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ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**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.

