

УДК 327.51

**INDIA-USA-CHINA TRIANGLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INDO-PACIFIC
STRATEGY: ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE FACTOR'S INFLUENCE**

Arnur Narekesh

nareksha@gmail.com

Master student of the Department of Oriental Studies of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National
University, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
Scientific adviser - A.M. Azmukhanova

Annotation

The relations between the three powers of the Asia-Pacific region - the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India and the United States of America are full of contradictions and difficulties. This geopolitical triangle is important in changing the power balance in the regional and global stage. The article examines the relationship between them in the context of the new Indo-Pacific strategy, as an expanded version of the Asia-Pacific region with India. Interaction in the triangle is analyzed in the foreign policy and economic partnership of the countries. The purpose is to identify the Chinese factor's influence in the strategic interests and partnerships of India and the United States as well as to analyze the role of each one in the context of the Indo-Pacific strategy. In conclusion, a forecast is made about the future of the "strategic triangle".

Key words: Indo-Pacific region, "Look East", "Act East", strategic triangle, India, China, USA, ASEAN.

The People's Republic of China and the Republic of India claim the status of regional and world powers. India shows great interest in East Asia because this region is the center of economic potential. In the past centuries, India was not so active in giving attention to East Asia, because during the Cold War East Asia was divided into opposing blocs, while India adhered to a policy of non-alignment [1]. By the end of the 20th century, India and the countries of East Asia became interested in each other to increase mutual influence and promote trade and economic integration. An obvious manifestation of these goals was the Indian "Look East" policy.

In the early 1990s, Prime Minister of India Narasimha Rao's administration faced an economic crisis and difficult political situation. The collapse of the bipolar system led to the activation of China in Asia and forced Asian countries to look for new economic partners as well as to put forward and defend their world positions [2]. In such an unfavorable environment, the countries of Southeast Asia were able to accelerate the development process, so India began the "Look East" policy from this region [3]. East Asia was involved in Indian "Look East" policy later.

With the coming to power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, the "Look East" policy was modified to the "Act East" policy [4]. India's goal is not only to increase economic activity with the states of East, Southeast, and South Asia but to create a safe environment to strengthen national security. It is sufficient to note that Indo-Chinese relationship is characterized by a rival and adversarial direction. The main reason is the enhancement of China's economic power in neighboring countries through the "Belt and Road" Initiative. China's policies and ambitions find Indian

resistance, and this makes India an attractive counterbalance to China's competitors as the United States of America [5].

India considers itself as a naval power, so the importance of sea routes makes India think about strengthening of security [6]. Recently, the concept of the “Indo-Pacific”, or an expanded version of the Asia-Pacific region with India, has emerged [7]. In 2018 Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially announced the concept. Among the reasons for its creation was the development of trade, the improving the security, and the demand for energy resources. India plans to include South Asia and the Indian Ocean in the Asia-Pacific region to balance China as India enters the international arena as a confrontational player. The necessity to create a new macro region is especially important for the United States.

Relations between India and the United States have developed by leaps and bounds and have a strong institutional base. Their positions have always been radically different because their relationship contains geopolitical and economic contradictions. However, in the 1980s the top political leaders of India began to intensify friendly ties with the United States to raise scientific and technological progress. The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War had a beneficial effect on Indo-American relations. It is noteworthy that the USSR has always been considered an obstacle to US geopolitical leadership in South Asia. India had to look for an alternative to Russia, and the United States became the only power that India could count on in its political vision and development. Despite the Kashmir problem, the nuclear issue and non-observance of human rights in India, the United States realized the importance and necessity of dialogue with India, and preferred closer trade and economic relations between two countries [8].

Since coming to power of Barack Obama's administration in 2008, the Asia-Pacific region has acquired a high significance for the United States. America has shifted focus to Asia under the influence of geopolitical changes as the enhancement of China, its active upholding of interests in Asia and the creation of its regional order against American plans. The United States announced intention to deploy up to 60% of its naval forces in the Asia-Pacific region to restrain China, as well as to strengthen position in the region. Despite the rapid development of China's military forces, the US military is always higher in the stage of innovative development. This creates a cause for disturbance of the Chinese side [9].

In the “Indo-Pacific Strategy Report”, Washington describes China as a “revisionist power” that violates international law and uses coercive tools to pursue its national interests [10]. The advancement of the “Indo-Pacific region” by the American side becomes anti-Chinese and creates a system of hostile alliances to China under the leadership of the United States. India supports the creation of the Indo-Pacific region because India's geopolitical role could grow immediately. The Indian side is interested in balancing China but does not seek to provoke China into a conflict situation. Instead, India chooses multi-vector interaction and opposes the block orientation of geopolitics. However, it is necessary to remind the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue on the security issues of India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. This dialogue is aimed at the military-political interaction of the participants. The United States plays a key role in dialogue, and China is considered the main geopolitical rival. India and the United States are conducting the Malabar naval military exercise in risky areas for China. The number of participants in the military exercise is increasing every time [11].

India is interested in strengthening its position, and not in confrontation with China. However, the safety of sea routes is still an essential argument for the cooperation of Quadrilateral's members because of importance as economic and energy routes. Besides, one of India's foreign policy strategies is ambition to become a “sea power” [12].

China's aggressive actions in the region have led the weak neighbors to address the United States for assistance. The attraction of the US military presence in the Indo-Pacific region has increased. China began to understand the resolution of neighboring countries (primarily Vietnam) in

upholding their position and demands [13]. The USA is close to ASEAN and India because the United States promotes peaceful means and multilateralism in foreign policy interactions and expresses the view that “big nations should not bully small ones”. With this opinion, the United States indicate Chinese aggressive actions in the South China Sea, such as the modernization of the People's Liberation Army of China and military conflicts [14].

The United States also promotes its national interests in the region as the detriment of the regional states' freedoms and independence. Regional small countries oppose the promotion of US national interests and form separate platforms without the American participation or with minimal American influence.

The American presence is hampering Asian countries' drive to play by Asian rules. Indo-American relations are not without troubles too. In an Asian worldview and diplomatic culture, India has much more in common with China than the United States. European colonialism and American imperialism suppressed the ambitions of Asian countries in every possible way, which resulted in Japanese imperialism during the Second World War and the Indian non-aligned movement during the Cold War. Subsequently, trade relations and entrepreneurship caused the process of Asian regionalism [15]. Regionalism has become a new regional tendency to create stronger and more efficient political and administrative structures for accelerated development. This process determines rules that improve political, economic, and other spheres without restricting of Western countries on their progress. Asian countries are enhancing their global position to get an equal partnership with the Western world [16]. It creates a basis of conflict between Asia and the United States with consideration of the “America First” slogan. Also, the “ASEAN + 3” (China, Japan, Republic of Korea), “ASEAN + 6” (China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand), etc. indicate the reinforcement of Asian regionalism without the American participation [17].

In this regard, relations within the India-US-China triangle will completely depend on the US adaptation to new changes, where is no place for the China-US bloc division. No wonder China is part of the Indian “Act East” policy. India seeks to improve relations with China, to achieve aims without provoking China, to remain faithful to the non-alignment principle [18]. India has also made some progress. Trade with China has increased significantly, and China stands in the first place along with the United States in the list of Indian trading partners. Some of the signed agreements have eased the conflict situation between China and India. It is noteworthy that their political views on world problems coincide [19].

On the other hand, the historical past of 1962 continues to interfere with bilateral relations. It remains an extreme degree of mistrust between two countries. The most considerable obstacle to the development of cooperation is China's support for Pakistan. Another reason is the geostrategic plans. China is actively developing the “Belt and Road” Initiative, which contradicts Indian interests, threatens security and the development of Indian initiatives. India is increasing own presence in the Indo-Pacific region and is trying to develop a multidimensional strategy to create regional security. But Sino-Indian relations are unbalanced, as China's power is greater than Indian. Ongoing tensions in disputed areas, persistent bilateral trade deficits, and India's outstripping expansion of international influence are evidence of a disproportionate relationship [20]. Both states have different views on regional cooperation, maritime trade, and enhancement of military forces to reinforce their positions.

Although Narendra Modi has revised the “Look East” policy for practical results, China has overridden India in improving relations with ASEAN through the “Belt and Road” Initiative by implementing great infrastructure projects as the construction of factories, roads, railways, sea ports, etc. China managed to reduce the role of the United States and Japan through financing ASEAN projects, while India left its initiatives on the sheets of documents [21].

Nevertheless, the US presence in the Indo-Pacific region maintains stability and economic prosperity. This fact has great importance for China and India, so they are forced to maintain an American presence. The United States has managed to seize an important role in maintaining the

security of the region. The withdrawal of the United States will not solve issues; Japan may occupy America's place. Shinzo Abe's reforms showed an intention to turn Japan into a military and possibly nuclear power that could complicate Sino-Japanese relations [22]. The US presence in the region is an important counterbalance to Indian politics. Thanks to the United States, India can make progress in the development of its economy, technology, shipping, and other areas. China's rather aggressive actions in the East China and South China Seas, its plans to create a chain of ports in the Indian Ocean, support for the Pakistani position on the Kashmir issue, rapid economic and military development prompted India to reinforce cooperation with the United States to ensure long-term stability. The Indian strategy is aimed at strengthening the Indian position in the security and the economy for internal balance, creating external partnerships for external balance through American participation [23].

The dispute between China and the United States are related to the redistribution of influence spheres and the issue of regional security. China is subjecting the established balance of power to a revision and is posing a threat to US interests in the Asia-Pacific region and the world. The development of the Chinese economy and the modernization of the military forces weaken the regional position of the United States. China concerns being surrounded by American partnerships and alliances across the region. This is the reason that affects the relationship with the United States and the arms race. China does not want to be ringed by American military forces, so the two world powers found themselves inevitably resolving the security issue. India also concerns the security issue, as the US does not always deliver on its promises. It suffices to recall the Indo-Pakistani war, the possession of American weapons by the Pakistanis, while the United States guaranteed not to sell weapons to Pakistan to be used against India. Besides, the United States can change the rules of the game, its direction to China, and create a new world order together with China [24].

The United States is interested in developing relations with both China and India. China, as a potential superpower, will influence the future of the Asia-Pacific region and the entire world. India, as an important partner, can confront China. At the same time, China and India accept the global leadership of the United States, but they are stand together by the desire to restrict the United States and establish a multipolar world order.

The Chinese factor significantly influences the strategies of India and the United States in Asia. Each of the parties agrees on the necessity to balance relations with China to advance their interests [25]. India has become an extremely important partner of the United States because its geostrategic position has taken on a prominent place in US foreign policy due to the rise of China as the main rival in the region and the world. The US promotion of the Indo-Pacific strategy to turn India into the resistance to Chinese initiatives is contrary to Indian interests and hinders the creation of its strategy without the American participation. Despite this, India remains committed to the policy of balancing, seeks to use the Chinese factor in strengthening its regional position. India intends to simultaneously establish a dialogue with China because the development of the Asian continent is impossible without cooperation between India and China. The interaction of the India-US-China triangle will decide the future of Asian security. Today all factors predict that all parties will continue to support and maintain the balancing policy as the most beneficial strategy for each one.

References

1. Лунев С.И. Внешняя политика Индии и воздействие на нее внутренних факторов. // Вестник МГИМО. (Lunev S.I. India's foreign policy and the impact of internal factors on it. MGIMO Bulletin). 2010. №1. P. 1-13.
2. David Brewster. India as an Asia Pacific Power. 2013. P. 143-145.
3. Shankari Sundararaman. India-ASEAN Relations: 'Acting' East in the Indo-Pacific. // SAGE journals. 30.08.2018. Accessed: doi.org/10.1177/0020881718787575

4. Danielle Rajendram. From 'Look East' to 'Act East' – India Shifts focus. Accessed: www.dw.com/en/from-look-east-to-act-east-india-shifts-focus/a-18141462/
5. K. V. Vesavan. India's 'Act East' policy and regional cooperation. // Observer Research Foundation. 14.02.2020. Accessed: www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-act-east-and-regional-cooperation-61375/
6. Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009. Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy). 2015. Accessed: www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-maritime-doctrine-2015-version/
7. Dingding Chen. The Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Background Analysis. Italian Institute for International Political Studies. 04.06.2018. Accessed: www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/indo-pacific-strategy-background-analysis-20714
8. W.P.S. Sidhu. India's Foreign Policy Priorities and India-U.S. Relations. // The Modi-Obama Summit: A Leadership Moment for India and the United States. 2016. P. 11-12.
9. China's Effort to Counter U.S. Forward Presence in the Asia Pacific. // U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. 15.03.2016. Accessed: <https://www.uscc.gov/research/chinas-efforts-counter-us-forward-presence-asia-pacific>
10. Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region. // The Department of Defense, U.S.A. 01.06.2019. P. 7-11.
11. Jyotsna Mehra. The Australia-India-Japan-US Quadrilateral: Dissecting the China Factor. // Observer Research Foundation Occasional Paper. 10.08.2020. Accessed: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-australia-india-japan-us-quadrilateral/>
12. Darshana M. Baruah. India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity. // Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 30.06.2020. Accessed: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>
13. Lingqun Li. China's Policy towards the South China Sea. When Geopolitics Meets the Law of the Sea. // Routledge Publisher. 2018. P. 253-260.
14. Obama says will ensure freedom of navigation in South China Sea. // Reuters Staff. 24.05.2016. Accessed: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-obama-southchinasea-idUSKCN0YFOIJ>
15. Asian Regionalism: Context and Scope. Chapter 2. Emerging Asian Regionalism. // Asian Development Bank. 2008. P. 26.
16. Charles E. Morrison, Peter A. Petri. Renewing the Pacific Partnership. // East-West Center. 08.11.2007. Accessed: <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/news-center/east-west-wire/renewing-the-pacific-partnership>
17. Masahiro Kawai, Ganeshan Wignaraja. ASEAN+3 or ASEAN+6: Which Way Forward? // Asian Development Bank Institute Discussion Paper. 2007. №77. P. 1-8.
18. Vaishnavi Mulay. India's Act East Policy: But What About China? // The London School of Economics and Political Science. South Asia Centre. 27.11.2017. Accessed: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2017/11/27/indias-act-east-policy-but-what-about-china/>
19. Ummu Salma Bava. India's Role in the Emerging World Order. // Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Briefing Paper 4. March 2007. P. 2-7. Accessed: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/global/04372.pdf>
20. Kirtika Suneja. India's trade deficit with China narrows to \$45,9 billion in 2020. // Economic Times Bureau. 24.02.2021. Accessed:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/indias-trade-deficit-with-china-narrows-to-45-9-billion-in-2020/>

21. C. Raja Mohan. Connecting Asia: India Talks, China Builds. // Indian Express. 05.01.2013. Accessed: <https://carnegieindia.org/2013/01/05/connecting-asia-india-talks-china-builds-pub-50514>

22. Micheal I. Magcamit. The fault in Japan's stars: Shinzo Abe, North Korea, and the quest for a new Japanese constitution. // International Politics 2020. №57. P. 606-630.

23. Лунев С.И. Балансирование Индии между США, Китаем и Россией. Запад-Восток-Россия 2017. Ежегодник. ИММО РАН (Lunev S.I. Balancing India between the US, China and Russia. West-East-Russia 2017. Yearbook. IMEMO RAN). 2018. P. 70-76.

24. Sean Golden. The US and China in the new global order. // CIDOB Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. CIDOB opinion. 01/2020. №607.

25. Vikram J. Singh. Spurred by China Rivalry, U.S., India Deepen Strategic Ties. // U.S. Institute of peace. 09.12.2020. Accessed: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/12/spurred-china-rivalry-us-india-deepen-strategic-ties>