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Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

This article covers "Daily current events" and the topic is about 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' which is in the news, it covers "International Relations" In GS-2; the following content has relevance for UPSC.

For Prelims: Free and Open Indo-Pacific

For Mains: GS-2, International Relation

Why in news:

The visit by the Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, to India, in March 2023, during which he engaged with his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, on global and bilateral issues, focused on cooperation between the G-7 and the G-20 (Japan and India hold their presidencies, respectively). Besides this, Mr. Kishida also unveiled "Japan's New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) and exchanged views about deepening the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership".

ABOUT FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC (FOIP)

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is a strategic concept that refers to an inclusive and rules-based vision for the region, which encompasses the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

- The Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept was first introduced by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2016 and has since been endorsed by several other countries, including the United States, Australia, India, and France.
- The concept has gained significant traction in recent years as a means of countering China's growing influence in the region and promoting a more inclusive and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

- The concept is aimed at promoting economic growth, development, and regional stability, while also safeguarding the fundamental principles of freedom of navigation and respect for international law.



Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

KEY PILLARS OF THE FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy is built around several key pillars, including:

- **Strengthening Economic Cooperation:** Emphasizes the need to promote free and fair trade, investment, and economic cooperation in the region. This includes supporting the development of regional infrastructure and connectivity, promoting digital transformation, and advancing sustainable development.
- **Strengthening Security Cooperation:** Calls for closer security cooperation and coordination between countries in the region. This includes strengthening maritime security, enhancing disaster response and humanitarian assistance, and promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- **Promoting Democratic Values and Human Rights:** Emphasizes the importance of promoting democratic values and human rights in the region. This includes supporting freedom of expression, the rule of law, and civil society, as well as promoting gender equality and empowerment.
- **Strengthening Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation:** Prioritizes cooperation in the areas of science, technology, and innovation, with a focus on promoting research and development, advancing digital transformation, and strengthening cybersecurity.
- **Strengthening Connectivity:** Development of robust connectivity between countries in the region, including through the promotion of high-quality infrastructure projects and digital connectivity.

Overall, Japan's new plan for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific reflects its commitment to promoting a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive region, and highlights the importance of cooperation and collaboration among countries in the Indo-Pacific.

JAPAN'S NEW PLAN FOR FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC (FOIP)

- The New Plan for the FOIP emphasizes the importance of maintaining the international rules-based order and respecting each other's territorial sovereignty.
- Japan wants to reinforce the idea of the FOIP concept and underlined the current geopolitical landscape with the ongoing issues of:
 - Russia – Ukraine war.
 - Growing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.
 - Chinese aggression at the Indian Line of Actual Control.
 - Violating the territorial sovereignty of Taiwan.

CHALLENGES OF JAPAN'S NEW PLAN FOR FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Japan's new plan for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) faces several challenges, both domestically and internationally. Some of the key challenges include:

- **China's influence in the region:** China's growing economic and military influence in the Indo-Pacific presents a significant challenge to Japan's FOIP strategy. Japan and other like-minded countries have expressed concern over China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, its Belt and Road Initiative, and its growing military capabilities.
- **Balancing economic and security priorities:** Japan's FOIP strategy aims to balance its economic interests with its security concerns. However, this may prove challenging, as Japan seeks to deepen economic cooperation with China and other regional actors, while also strengthening its security ties with the United States and other partners.
- **Domestic political opposition:** Japan's FOIP strategy has faced opposition from some domestic political groups, who criticize it as being too closely aligned with the United States and too focused on security concerns. There are also concerns about the potential environmental and social impact of large-scale infrastructure projects.
- **Implementation challenges:** Japan's FOIP strategy will require significant resources and coordination among a diverse range of actors, including governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Ensuring effective implementation of the strategy may prove challenging.
- **Coordination among like-minded countries:** Japan's FOIP strategy relies on cooperation and coordination among like-minded countries in the region. However, there are differences in priorities and interests among these countries, which may make coordination and cooperation difficult.

Overall, while Japan's new plan for the FOIP region represents a significant effort to promote a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive region, it faces several significant challenges that will need to be addressed to achieve its objectives.

IMPORTANCE OF FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC (FOIP) FOR INDIA

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) initiative is of significant importance to India due to several reasons:

- **Strategic Location:** India is strategically located in the Indian Ocean region, which is a crucial area of the Indo-Pacific region. The FOIP initiative aims to promote a free and open maritime order in the region, which is in India's interest as it depends heavily on maritime trade.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India's economy is heavily dependent on exports and access to global markets. The FOIP initiative promotes economic cooperation and integration, which can lead to increased trade and investment opportunities for India.
- **Regional Security:** India has concerns regarding China's growing military and economic influence in the region. The FOIP initiative aims to promote a rules-based international order and strengthen regional security cooperation, which can help India counter security threats and maintain regional stability.
- **Multilateral Diplomacy:** India has been actively participating in various multilateral forums, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), to promote regional cooperation and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The FOIP initiative provides a platform for India to engage with like-minded countries and promote its interests in the region.

In summary, the FOIP initiative is of significant importance to India as it promotes economic cooperation, and regional security, and provides a platform for India to engage with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

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