

WORLD POLITICS IN INDO-PACIFIC, A CASE STUDY OF AMBITION FOR GREAT POWERS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18627438>

Keywords

Article History

Received: 14 December 2025

Accepted: 29 January 2026

Published: 13 February 2026

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Abstract

The concept of the Indo-Pacific has emerged as one of the most important strategic frameworks in modern international relations. Instead of denoting an amoral geographic space, the Indo-Pacific corresponds to a politically conceived domain shaped by the competition of great powers, maritime rivalry, and competing visions of territorial order. This paper argues that the Indo-Pacific would be interpreted not as an oceanic spectrum but as a battlefield of aspirations in which major powers seek to shape security designs, economic flows, and moral principles. Drawing on international relations theory and territorial studies, the paper suggests the development of the Indo-Pacific concept, analyzes the strategic aspirations of great and medium powers, and examines the security, economic, and moral dimensions of territorial contest. The paper concludes that the Indo-Pacific indicates wide fabrications in the world order, marked by the erosion of uni-polar supremacy and the integration of a disputed multi-polar maritime system.

1. Introduction

The Indo-Pacific is commonly defined as a huge maritime range stretching from the eastern waters' edges of Africa to the western seaboard of the Americas. Such an explanation, however, is ambiguous in its more profound political and strategic importance. The Indo-Pacific is not only a mass of water; it is a strategic vision formed by power politics, rivalry, and ambition (Acharya, 2019). Unlike conventional geographic territories distinct by physical boundaries, the Indo-Pacific occurs because states especially big powers have selected to conceptualize, name, and operationalize it as a single strategic theater (Buzan, 2003).

This paper progresses the core debate that the

Indo-Pacific represents a battlefield of aspiration rather than an inherent maritime territory. It is a domain where states challenge to form trade workouts, security building, political standards, and the next equality of power. The region's significance lies not in its physical waters but in what flows through them: commerce, military force, strategic impact, and contents (Kaplan R. &, 2010,2001). Knowing the Indo-Pacific as a domain rather than a map allows for an obvious understanding of the dynamics driving modern global politics.

This paper progresses in eight different segments. Pursuing this introduction, Section Two conceptualizes the Indo-Pacific and suggests its evolution from the earliest

territorial frameworks. Section Three analyzes the strategic aspirations of big powers, comprising the United States, China, and India. Section Four investigates the emerging militarization and security contest across the territory. Section Five explores the economic and connectivity aspects of Indo-Pacific competition. Section Six focuses on the competition over norms and territorial order. Section Seven evaluates the broader consequences for territorial and international stability. This paper ends by reflecting on the Indo-Pacific as a mirror of the changing global system.

2. POSTULATING THE INDO-PACIFIC

3.1 From Asia-pacific to Indo-pacific

Throughout much of the late twentieth century, the ascendant framework for knowing maritime Asia was the Asia-pacific, centered primarily on East Asia and the Pacific edge. This paradigm demonstrated the economic emergence of Japan, the export-led rise of East Asian economies, and the crucial role of US alliances in the Pacific (Yahuda, 2019). Although the Asia-pacific idea no longer fully reflected emerging strategic realities, specifically the emerging significance of the Indian Ocean and India's widening role in regional affairs.

The shift from Asia-pacific to Indo-Pacific denotes a reflective widening of strategic emphasis that links the Indian and Pacific oceans into a single battlefield (Pant & Scott, 2014). This reconsideration showcases three interrelated developments: the emerging relevance of sea lanes connecting East Asia with the Middle East and Europe, the growing naval expansion of regional politics, and the climb of India as a notable maritime actor (Kaplan R., 2010). The Indo-Pacific paradigm thus demonstrates strategic requirement rather than cartographic discovery.

However, we can say that the Indo-Pacific is not revealed, but it is created. Its perimeters remain

fluid, varying according to national strategies and policy documents. This flexibility emphasizes its political nature and augments the argument that the Indo-Pacific is well understood as a strategic domain shaped by aspiration and controversy rather than as a fixed geographic entity (Acharya, 2019).

3.2 The Indo-Pacific as a strategic tale

Strategic structures play a core role in shaping how regions are interpreted and acted upon. The Indo-Pacific tale focuses principles such as freedom of navigation, regard for sovereignty, regulation of law, and equality of power (House, 2022). Meanwhile, it indirectly recognizes challengers to these principles, converting the region into a space of contest rather than one of neutral cooperation (Ratner, 2018).

From the constructivist perspective, the Indo-Pacific tale commends to the social construction of regional identity and threat perception. By enclosing the territory as a single strategic arena, states clarify military implementations, alliance-building, and economic campaigns that might otherwise seem disconnected. The tale itself thus becomes a means of power, shaping expectations and legitimizing strategic behavior.

3. The Indo-Pacific As The Primary Battleground Of Great Power Rivalry

3.1 The United States: maintaining supremacy

For the United States the Indo-Pacific symbolizes the core scene for maintaining global authority in the twenty-first century. US strategy focuses alliance networks, forward military existence, and partnership shaped to protect the emergence of an aggressive regional hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001). The formulation of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" demonstrates both normative commitments

and strategic directives intended at preserving U.S impact (House, 2022).

From a realist perspective, U.S response in the Indo-Pacific is steering by concern over relative power and balance. The region significance lies not only in its economic worth but also in its function as the primary site of capability great-power dispute. Hence, U.S aspiration in the Indo-Pacific is focused towards prevention, comport of allies, and the sustenance of a promising balance of power.

3.2 China: Reshaping the maritime balance

In China's perspectives the Indo-Pacific is crucial to its security, economic expansion and global status. Growing naval competencies, maintaining maritime claims, and committing in port and infrastructure growth are core components of Beijing's strategy to reform the regional order (Medcalf, 2020). In China's point of view, operational maritime setups reflect historical unfairness and restrict its reasonable ambition (Ratner, 2018). China's aspiration in the Indo-Pacific obstacles recognized the norms concerning to maritime administration and regional hierarchy. However Beijing declines the Indo-Pacific label itself, its activities progressively shape the very dynamics that the idea aims to acquire. This contradiction under sources the amount to which the Indo-Pacific combat zone is distinct by actions rather than terminology.

3.3 India: from land-based to sea-based power

India's integration in the Indo-Pacific blueprint marks an important evolution in its strategic perspective. Traditionally aligned toward continental security matter, India has highly welcomed a maritime identity in reaction to regional power shifts (Pant & Scott, 2014). The Indo-Pacific enhances India's role while allowing it to maintain strategic freedom rather than conventional alliance commitments (Medcalf, 2020).

India's aspiration lies in influencing a multi-polar regional order that deters domination by any single power. Consequently, India roles as both as balanced and a bridge with in the Indo-Pacific battle ground.

4. Strategic rivalry and military escalation

The Indo-Pacific has highly skilled escalated naval deployments, combat exercises, and defense collaboration over the past decade. Strategic corridors such as the Malacca strait and the South China Sea have become core focus of contest due to their significance for trade and energy flows (Kaplan R. , 2010). Military deployments inside these zones are no longer exclusively defensive but gradually dramatic, focused at conveying resolve and shaping opinions (Mahan, 1890).

The expansion of mini-lateral security setups reflects the region's transition towards disincentive based order. Rather than trusting on diverse multilateral institutions, states highly favor versatile grouping that boost operational collaboration and strategic conveying (Scott, 2016). This trajectory strengthens the characterization of the Indo-Pacific as a combat zone of aspiration rather than a collaborative maritime commons.

5. Economic dominance and strategic networks

While security contest is extremely visible, economic aspiration underpins much of the Indo-Pacific competition. Sea lines of communication throughout the region lift the majority of world trade and energy supplies, building maritime stability a strategic main focus (Kaplan R. , 2010). Rule over infrastructure, logistics hubs, and supply chains have consequently become a core extent of contest.

Economic campaigns in the Indo-Pacific are infrequently neutral. Infrastructure developments, connectivity projects, and trade

models are inserted with strategic objective and prescriptive preferences (Tellis, 2020). Competing techniques to economics governance reflect wider confrontations over who sets the rules of regional order (Acharya A., 2014)

6. Under pressure norms and orders from competing visions

At its core, the Indo-Pacific battlefield is also conventional, conflicting visions of order ruled based as opposed to power based, open versus hierarchical shape diplomatic conversation and institutional design (Acharya A., 2014) (Yahuda, 2019). These conventional competitions influence how legitimacy is described and whose supervision is satisfactory. From an international relations theory stand point, this strive reflects anxieties between liberal institutionalist and realist conceptions of order. The Indo-Pacific hence working is a testing ground for more extensive arguments about the upcoming global governance (Buzan, 2003).

7. Effects on regional security and the broader world order

The Indo-Pacific demonstrates wider metamorphoses in international politics described by the corrosion of undisputed hegemony and the appearance of crossing spheres of dominance (Waltz, 1979) (Mearsheimer, 2001). Smaller states maneuver this environment with strategic caution, looking for economic advantages while escaping involvement in great power rivalry (Goh, 2025). The consistency of the Indo-Pacific will rely less on geography than on how aspiration is directed or misdirected by its principal actors. Incorrect estimation in this closely interlinked arena carries global outcomes.

8. Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific is not a body of water in any substantive political sense. It is a battlefield of aspiration, strategically shaped through strategy, contest and ambition (Acharya A. 2., 2019) As power continues to evolve and contest intensifies, the Indo-Pacific will persist as less an ocean and ever more a mirror of the world order itself (Mearsheimer, 2001). The alteration emphasizes the scope to which geography in world politics is not only physical but intensely political, shaped by the dispersion of power and the interpretations of intimidation and opportunity among states. The Indo-Pacific paradigm thus reflects wider structural changes in the world order, specifically the dispersion of power, the erosion of unchallenged U.S primacy, and the ascend of the strategic pluralism. Understanding the Indo-Pacific as a political build instead of a fix region is therefore vital, it exposes how states use regional discourse to authorized strategic conduct, arrange partnership and shape institutional organizations.

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