and USA to harness economic and security partnership in the Pacific and also to counter the threat posed by a growing China trying to dominate the global world order and also its immediate neighbours. While the QUAD often engages in military exercises like Malabar exercise which originally began in 1992 as an exercise between United States and India only, and now includes both Australia and Japan as a show of strength, it is its economic initiatives that have been more important. This is what has made these exercises go beyond their military strength and show the convergence of views amongst the QUAD members on maritime issues and their commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rule based international order.

The QUAD has been a perfect example of how geopolitical partnerships are built and developed on the principles of geoeconomics with its initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) which outlines its open and inclusive approach to the Indo-Pacific against the economic hostility and dominance of China. The IPEF goes beyond the 4 QUAD partners to also include countries like Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, New

¹³⁵ Mattlin, Mikael, and Mikael Wigell. "Geoeconomics in the context of restive regional powers." *Asia Europe Journal* 14 (2016): 125-134

Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei, which pushes the its membership to 13 partner countries. The IPEF have reinforced the Indo-Pacific partnership by not only strengthening the geoeconomics of the partner countries accounting for 40% of the world GDP but also the entire Indo-Pacific region. It has an objective to strengthen economic cooperation and enhance inclusiveness, resilience, sustainability, fairness, economic growth and competitiveness in the region.

This is reflective of the collective desire of making the region the engine of global growth and international cooperation. These shared ideals reflect the importance of social constructivism in Indo-Pacific which highlights the role of the region as a new social construct based on the principles democratic values and identities.¹³⁶ These democratic values became the link that connected not only India, USA, Australia and Japan but also connects countries like Philippines, South Korea, New Zealand, etc. which later on joined the IPEF.

The strategic alliances that have developed in the Indo-Pacific region have also stemmed from the idea of economic liberalism that emphasises the role of economic interdependence amongst the countries.¹³⁷ While economic liberalism is one major school of liberalism, upon whose foundations the idea of strategic cooperations in Indo-Pacific were built, the second major school is institutional liberalism which has given this strategic partnership an institutional framework in the form of the QUAD alliance and its institutional frameworks like IPEF, etc.

¹³⁶ He, Kai. "Institutional balancing and international relations theory: Economic interdependence and balance of power strategies in Southeast Asia." *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3 (2008): 489-518

¹³⁷ Prabhakar, Lawrence W. "The emergent vistas of the Indo-Pacific." *Indo Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects* (2014): 5-16

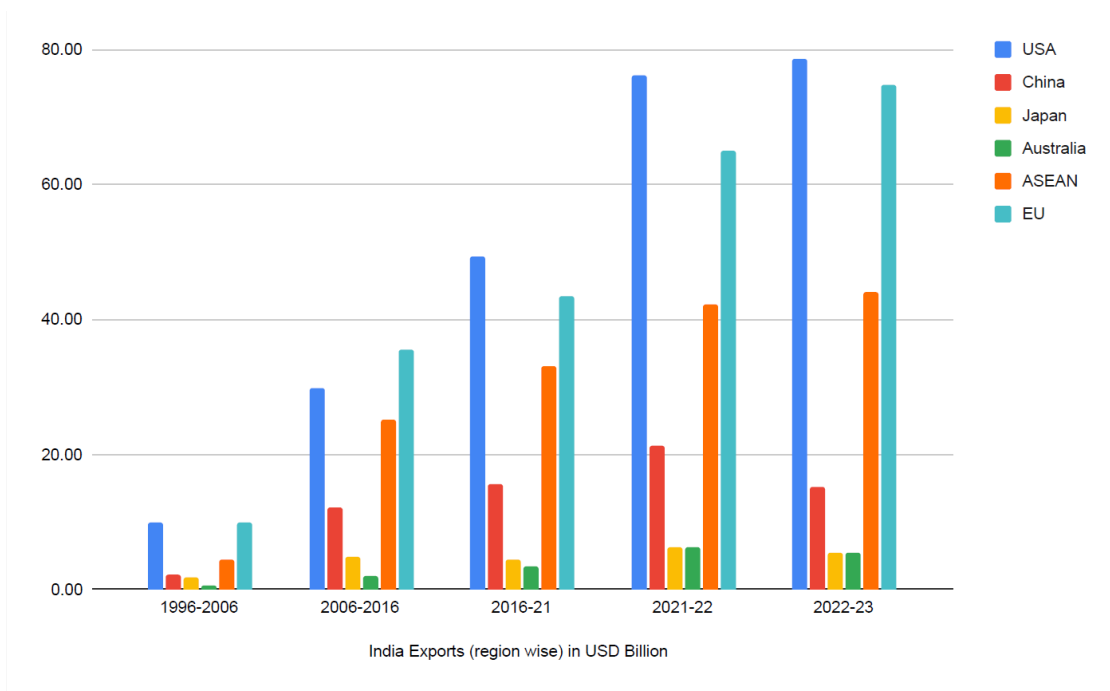


Figure 5: Trade growth vis-à-vis India’s Exports with the USA, China, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN in India’s post-liberalization period (1996-2023).

Source – India Trade Statistics, Ministry of Commerce: <https://commerce.gov.in/trade-statistics/>

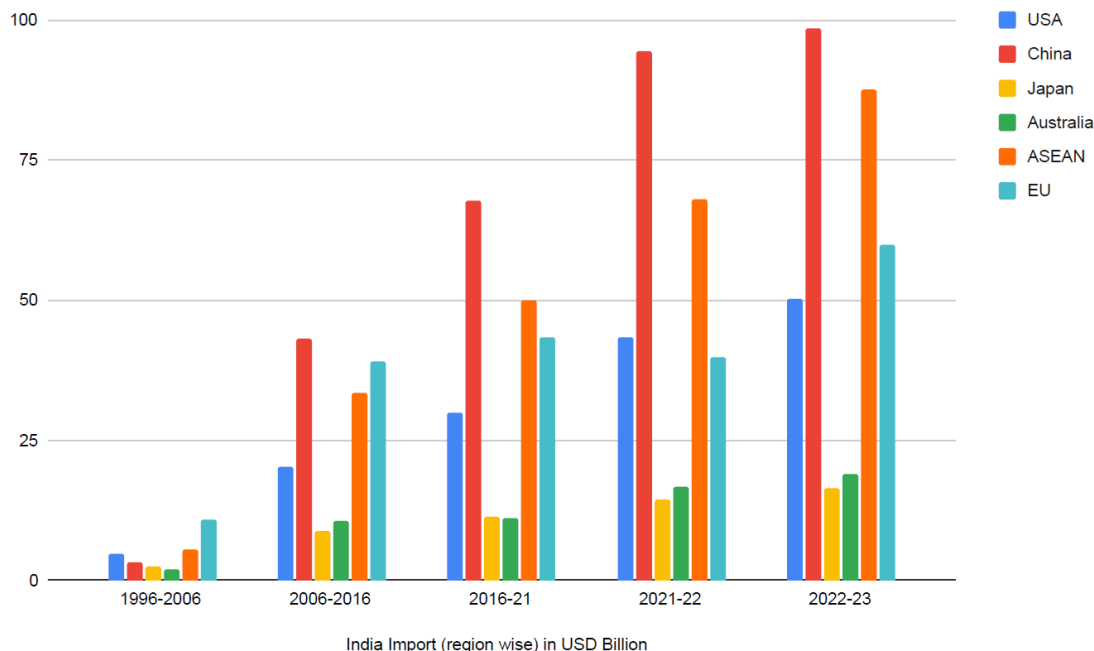


Figure 6: Trade growth vis-à-vis India’s Imports with the USA, China, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN in India’s post-liberalization period (1996-2023).

Source – India Trade Statistics, Ministry of Commerce: <https://commerce.gov.in/trade-statistics/>

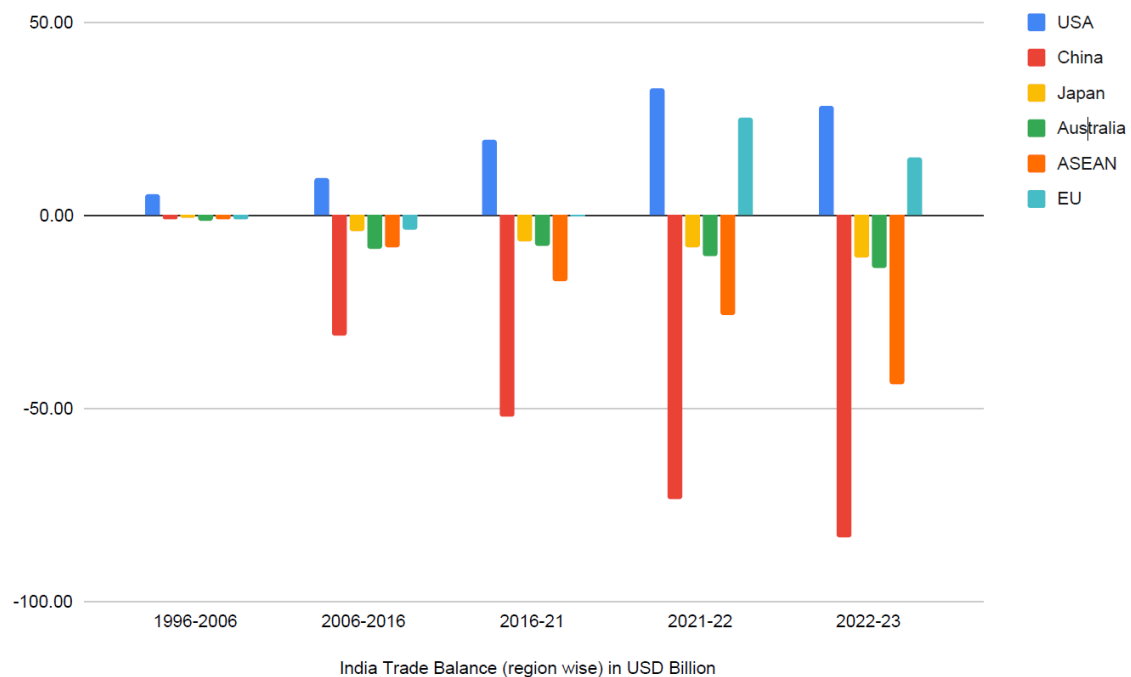


Figure 7: Trade growth vis-à-vis India's Trade Balance with the USA, China, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN in India's post-liberalization period (1996-2023).

Source – India Trade Statistics, Ministry of Commerce: <https://commerce.gov.in/trade-statistics/>

India has been crucial in its development as a global power often called as the “Third Pole” while emerging as a major pivot of the global Indo-Pacific strategic alliances. India's role in the Indo-Pacific have been acknowledged and appreciated by regional and extra-regional powers alike. The realist outlook in the International Theory suggest that the balancing of power is a normal state behaviour under anarchy. The strategic anxiety caused amongst countries due to the rampant and hostile rise of China led to the promotion of “Indo-Pacific” in regional security domains. The rise of India as a South Asian power was expected to act as a natural balancer against China's rise. Along with this, Indo-Pacific concept offered a strategic opportunity for India which was excluded from the Asia Pacific in the post-Cold War era. It was only in 1996 that India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which got India some representation in issues pertaining to Indo-Pacific region. Along with this, the

Indo-Pacific has been a crucial aspect of United States's "rebalance" policies which has seen it strengthen its military cooperation with traditional allies and strategic important countries especially India. This is what has led to a convergence between India's Look East Policy and USA's rebalancing act in the Indo-Pacific region.

India's presence in the Indo-Pacific is not only limited to its participation in the QUAD and even its participation in the IPEF is not only a result of its presence in the QUAD but also falls under its willingness to be active in the Indo-Pacific through its "Act East Policy". Over the years India's trade has increased in the Indo-Pacific while the region started questioning China's actionable policies. India doesn't play an assisting role in the region to global powers like USA, rather it takes on an activist role in the region, the geographical extent of which stretches from the eastern coast of Africa to Oceania and also includes the Pacific Island countries. India's vision of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" and its inclusive approach allows it to have "inclusiveness, openness, and ASEAN centrality and unity" as part of its conception of the Indo-Pacific. This was largely the theme of the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2022 (IPRD-2022) that was held in Delhi between 23rd and 25th November, 2022. It was based on the overarching theme of "Operationalising the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" (IPOI), and explored sub-themes that provided a greater degree of specificity and traction to the seven 'pillars' or 'spokes' of the IPOI. These seven pillars as spelled out by the Indian Prime Minister under an "open for. All initiative" included Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Maritime Security; Science, Technology, and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.

India's stance has also acted as a guiding force for the countries in the Indo-Pacific and New Delhi has found the consolidation of existing partnerships such as that with Tokyo

and also the strengthening of new ones in the context of the geopolitical dynamics of the region, such as with Seoul. in shaping their own respective foreign policies. For example, the launch of South Korea's first Indo-Pacific vision document titled "Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific" has allowed the current South Korean Government to look beyond the cautious approach of its predecessors which gave deference to Seoul's largest trade partner, China, while also ensuring widened leeway in having close ties with South Korea's security treaty ally, the United States. While a major reason for this shift has been attributed to China's action against South Korea after the latter deployed the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system.

China's decision to boycott the South Korean tourism industry resulted in the South Korean economy losing out on nearly 7.5 trillion won (\$ 6.8 billion). China saw the THAAD as a threat to its national security but its actions to influence the decision-making of South Korea have largely been driven by geoeconomic tools to mark its presence in the Indo-Pacific this. With India being an active participant in the the Indo-Pacific, Seoul sees itself as a close ally to New Delhi. The current bilateral relations between India and South Korea are largely built on the foundations laid in the 2018 Modi-Moon vision for peace and prosperity which was aimed at strengthening the 'Special Strategic Partnership' between the countries built on built on the foundations of deep-rooted historical and cultural bonds, and based on shared universal values of democracy, free market economy, rule of law, common commitment to a peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based region.¹³⁸ While South Korea is an indispensable partner to India's vision under its "Act East Policy", India also remains as a critical partner to South Korea's new Indo-Pacific strategy. In the context of the relationship between both countries, 2023 seems to be a watershed moment with both countries

¹³⁸John, Jojin V. "India–South Korea relations under 'Special strategic partnership': 'Act east policy' meets 'New southern policy'." *India Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2020): 207-225

celebrating 50 years of diplomatic ties. Along with this, their engagement under G20's International Financial Architecture Working Group (where South Korea is a co-chair) along with their synergy through the "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FIOP) vision provides momentum to the relationship between both India and South Korea. In this regard, both countries mirror the sentiments captured by the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in his 1929 poem titled "Lamp of the East" where he celebrated Korea's historical past and its promising future through the following lines:

*"In the golden age of Asia
Korea was one of its lamp bearers,
And that lamp is waiting to be lit up once again
For the illumination of the East"*

3.3 Employing strategic capacity and diplomacy

Interest and emphasis on the advancement of maritime capability resulted in a renewed effort on naval development especially since the mid-1990s when the country embarked upon a major program for the development of a Blue Water navy with considerable increase in naval expenditure.¹³⁹ The naval budget grew from 5% during 2000-2005 and at 10% from 2005-2008 with a simultaneous increase in the navy's share of the annual defence budget which contributed to changes in the navy's force structure and sea control capabilities.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Brewster, David. "An Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean?" *Security Challenges* 6, no. 3 (2010): 1-20

¹⁴⁰ Brewster. "An Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean?"

During this period, India aimed at selective control of the Indian ocean through separate fleets¹⁴¹ in the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal alongside an expansion of the Coast Guard for policing activities supplementary to that of the navy. Parallely, New Delhi has also focussed on enhancing security partnerships from the western Indian Ocean to the east with an emphasis on chokepoints to the Indian Ocean from southern Africa, the Arabian peninsula (Mozambique channel, Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandab) to the west and the Indonesian archipelago (Straits of Malacca, Lombok and Sunda) to the east.¹⁴² Chokepoints in maritime parlance refer to narrow channels of water connecting the high seas, through which trade routes pass and which therefore also assume strategic significance during times of conflict. An important element of the country's ocean diplomacy has been the outreach to Arab Gulf States through sustained capacity building and security collaborations and surpassing the mere cultivation of political relationships.¹⁴³ In fact, in contemporary maritime geopolitics, the navy's western outreach precedes its attention towards the east.

The Indian Navy has gradually over the years been building on its engagements with littorals of the Southeast Asian region towards the facilitation of well-rounded defence cooperation which has been elucidated as 'harnessing the collective military competency' in the 2015 naval doctrine – *Ensuring Secure Seas*.¹⁴⁴ In 2019, the then Chief of Naval Staff outlined the four pillars which have been guiding foreign engagements : (i) capacity building (provision of military assets and military infrastructure development); (ii) capability enhancement (military training, technical and hydrographic assistance, exclusive economic

¹⁴¹ With three aircraft carriers forming the core of this positioning.

¹⁴² Brewster. "An Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean?"

¹⁴³ Singh, Abhijit. "India's 'Look West' Maritime Diplomacy," *The Diplomat*, October 04, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/indias-look-west-maritime-diplomacy/>

¹⁴⁴ Thomas, Roby. "Leveraging India's Maritime Diplomacy." *Journal of Defence Studies* 14, no. 3 (2020)

zone [EEZ] surveillance, etc.); (iii) constructive engagements (military level talks, military exercises, ship visits, etc.); and (iv) collaborative efforts (symposiums, constructs, conclaves, etc.).¹⁴⁵

Two key naval strategy documents – Freedom to Use the Seas in 2007 and Ensuring Secure Seas in 2015 – have been vital in giving shape to the country’s envisioned role, its capacities and most importantly its identified areas of interest.

- **2007 Report on ‘Freedom to Use the Seas’**

In 2007, the Indian Navy published its maritime military strategy - ‘Freedom to Use the Seas’, in which, for the first time, the Indian Navy officially acknowledged its broader role, beyond the development of its defence capacities. After 16 years of reforms, India was deeply into the neo-liberal agenda in 2007 and accordingly acting on all its policies. ‘Freedom to Use the Seas’ was testimony to this action as it expanded its understanding of a strategy in terms of external environment, “Since strategy is meant to show the way to employ forces and build capabilities in pursuit of national political aims and military objectives, it must remain sensitive to the changing circumstance, environments and threats. It should therefore be revisited and revised to keep it contemporary relevant.”¹⁴⁶

In an attempt to update India’s maritime military policy, the report was prescient enough to dedicate generous space to Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Security of Energy and even foreign policy initiatives in the IOR. These formed the renewed aspects of the report as

¹⁴⁵ ‘Indian Navy Committed to Enhance Cooperation with Like-minded Navies: Admiral Singh’, *The Economic Times*, October 18, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-navy-fully-seized-of-its-role-in-maritime-cooperation-navy-chief/articleshow/71645073.cms>

¹⁴⁶ Government of India, Indian Navy. *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy*. New Delhi, May 2007. <http://aldeilis.net/mumbai/1686.pdf>

the rest of the report is focused on the military aspect of the Navy. There is also continued emphasis on regional involvement for non-military issues and using partnerships for better results, “In order to overcome the menace of terrorism, drugs, arms and human trafficking, concerted regional initiatives would be desirable. The Indian Navy has invested in partnerships to map the activities of terrorist organisations in the IOR.”¹⁴⁷

With globalisation, increased interconnectivity demands cooperative efforts that serve all interests. But it also implies increased surveillance needs due to greater exposure. It is in this regard that MDA becomes crucial. By including this aspect in the report, the Navy indicated the need for information on geopolitical developments vital for effective decision-making. This is suggestive of the larger idea of the report, which was to ‘provide a fresh strand of philosophy to mull over, and if possible, to provoke doctrinal discussion and debate.’¹⁴⁸ It was achieved by including the entire spectrum of operations during peace and conflict in its strategy thereby adding to the theme of focusing on the economic security of India. The report is an important indicator of the shifts in maritime policy being experienced in the 2000s after securing the benefits of liberalisation.

- **2015 Report on ‘Ensuring Secure Seas’**

While there was considerable acknowledgement, lack of implementation seriously persisted. India continued to have untapped port capabilities and an inability to cope with the constantly changing geopolitical environment. A revision to the 2007 report occurred only in 2015 with Indian Navy’s new maritime strategy called, ‘Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy.’ The objectives, along with revising the 2007 report, were to

¹⁴⁷ Indian Navy. *Freedom to Use the Seas*.

¹⁴⁸ Indian Navy. *Freedom to Use the Seas*.

increase maritime cooperation and coordination and provide a framework for synergising actions in the maritime domain with all stakeholders.¹⁴⁹

The then Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral RK Dhowan, specified three developments that affected India's maritime security and Navy's role. His articulation aptly puts the causes that motivated another significant evolution in strategizing maritime policy, "The first is the sweeping change that the global and regional geo-strategic environment has seen during the period. The shift in worldview from a *Euro-Atlantic* to an *Indo-Pacific* focus and the repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment in tangible ways."¹⁵⁰ The other major development was the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai which required a re-evaluation of the country's coastal and offshore security. Lastly, the growing recognition of maritime security in national progress contributed to the creation of a broad and accommodative strategy.

The 2015 report was also the first time there was a formal acknowledgement of the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' and its implications for the Indian Ocean. United States, Japan, Indonesia, along with India, have preferred to use the term 'Asia-Pacific' instead.¹⁵¹ In the past, while trying to keep up with globalisation, the focus was still on the Indian Ocean and its maritime boundaries. This report signalled an India finally accepting of the fact that developments beyond the immediate IOR hugely impact maritime security framework. The areas that attained new primary interest were the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of

¹⁴⁹Government of India, Indian Navy, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2. *Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy*. New Delhi, October 2015.

https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

¹⁵⁰ Indian Navy. *Ensuring Secure Seas*.

¹⁵¹Baruah, Darshana M. "India's Evolving Maritime Strategy," *The Diplomat*, December 3, 2015
<https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/indias-evolving-maritime-strategy/>

Aden and their littoral regions, Southwest Indian Ocean and East Coast of Africa littoral regions.¹⁵²

India's maritime geography is unique due to its central location and influence in the IOR, which is also the hub of global trade and commerce.¹⁵³ The concept of providing 'net security' in the maritime area was presented and defined as 'the state of actual security available in an area, upon balancing prevailing threats, inherent risks and rising challenges in a maritime environment, against the ability to monitor, contain and counter all of these'. This is a nuanced concept that requires maturity in strategy and decision-making that India projected to be ready for in 2015.

Led by the navy, India's military engagements with countries in Southeast Asia reached 'maturity and salience' by the second decade of the 21st century comprising bilateral naval exercises, coordinated patrols, submarine and anti-submarine cooperation with countries like Indonesia, ASEAN, South Korea, Philippines, and Australia. These are aimed at the enhancement of interoperability which in turn contribute to the improvement of responses and capabilities for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), out-of-area contingencies (OOAC) and military operations other than war (MOOTW), including non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Baruah. "India's Evolving Maritime Strategy"

¹⁵³ Indian Navy. *Ensuring Secure Seas*.

¹⁵⁴ Indian Navy Committed to Enhance Cooperation with Like-minded Navies: Admiral Singh', *The Economic Times*, October 18, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-navy-fully-seized-of-its-role-in-maritime-cooperation-navy-chief/articleshow/71645073.cms>

Table 1: India's Maritime Deterrence Strategy

ROLE	MILITARY	DIPLOMATIC	CONSTABULARY
OBJECTIVES	Deterrence against Conflict and Coercion Defence of India's Territorial Integrity, Citizens and Offshore Assets from Seaborne Threats Influence Affairs on Land Safeguard India's National Interests and Maritime Security	Strengthen Political Relations and Goodwill Strengthen Defence Relations with Friendly States Portray Credible Defence Posture and Capability Strengthen Maritime Security in IOR Promote Regional and Global Security	Coastal and Offshore Security Security of EEZ Good Order at Sea
MISSIONS	Nuclear Second Strike MDA Sea Control Sea Denial Power Projection Expeditionary Ops SLOC Protection Special Forces Ops Seaward Defence Coastal and Offshore Defence	Constructive Maritime Engagement Maritime Assistance and Support Presence	Counter Terrorism Counter Armed Threats from Non-State Actors
TASKS	Surveillance Patrol Anti-Submarine Ops Anti-Surface Ops Anti-Air Ops Information Ops Electronic Warfare Protection of Offshore Assets Mine Warfare Harbour Defence	Overseas Deployment Flag Showing/ Port Visits Hosting Foreign Warships' Visits Technical and Logistics Support Foreign Training Bilateral/ Multilateral Exercises Coordinated Patrol Activities under the IONS Programme	Counter Infiltration Patrol Anti-Trafficking

Source: Indian Navy. "Ensuring secure seas: Indian maritime security strategy." Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1, no. 2 (2015): 32. Government of India.

https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

Table 2: India's Maritime Conflict Strategy

ROLE	MILITARY	DIPLOMATIC	CONSTABULARY
OBJECTIVES	Decisive Military Victory in Case of War Defence of India's Territorial Integrity, Citizens and Offshore Assets from Seaborne Threats Influence Affairs on Land Safeguard India's Mercantile Marine and Maritime Trade Safeguard India's National Interests and Maritime Security	Strengthen Political Relations and Goodwill Strengthen Defence Relations with Friendly States Portray Credible Defence Posture and Capability	Coastal and Offshore Security
MISSIONS	Nuclear Second Strike MDA Sea Control Sea Denial Blockade Power Projection Force Protection Expeditionary Ops Compellance Destruction SLOC Interdiction SLOC Protection Special Forces Ops Seaward Defence Coastal and Offshore Defence	Constructive Maritime Engagement Presence	Counter Terrorism Counter Armed Threats from Non-State Actors
TASKS	Surveillance Patrol Maritime Strike Anti-Submarine Ops Anti-Surface Ops Anti-Air Ops Amphibious Ops Information Ops Electronic Warfare Protection of Offshore Assets NCAGS & NCS Ops Mine Warfare VBSS Harbour Defence	Technical and Logistics Support Foreign Training Coordinated Patrol	Counter Infiltration Patrol Anti-Trafficking

Source: Indian Navy. "Ensuring secure seas: Indian maritime security strategy." Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1, no. 2 (2015): 32. Government of India.
https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

In a marked shift from its earlier format of engagements via naval visits for military diplomacy, training, and assistance, recent years have also witnessed the expansion of the

navy's presence and operational reach through 'mission-based deployments' involving the deployment of mission-ready ships and aircraft along critical sea lanes.¹⁵⁵

Table 3: India's Maritime Strategy for Shaping a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment

ROLE	MILITARY	DIPLOMATIC	CONSTABULARY	BENIGN
OBJECTIVES	Deterrence against Conflict and Coercion Security of India's Territorial Integrity, Citizens and Offshore Assets from Seaborne Threats Influence Affairs on Land Safeguard India's Mercantile Marine and Maritime Trade Safeguard India's National Interests and Maritime Security	Strengthen Political Relations and Goodwill Strengthen Defence Relations with Friendly States Portray Credible Defence Posture and Capability Strengthen Maritime Security in IOR Promote Regional and Global Security	Coastal and Offshore Security Security of EEZ Good Order at Sea	Promote Civil Safety and Security Project National Soft Power
MISSIONS	MDA Force Protection SLOC Protection Seaward Defence Coastal and Offshore Defence	Constructive Maritime Engagement Maritime Assistance and Support Presence Peace Support Ops	Counter Terrorism Counter Armed Threats from Non-State Actors	HADR Aid to Civil Authorities Hydrography SAR
TASKS	Surveillance Patrol Information Exchange Protection of Offshore Assets VBSS Harbour Defence	Overseas Deployment Flag Showing/ Port Visits Hosting Foreign Warships' Visits Technical and Logistics Support Foreign Training Coordinated Patrol Bilateral/ Multilateral Exercises NEO Peace Enforcement, Peace Making, Peace Keeping and Peace Building Activities under the IONS Programme	Counter Infiltration Patrol Anti-Piracy Anti-Poaching Anti-Trafficking	Provision of Relief Material and Supplies Medical Assistance Diving Assistance Hydrographic Assistance

Source: Indian Navy. "Ensuring secure seas: Indian maritime security strategy." Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1, no. 2 (2015): 32. Government of India. https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

¹⁵⁵ "Navy to implement new plan for warships in Indian Ocean region", *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/to-counter-china-navy-to-implement-new-plan-for-warships-in-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/61231821.cms?from=mdr>

The Gulf of Aden, the northern Arabian Sea, the waters around Lakshadweep and the Maldives, the EEZs of Seychelles and Mauritius, the northern Bay of Bengal, the waters around Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Straits of Malacca southwards have been identified as seven zones for year-round patrols by 15 warships and reconnaissance aircraft.¹⁵⁶

Mission-Based-Deployments Across the Indian Ocean Region

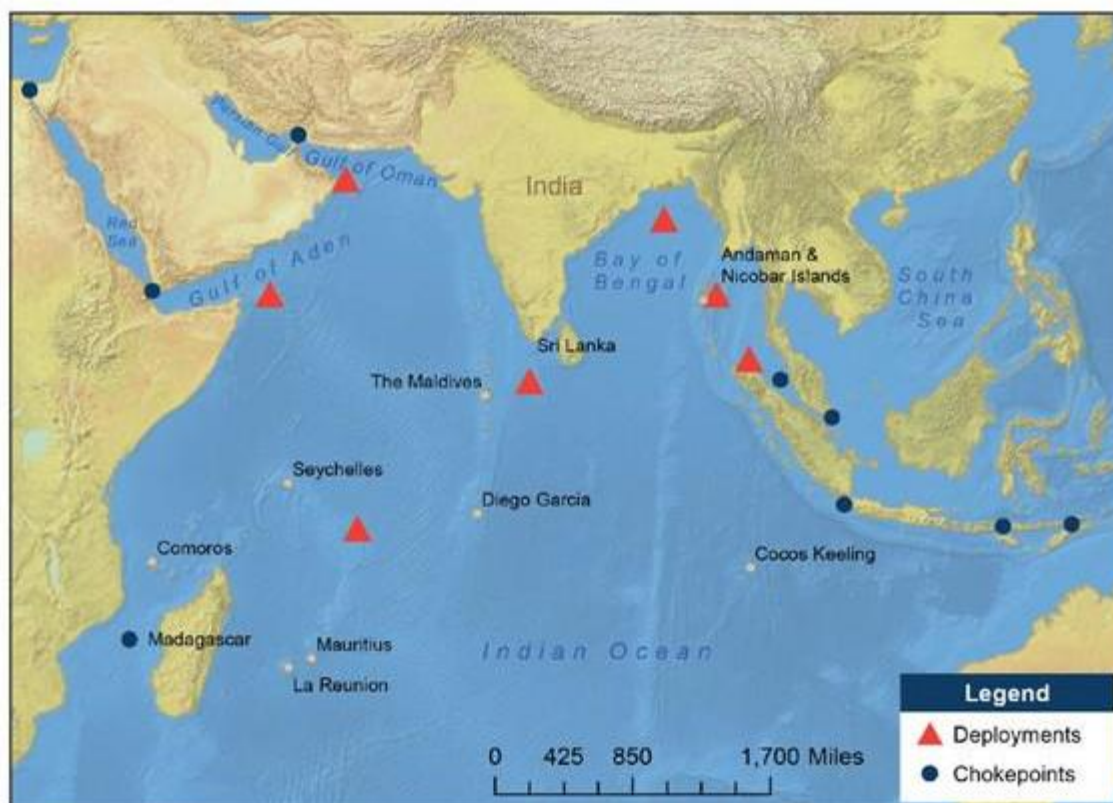
There is also a renewed interest to engage more with other navies through port visits, bilateral interactions, training initiatives, operational exercises and technical support arrangements. Overseas Deployment or OSDs were seen intrinsic to this goal and the Navy held that it would continue to send its forces on OSDs ‘to gather operational experience and environmental knowledge, undertake military exercises, demonstrate reach and sustenance, exercise freedom of navigation, pursue maritime engagements, and showcase the nation and the navy.’¹⁵⁷

MILAN, Indian Navy’s 1995 initiative of having biennial meeting of regional navies, was seen as a forum for improving operational interaction between navies in the region. Increasing from 5 navies in 1995 to 17 navies in 2014 is telling of its progress in cooperation. Another platform that got deserved attention was the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), under the similar theme of increasing regional cooperation. IONS was established in 2008 as a regional forum for navies of the Indian Ocean and is significant to the region’s sea-based diplomacy.

¹⁵⁶ Jaishankar, Dhruva. “Acting East: India in the Indo-Pacific”, *Brookings India Impact Series 102019-02*, October 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Acting-East-India-in-the-INDO-PACIFIC-without-cutmark.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Indian Navy. *Ensuring Secure Seas*.

Figure 8: Indian Navy's Mission-Based Deployments in the Indian Ocean Region



Source: Directorate of Strategy, Concepts, and Transformation, Integrated Headquarters, "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy," Naval Strategic Publication 1.2, Indian Navy, October 2015, https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

A vital aspect of India's strategic engagements with its maritime neighbourhood has been the development and augmentation of the country's own maritime domain awareness and also enabling the same for other IOR littorals. MDA is regarded as critical requisite for ensuring maritime security and maintaining strategic advantage by deterring adversarial inroads.¹⁵⁸ New Delhi has expanded its surveillance footprint across Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh; Mauritius, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka via radar stations and conversely enabling reciprocal cooperation by stationing liaison officers from these

¹⁵⁸ Indian Navy. *Ensuring Secure Seas*.

countries at India's Information Fusion Centre.¹⁵⁹ New Delhi is also aiming to facilitate real time sharing of maritime information via military satellite. Besides surveillance to monitor potential maritime threats, combatting regional transnational crime is another objective or the enhancement of MDA. These steps are intended to enable region wide maritime safety through effective monitoring and information exchange. The Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in India is also expected to be integrated with the Information Fusion Centre at Singapore and the and the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Center in Madagascar making way for a pan-Indian Ocean MDA operational framework.

Simultaneously, key stakeholders of the region have also sought to bolster the role of the Indian Navy and have recognised its significance as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region. For instance, the US National Security Strategy document (December, 2017) acknowledges that the role played by the Indian navy has been limited in scope whereas it underlines the potential of the navy in mitigating equilibrium threats across the Indian Ocean space.¹⁶⁰ The country's foreign policy outreach towards the eastern Indian Ocean space has been led by the Look East and later refurbished Act East policies. And while there has generally been a certain degree of ambiguity regarding the operational aspects or scope of the Act East, the policy initiative is a structured reflection of the securitization of India's eastward engagement¹⁶¹ and a natural convergence of the country's growing capabilities, obligations and aspirations.

¹⁵⁹ Singh, Abhijit. "Boosting India with Maritime Domain Awareness", *The Hindu*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/boosting-india-with-maritime-domain-awareness/article33514223.ece>

¹⁶⁰ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

¹⁶¹ Jaishankar. "Acting East: India in the Indo-Pacific."

Multilateral efforts have included strengthening the IORA charter missions, boosting interoperability and HADR in collaboration with the IONS, revamping the BIMTEC, maintaining active cooperation programmes with island countries of the region and so on. Besides these India has also been actively engaged in participating in and sustaining dialogue partnership with platforms like the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union, East Asia Community, And the Southern African Development Community, ASEAN, and mini-lateral and trilateral platforms in the eastern Indian Ocean. Alongside organising the Malabar, Milan and other naval exercises, the navy and also the coast guard have been expanding and conducting consultation mechanisms, coordinated patrols, monitoring of illegal activities, evacuation operations, training and transfer of naval platforms, and providing assistance to neighbouring countries in the enhancement of their own maritime domain awareness. New Delhi has already signed bilateral maritime white-shipping agreements with 22 countries and another with the Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre.¹⁶²

The establishment of an Information Fusion Centre for the IOR has been another significant step towards the collation fusion and dissemination of maritime safety information.¹⁶³ Additionally, New Delhi's maritime engagement with its neighbourhood has also been bolstered through the country's Ministry of Earth Sciences which has been developing the capacities of partner countries in operational oceanography, forecasting extreme weather events and helping in climate change proofing of their vital infrastructure.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² It is a multinational construct which has facilitated the creation of virtual networks for the sharing of information among 30 countries.

¹⁶³ Thomas, Roby. "Leveraging India's Maritime Diplomacy." *Journal of Defence Studies* 14, no. 3 (2020)

¹⁶⁴ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Distinguished Lectures, "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives," <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?852>

India's Indo-Pacific outreach also creates an opportunity to expand its diplomatic footprint and leverage partnerships to address a new strategic and security environment.¹⁶⁵ The partnership aspect of the Indo-Pacific outlook can be attributed to the desire for building cohesive groupings or alliances. India has been developing its interest in being a key player of the Indo-Pacific region through multiple partnerships evident 'from frequent high-level visits; strong defence cooperation, which includes training, ship visits, joint coordinated patrols, defence sales and defence supplies, close security cooperation, comprehensive economic engagement, regular dialogues on education and skill development and cultural cooperation.'¹⁶⁶ The MEA has made it clear that 'through the Indo-Pacific construct, India envisages a greater role for itself in the wider region.'¹⁶⁷

Recently, the Quad or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, involving the major Indo-Pacific countries like, India, Australia, Japan and United States, has garnered much attention along with a firm opposition from China. It was an informal strategic dialogue but after an official shared vision shared by India and Australia¹⁶⁸ in June 2020, the Quad finally started taking concrete shape. Their first official all leaders meeting took place in March 2021 which led to the release of the first official statement affirming joint commitment towards promoting a free, open rules-based order, rooted in international law and advancing security and prosperity and counter threats to both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. the support of rule

¹⁶⁵ Baruah, Darshana M. "India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theatre of Opportunity," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>

¹⁶⁶ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. *Annual Report 2018-19*. New Delhi. http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/31719_MEA_AR18_19.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of External Affairs. *Annual Report 2018-19*.

¹⁶⁸ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. *Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between the Republic of India and the Government of Australia*. New Delhi, June 2020. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32730/joint+declaration+on+a+shared+vision+for+maritime+cooperation+in+the+indopacific+between+the+republic+of+india+and+the+government+of+australia>

of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity remain core areas of understanding for the Quad members.¹⁶⁹

Since the Indo-Pacific construct gained momentum, India has maintained that it does not view the label in an exclusionary capacity and the country's Indo-Pacific outreach has been designed to factor in the diplomatic objectives of littorals who comprise this region. New Delhi has consequently, sought to employ maritime diplomacy in keeping with a holistic perspective to its approach towards the region.¹⁷⁰ The SAGAR or Security and Growth for all in the Region initiative reflects this inclusive approach and is also in keeping with New Delhi's call to strengthen regional institutional mechanisms such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

Tracing the Expansion in India's Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Role since 1991

India's geoeconomic role in the Indo-Pacific has expanded significantly in the post-liberalization era, as India has pursued policies aimed at promoting economic cooperation and integration with countries in the region. One of the key drivers of India's geoeconomic role in the Indo-Pacific has been its growing economic engagement with the region. India has sought to deepen its trade and investment ties with countries in the region through initiatives such as the Act East Policy, which has led to the signing of numerous free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries in the region. India is also a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade agreement between 15 countries in the Indo-Pacific region that covers a wide range of economic sectors.

¹⁶⁹ Government of the United States of America, White House. *Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: "The Spirit of the Quad"*. Washington DC, March 12, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>

¹⁷⁰ Ministry of External Affairs. "India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives"

India has also been actively involved in regional infrastructure development, with a range of connectivity initiatives. These initiatives aim to enhance connectivity and promote economic integration within the region, which will help to strengthen India's geoeconomic role in the Indo-Pacific.

Another key aspect of India's geoeconomic role in the Indo-Pacific has been its growing investment in the region. Indian companies have invested in a range of sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing, in countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia. India has also sought to promote greater investment from countries in the region, through initiatives such as the India-ASEAN Investment Partnership and the India-Japan Investment Promotion Partnership.

India's geoeconomic role in the Indo-Pacific has also been shaped by its efforts to promote greater regional cooperation on issues such as climate change and sustainable development. India has been actively involved in initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, which aims to promote sustainable use of marine resources in the region, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which seeks to enhance infrastructure resilience in the face of natural disasters.

From Concept to Articulation – The Arrival of India in the Indo-Pacific

The articulation of India's policy in the Indo-Pacific in terms of geoeconomics is not just a Modi-era concept and can be back to Jawaharlal Nehru's speech in the Constituent Assembly in 1947 where he said,

“Talking about foreign policies, the House must remember that these are not empty struggles on a chessboard...foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy.”

A similar sentiment was reiterated by the 1991 PV Narasimha Rao Government that was credited with the liberalisation reforms in India when the then finance minister Manmohan Singh during his budget speech of 1991 quoted Victor Hugo and said¹⁷¹,

“No power on Earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I suggest to this august House that the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea.”

India’s role in the Indo-Pacific is reflective of the realpolitik stance of the raja-mandala (circle of states) mentioned in Arthashastra which conceptualises the neighbours and how a customised, calibrated approach to external relations flows from these neighbours.¹⁷² The interplay of geoeconomics which expands the role of nations beyond their limited geographical presence in the Indo-Pacific in specific and the world order in general is envisaged in the Arthashastra where Kautilya sees the interstate realm as a fluid space that dilutes the permanence of geography and its attendant determinism. Despite being an important factor in foreign policies, physical location is not the only determining variable as the countries work in conjunction with their relative strengths and dispositions.¹⁷³ When Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in keynote address at the Shangri La Dialogue, linked India’s future economic prospects to not just the scale of the country’s economy but also to the depth of its global engagement, he hinted at this very “relative strength and disposition” of India

¹⁷¹ Singh, Manmohan. Speech Introducing the Budget for the Year 1991-92, July 24, 1991, India Budget, <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/bspeech/bs199192.pdf>

¹⁷² Shahi Deepshikha. “Arthashastra beyond Realpolitik: The ‘Eclectic’ Face of Kautilya,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX No. 41, October 11, 68-74 (2014), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i24478536>

¹⁷³ Kangle, Ramakant Prabha. *The kautiliya arthashastra*. No. 2. Motilal Banarsidass Publication, 1986

which was aimed at establishing a rules-based international order with the goals of achieving prosperity and security.¹⁷⁴

Samuel Huntington in his influential essay on “Why International Primacy Matters” talks about economic activity being a source of power and well-being both. According to Huntington, economic power becomes critical in determining the primacy or subordination levels of state in a world order where military conflicts between major states seems to be rare.¹⁷⁵ This also adds to the theory of famous sociologist Daniel Bell who propounded that “economics is the continuation of war by other means”.¹⁷⁶ The current interplay of geoeconomics and geopolitics in the world order has evolved into a complex web of interdependence, cooperation and competition as the nation states try to employ tools of economics and statecraft to attain their objective of regional dominance and also region cooperation. It can also be stated that these economic tools used by the modern day countries can also be reduced within Carl Von Clausewitz’s famous dictum that “war is a continuation of politics by other means”.

India’s “Indo-Pacific Strategy” is reflected by its rapid naval modernisation and its policy of “extended neighbourhood”. Playing a proactive role in shaping a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region, India has been critical in institutionalising and infusing credibility to the Indo-Pacific construct.¹⁷⁷ India has been vocal about its active participation in establishing free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and set up a separate Indo-Pacific Division

¹⁷⁴ Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue June 1, 2018, Ministry of External Affairs Media Centre.

¹⁷⁵ Huntington, Samuel P. "Why international primacy matters." *International security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 68-83

¹⁷⁶ Bell, Daniel. "Germany: The enduring fear: a new nationalism or a new Europe?." *Dissent* 37 (1990): 461-467

¹⁷⁷ Sana, Asma and Akhtar, Shaheen. “India’s ‘Indo-Pacific’ Strategy: Emerging Sino-Indian Maritime Competition,” Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, October 12, 2020, <https://issi.org.pk/indias-indo-pacific-strategy-emerging-sino-indian-maritime-competition/>

within the Ministry of External Affairs in April, 2019. This structural change was aimed at providing,

“...substantive policy elements and programmes to that vision. Indo- Pacific Division deals with matters relating to the Indo-Pacific, India-ASEAN relations, East Asia Summit, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).”

Impediments and Imperatives

There are both strategic-operational and also strategic-policy related challenges for the country as it looks to engage more deeply and more comprehensively with in the maritime domain. While the peninsular shape offers obvious advantages, the same can also be a source of vulnerability and constrain the navy’s ability to monitor or influence events in the vast east-west expanse of the ocean space leading to difficulties in striking the right balance between ‘blue-water’ and ‘brown-water’ responsibilities.¹⁷⁸ For instance, mission-based-deployments may overstretch the navy’s functioning abilities and may prove to be unsustainable and ineffective as credible deterrents. It is also contended that despite the rise in ‘operational tempo’, the country’s maritime deployments do not reflect an active naval projection strategy especially, further east, being confined largely to a constabulary role.¹⁷⁹ To address these challenges the cultivation of reliable and reciprocal diplomatic and strategic

¹⁷⁸ Khurana, Gurpreet S. “India’s Maritime Strategy: Context and Subtext”, *Maritime Affairs*, April 19, 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/09733159.2017.1309747>

¹⁷⁹ Singh, Abhijit. “India’s ‘mission ready’ naval posture in the Indian Ocean isn’t sustainable”, *ORF Raisina Debates*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-mission-ready-naval-posture-in-the-indian-ocean-isnt-sustainable/>

partnerships alongside – as far as practicable – domestic capacity enhancement as well as capacity building with small, middle and major powers is imperative.

Perhaps the most challenging yet promising aspect of India's maritime engagement is presented by the Indo-Pacific itself which has been and continues to be shaped to a great degree by the China factor. China's inroads into the Indian Ocean are not novel and have been occurring for over a decade through active political engagements and long-term port investments¹⁸⁰ across the Indian Ocean Region aimed at expanding Beijing's footholds to ensure both commercial and naval influence along the breadth of the ocean space. Beginning with what is also referred to as the 'flag-following-trade' policy, China's security presence in the Indian Ocean and its activities in the wider Pacific have transformed into semi-military alliances, dual-use port facilities, stationing of non-combat troops initially abroad, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) missions and arms transfers to the region.¹⁸¹ The demands and benefits of interconnectedness together with the challenges posed by uncertainties and ambiguities with reference to China have led to a 'competition continuum'¹⁸² or in other words, a perpetually tenuous situation at times just shy of overt conflict.

The Indo-Pacific also comprises a region which is as yet indeterminate because demarcation of its geographical limits varies from country to country. Furthermore, it is characterised by divergent sets of interests and aspirations – the realisation of which is as yet

¹⁸⁰ Bhaskar, C. Uday. "China and India in the Indian Ocean region: neither conflict nor cooperation preordained." *China Report* 46, no. 3 (2010): 311-318. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000944551104600311>

¹⁸¹ Kondapalli, Srikanth. "China's evolving naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region." *India & China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean* (2018): 115, <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780199479337.001.0001/oso-9780199479337-chapter-7>

¹⁸² Roche, Elizabeth. "Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean may go deeper", *Livemint*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/chinese-presence-in-indian-ocean-has-been-a-regular-phenomenon-in-past-decade-11618407976324.html>

based loosely on the foundational principles of a free, open, stable and prosperous region forming the basis of both formal and informal platforms of cooperation across the region.

Narratives around the Indo-Pacific strategic space, have, in recent years popularized the phrase – ‘like-minded’. The phrase is often employed overtly to categorise groups of countries which essentially seek to preserve stability via the already existing rules-based legal order. The term is often used covertly to indicate forums and partnerships which aim to counterbalance China’s influence and penetration within the region. In both cases, grouping of ‘like-minded’ countries emphasize on shared interests. As sovereign nations however, interests may be similar to varying degrees but can very rarely be shared. This is because countries operate in and from the boundaries of their geographies and capacities and aspirations – which are bound to vary.

Hence, these collaborations will not be effective unless there is an acknowledgment and recognition of stark differences in priorities. While the China challenge will continue to shape interactions among countries, it is vital to identify functional areas of cooperation which are de-linked from apprehensions concerning China. This is vital for the sustenance of partnerships being forged. Additionally, India should make efforts for collaboration with other non-conventional players with great potential, such as Canada, New Zealand and Norway.¹⁸³ Continued growth in the Indo-Pacific region can also lead to a structural change in India’s foreign policy as countries and smaller island nations continue to manoeuvre through China-USA competition.

¹⁸³ Baruah. “India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi’s Theater of Opportunity”

Realistically therefore, shared interests are not really ‘shared’ but are rather in many cases a conflation of asymmetrical capabilities and degrees of interest being utilized as the foundation for moving towards a more or less common objective. This is however, is not to detract from the formation of like-minded alliances but rather to highlight the need for underscoring realities in terms of capacity and cost in order to be better equipped to meet the shared objective. ‘Like-minded’ countries should therefore consider the attendant dissimilarities as doing so would enable a clearer understanding of individual interests which can subsequently be qualified or supplemented towards the achievement of similar objectives. It must also be considered that geopolitics does not comprise a fixed setting but instead changes with the changing balance of power and hence ‘the Indo-Pacific Ocean is a new term and reflects the realities of contemporary Asian order.’¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the establishment of requisite institutional and physical infrastructure for constructive engagement, the cultivation of strategic trust, reforming institutional insufficiencies, and collaborating towards the mitigation of system destabilisation threats¹⁸⁵ such as climate change will continue to be imperative in the years to come.

¹⁸⁴ Scott, David. "India and the Allure of the ‘Indo-Pacific’." *International Studies* 49, no. 3-4 (2012): 165-188. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0020881714534038>

¹⁸⁵ Ministry of External Affairs. “India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific in pursuit of its national objectives”

Chapter V:

Conclusion

In his paper published in 1990 and set in the context of the fall of the Soviet Union, Edward Luttwak observes that “methods of commerce are displacing military methods.”¹⁸⁶ The end of the Cold War marked the end of the importance of military power in the greater part of the world according to the author. While there exists ample evidence to prove that military power remains a crucial element in conveying a country’s power, it cannot be denied that the use of military might by one state against another has reduced and that economic prowess marks a more important indicator of strength. Nevertheless, economic aspirations have to negotiate with geopolitics and this is where ‘geo-economics’ assumes importance.

¹⁸⁶ Luttwak, Edward N. "From geopolitics to geo-economics: Logic of conflict, grammar of commerce." *The national interest* 20 (1990): 17-23

Maritime spaces have played a significant role in the history of cross-cultural interactions, with maritime trade and connectivity being some of the earliest forms of such interactions. The Indian Ocean has been a crucial medium for trade, particularly for densely populated littoral countries such as India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Throughout history, the Indian Ocean has been a hub of significant trade, both in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, with the regions surrounding the bay, particularly in India and Bangladesh, having high productivity potential for various crops due to their fertile river deltas. Additionally, the rich cultural heritage of these regions has resulted in the production of a range of handcrafted or specialized products. During the pre-colonial era, the Coromandel Coast and Bengal were the two main trading regions along the east coast of India, with Pulicat, Nagapattinam, and Masulipatnam being the most important ports in the Coromandel Coast and Chittagong, Satgaon, Pipli, and Balasore being the most significant in Bengal. Trade items mainly included provisions such as rice, sugar, long pepper, and luxury goods such as delicate handcrafted textiles and spices. Overseas trade occurred with kingdoms located across the Malacca Strait, the areas around the Persian Gulf region, China, and other littoral regions such as Ceylon and Arakan.¹⁸⁷

There are various reasons why the region is gaining greater importance and is playing a larger role in India's foreign policy interests as discussed in the preceding chapters. To summarise, firstly, the region is located at the intersection of some of the busiest sea lines of communication that connect the commercially rich areas of the North Atlantic, Southeast and East Asia, and West Asia. Secondly, the region offers emerging opportunities for India to strengthen cooperation with its neighboring countries, which gives a boost to India's Neighbourhood First policy. This is crucial for securing India's outreach to its immediate

¹⁸⁷ Prakash, Om. *European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India*. Vol. 5. Cambridge University Press, 1998

neighborhood and essential for achieving its aspirations. Additionally, the Indian Ocean can play a significant role in enhancing economic collaboration with the ASEAN nations, thus supporting India's Act East policy goals. Thirdly, the increasing presence of China in the Indian ocean region, as part of China's ambitious twenty-first-century Maritime Silk Road project, has added to the international power dynamics in the region. Finally, these waters have a substantial proportion of untapped natural resources, which magnifies its economic value.¹⁸⁸

India's policy towards the Indian Ocean has been an important part of its foreign policy since its independence. In recent years, India has intensified its engagement with the Indian Ocean region, and its policy has evolved to reflect this. India's policy towards the Indian Ocean can be divided into three phases. The first phase was from 1947 to 1991 when India's policy was primarily focused on its maritime security. During this period, India established its navy and developed its maritime capabilities. India also established relationships with other countries in the region to enhance its security and strategic position. India was one of the founders of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008, which is a platform for navies to cooperate on maritime security issues.

The second phase of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean was from 1991 to 2014. During this period, India's focus shifted to economic and trade issues. India recognized the importance of the Indian Ocean for its economic growth and development. India's "Look East" policy was launched in 1991, which aimed to strengthen economic ties with Southeast Asia. India also became a member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral

¹⁸⁸ Chaudhury, Anasua Basu Ray, and Rakhahari Chatterji. "Maritime order and connectivity in the Indian Ocean: the renewed significance of the Bay of Bengal." *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 15, no. 3 (2019): 241-244. doi/full/10.1080/19480881.2019.1665823

Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in 1997, which aimed to enhance economic cooperation between countries in the region.

The second phase can be characterized as a period of consolidation and expansion of India's maritime interests in the region. The end of the Cold War and the liberalization of India's economy marked a shift in the country's approach to the Indian Ocean, from a primarily security-driven focus to a more multifaceted one that encompassed economic, diplomatic, and cultural dimensions.

In the economic realm, India began to pursue a more active role in promoting regional trade and investment, with the aim of leveraging the Indian Ocean's strategic location to enhance its own economic development. The Look East Policy, launched in 1992, was a key component of this strategy, which sought to deepen India's ties with Southeast Asian countries and integrate India into the regional economic architecture of the Asia-Pacific.

Another important development during this period was the increasing emphasis on energy security. With India's growing energy needs, especially in the wake of its economic liberalization, the Indian Ocean became an increasingly important arena for securing access to oil and gas resources. India's engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as well as its efforts to develop closer ties with Iran, were driven in large part by energy considerations.

In the diplomatic realm, India continued to seek a more active role in shaping regional security dynamics. This included a renewed focus on strengthening bilateral ties with key partners, such as the United States, Japan, and Australia, as well as multilateral initiatives like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). India also continued to play a leading role in maritime security operations, including anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden.

Finally, the cultural dimension of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean was also given greater emphasis during this period. This included the promotion of Indian culture and soft power, as well as efforts to strengthen people-to-people ties across the region. One notable example was the Indian Ocean Cultural Centre for Dialogue and Exchange, established in 2008 in the Maldives.

The third and current phase of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean is from 2014 onwards. During this period, India's policy has focused on enhancing its presence and influence in the region. India's "Act East" policy was launched in 2014, which aimed to enhance economic, strategic, and cultural ties with Southeast Asia. India has also been actively involved in regional groupings like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) to enhance cooperation and dialogue in the region. The third phase is characterized by a renewed focus on the region and a more proactive and assertive approach towards its maritime interests. This phase is marked by the "Act East Policy," which seeks to deepen India's engagement with Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific, and the Indian Ocean region.

One of the key pillars of India's policy in this phase is the emphasis on building strategic partnerships and maritime cooperation with other countries in the region. India has been engaging in regular naval exercises with countries like the United States, Japan, Australia, and France, aimed at enhancing maritime security and interoperability. The Indian Navy has also been conducting joint patrols and coordinated patrols with other navies in the region, including Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore.

Another important element of India's policy in this phase is the focus on developing maritime infrastructure and building connectivity in the region. India has been investing in port development projects in the region, such as the Chabahar port in Iran and the Duqm port

in Oman, which are expected to enhance India's connectivity with Central Asia and West Asia. India is also working on developing a network of maritime corridors, including the International North-South Transport Corridor and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, which will provide a framework for enhancing connectivity and promoting economic cooperation in the region.

In addition to building partnerships and infrastructure, India has also been actively engaging in maritime diplomacy in the region. India has been participating in multilateral forums like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), which provide a platform for discussing issues related to maritime security and cooperation. India has also been engaging with China on issues related to maritime security, including through the mechanism of the Maritime Affairs Dialogue.

One of the defining moments of India's policy in this phase was the launch of the "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative in 2015 which is discussed earlier. The SAGAR initiative aims to promote regional economic integration, enhance maritime security, and strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties in the Indian Ocean region. Under this initiative, India has been offering development assistance and capacity-building support to countries in the region, with a focus on areas like disaster management, hydrography, and marine research.

The third phase of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean has seen a shift towards a more proactive and assertive approach, aimed at promoting India's maritime interests and enhancing regional cooperation. With India's growing economic and strategic interests in the region, this phase is likely to continue in the years to come, with a focus on building partnerships, infrastructure, and connectivity in the Indian Ocean region.

One of the key components of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean is its naval presence. India has been expanding its naval presence in the region, and it has established naval bases in the Seychelles, Madagascar, and Oman. India has also been involved in several maritime exercises and operations in the region. The Indian Navy has conducted joint exercises with the navies of the United States, Japan, Australia, and France in the region. India has also been involved in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008.

Another important aspect of India's policy towards the Indian Ocean is its engagement with the littoral states in the region. India has been actively involved in providing development assistance and capacity-building support to these countries. India has established the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) fund, which provides financial support for capacity-building and development projects in the region. India has also established the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) fellowship program, which provides training and capacity-building support to naval personnel from littoral states.

India's policy towards the Indian Ocean also includes an emphasis on maritime trade and connectivity. India has been promoting the development of maritime infrastructure and connectivity in the region. India has launched several initiatives like the Sagarmala project, which aims to enhance port infrastructure and connectivity in India. India has also been involved in the development of the Chabahar port in Iran, which is expected to provide India with a direct sea-land route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

As India aspires to deepen its participation in the maritime domain, both strategic-operational and also strategic-policy related challenges remain. First, although the peninsular shape offers obvious advantages, the same can also be a source of vulnerability and constrain the navy's ability to monitor or influence events in the vast east-west expanse of the ocean

space leading to difficulties in striking the right balance between ‘blue-water’ and ‘brown-water’ responsibilities.¹⁸⁹

Second, but perhaps the most challenging aspect of India’s maritime engagement is presented by the Indo-Pacific region itself which has been and continues to be shaped to a great degree by China. Beijing’s inroads into the Indian Ocean have been occurring for over a decade through active political engagements and long-term maritime investments¹⁹⁰ across the Indian Ocean Region designed to expand Beijing’s footholds to ensure both commercial and naval influence along the entire ocean space.

Third, despite the gradual growth in the naval budget together with the acquisition and development of resources as well as diversification of strategic maps, it is still believed that the navy falls far short of its potential. The 21-22 budgetary allocations, for instance, saw a rise in total capital outlay for the Navy from that in 20-21 but not a significant one further contributing to opinion which holds that New Delhi continues to suffer from a characteristic degree of sea blindness.¹⁹¹

However, notwithstanding the fact that India’s continental threats may be arguably more intense and often more imminent than its maritime ones, India is opting for asymmetrical responses to the conflicts marking its land borders by utilising the ocean space through naval positioning towards the creation of deterrence. For instance, India chose to utilise the maritime sphere as it responded China’s aggressions during the Galwan valley clash and repeated incidents on the Ladakh border over 2020-2021.

¹⁸⁹ Khurana, Gurpreet S. “India’s Maritime Strategy: Context and Subtext”, *Maritime Affairs*, April 19, 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/09733159.2017.1309747>

¹⁹⁰ Bhaskar, C. Uday. "China and India in the Indian Ocean region: neither conflict nor cooperation preordained." *China Report* 46, no. 3 (2010): 311-318. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000944551104600311>

¹⁹¹ Singh, Manavendra. “Budget again shows Navy is India’s forgotten Service. While China marches to 2049 mega plan”, *The Print*, February 3, 2021, <https://theprint.in/opinion/budget-again-shows-navy-is-indias-forgotten-service-while-china-marches-to-2049-mega-plan/597590/>

Conclusion and Implications

As the Indian Ocean's role as a conduit of vital resources grows, so does the propensity for regional powers to exert influence in this arena. As part of a strategic maritime space, the Indian Ocean, and particularly the eastern part of it stretching from India's eastern seaboard and further towards the Indo-Pacific has witnessed of geo-political interests over the last decade. The turbulent nature of the Bay of Bengal and the relatively low levels of socio-economic development may be considered as limiting factors insofar as the growth of trade across the region is concerned. Nevertheless, with reference to the first research question regarding the role of geography and geopolitics in India's maritime policy, it is evident that the strategic revisiting of the Indian Ocean over the last few years is primarily due to its geographical location at roughly the centre of the broader Indo-Pacific region. As interactions and activities in the maritime sphere expand, so do various alliances which are geared towards the preservation of the maritime order and interests. The Indian Ocean is home to some of the busiest shipping routes in the world and the protection of navigation along these waterways is of vital concern to ensure the safe passage of trade and energy supplies for India and Southeast and East Asia. For these reasons, the eastern Indian Ocean region will be witness to shifts and cycles of power dynamics for the foreseeable future.

While conducive geography could be considered a key enabler for trade, diplomacy, and geostrategy are key components for creating a thriving environment for commercial outreach. The extensive trade networks that spanned towards both the west of the Indian peninsula and the east for millennia enabled civilisations to flourish and political channels to be established. In the context of modern state systems too, trade is an essential component for political, diplomatic, strategic, religious, and people-to-people ties to thrive. However, while trade relations as a driver for these forms of linkages the relationship is vice-versa. Conducive political and strategic ties also help to facilitate trade ties. With global interactions

having become increasingly complex and multifaceted, geostrategy and geoeconomics have both become a part of the larger umbrella of geopolitics. Dirlik in 1998¹⁹² discussed the underlying power structures which manifest themselves in terminologies like Asia Pacific or the Pacific Rim and the ideological constructions which are camouflaged in these constructions which bring into focus the relationships between capital and commodities which shape the power structures. In the Asia Pacific or the Indo-Pacific today, it is these power constructions which characterize and determine regional as well global political shifts.

Following from this therefore, with respect to the second research question, it can be established that the expansion of trade and commercial relations of India with her eastern and southeastern neighbours has indeed impacted the country's maritime policy while also having acted as a factor in shaping the country's foreign policy strategy. India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and is the largest economy in South Asia. In the twenty-first century globalized world order, India's national interests are no longer limited to its domestic welfare. As India attempts to gain greater prominence in global and regional affairs, the Indian Ocean provides viable opportunities for India to fulfil its objectives in international relations, especially, as mentioned earlier, in the implementation of its policies of "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East". India is part of one of the world's least integrated regions, marked by a history of political divisions, economic differences, and geostrategic divergences. It therefore recognizes the need to address this challenge, without which the region will never be able to utilize its potential. The relative failure of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has led India to increasingly focus on the Indian Ocean region to forge new alliances. Increased interconnectedness and integration have become important not only

192 Dirlik, Arif. *What is in a rim? : critical perspectives on the Pacific Region idea*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998

to bolster international trade interactions but also to create leverage against growing Chinese control and intrusion in this region.

India's geopolitical outreach in the Indo-Pacific region in the post-liberalization era has been shaped by its growing economic and strategic interests, as well as its desire to maintain regional stability and peace. India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region has been characterized by a multidimensional approach, which includes strengthening economic ties, enhancing defense cooperation, and promoting regional integration.

The country has also been actively involved in regional forums such as the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation. These forums provide a platform for India to engage with other countries in the region on a range of issues, including economic cooperation, maritime security, and counterterrorism.

India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region has also been marked by its growing defense cooperation with countries in the region. India has strengthened its defense ties with countries like Japan, Australia, and the United States, through joint military exercises, defense technology transfer, and other forms of military cooperation. India has also been involved in counterpiracy operations and has provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to countries in the region. Another key aspect of India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region has been its efforts to promote regional integration and connectivity with the countries of South and Southeast Asia.

New Delhi has played an increasingly significant role in investing across the Indo-Pacific region in the post-liberalization era, as it seeks to deepen its economic engagement with countries in the region and to contribute to the development of the region's infrastructure and industries. One of the key drivers of India's investment in the Indo-Pacific region has

been its "Act East" policy, which was launched in 2014 and seeks to deepen India's economic, political, and strategic ties with countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia. This policy has led to the signing of numerous free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries in the region, as well as the expansion of India's strategic partnerships with countries like Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. The Act East Policy aims to deepen India's economic, political, and strategic ties with the countries of Southeast Asia and East Asia, as well as with the Pacific Island countries. India has sought to enhance connectivity with the region through the development of infrastructure projects, such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.

India's investment in the Indo-Pacific region has been focused on a range of sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing. Indian companies have invested in countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia, with a particular focus on developing infrastructure projects such as ports, highways, and railways. Indian companies have also invested in the energy sector, with investments in oil and gas exploration and production in countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia. Investments have also been driven by its desire to promote greater regional cooperation on issues such as climate change and sustainable development. India has been actively involved in initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, which aims to promote sustainable use of marine resources in the region, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which seeks to enhance infrastructure resilience in the face of natural disasters. Another driver of India's investment in the Indo-Pacific region has been its participation in regional initiatives aimed at promoting economic cooperation and integration. India is a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade agreement between 15 countries in the Indo-Pacific region that covers a wide range of economic sectors. India has also been actively involved in regional infrastructure development, through regional connectivity initiatives.

India has thus transitioned into being not only an active participant in the Indo-Pacific but also a responsible one, as it has increased its capacities in supplying pharmaceuticals, transformed its manufacturing base to cover key health essentials, and provided medical aid to several countries. India's positive role in the region signals its political intent to participate, which is in keeping with its capacities.¹⁹³ This approach is in some ways the result of New Delhi's deepening strategic ties with the US, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN, as well as the concurrent strengthening of their involvement within the region.

While policy directives and naval engagements began to steadily take shape and expand since the early 1990s, the country's maritime outlook has become perceptibly visible and gained prominence largely over the latter half of the last decade with a greater number of stakeholders engaging in dialogue around maritime geopolitics, commerce, infrastructure, ecology and defence. The third research question regarding the factors that have shaped the shift in India's foreign policy from an entirely continental approach to one that acknowledges and accords significant to the maritime domain and to the augmentation of maritime capabilities, hence, finds a response in the abovementioned relationships that the country has established and built. The policy shift towards a proactive maritime engagement is evidenced with New Delhi beginning to engage more with its neighbourhood and increasingly realising the significance of reviving ancient maritime connections – both political and commercial – since the early 1990s and as it became a trading nation.¹⁹⁴ Two naval strategy documents since the turn of the millennium have been instrumental in giving shape to the country's intended role, its capacities and its identified areas of interest – Freedom to Use the Seas in 2007 and Ensuring Secure Seas in 2015. The 2007 report for instance was prescient enough

¹⁹³ Jash, A. COVID-19: Boosting Indo-Pacific Alignment and India's Regional Role. *The Diplomat*. June 16, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/covid-19-boosting-indo-pacific-alignment-and-indias-regional-role/>

¹⁹⁴ Mohan, C. Raja. "Raja-Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi," *The Indian Express*, February 09, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/international-fleet-review-maritime-india-versus-continental-delhi/>

to acknowledge the significance of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and foreign policy outreach in the IOR while the 2015 report for the first time recognised the implications of the Indo-Pacific for the Indian Ocean. Protection from threats arising ‘in’ or ‘from’ the sea; preservation of stability in the country’s maritime neighbourhood; provision of support succour and extrication options to Indian diaspora; the creation, development and maintenance of a ‘blue economy’; and the establishment and retention of a regionally favourable geostrategic maritime position comprise the key objectives in the New Delhi’s maritime strategy.¹⁹⁵ Together with these, engagement with other navies through port visits, bilateral interactions, training initiatives, operational exercises and technical support arrangements comprise the main elements of maritime diplomacy.

Within the realm of maritime engagements, New Delhi is poised to pursue a multifaceted strategy. On one front, there is a concerted effort to bolster and reinforce naval capabilities within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This includes investments in naval infrastructure, modernization of naval assets, and the development of strategic partnerships with neighboring nations to ensure a robust maritime presence in this vital zone.

Simultaneously, New Delhi is also set to broaden its horizons by extending foreign policy endeavors beyond the confines of the IOR. This expanded outlook encompasses a more comprehensive approach to regional maritime developments, with a keen focus on establishing diplomatic and strategic ties with nations not only within the IOR but also in the broader Indo-Pacific and beyond. This signifies India's aspiration to play a more prominent role on the global stage, aligning its interests and ambitions with the evolving dynamics of a multipolar world.

¹⁹⁵ Chauhan, Pradeep. “India’s Proposed Maritime Strategy”, National Maritime Foundation, February 3, 2020, <https://maritimeindia.org/indias-proposed-maritime-strategy/>

In terms of diplomacy, the country has in recent years substantially expanded its access and network beyond the immediate IOR. New Delhi is thus poised to adopt a two-pronged approach with respect to its maritime engagements - deploying and strengthening naval abilities in the IOR space; and expanding foreign policy-related outreach beyond the IOR;. Therefore, commercial interactions have impinged on the geo-political and geo-strategic interests of India and the immediate maritime region while simultaneously, security and strategic considerations have in turn shaped economic orientations.



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Annexure

Source for all data: India Trade Statistics, Ministry of Commerce: <https://commerce.gov.in/trade-statistics/>

1. India-US Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billion USD)	Total Export (billion USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	6.56	33.4695	19.6	NA
1997-98	6.74	34.78498	19.4	2.75
1998-99	7.20	33.21872	21.7	6.89
1999-2000	8.40	36.82249	22.8	16.61
2000-01	9.31	44.56029	20.9	10.83
2001-02	8.51	43.82672	19.4	-8.51
2002-03	10.90	52.71943	20.7	27.98
2003-04	11.49	63.84255	18	5.45
2004-05	13.77	83.53594	16.5	19.81
2005-06	17.35	103.09053	16.8	26.06
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	10.02	52.987115	19.58	11.98555556
2006-07	18.86	126.41405	14.9	8.7
2007-08	20.73	163.13218	12.7	9.9
2008-09	21.15	185.29536	11.4	2.02
2009-10	19.54	178.75143	10.9	-7.63
2010-11	25.29	249.81555	10.1	29.47
2011-12	34.74	305.96392	11.4	37.36
2012-13	36.16	300.40058	12	4.07
2013-14	39.14	314.4053	12.4	8.26
2014-15	42.45	310.33848	13.7	8.45
2015-16	40.34	262.29109	15.4	-4.98
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	29.84	239.680794	12.49	9.562
2016-17	42.21	275.85243	15.3	4.65
2017-18	47.88	303.52616	15.8	13.42
2018-19	52.41	330.07809	15.9	9.46
2019-20	53.09	313.36104	1.3	2.64
2020-21	51.62	291.80848	17.7	-2.76
2016-21	49.44	302.92524	13.2	5.482
2021-22	76.17	422.0044	18	47.54
2022-23	78.54	450.95843	17.4	3.12

2. India-US Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billion USD)	Total Import (billion USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	3.62	39.13241	9.2	NA
1997-98	3.71	41.48449	9	7.5
1998-99	3.64	42.38871	8.6	-1.99
1999-2000	3.56	49.73806	7.2	-2.2
2000-01	3.02	50.53645	6	-15.31
2001-02	3.15	51.41328	6.1	4.46
2002-03	4.44	61.41214	7.2	41.08
2003-04	5.03	78.14911	6.4	13.31
2004-05	7.00	111.51743	6.3	39.06
2005-06	9.45	149.16573	6.3	35.04
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	4.66	67.493781	7.23	13.44
2006-07	11.74	185.73524	6.3	24.15
2007-08	21.07	251.65401	8.4	79.48
2008-09	18.56	303.69631	6.2	0.2
2009-10	16.97	288.37288	5.9	-8.55
2010-11	20.05	369.76913	5.4	18.13
2011-12	23.45	489.31949	4.8	16.98
2012-13	25.20	490.73665	5.1	7.46
2013-14	22.51	450.19979	5	-10.71
2014-15	21.81	448.03341	4.9	-3.07
2015-16	21.78	381.00776	5.7	-0.15
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	20.32	365.852467	5.77	12.39
2016-17	22.31	384.35703	5.8	2.42
2017-18	26.61	465.58099	5.7	19.29
2018-19	35.55	514.07842	6.9	33.59
2019-20	35.82	474.70928	7.5	0.76
2020-21	28.89	394.43588	7.3	-19.35
2016-21	29.84	446.63232	6.64	7.34
2021-22	43.31	613.05205	7.1	49.94
2022-23	50.24	714.04245	7	15.99

3. India-China Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billions USD)	Total Export (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	0.61	33.4695	1.8	NA
1997-98	0.72	34.78498	2	16.78
1998-99	0.43	33.21872	1.3	-40.5
1999-2000	0.54	36.82249	1.5	26.19
2000-01	0.83	44.56029	1.9	54.22
2001-02	0.95	43.82672	2.2	14.51
2002-03	1.98	52.71943	3.7	107.52
2003-04	2.96	63.84255	4.6	49.59
2004-05	5.62	83.53594	6.7	90.04
2005-06	6.76	103.09053	6.6	20.36
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	2.14	52.987115	3.23	37.63
2006-07	8.32	126.41405	6.6	23.12
2007-08	10.87	163.13218	6.6	30.64
2008-09	9.35	185.29536	5	-13.96
2009-10	11.62	178.75143	6.5	24.21
2010-11	14.17	249.81555	5.7	21.96
2011-12	18.08	305.96392	6	27.58
2012-13	13.53	300.40058	4.5	-25.12
2013-14	14.82	314.4053	4.8	9.53
2014-15	11.93	310.33848	3.9	-19.5
2015-16	9.01	262.29109	3.4	-24.49
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	12.17	239.680794	5.3	5.40
2016-17	10.17	275.85243	3.7	12.88
2017-18	13.33	303.52616	4.4	31.08
2018-19	16.75	330.07809	5.1	25.64
2019-20	16.61	313.36104	5.3	-0.83
2020-21	21.19	291.80848	7.3	27.54
2016-21	15.61	302.92524	5.16	19.26
2021-22	21.26	422.0044	5	0.34
2022-23	15.31	450.95843	3.4	-28

4. India-China Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billions USD)	Total Import (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	0.76	39.13241	1.9	NA
1997-98	1.11	41.48449	2.7	46.92
1998-99	1.10	42.38871	2.6	-1.38
1999-2000	1.28	49.73806	2.6	16.98
2000-01	1.50	50.53645	3	17.09
2001-02	2.04	51.41328	4	35.56
2002-03	2.79	61.41214	4.5	37.17
2003-04	4.05	78.14911	5.2	45.17
2004-05	7.10	111.51743	6.4	75.12
2005-06	10.87	149.16573	7.3	53.11
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	3.26	67.493781	4.02	36.19
2006-07	17.48	185.73524	9.4	60.79
2007-08	27.15	251.65401	10.8	55.34
2008-09	32.50	303.69631	10.7	19.71
2009-10	30.82	288.37288	10.7	-5.15
2010-11	43.48	369.76913	11.8	41.06
2011-12	55.31	489.31949	11.3	27.22
2012-13	52.25	490.73665	10.7	-5.54
2013-14	51.03	450.19979	11.4	-2.32
2014-15	60.41	448.03341	13.5	18.38
2015-16	61.71	381.00776	16.2	21.4
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	43.21	365.852467	11.65	23.09
2016-17	61.28	384.35703	15.9	-0.69
2017-18	76.38	465.58099	16.4	24.64
2018-19	70.32	514.07842	13.7	-7.94
2019-20	65.26	474.70928	13.7	-7.19
2020-21	65.21	394.43588	16.5	-0.07
2016-21	67.69	446.63232	15.24	1.75
2021-22	94.57	613.05205	15.4	45.02
2022-23	98.51	714.04245	13.8	4.16

5. India-Japan Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billions USD)	Total Export (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	2.01	33.4695	6	NA
1997-98	1.89	34.78498	5.4	-5.68
1998-99	1.65	33.21872	5	-12.69
1999-2000	1.69	36.82249	4.6	2.02
2000-01	1.79	44.56029	4	6.47
2001-02	1.51	43.82672	3.4	-15.83
2002-03	1.86	52.71943	3.5	23.41
2003-04	1.71	63.84255	2.7	-8.3
2004-05	2.13	83.53594	2.5	24.49
2005-06	2.48	103.09053	2.4	16.61
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	1.87	52.987115	3.95	3.39
2006-07	2.87	126.41405	2.3	15.59
2007-08	3.86	163.13218	2.4	34.53
2008-09	3.03	185.29536	1.6	-21.58
2009-10	3.63	178.75143	2	19.96
2010-11	5.09	249.81555	2	40.27
2011-12	6.33	305.96392	2.1	24.3
2012-13	6.10	300.40058	2	-3.61
2013-14	6.81	314.4053	2.2	11.71
2014-15	5.39	310.33848	1.7	-20.96
2015-16	4.66	262.29109	1.8	-13.42
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	4.78	239.680794	2.01	8.68
2016-17	3.85	275.85243	1.4	-17.52
2017-18	4.73	303.52616	1.6	23.1
2018-19	4.86	330.07809	1.5	2.69
2019-20	4.52	313.36104	1.4	-7.02
2020-21	4.43	291.80848	1.5	-1.9
2016-21	4.48	302.92524	1.48	-0.13
2021-22	6.18	422.0044	1.5	39.29
2022-23	5.46	450.95843	1.2	-11.58

6. India-Japan Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billions USD)	Total Import (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	2.19	39.13241	5.6	NA
1997-98	2.14	41.48449	5.2	-1.95
1998-99	2.47	42.38871	5.8	14.96
1999-2000	2.54	49.73806	5.1	2.84
2000-01	1.84	50.53645	3.6	-27.35
2001-02	2.15	51.41328	4.2	16.52
2002-03	1.84	61.41214	3	-14.45
2003-04	2.67	78.14911	3.4	45.27
2004-05	3.24	111.51743	2.9	21.27
2005-06	4.06	149.16573	2.7	25.53
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	2.51	67.493781	4.15	9.182222222
2006-07	4.60	185.73524	2.5	13.26
2007-08	6.33	251.65401	2.5	37.53
2008-09	7.89	303.69631	2.6	24.67
2009-10	6.73	288.37288	2.3	-14.61
2010-11	8.63	369.76913	2.3	28.18
2011-12	12.00	489.31949	2.5	39.01
2012-13	12.41	490.73665	2.5	3.44
2013-14	9.48	450.19979	2.1	-23.62
2014-15	10.13	448.03341	2.3	6.86
2015-16	9.85	381.00776	2.6	-2.77
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	8.81	365.852467	2.42	11.195
2016-17	9.75	384.35703	2.5	-0.97
2017-18	10.97	465.58099	2.4	12.49
2018-19	12.77	514.07842	2.5	16.4
2019-20	12.43	474.70928	2.6	-2.65
2020-21	10.92	394.43588	2.8	-12.14
2016-21	11.37	446.63232	2.56	2.626
2021-22	14.40	613.05205	2.3	31.81
2022-23	16.50	714.04245	2.3	14.55

7. India-Australia Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billions USD)	Total Export (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	0.39	33.4695	1.2	NA
1997-98	0.44	34.78498	1.3	13.73
1998-99	0.39	33.21872	1.2	-11.6
1999-2000	0.40	36.82249	1.1	4.1
2000-01	0.41	44.56029	1	0.64
2001-02	0.42	43.82672	1	2.99
2002-03	0.50	52.71943	1	20.61
2003-04	0.58	63.84255	0.9	15.89
2004-05	0.72	83.53594	0.9	23.27
2005-06	0.82	103.09053	0.8	14.02
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	0.51	52.987115	1.04	9.29
2006-07	0.93	126.41405	0.7	12.66
2007-08	1.15	163.13218	0.7	24.56
2008-09	1.44	185.29536	0.8	24.9
2009-10	1.38	178.75143	0.8	-3.78
2010-11	1.71	249.81555	0.7	23.69
2011-12	2.48	305.96392	0.8	44.59
2012-13	2.35	300.40058	0.8	-5.18
2013-14	2.30	314.4053	0.7	-2.06
2014-15	2.78	310.33848	0.9	20.95
2015-16	3.26	262.29109	1.2	17.28
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	1.98	239.680794	0.81	15.761
2016-17	2.96	275.85243	1.1	-9.35
2017-18	4.01	303.52616	1.3	35.65
2018-19	3.52	330.07809	1.1	-12.26
2019-20	2.85	313.36104	0.9	-18.98
2020-21	4.04	291.80848	1.4	41.78
2016-21	3.48	302.92524	1.16	7.368
2021-22	6.18	422.0044	2	39.29
2022-23	5.46	450.95843	1.5	-11.58

8. India-Australia Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billions USD)	Total Import (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	1.32	39.13241	3.4	NA
1997-98	1.49	41.48449	3.6	12.78
1998-99	1.45	42.38871	3.4	-2.73
1999-2000	1.08	49.73806	2.2	-25.14
2000-01	1.06	50.53645	2.1	-1.76
2001-02	1.31	51.41328	2.5	22.9
2002-03	1.34	61.41214	2.2	2.35
2003-04	2.65	78.14911	3.4	98.18
2004-05	3.82	111.51743	3.4	44.36
2005-06	4.95	149.16573	3.3	27.5
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	2.05	67.493781	2.95	19.83
2006-07	7.00	185.73524	3.8	41.47
2007-08	7.82	251.65401	3.1	11.65
2008-09	11.10	303.69631	3.7	42
2009-10	12.41	288.37288	4.3	11.8
2010-11	10.79	369.76913	2.9	-13.04
2011-12	15.58	489.31949	3.2	44.39
2012-13	13.09	490.73665	2.7	-16
2013-14	9.82	450.19979	2.2	-24.94
2014-15	10.25	448.03341	2.3	4.32
2015-16	8.90	381.00776	2.3	-13.16
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	10.67	365.852467	3.05	8.85
2016-17	11.15	384.35703	2.9	25.35
2017-18	13.99	465.58099	3	25.45
2018-19	13.13	514.07842	2.5	-6.16
2019-20	9.78	474.70928	2.06	-25.5
2020-21	8.25	394.43588	2.1	-15.69
2016-21	11.26	446.63232	2.512	0.69
2021-22	16.76	613.05205	2.7	103.17
2022-23	19.01	714.04245	2.7	13.46

9. India-ASEAN Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billions USD)	Total Export (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	2.90	33.4695	8.7	NA
1997-98	2.46	34.78498	7.1	-15.08
1998-99	1.63	33.21872	4.9	-33.87
1999-2000	2.24	36.82249	6.1	37.27
2000-01	2.91	44.56029	6.5	30.22
2001-02	3.46	43.82672	7.9	18.64
2002-03	4.62	52.71943	8.8	33.6
2003-04	5.82	63.84255	9.1	26.05
2004-05	8.43	83.53594	10.1	44.73
2005-06	10.41	103.09053	10.1	23.56
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	4.49	52.987115	7.93	18.35
2006-07	12.61	126.41405	10	21.09
2007-08	16.41	163.13218	10	30.19
2008-09	19.41	185.29536	10.3	16.62
2009-10	18.11	178.75143	10.1	-5.37
2010-11	25.63	249.81555	10.3	41.48
2011-12	36.74	305.96392	12	43.38
2012-13	33.01	300.40058	11	-10.17
2013-14	33.13	314.4053	10.5	0.38
2014-15	31.81	310.33848	10.3	-3.99
2015-16	25.13	262.29109	9.6	-21
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	25.20	239.680794	10.41	11.26
2016-17	30.96	275.85243	11.2	23.19
2017-18	34.20	303.52616	11.3	10.47
2018-19	37.47	330.07809	11.4	9.56
2019-20	31.55	313.36104	10.1	-15.82
2020-21	31.49	291.80848	10.8	-0.19
2016-21	33.13	302.92524	10.96	5.44
2021-22	42.33	422.0044	10	34.43
2022-23	44.00	450.95843	9.7	3.95

10. India-ASEAN Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billions USD)	Total Import (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	2.93	39.13241	7.5	NA
1997-98	3.40	41.48449	8.2	15.76
1998-99	4.32	42.38871	10.2	27.11
1999-2000	4.63	49.73806	9.3	7.22
2000-01	4.15	50.53645	8.2	-10.41
2001-02	4.39	51.41328	8.5	5.78
2002-03	5.15	61.41214	8.4	17.39
2003-04	7.43	78.14911	9.5	44.33
2004-05	9.11	111.51743	8.2	22.62
2005-06	10.88	149.16573	7.3	19.41
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	5.64	67.493781	8.53	16.58
2006-07	18.11	185.73524	9.7	66.38
2007-08	22.68	251.65401	9	25.22
2008-09	26.20	303.69631	8.7	15.56
2009-10	25.80	288.37288	9	-1.55
2010-11	30.61	369.76913	8.3	18.64
2011-12	42.16	489.31949	8.6	37.74
2012-13	42.87	490.73665	8.7	1.68
2013-14	41.28	450.19979	9.2	-3.71
2014-15	44.71	448.03341	10	8.33
2015-16	39.91	381.00776	10.5	-10.75
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	33.43	365.852467	9.17	15.75
2016-17	40.62	384.35703	1.8	4.5
2017-18	47.13	465.58099	16.0	11.5
2018-19	59.32	514.07842	25.9	36.6
2019-20	55.37	474.70928	11.7	-6.66
2020-21	47.42	394.43588	12	-14.36
2016-21	49.97	446.63232	13.5	6.32
2021-22	68.08	613.05205	11.1	43.57
2022-23	87.58	714.04245	12.3	28.64

11. India-EU Trade: Exports

Year	Export (billions USD)	Total Export (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	6.83	33.4695	20.4	NA
1997-98	7.25	34.78498	20.8	6.17
1998-99	7.35	33.21872	22.1	1.45
1999-2000	7.64	36.82249	20.7	3.83
2000-01	8.40	44.56029	18.9	9.99
2001-02	8.00	43.82672	18.3	-4.76
2002-03	9.40	52.71943	17.8	17.5
2003-04	11.51	63.84255	18	22.45
2004-05	14.59	83.53594	17.5	26.77
2005-06	18.20	103.09053	17.7	24.73
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	9.92	52.987115	19.22	12.01
2006-07	21.26	126.41405	16.8	16.84
2007-08	27.90	163.13218	17.1	31.22
2008-09	32.79	185.29536	17.8	17.51
2009-10	29.90	178.75143	16.7	-8.82
2010-11	38.85	249.81555	15.6	29.96
2011-12	44.08	305.96392	14.4	13.46
2012-13	41.94	300.40058	14	-4.85
2013-14	41.94	314.4053	13.4	0
2014-15	40.17	310.33848	13	-4.22
2015-16	35.74	262.29109	13.6	-11.02
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	35.46	239.680794	15.24	8.008
2016-17	38.76	275.85243	14.1	8.44
2017-18	43.91	303.52616	14.5	13.27
2018-19	47.86	330.07809	14.5	9.01
2019-20	44.99	313.36104	14.4	-6
2020-21	41.36	291.80848	14.2	-8.07
2016-21	43.38	302.92524	14.34	3.33
2021-22	64.96	422.0044	15.4	57.07
2022-23	74.84	450.95843	16.6	15.2

12. India-EU Trade: Imports

Year	Import (billions USD)	Total Import (billions USD)	%share	Growth%
1996-97	8.49	39.13241	21.7	NA
1997-98	8.44	41.48449	20.3	-0.67
1998-99	8.27	42.38871	19.5	-2.04
1999-2000	8.43	49.73806	17	2.03
2000-01	7.51	50.53645	14.9	-10.96
2001-02	8.09	51.41328	15.7	7.7
2002-03	10.06	61.41214	16.4	24.38
2003-04	11.85	78.14911	15.2	17.79
2004-05	15.74	111.51743	14.1	32.83
2005-06	22.10	149.16573	14.8	40.41
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	10.90	67.49378	16.96	12.39
2006-07	25.74	185.73524	13.9	16.46
2007-08	33.51	251.65401	13.3	30.23
2008-09	36.88	303.69631	12.2	10.03
2009-10	34.00	288.37288	11.8	-7.8
2010-11	39.17	369.76913	10.6	15.22
2011-12	49.76	489.31949	10.2	27.04
2012-13	46.00	490.73665	9.4	-7.56
2013-14	43.92	450.19979	9.8	-4.53
2014-15	44.22	448.03341	9.9	0.69
2015-16	38.74	381.00776	10.2	-12.39
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	39.19	364.16855	11.13	6.74
2016-17	38.72	384.35703	10.1	-0.06
2017-18	43.07	465.58099	9.3	11.23
2018-19	50.86	514.07842	9.9	18.1
2019-20	45.04	474.70928	9.5	-11.45
2020-21	39.72	394.43588	10.1	-11.82
2016-21	43.48	429.77080	9.78	1.2
2021-22	39.72	613.05205	8.4	29.43
2022-23	59.87	714.04245	8.4	16.47

13. India's Trade Balance (billion USD)

Year	US	China	Japan	Australia	ASEAN	EU
1996-97	2.94	-0.14211	-0.18149	-0.93184	-0.03155	-1.66631
1997-98	3.02	-0.3941	-0.25283	-1.04731	-0.93166	-1.18824
1998-99	3.56	-0.66955	-0.81372	-1.0576	-2.6874	-0.91081
1999-2000	4.84	-0.74385	-0.85043	-0.67848	-2.39166	-0.79627
2000-01	6.29	-0.6709	-0.04771	-0.65689	-1.2337	0.89152
2001-02	5.36	-1.08444	-0.636	-0.88808	-0.93021	-0.08676
2002-03	6.45	-0.81656	0.0277	-0.83261	-0.53163	-0.65806
2003-04	6.46	-1.09813	-0.95839	-2.06493	-1.6114	-0.33796
2004-05	6.76	-1.4821	-1.10722	-3.10428	-0.68877	-1.14717
2005-06	7.90	-4.10895	-1.57984	-4.12668	-0.47237	-3.89883
1996-2006 (DECADAL)	5.36	-1.121069	-0.639993	-1.53887	-1.151035	-0.979889
2006-07	7.13	-9.15317	-1.73142	-6.07479	-5.50105	-4.47235
2007-08	-0.34	-16.27527	-2.46744	-6.66292	-6.26329	-5.61247
2008-09	-282.55	-23.14352	-4.86057	-9.65875	-6.79233	-4.08914
2009-10	2.56	-19.20614	-3.10464	-11.02241	-7.68425	-4.10199
2010-11	5.24	-29.3109	-3.54079	-9.07598	-4.98007	-0.31909
2011-12	11.29	-37.23703	-5.67089	-13.10168	-5.41449	-5.68035
2012-13	10.95	-38.71345	-6.31223	-10.73705	-9.85815	-4.05645
2013-14	16.64	-36.21026	-2.66668	-7.52224	-8.14454	-1.97418
2014-15	20.63	-48.47892	-4.74579	-7.46511	-12.90219	-4.0461
2015-16	18.55	-52.69659	-5.18737	-5.6358	-14.77623	-2.99785
2006-2016 (DECADAL)	9.52	-31.042525	-4.028782	-8.695673	-8.231659	-3.734997
2016-17	19.90	-51.11114	-5.90891	-8.19679	-9.65569	0.04235
2017-18	21.27	-63.04717	-6.23913	-9.98143	-12.92999	0.84021
2018-19	16.86	-53.56744	-7.91194	-9.61077	-21.8476	-3.00022
2019-20	17.27	-48.648	-7.91442	-6.93008	-23.82329	-0.05028
2020-21	22.74	-44.0251	-6.49015	-4.20342	-15.93505	1.64372
2016-21	19.61	-52.07977	-6.89291	-7.784498	-16.838324	-0.104844
2021-22	32.85	-73.31078	-8.223	-10.5794	-25.75385	25.24734
2022-23	28.30	-83.19969	-11.03398	-13.54997	-43.577	14.96626