

## Indo-Pacific Vision 2047: India's Strategic Rise as a Maritime Powerhouse

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### ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific is the geopolitical and geo-economic pivot of the 21st century, which is influencing the power dynamics and policies of the world. In this dynamic context, "Indo-Pacific Vision 2047: India's Strategic Rise as a Maritime Powerhouse" explores India's strategic vision for becoming a pivotal player in the Indo-Pacific region by 2047, the Indian Independence Day, by focusing on the sea. In this context "Indo-Pacific Vision 2047: India's Strategic Rise as a Maritime Powerhouse" discusses India's long-term strategy on the sea to become a pivotal player by 2047, the centenary of the Independence Day of India. The study delves into the Indian point of view and the underlying principles of maritime vision that are based on understanding of the inter-dependence of the region, security needs and Indian desire for a rules-based and stable order. The paper critically examines the fundamental principles of the Indian maritime rise SAGAR, Act East Policy, IPO and relates them to the national agenda of Viksit Bharat @2047. The study emphasises on India's growing naval power, island-chain geopolitics (Andaman & Nicobar Command), strategic ties with ASEAN, Quad, IORA and BIMSTEC and indigenous defence manufacturing as the key factors to influence the region in the coming years. The paper argues that the Indo-Pacific Vision 2047 is not just a foreign policy concept but a holistic national strategy aimed at ensuring maritime security, stability, and India's role as a responsible and responsible maritime power in the emerging Indo-Pacific security landscape.

**KEYWORDS-** ASIAN, Indo-Pacific, Maritime Powerhouse, SAGAR, QUAD, Viksit Bharat.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as a key battleground for international politics, a strategic competition, a sea lane, a source of energy and a new security issue. The Indo-Pacific is not just a regional approach but the cornerstone of India's enduring national agenda of Viksit Bharat @2047. The maritime dimension is acquiring a new greater importance for India as the world moves to multipolarism and India's maritime interests are increasing in size and are being safeguarded with the changing geopolitical reality. Secure Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are vital to India as nearly 95% of trade in quantity and 80% in value passes through

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the Indian Ocean. The region's geopolitical interests, driven by China's oceanic power projection and the militarization of the South China Sea, sea-based cyber threats, maritime piracy, and climate change challenges require a flexible and robust maritime strategy. India's answer in the form of doctrines like SAGAR, Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), is a clear-cut move from a land centric to a maritime strategic culture. The paper examines the geopolitical, institutional, naval modernization, strategic partnership and economic opportunities involved in India's journey to become a maritime powerhouse by 2047. It also states that India's Indo-Pacific Vision 2047 is not just about security but also development, diplomacy, and technology to build the future regional architecture.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The Indo-Pacific is a concept that is both relatively new and highly influential. The concept of Indo-Pacific is relatively new, yet it is very influential. The Indo-Pacific has become a full-fledged geo-political and geo-economic strategy, bringing together the strategic geography of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean together in one region. The Indo-Pacific is a broader maritime space that extends from the eastern coast of Africa to the western shores of the Americas, and differs from the previous “Asia-Pacific” notion which was mostly focused on East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Rim (Medcalf, 2020). The Indo-Pacific represents a transition from land based strategic worldview to a maritime strategic worldview, where sea routes, naval power and ocean governance will determine the balance of power as scholars debate (Khurana, 2007; Brewster, 2021). Geography of the Indian and Pacific Oceans via key straits like the Strait of Malacca and Lombok Strait. Economic connectivity – more than 60 percent of global maritime trade passes through Indo-Pacific sea lanes (World Bank, 2023). Major powers' strategic convergence is evident on issues such as regional security, supply chains and rule-based order (U.S. DoD, 2019). A wider regional perspective on geopolitics, which remains limited to Asia-Pacific, covers the South Asia, East Africa and Oceania regions which are not discussed in the Asia-Pacific framework.

**2.1 Strategic and Economic Significance:** The Indo-Pacific is home to: 65% of the global population, 63% of world GDP, 46% of global merchandise trade, Three of the world's top five economies, and The world's busiest sea lanes, including the South China Sea, which alone handles one-third of global shipping (World Bank, 2023; UNCTAD, 2022). The area is the world's economic, energy and technological hub.

**2.2 India's Vision of the Indo-Pacific:** India's Indo-Pacific concept is consistent with its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the region) policy and Act East Policy which aims at a free and open Indo Pacific (2018, MEA). India is highlighting Maritime security and domain awareness, Blue economy cooperation, Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, Partnerships with ASEAN, QUAD.

The Maritime Perspective of India has undergone a significant transformation over time.

## **3. THE MARITIME PERSPECTIVE OF INDIA HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME.**

The national strategic scenario that is India's maritime outlook has completely changed from a land-centric strategy to a holistic maritime approach that is in tune with the national

development agenda and the international strategic context. The area of strategic focus for India was largely on territorial issues with Pakistan and China and India has been seen in its pre-eminent role as a continental power for most of the post-independence era. But the economic reforms of the post-1991 period, the globalisation of trade and the emergence of China in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) spurred a significant shift in India's maritime policy (Pant & Joshi, 2016).

ii) Phase II (1991-2005): India's economic liberalisation in 1991 changed the way of Indian interaction with the world, resulting in maritime modernisation and outreach to the regions. India's external trade as a share of GDP increased from 16% in 1991 to 30% by 2005 (World Bank, 2023). The acquisition of the Delhi class of destroyers in 1997 and the Sindhughosh class submarine in 1997 added to the maritime deterrence capability (SIPRI, 2005). India initiated the Look East Policy in 1992 and strengthened its relations with ASEAN and participated in the regional fora like ARF (MEA, 1992). By the 2000s, more than 90% of India's trade by volume was carried out via sea (UNCTAD, 2004).

iii) Phase III (2005-2020): Maritime Assertiveness: India strengthened security relations and increased its naval capabilities in the context of rising Indo-Pacific competition and China's growing naval assertiveness. Act East Policy (2014) has enhanced economic and strategic relationship with ASEAN, Japan, Australia and the U.S. (MEA, 2014). Escorting of merchant shipping vessels in the Gulf of Aden: India has been escorting more than 3,440 merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden since 2008, highlighting its blue-water capabilities (Indian Navy, 2020). The Maritime Powerhouse Vision of India towards becoming a maritime powerhouse by marking its 100th Independence Day is the guiding theme for Phase IV (2020-2047). Strategically aligns development efforts with maritime security and global leadership (NITI Aayog, 2022) Indo-Pacific Vision 2047. SAGAR Promotes security cooperation and partnerships for the blue economy in the region (MEA, 2015). IPOI (2019): Seven pillars on maritime ecology, capacity building, HADR and connectivity (MEA, 2019). The contribution of the blue economy to GDP is projected to reach ₹500,000 crore by 2035 (Economic Survey of India, 2021). By 2047, the plan is to have a ship Navy of 170-200 ships comprising nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, and enhanced surveillance (Indian Navy Maritime Capability Perspective Plan, 2022).

#### **4. INDIA'S INDO-PACIFIC VISION 2047: STRATEGIC PILLARS**

India's Indo-Pacific Vision 2047 is based on a series of interconnected strategic tenets covering aspects of national security, maritime governance, economic development, and regional diplomacy. They represent India's vision of becoming a maritime-powerhouse by its centenary of independence and help define a rules-based, inclusive and stable Indo-Pacific. The framework is in line with the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and Indo-Pacific strategy Viksit Bharat (India) @2047 and SAGAR.

##### **4.1 Maritime security and naval modernization**

One of the key pillars of India's Indo Pacific vision is strengthening of the maritime security architecture to defend Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and thwart strategic threats. Navies are a national priority in India as 95% of the nation's merchandise trade and 80% of its

oil imports pass through the Indian Ocean (UNCTAD, 2023). The Indian Navy's Maritime Capability Perspective Plan 2022–2037 outlines a long-term growth strategy for a fleet of 170–200 ships, development of nuclear submarines, and the construction of indigenous aircraft carriers (Indian Navy, 2022).

#### **4.2. Strategic Partnerships and Defence Diplomacy**

Multi-layers partnership is crucial for India to support a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific. Cooperative security role reinforced by Quad (India–US–Japan–Australia) and platforms led by the ASEAN countries, IORA, and bilateral security ties with France, Indonesia, and Japan. In 2022, the Quad's maritime domain awareness initiative greatly improved the real time monitoring of Indo-Pacific waters, in line with India's transition to collective security frameworks (Quad Joint Statement, 2022).

#### **4.3. Blue Economy and Sustainable Maritime Development**

The fisheries, offshore energy, biotechnology and shipping sectors of India's blue economy hold tremendous potential to contribute almost \$1 trillion to GDP by 2035 (The Economic Survey of India, 2021). India's “Blue Economy” is a part of IPOI's and is promoting the growth of the maritime sectors with environment sustainability, deep-sea exploration and coastal infrastructure through Sagarmala and Maritime India Vision 2030.

#### **4.4. Secure, trade and maritime infrastructure.**

Strengthening connectivity in the Indo-Pacific is a key focus of India's Indo-Pacific policy. The India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, the Chabahar port and the collaborations with Indonesia's Sabang port are all efforts to develop resilient supply chains and overcome strategic choke points (MEA, 2020). Sagarmala has helped India's port capacity to rise from 871 million tonnes in 2010 to over 1,600 million tonnes in 2023 and enhanced the logistics efficiency. (Ministry of Ports, 2023).

### **5. STRATEGIC DRIVERS OF INDIA’S MARITIME RISE**

**5.1 China’s Maritime Assertiveness:** China’s expanding maritime footprint has become the primary external driver shaping India’s Indo-Pacific strategy. The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is now the world’s largest navy with over 370 vessels (US DoD, 2023). Its militarization of the South China Sea including the construction of three fully-fledged military outposts on Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs has altered the regional balance (AMTI, CSIS, 2023). India’s response has focused on enhancing maritime readiness through the expansion of the Indian Navy to a planned 175-ship force by 2035.

**5.2 Security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs):** India’s economic security is dependent on uninterrupted SLOCs. Nearly 80% of India’s crude oil and over 95% of its trade by volume transit through the Indian Ocean (MEA, 2023). Chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz handle 18 million barrels per day of global oil flows, while the Strait of Malacca carries one-third of global maritime trade (EIA, 2023; UNCTAD, 2022). India has responded by expanding its Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), deploying mission-based naval patrols in the Gulf of Aden, Malacca Strait, and Southwest Indian Ocean,

and strengthening logistics agreements with the US, France, Australia, Singapore, and Japan for port access and refueling.

**5.3 Economic Imperatives:** India's Indo-Pacific strategy is strongly tied to its long-term economic ambitions. With 90% of India's external trade and nearly all energy imports dependent on maritime routes, securing the Indo-Pacific is essential for economic resilience (MoCI, 2023). The Sagarmala Programme, involving over 800 projects worth ₹5.4 lakh crore, aims to modernize ports, enhance hinterland connectivity, and boost coastal shipping (MoPSW, 2024). India's blue economy estimated at 4% of GDP includes fisheries, seabed resources, shipping, and renewable ocean energy (NITI Aayog, 2022).

**5.4 Strategic Autonomy and Multi-Alignment:** India's Indo-Pacific approach is shaped by its long-standing doctrine of strategic autonomy, avoiding fixed alliances while engaging with all major powers. Relations with the United States have deepened through foundational defense agreements (LEMOA 2016, COMCASA 2018, BECA 2020). Australia remains a key partner in maritime domain awareness and defense cooperation, highlighted by the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (2020).

## **6. MODERNISATION AND DEFENCE CAPABILITY FOR THE NAVY.**

The Indian Navy's vision of maritime strategy is to develop a technologically modern Indian Navy of 155–175 ships by 2035 and build further on this by adding additional ships and augmenting their capabilities to 2047 as part of its goals of Viksit Bharat and Indo-Pacific (Indian Navy Maritime Capability Perspective Plan, 2022). The process of modernization has several priorities. India currently has two shipyards operating – the INS Vikramaditya and the indigenously built INS Vikrant (IAC-1) with a further planned ship IAC-2 (Vishal) of 65,000 tons with the introduction of advanced electromagnetic launch systems (MoD, 2023). The next planned nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) will be joined by the Arihant-class SSBNs equipped with K-15/K-4 SLBMs to guarantee nuclear deterrence (The Hindu, 2023). Surface warfare is bolstered with the Visakhapatnam-class destroyers (Project 15B) with BrahMos missiles and MoD's MF-STAR radars in their kit.

Naval aviation has also progressed and the P-8I Poseidon aircraft, MQ-9B SeaGuardian drone aircraft and unmanned surface and underwater drones have been increasingly used for long-range maritime surveillance and reconnaissance, mine countermeasure operations (MEA, 2023; DRDO, 2023). Cyber-maritime capabilities and AI-based command systems will support the cyber protection and enhance networked operations of the Indian Navy (Indian Navy Cyber Strategy, 2022). This naval modernization is backed by India's Defence Industrial Base (Atmanirbhar Bharat). Indian shipyards like MDL, GRSE, CSL and L&T have the capacity to build more than 75% of the ships under construction including destroyers, frigates and submarines (MoD, 2024). Indigenous development of advanced missile systems like BrahMos NG, VL-SRSAM, and SMART torpedoes is underway and hydroacoustic arrays and seabed monitoring networks are being developed to improve underwater domain awareness (IN-UDA Project, 2022; DRDO Annual Report, 2023).

## **7. MARITIME DIPLOMACY AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

Maritime diplomacy and fostering strategic partnerships are integral components of India's Indo-Pacific strategy, which aims to ensure the stability of the region, secure its sea lines and advance economic progress. The partnerships create a platform for India to further strengthen its presence in the Indo Pacific region and also exercise strategic autonomy. The following are some key aspects of the discussion.

### **7.1 The Quad (India–US–Japan–Australia)**

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is becoming an important forum for India to strengthen its security and maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. India is also involved in the Quad, participating in the activities for maritime domain awareness and sharing intelligence and monitoring significant sea lanes. The framework supports supply chain resiliency amid geopolitical uncertainty, and joint naval exercises, including Malabar, enhance operational interoperability and strategic deterrence (US INDOPACOM, 2022). The Quad has emerged as the core of India's vision of a free, open and rules-based Indo Pacific.

### **7.2 ASEAN Partnerships**

India-ASEAN relations are of utmost importance in terms of regional connectivity, multilateral diplomacy and maritime security. Strategic dialogue and confidence building can be undertaken in platforms like ADMM+, ARF, the East Asia Summit (EAS). India also has been actively pursuing practical initiatives, such as the Trilateral Highway (India, Myanmar and Thailand), to boost connectivity and economic integration in the region (MEA, 2020).

### **7.3 Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**

India is spearheading a number of projects under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) aimed at enhancing maritime governance, climate resilience, and disaster response in the Indian Ocean Region. India not only encourages the Member States to undertake various blue economy activities in the field of fisheries, renewable ocean based energy and port development, but also supports them in capacity building and training for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). (IORA, 2021). These initiatives put India in the top tier of maritime developments and sustainability in the region.

**7.4 BIMSTEC:** Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a valuable forum for promoting security and economic cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region. BIMSTEC is used by India to coordinate counter-terrorism efforts, disaster management plans, and port-led infrastructure development efforts, with a focus on promoting maritime security and economic development in the region (BIMSTEC Secretariat, 2022). These efforts will help to unite India in the eastern Indian Ocean and enhance its ties with South and Southeast Asian countries.

## **8. THE CHALLENGING AREAS**

India is emerging to play a maritime and strategic leadership role in the Indo Pacific region and is facing several challenges. Such challenges are traditional and non-traditional ones and

necessitate adaptive measures and a multilateral approach to protect national and regional interests.

**8.1 Grey-Zone Warfare:** In the Indo-Pacific region, grey-zone threats are becoming common these days as they are not so grave as conventional warfare. The list of these comprises cyberattacks on naval and port infrastructure, deployment of maritime militia vessels disguised as civilian ships, and the use of underwater surveillance operations by foreign powers to monitor Indian naval movements (Erickson & Goldstein, 2021). These measures make it difficult for India to deter such attacks by taking advantage of the grey areas in the law and by restricting conventional military options.

**8.2 Climate Change:** Climate change is an emerging non-traditional security challenge in the Indo-Pacific. Climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise, intensifying tropical cyclones and coastal erosion are posing risks for low-lying islands and port facilities, including strategic facilities in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (UNDP, 2022). Such vulnerabilities have implications not just on their own, but also on the maritime logistics and operational preparedness of India in the Indian Ocean Region.

**8.3 Non-traditional security threats:** This includes piracy in the Gulf of Aden, illegal fishing, drug trafficking and human trafficking, which remain a threat to commercial shipping and regional stability, with 8.3% of vessels lost or stolen during the period. To meet these threats, Indian Navy has consistently deployed Task forces, Joined the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and cooperated with regional partners to secure Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) (Indian Navy, 2020).

**8.4 Strategic Competition:** The Indo Pacific is set to become a great power competition environment. Chinese naval expansion into the Indian Ocean, growing militarization and great-power rivalry between the US and China create an intricate strategic landscape (Medcalf, 2020). India's foreign policy must account for these factors in order to strike a balance between partnerships, strategic autonomy and also play its part in building a rules-based multipolar Indo Pacific.

## **9. INDIA'S VISION FOR 2027**

India's Way to Become a Maritime Power House by 2047 is under discussion. India's plan to be a maritime power house by 2047 is in discussion. India's aspirations to become a maritime powerhouse by 2047 encompass strategic, economic, technological, and diplomatic steps aimed at positioning itself as a key player in the Indo-Pacific. List some of the important points stated below.

**9.1 Strengthening Naval Power:** India's blue-water navy goals include developing the capability to undertake long-distance operations in the Indo-Pacific, which would involve deploying carrier battle groups, a modernized submarine fleet (including SSBNs and SSNs), and AI-assisted command and control networks. Growth of tri-service commands, advanced destroyers, and long-range maritime patrol aircraft will increase power projection and deterrence capabilities and help in the protection of important Sea Lines of Communication

(SLOCs) and responses to any contingency in the region, adding to the Indian Navy's capabilities (Indian Navy, 2022; MoD, 2023).

**9.2 Economic Leadership:** The roadmap aims to develop the blue economy as a pillar of economic strength in India, sustainable use of ocean resources, fisheries and off-shore energies. Maritime finance, port-led trade and maritime industrial clusters initiatives are expected to transform India into a hub of regional trade and maritime logistics, and the blue economy's contribution to GDP is projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2035 (NITI Aayog, 2022; Economic Survey of India, 2021).

**9.3 Maritime Infrastructure:** Port modernization, the extension of coastal connectivity, and streamlining marine logistics are integral to India's strategic path, underlined by the Sagarmala Programme. By 2035, port handling capacity will reach more than 2 billion tonnes, thereby optimizing trade connectivity for India with Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa (MoPSW, 2024). These types of investments in infrastructure bolster both economic development and sea support.

**9.4 Regional Leadership:** India wants to reinforce its presence in the Indo Pacific region through bilateral and multilateral engagements. ASEAN, IORA, BIMSTEC, and Quad engagement guarantees cooperation on maritime security, capacity building, disaster and connectivity efforts. The presence of India in the Indian Ocean contributes to her increasing role as a security provider for this region, while also fostering strategic goodwill with littoral countries (MEA, 2020; IORA, 2021).

### **9.5. Technological Innovation**

The maritime transformation of India is carried out by cutting edge technologies. Purchases of unmanned surface and underwater systems, maritime surveillance technologies, cybersecurity, and AI-driven operations further advances maritime situational awareness and force multiplication. To promote innovation and cut reliance on foreign technology, programs like iDEX and DRDO's autonomous systems development are being promoted (MoD, 2024; DRDO Annual Report, 2023).

## **10. CONCLUSION**

The path for India to emerge as the maritime powerhouse by 2047 is more of a strategic realignment that takes into account its history, economic needs, technological advancements, and diplomatic efforts. India's naval buildup has continued and the navy has grown from a landlocked force to one that has blue-water capabilities, and it has steadily increased its presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, ranging from its initial post-independence interest in the mainland to its current focus on the blue-water navy. Due to the changes in strategic context as a result of China's maritime assertiveness, great power rivalry, non-traditional security threats and climate risks, it is imperative that a multi-dimensional strategy is adopted in order to fight fear, build confidence and realize sustainable development. This Study's roadmap serves as a clear example that the Indian maritime rise isn't just about military prowess but a comprehensive approach that involves economic development, technological advancement, and diplomacy within its region. India aims to become a credible, independent

and influential player in terms of maritime power by 2047 to safeguard its interests and ensure stability, connectivity and prosperity in the Indo Pacific region. Overall, India's strategic approach is one of power, prudence, and partnership, ensuring that it will be a key player in the geopolitical, economic, and security landscape of the 21st-century Indo-Pacific.

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