

# The Indo-Pacific Command Is All About “Containing” China Through India

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Global Research, September 04, 2022

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

With historical insight this article by Andrew Korybko was first published on June 12 2018.

*The US military [rechristened](#) its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command as a means of strongly signaling its growing interest in India and its eponymous ocean.*

*The importance of this development shouldn't be underestimated because it sets the strategic basis for the US' 21<sup>st</sup>-century policy of "[containing China](#)". The People's Republic depends just as much on the Indian Ocean as it does the Pacific because of the role that this body of water plays in facilitating commerce with Europe & Africa and the energy trade with the Mideast, hence why it's pivotal for the US to prioritize military operations in this ocean and its surrounding Rimland. To that end, America has entered into a game-changing military-strategic relationship with India through the 2016 [LEMOA](#) logistics agreement that allows both Great Powers to use one another's facilities as part of what former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson described late last year as their [planned partnership for entire 21<sup>st</sup> century](#).*

The US envisions India becoming a bulwark against China and functioning as Washington's premier "[Lead From Behind](#)" partner in "containing" it, though it recognizes that it probably can't sustain this role for too long unless it receives multilateral support, ergo the so-called "Quad" that also involves Japan and Australia and could unofficially be called the "[Hex](#)" through Vietnam and France's participation as well. India's [LEMOA-like deal with France](#) to also use its Indian Ocean military facilities gives New Delhi the potential to massively expand its strategic reach in the region and fulfill its US-backed geopolitical destiny, which just received a strong strategic boost last week after Prime Minister Modi clinched an agreement to [develop a base in Indonesia's Sabang island](#) right near the mouth of the Strait of Malacca.



A new American-encouraged Great Power constellation is therefore in the process of forming all across the [Indo-Pacific Rimland](#) in seeing India, [Indonesia](#), and Japan deepening their multilateral strategic integration with one another, with Washington desiring for New Delhi to play the role of regional hegemon in the Indian Ocean, Tokyo to do so in the Pacific, and Jakarta to bridge the two together in the Southeast Asian archipelago connecting both of their bodies of water. Seeing as how half of this grand strategy geographically involves the Indian Ocean, it's therefore appropriate that the erstwhile Pacific Command updated its name to the Indo-Pacific Command to better reflect the bulk of its future efforts.

The [next step](#) that could be expected would for the US to organize a so-called “Eighth Fleet” in the Indian Ocean region in order to more effectively concentrate its strategic focus in this part of the world. The Japanese-based Seventh Fleet covers the same area of maritime operations as the Indo-Pacific Command does, which includes the half of the Indian Ocean south and east of its namesake country, so it would make sense to “decentralize” operations by setting up a separate regional branch that’s actually based in this body of water. Although the Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet would probably still remain responsible for activities around the Arabian Peninsula, the Italian-based Sixth Fleet wouldn’t have to take care of East Africa like it already does because everything east of the Cape of Good Hope would prospectively fall under the Eighth Fleet’s area of responsibility.

So as not to be misunderstood, there presently aren’t any serious plans to create an Eighth Fleet, but it’s logical that this might eventually follow the rechristening of the Pacific Command as the Indo-Pacific Command, and naturally have an Indian Ocean base of operations either in Diego Garcia or somewhere on the South Asian mainland in order to more effectively “contain” China.

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*This article was originally published on [Oriental Review](#).*

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