



The United States' Indo-Pacific Strategy and India: Prospect for India's Participation

Dr. Lee Daewoo

delee@sejong.org

Director of Department of Security Strategy Studies, the Sejong Institute

Executive Summary

This paper attempts to answer the question “Why is India lukewarm about participating in the United States-led Indo-Pacific strategy, targeted at obstructing China’s pursuit of hegemony?” and to forecast India’s participation in the future. The author use the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (IPSR, 2019) published by the U.S. Department of Defense as the central source to analyze the U.S.’s strategy, and the publications including Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (2015), Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces (2017), SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Yearbook (2018), and The Military Balance (2019) in order to examine India’s diplomatic and security policy and military capacity. Although not particularly mentioned in IPSR, the U.S. has demonstrated its will to institutionalize the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) among the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia as the propellant for its Indo-Pacific strategy, in order to counter to China’s offensive.

The result of this analysis shows that India is certainly determined to become a regional hegemon in the Indian Ocean and to exert influence in construction and maintenance of the international security order. However, India’s economic and military capability is not strong enough to affect the international security order. India’s military capacity has not proved itself beyond counteracting against the separatists in its northeastern region and the Maoists in the central-northern region, and deter-

ring offenses from China and Kazakhstan during the territorial disputes. In particular, the warships that India possesses are largely decrepit, incapable of going on an expedition.

Moreover, India's relationship with the U.S. is rapidly improving but is yet to develop a solid trust. It is still uncomfortable with China due to the territorial disputes, but China's market is crucial for India's economic growth, so it will avoid heightening confrontation with China.

Therefore, for a while, it will be difficult for India to participate proactively in the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Strategy. Still, for now, India can join the U.S. by strengthening its navy around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in order to block Chinese fleets from entering the Indian Ocean. Of course, if and when China's pursuit of hegemony becomes more explicit, India's participation will be augmented. ♣

※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.

※ This article is written based on the author's personal opinions and does not reflect the views of the Sejong Institute.