

- The vessel was built by the Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineering Limited.
- India also gifted 50,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine to Seychelles

### 'All options open on South China Sea'

The Philippines defence department said that it was keeping its options open as a diplomatic row with Beijing grows over hundreds of Chinese vessels in the contested South China Sea.

- Tensions over the resource-rich waters have spiked in after over 200 Chinese boats were detected at Whitsun Reef in the Spratly Islands.
- Both China and the Philippines have rival claims in the Spratly Islands.
- While Manila says that the Chinese boats unlawfully entered its exclusive economic zone,

China has refused repeated appeals by the Philippines to withdraw the vessels.

- In this backdrop, the Philippines said that it has kept its options open in managing the situation, including leveraging its partnerships with other nations such as the United States.

- Recently, the United States reminded China of Washington's treaty obligations to the Philippines in the event of an attack in the waters.

### US-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty:

- The decades-old military agreement between Manila and Washington states that each country would come to the defence of the other in case of an attack by a foreign country.
- It was signed on August 30, 1951.

### Issue:

- China claims almost the entirety of the sea.
- Many of the boats detected at Whitsun Reef in early March 2021 have since scattered across the Spratly archipelago.

- The Spratly Islands is also claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- Beijing often invokes the so-called nine-dash line to justify its apparent historic rights over most of the South China Sea.
- It has ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared this assertion to be without basis.
  - The arbitral tribunal recognized Manila's sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone that Beijing contests.
  - The tribunal also ruled that China's activities involving island-building on several reefs in the Kalayaan Island Group constitute violations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and have caused damage to the marine environment.

## U.S. China Cold War like situation:

- U.S. views China as its principal adversary on the world stage.
- The new Cold War like situation between China and the U.S. gained a concrete shape during the Trump presidency. The U.S. has been trying to build an alliance of likeminded countries to try and curb China's growth, reduce its influence in international institutions.
- The U.S. has been trying to use the Quad to challenge China in the Indo-Pacific, possibly as part of a "new Cold War".

## U.S. Russia hostility:

- Russia's war with Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea in 2014, followed by allegations of Russian cyber-interference in the U.S. presidential elections of 2016 has raised the hostility between U.S. and Russia.

## China-Russia partnership:

- U.S. animosity has encouraged China and Russia to solidify their relations.
- Besides significantly expanding their bilateral ties, the two countries have agreed to harmonise their visions under the Eurasian Economic Union

sponsored by Russia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This idea has now been subsumed under the 'Greater Eurasian Partnership' to which both the countries are committed.

- The new Cold War is now being reflected in a new geopolitical binary – the Indo-Pacific versus Eurasia.

### Evolving alignments:

- The alignments between the rival power groups and the middle powers seem to be crystallizing.

- Japan and India are deeply entrenched in the Quad and have substantial security ties with the U.S.

- Iran, facing a sanction regime from western powers led by the U.S. has found strategic comfort with the Sino-Russian alliance. Iran and China recently concluded an economic pact.

- Turkey, a NATO member, has found its interests better-served by Russia and China rather than the U.S. and its European allies.

### The role of middle powers:

- Japan, Iran, Turkey and India are well set to shape the emerging world order. The "middle powers", have the capacity to project power

regionally, build alliances, and support (or disrupt) the strategies of international powers pursuing their interests in the region.

Reluctant allies:

- Despite the allure of joining the rival super power groupings led by the U.S. or China and Russia, the four nations are not yet prepared to join the power alliances.

Japan:

- Though, Japan has an ongoing territorial dispute with China relating to the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, Japan has a strong economic linkage with China.

- In 2019, 24% of Japanese imports came from China, while 19% of its exports went to China.

- Japan's \$200 billion 'Partnership for Quality Infrastructure' initiative that funds infrastructure projects in Asia and Africa, is willing to work on BRI projects on a selective basis.

- Japan has the security treaty of 1951 with the U.S. making it dependant on the U.S. for much of its security concerns.

- Notably, Japan has been trying to reduce its security-dependence on the U.S. and pursue an independent role in the Indo-Pacific.

## India:

- As the threats from China at the border and intrusions in its South Asian neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean became sharper, India has moved closer to the U.S. India-U.S. relationship has been on the upswing, marked by expanding defence ties with the U.S., including defence purchases and agreements on inter-operability and intelligence-sharing and frequent military exercises.

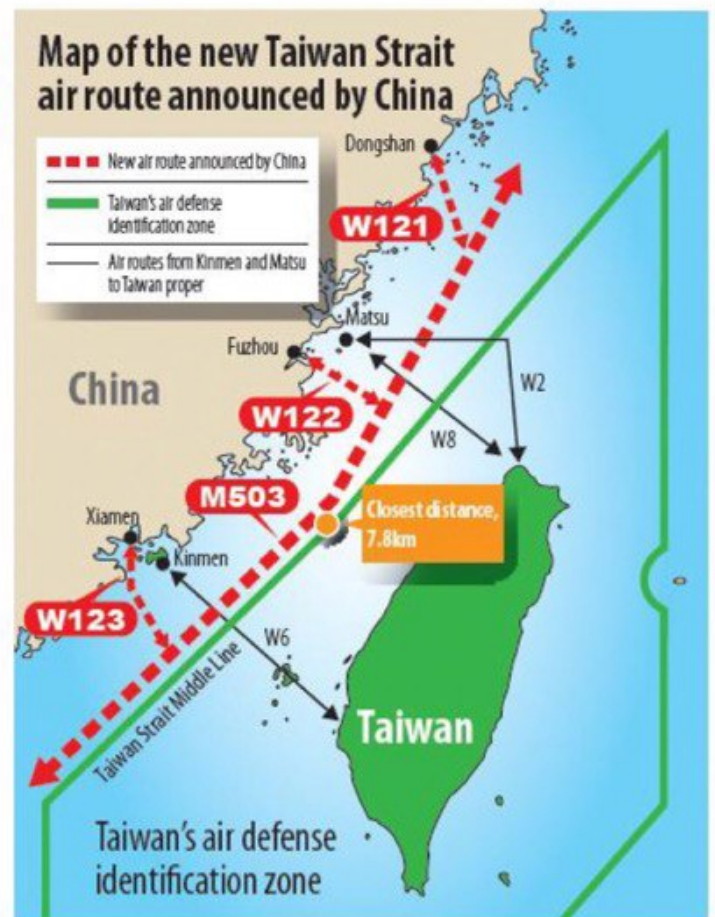
- Through the border stand-off at Ladakh, China is perhaps indicating to India that its security interests demand close engagement with China rather than a deepening alignment with the U.S.

- The recent Freedom of navigation exercise carried out by the U.S. in India's EEZ without its consent would undermine India U.S. bilateral relationship

- India will need to manage its ties with China largely through its own efforts, while retaining Russia as its defence partner.

## \* China protests US Navy passage

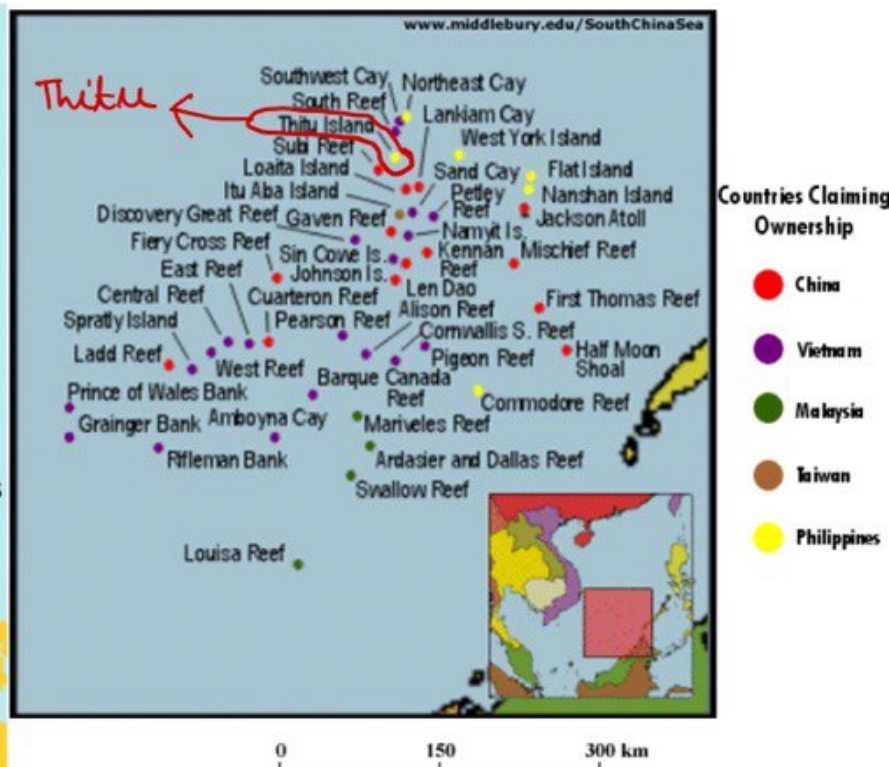
- Passage through Taiwan Strait
- China called it a provocation
  - ↳ undermined peace & stability in region
- US: transit according to International law
- Taiwan Strait
  - ↳ in international waters
  - ↳ China claims self governing Taiwan as its own territory





# \* Philippines protests against China

- 'Illegal' Chinese presence in S. China Sea
- In vicinity of Thitu island (Pag-asa)
  - ↳ 451 km from Philippines & biggest of the 8 islands it occupies in Spratly archipelago
- Subi reef: 25 km from Thitu
  - ↳ China has built a mini-city with runways, hangars & S2A missiles



↓  
**Spratly Archipelago**

## - Earlier, China Vs Philippines

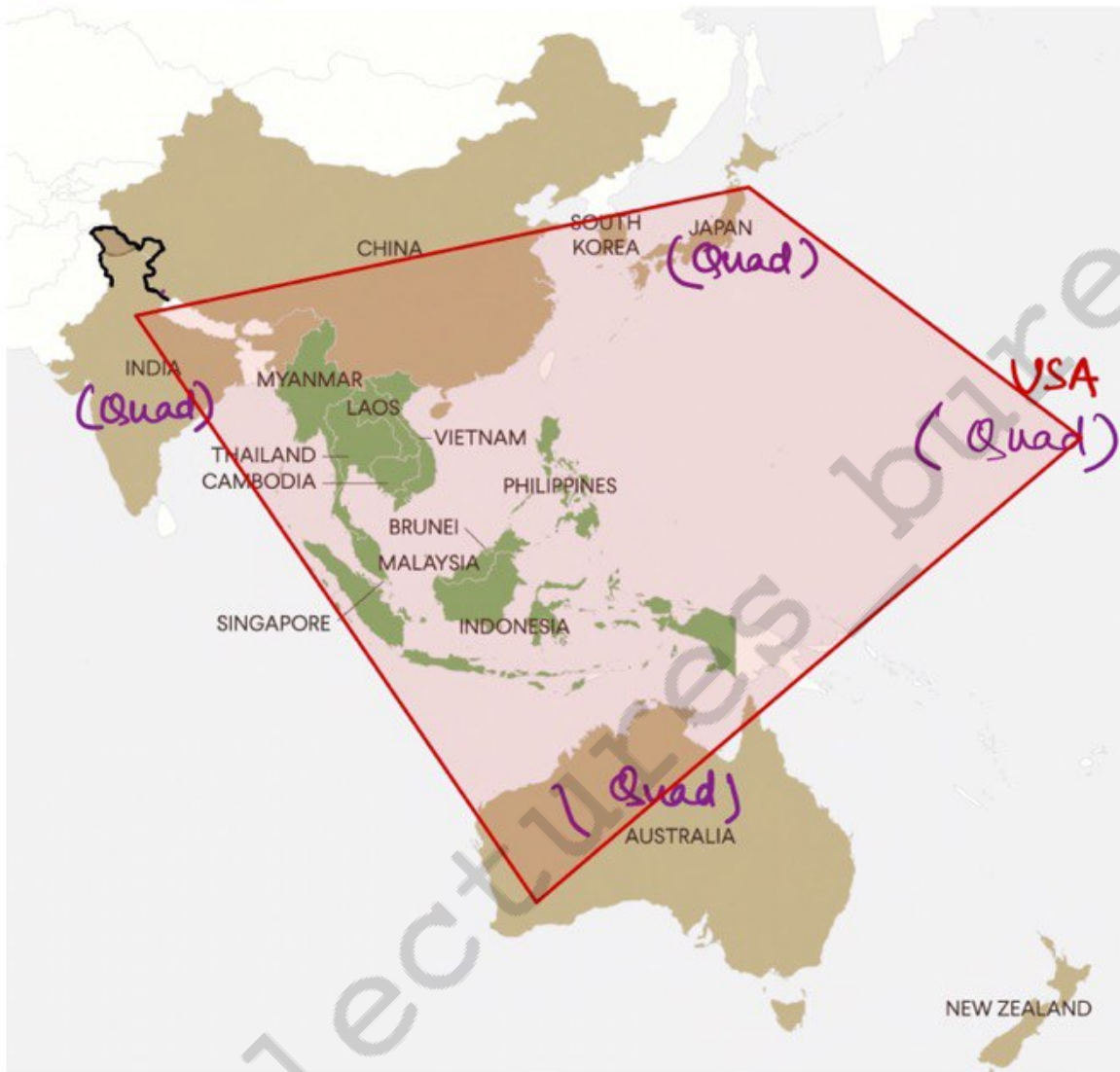
- 100s of Chinese ships in Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone.
  - ↳ China said they were sheltering from bad weather.
- China's claims in S. China Sea
  - ↳ invalidated by an International Tribunal
  - ↳ Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan & Vietnam also have competing claims.

# \* China hosts ASEAN foreign Ministers

## - ASEAN-China foreign Ministers meet

### ASEAN Members and Trade

● ASEAN members   ● Countries with free trade agreements with ASEAN



## - Purpose as publicised by China

↳ closer economic cooperation & RCEP

↳ aligning pandemic recovery efforts

## - Real purpose → Pushing back the Quad.

## Fear of Quad

- China called on Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to reject "military alliances".

China describes Quad as such & even called it "an Asian NATO"

- China thinks ASEAN is the key region  
↳ where China Vs Quad may flare up.
- Possibility that Quad will draw in more members like from ASEAN  
↳ as SE Asia is of great significance to US' Indo Pacific Strategy.

## Meeting also on -

- Vaccine passport

↳ connecting China & ASEAN

- Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC)

↳ with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam & Thailand

## South China Sea issue (recent)

↳ Malaysia & Philippines protested Chinese presence.

↳ China blames US for the situation

↳ presence of US warships are the biggest threat.

## \* G7 leaders take on China

- US-led plans to counter China in infra funding of poorer nations
- Build Back Better World (B3W) Project
  - ↳ to compete with China's BRI
  - ↳ BRI ⇒ widely criticized
    - ⇒ is used to debt trap countries and then China gains control of strategic assets.
    - Eg: In Sri Lanka ⇒ Hambantota Port.
- G7 agreed on the Carbis Bay Declaration
  - Commitments to curb future pandemics (Carbis Bay → in Cornwall, UK → G7 meet location)
  - Slashing time taken to develop & license vaccines, treatments etc under 100 days.
  - Reinforce global surveillance networks.
- India, S. Korea & Australia will also join the G7
  - ↳ @ Carbis Bay, Cornwall, UK
  - ↳ Earlier, UK had advocated inclusion of these 3 & called it a D10 grouping

## \* Biden's Manichean vision

### - US and G7 countries

- ↳ stand for democracy & not autocracy.
- ↳ Against those who say that age of democracy is over.

### - British PM invited 4 other democracies @ G7

↳ India, Australia, S. Korea & S. Africa

↳ D10 coalition ⇒ D for Democracy

↳ G7 + India, Aus, S. Korea.

### - Why D10 is important?

- A stronger approach Vs Chinese challenges
- A transcontinental counterweight to China.

### - But G7 or D10 are not idealistic alliances for spreading democracy as claimed by Biden -

- No neat division of world into black (dictators) and white (democracies)
- Eg: US itself supports authoritarian regimes in W. Asia  
Europeans still have client dictatorship in Africa
- S. Korea → not ready to join a formal D10 as its economy is interwoven with China.
- India → cannot afford to alienate friendly undemocratic powers like Russia, Iran or Vietnam.

## \* A 'Taiwan Flashpoint' in the indo-pacific

- ↳ Taiwan officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island separated from China by the Taiwan Strait.
- ↳ The Chinese communist party (CCP) views the island as an unfinished business of China's liberation
  - China also vows to eventually "unify" Taiwan with the mainland.
- ↳ Civil war
  - Between CCP and Kuomintang (KMT) started in 1920s.
  - The KMT forces under Chiang Kai-shek lost the 1945-49 civil war to the CCP forces under Mao Zedong.
  - Chiang retreated to the island of Taiwan and set up a regime and pledged to recover the mainland eventually.
- ↳ Role of US
  - Taiwan become military alliance with US during the Korean War of 1950-53.
  - China unable to unite Taiwan.
  - US recognised people's Republic of China (PRC) as legitimate gov of China in 1979
  - US ended its official relationship with the island and abrogated its mutual defense treaty with island

## ↳ Strategic ambiguity

- It is the practice by a government of being intentionally ambiguous on certain aspects of its foreign policy

### ● US

Declared that it will "maintain the ability to come to Taiwan's defence

At the same time not committing itself to do so

### ● China

Committed to pursuing peaceful unification with Taiwan but retains the right to use force to achieve the objective.

## ↳ Carrot and stick policy of China

- China's "one country two systems"
  - Promising a high degree of autonomy
  - But retained its armed forces during the transition period

## ↳ Economic links

- After the open door policy of China in 1970, Taiwan business entity have invested heavily in mainland China.

- B/w 1991 and 2000, Taiwanese capital invested in China reached U.S. \$188.5 billion

- Bilateral trade in 2019 was U.S. \$150 billion, about 15% of Taiwan's GDP

- By contrast, the stock of Chinese capital invested in Taiwan is barely U.S. \$2.4 billion



## ↳ Concerns for Taiwan

- Tries to reduce the economic exposure to China, but has been abortive.
- China capable of inflicting acute economic pain through coercive policies

## ↳ Taiwan Politics

- It has two major political parties
  1. The KMT
    - Dominated by descendants of Chiang Kai-shek
    - Committed to a one-China policy
  2. Democratic progressing party (DPP)
    - Representatives of indigenous population of the island and favours independence
- China hostile to DPP under the leadership of Tsai zing-wen as the demand for independence grew in recent time.

## ↳ The U.S. Stance

- The US will not support the idea of an independent Taiwan.
- However it has gradually reversed the policy of avoiding official-level engagement with Taiwan gov.
- Ex-senior and cabinet level officials from the Trump administration had visited Taiwan
- Joe Biden Administration continue with same policy.
- US Military presence in South China Sea.

## ↳ China's response

- Objected to U.S actions vociferously.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping said, "The historic task of the complete reunification of the motherland must be fulfilled and will definitely be fulfilled"

## ↳ Conclusion

- For these reasons, Taiwan is emerging as a potential trigger point for a clash of arms between the U.S. and China
- In pursuing its Indo-Pacific strategy, India would do well to keep these possible scenarios in mind

## Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities

China Military Power Report (CMPR) recently released by the Pentagon.

- Increasing military capabilities of the People's Republic of China (PRC).
- Transformation in both the quantity and the quality of China's nuclear arsenal.
- Fundamental changes in the quantitative strength and atomic yield of nuclear arsenal, enhanced delivery capabilities (missile) and nuclear posture of China.

### Rising number of nuclear war heads:

- China's nuclear arsenal is set to increase. As per the report, by 2027, China could have around 700 nuclear weapons consisting of varying yields.

### Tactical low yield nuclear weapons:

- China seems to be prioritizing low-yield nuclear weapons.
- This gives rise to speculation that China plans to use its nuclear weapons not just for

deterrence but intends to use them in the battlefield if necessary.

### Increasing delivery capabilities:

- China has been notably developing long range nuclear weapon delivery capable missiles, Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) with a range of 7,200 kms.
- Such long range capacity missiles would allow China to strike any target across continental Asia.
- Notably, China has even deployed these missile systems in key areas.

### Concerns over the Nuclear posture:

- China has adopted a Launch on Warning (LoW) nuclear posture.
- **Launch on warning (LOW)** or fire on warning is a strategy of nuclear weapon retaliation. This military strategy allows high-level commanders to launch a retaliatory nuclear-weapons strike against an opponent as soon as satellites and other warning sensors detect an incoming enemy missile.
- This marks a higher alert posture.

• It not only risks reducing the threshold for nuclear use in the form of pre-emption but it could also sow the seeds of miscalculation and unintended nuclear use.

### Security implications for India:

• China's nuclear competition with the United States will have a cascading effect for the Indo-Pacific region .

• It threatens the survivability of the Indian nuclear arsenal in case of a nuclear war between India and China.

• China's adoption of a Launch on Warning (LoW) nuclear posture reduces the decision time for any Indian retaliatory nuclear strike

• India may pursue its own LoW instead of the present **No First Use (NFU) policy.**

• Chinese SSBNs are capable of carrying nuclear warheads and this could leave India exposed to a Chinese atomic pincer from the maritime domain in addition to the continental domain.

## \* A strong India to counterbalance China

- Trump administration declassified a sensitive document on US' Indo-Pacific strategy from 2018
- Objectives & strategies outlined -

- US' 1<sup>st</sup> national security challenge

- ↳ Maintaining US strategic primacy and promoting a liberal economic order.
- ↳ Preventing China from establishing "illiberal spheres of influence"

- 2<sup>nd</sup> challenge

- ↳ Ensuring N. Korea does not threaten US

- 3<sup>rd</sup> challenge

- ↳ advancing US economic leadership globally.

- India → one of the 'desired end states'

- ↳ US to be India's preferred security partner.
- ↳ cooperate to preserve maritime security
- ↳ counter Chinese influence in S. Asia, SE Asia & other regions.

- US aims for India -

- To help India become a net security provider

in the region.

- ↳ by effective collaboration of strong Indian military with US & its regional partners.
- ↳ enhanced defence cooperation & interoperability
- Greater domestic economic reforms in India
- Greater leadership roles for India
  - ↳ in East Asia Summit &
  - ↳ ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus.
- Support to India via military, diplomatic & intelligence channels to help address continental challenges like
  - ↳ border dispute with China
  - ↳ Water Issues w.r.t. Brahmaputra & other rivers facing diversion by China.
- Bolster common principles, like
  - ↳ peaceful dispute resolution
  - ↳ transparent infra-debt practices.
- Support India's Act East Policy & its aspirations to be a leading global power
- A strong India, in cooperation with like minded countries would act as a counter to China.

# \* US, China dominates arms market

- Report by SIPRI  
(Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)
- World's Top 25 manufacturers (2019)
  - ↳ US (61% of global sales) > China (15.7%)
- Top 10 ⇒ 6 US companies; 3 Chinese; 1 British
- Total sales by Top 25 companies
  - ↳ ↑ by 8.5% to \$361bn
  - ↳ 50 times annual budget of UNPK operations
- European companies but dispersed in rankings
- West Asian surprise
  - ↳ EDGE → 22<sup>nd</sup> rank
  - ↳ UAE company formed by consolidation of some 25 defence entities in 2019
- Best performers
  - ↳ Dassault (France)
  - ↳ shot up from 38<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - ↳ boosted by exports of Rafale jets in 2019
- 2 Russian Companies also in list.



## \* Quad is US anti-China game: Russia

- Russia's concerns on Quad -

Statements by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

- Quad is a divisive & exclusivist concept
- Devises policy by western powers to engage India in "anti-China games"
- Can affect India-Russia ties
- West is trying to undermine Russia's close partnership and privileged relations with India
- US & other European countries trying to restore the unipolar model with US leadership  
↳ seeks to isolate other poles like China & Russia.

- Implications -

- Signals gaps in understanding between Moscow & N-Delhi.
- Despite regular dialogue at highest levels
- Russia should also express concern about China's unacceptable territorial aggressions.

## \* China rise has attracted attention : CDS

- Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat addressing @ Global Dialogue Security Summit.
- His views on Indo-Pacific
  - China's rise → one of the most defining moments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - → led to deployment of over 120 warships in IOR
  - The region though peaceful, but under contestation
  - World entering a new geopolitical phase, based on nationalism, protectionism & strategic realignment.
  - World moving towards →  
Globalisation → deglobalisation regionalism → glocalisation

## Taking the long view with China

### Rise of China:

- China has been emerging as a major military and economic power not only regionally but also globally.
- The Chinese renminbi may become a global reserve currency. The BRI countries are using the renminbi in financial transactions with China, and can be expected to use it in transactions with each other. China is the world's largest trading economy.
- China could soon become the world's largest economy.
- The European Union created its own cross-border clearing mechanism for trade with China overcoming the U.S.'s hindrance.
- China has stitched together an investment agreement with the EU and with most of Asia.
- The China-led AIIB Bank has increased its membership to 100 countries.
- China is now the second-biggest financial contributor to the UN

## Foreign policy challenge for India:

- India has to engage with China which is consolidating an expanding Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) while trying to balance off China through appropriate partnerships.

## Way forward for India:

### 1. Ensuring strategic autonomy:

- India has a "special and privileged strategic partnership" with Russia, and a "comprehensive global strategic partnership" with the U.S, thus balancing its interests.

- India's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, led by Beijing and Moscow and designed to resist the spread of Western interests is balanced by its participation in the U.S.-led (Quad), with its anti-China stance.

### 2. Issue based approach:

- India's policy towards China should be guided by the notion of China as a partner, competitor, and economic rival depending on the policy area in question.

- Within the United Nations, India's interests have greater congruence with China's interests rather than the U.S.'s and the EU's.

### 3. Playing a bridging role:

- Instead of an alternate development model, India should move the Quad towards supplementing the infrastructure push of the BRI in line with other strategic concerns in the region.

- For example, developing their scientific, technological capacity and digital economy.

### 4. Focus on domestic development:

- India needs to focus on achieving a \$5 trillion economy, shift to indigenous capital military equipment, and also realize the goals set under the new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy.

## \* China says its 'drove away' U.S. warship

- ↳ China's military claimed → drove away U.S. warship near the Paracel Islands in South China Sea.
- ↳ The Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, which require either permission or advance notification before military vessel passes through.
- ↳ International court ruling on island
  - On July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Hague, ruled that China had no historic title over the South China Sea



## ↳ China's stand

- said it would ignore PCA ruling
- claim over most of the region of South China sea.

## ↳ US response

- Navigation rights and freedom in the vicinity of the Paracel Island consistent with international law
- the ship of all states enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea

## \* Getting back in business in Indo-Pacific

- US engagements in Indo-Pacific are back in
  - Japan, S. Korea, Mongolia & China
  - Singapore, Vietnam & Philippines
  - India
- Japan, S. Korea, Mongolia & China
  - US committed to work with allies & partners
  - Uphold a 'rules based order'  
(targeting ↓ China)
  - Furthering Japan-US alliance.
  - Trilateral Japan-S. Korea-US meet
  - Mongolia often wants to assert its independence despite closeness with Beijing
    - ↳ Visit of US Deputy Secretary of State to enhance ties.
  - US welcomed China's competition but not confrontation.
    - ↳ US pointed out dismal human rights situation in Xinjiang



## - ASEAN (Singapore, Vietnam & Philippines)

- US declared that Beijing's claims in South China Sea has no basis
- Objected China's aggressions, including against India.
- Singapore provides logistical support to US military aircraft & vessels & in return gets benefits of an US air force base at Guam.
- Vietnam-US signed MoU to resolve the war legacy issues
  - ↳ creation of a database to accelerate search for those still missing in action
- Philippines agreed to full restoration of Visiting Forces Agreement of US
  - ↳ provides legal foundation for US military presence in other countries.

## - India

- Convergence b/w India & US on
  - ↳ Indo-Pacific & rules based order
  - ↳ Quad as not a military alliance &

just a group of 4-like minded countries coming together to work collectively.

- Some divergence b/w India & US
  - ↳ on Taliban & Afghanistan.
- In all, India-US relations are now closest than earlier.
  - ↳ areas of convergence are expanding.

### - Conclusion

- US' China policy & Indo-Pacific policy will run together
- US is intent on maintaining tough attitude towards China
  - ↳ but doors of dialogue also open.
- Integrated deterrence to counter China
  - ↳ using every military & non-military tool with support from allies, partners & like minded countries.