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**India's Global Rise, its  
Regional Decline**

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## INDIA'S GLOBAL RISE, ITS REGIONAL DECLINE

### In Context

- India's recent economic success, solid momentum, and promising prospects are making the country more influential

### About India's global rise

- India's aggregate power has grown over the past two decades — evident in robust economic growth, military capabilities, and a largely young demography.
- Its inclusion in **key global institutions** such as the **G-20**, as an **invitee at G-7** meetings, and active **participation** in multilateral groups such as the **Quad**, **BRICS**, and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** further highlight its **geopolitical significance** and its powerful presence globally, even if it is not a member of the United Nations Security Council.
- India's global rise is also aided by **growing international attention** on the **Indo-Pacific**, a theatre that is pivotal to **global strategic stability**, where India has a central position, geographically and otherwise.
- A major reason why the United States and its allies are keen to accommodate India's global interests including in order to push back China in the region.

### Emerging challenges

- India's influence is declining in **South Asia**.
  - ◆ When compared to India's influence in the region during the Cold War or in comparison to China's influence in the region today,
- Its waning regional influence is caused by diminishing relative power (vis-à-vis China), loss of primacy in South Asia, and fundamental changes in South Asian geopolitics.
- The arrival of China in South Asia, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the region, and India's tilt to the Indo-Pacific have shifted the regional balance of power in Beijing's favour.
- India's regional decline is a product of the **dynamics of comparative power**, and geopolitical choices made by the region's smaller powers.
  - ◆ India's smaller neighbours seem to find China as a useful hedge against India, for the moment at least.
- China's rise will, therefore, mean that India may no longer be the most consequential power in the region.

### Way Forward for India

- India **must revisit some of its traditional conceptions** of the region, **'modernise' its primacy in South Asia**, and take proactive and imaginative policy steps to meet the China challenge in the region.
- First of all, **India must accept the reality** that the region, the neighbours and the region's geopolitics have fundamentally changed over the decade-and-a-half at the least.
- India must focus on its **strengths** rather than trying to match the might of the People's Republic of China in every respect
  - ◆ **Fashioning a new engagement** with the region that reflects India's traditional strengths and the region's changed realities is essential.
  - ◆ Reclaiming Buddhist heritage is one such example.
- India's **continental strategy** is replete with challenges whereas its **maritime space has an abundance of opportunities** for enhancing trade, joining multilateralism, and creating new issue-based coalitions, among others.

- ◆ India must use its maritime (Indo-Pacific) advantages to cater to its many continental handicaps.
- ◆ Doing so could involve including India's smaller South Asian neighbours to the Indo-Pacific strategic conversations.
- **India and its partners** (the U.S., Japan, Australia, the European Union, and others) must find ways of engaging and partnering with Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Bangladesh as part of their larger Indo-Pacific strategy.
- New Delhi should make creative uses of its **soft power to retain its influence in the region.**
  - ◆ One way to do that is to actively encourage informal contacts between political and civil society actors in India and those in other South Asian countries.
- There is a desire to join hands with external friendly partners both in the Indian Ocean and South Asia so as to deal with the region's common challenges.
  - ◆ This openness in New Delhi, and the desire of the external actors to engage the region, must be utilised to address the difficulties arising out of New Delhi's regional decline

### Mains Practice Question

- Q. The dichotomy between India's global rise and regional decline has profound implications for India's global aspirations . Discuss.

