US's Global Policy Shifts

Mains: *GS-II – International Relations*

Why in News?

The U.S. dropping "Indo" from INDOPACOM back to PACOM signals a deeper strategic recalibration: Washington is prioritizing rapprochement with China, downplaying the Quad, and reshaping its role in West Asia and South Asia.

Does the PACOM renaming signal a shift in U.S. priorities?

- **The Name Change** – The U.S. military has changed the name of its naval command from United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) to United States Pacific Command (PACOM).
- The command's area of responsibility from the water off the west coast of U.S to India's western border that remains unchanged.
- In 2018, the term "Indo-Pacific" was adopted to highlight India's growing significance in the region.
- **Shift in U.S. Rhetoric** – In 2018, U.S. emphasized India's role in the Indo-Pacific.
- In contrast, now the U.S at the *Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore* did not mention the Indo-Pacific at all, unlike which referenced it over 30 times in 2025, which signals a strategic shift in U.S. priorities.

What about the approach related to U.S.-China ties and the Quad?

- **U.S.–China Outreach** – The U.S. is softening its stance toward China and concurrently diminishing salience of the Quad under Trump 2.0, despite long-term rivalry.
- Both the countries Presidents visit shows that both sides want to avoid confrontation for now.
- Trump's references to a "G-2" world order suggest a plan to divide global influence, with China would be the predominant power in Asia — contrary to India's vision of a multipolar region.
- **Quad Losing Momentum** – The Quad, rebuilt in Trump 1.0 as a counter to China in the region, appears to be floundering.
- Quad's combined agenda has shrunk to four areas of cooperation –
    - Maritime security,
    - Prosperity,
    - Critical & Emerging Minerals Technology, and
    - Disaster response.

- Even within these limited objectives, there have been setbacks, such as over Artificial Intelligence cooperation.
- Despite Quad countries signing on to Pax Silica, and Critical Minerals Initiative Framework with the U.S., the Trump administration ordered Anthropic to end access to its latest models for all non-Americans.
- **Challenges in Quad** – India has tried to host a Quad Summit since 2024 but without success.
- During U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's May 2026 visit, no commitment was given for Trump's visit to Delhi & Signs point to the Quad being downgraded to a Foreign Ministers' level grouping.
- Maritime security concerns remain acute, highlighted by U.S. Navy actions against Iranian vessels (IRIS Dena) and recent attacks killing Indian sailors.

What about the approach related to the U.S.-Iran MoU and West Asia?

- **U.S.–Iran Ceasefire & Regional Fatigue** – After a badly planned war, the U.S. under Trump 2.0 quickly agreed to a ceasefire with Iran, showing fatigue with its allies in West Asia.
- The situation is now more volatile than before, especially with Israel sidelined in negotiations with Iran & Israel Prime Minister openly defying the ceasefire terms for Lebanon.
- **Signals from the Islamabad MoU** – An agreement between the U.S. and Iran contains key provisions -
    - Withdrawal of U.S. forces from the proximity of Iran within 30 days of the final deal.
    - Strait of Hormuz administration to be jointly defined by Iran and Oman, in consultation with Persian Gulf littoral states.
    - At least $300 billion as reconstruction aid to Iran for reconstruction, pledged by the U.S. and regional allies.
- **Shifting Regional Alignments** – Oman and Qatar are now closer to Iran & having part of the Pakistan-led mediation process & Saudi Arabia is seeking new security arrangements with Turkiye, Pakistan, and Ukraine.
- These shifts highlight Iran's growing influence and the weakening of traditional U.S.–Gulf Cooperation Council frameworks.

What about the approach related to the U.S. and South Asia?

- **U.S. Expanding Role in South Asia** – The appointment of Sergio Gor as both U.S. Ambassador to India and Special Envoy for South and Central Asia signals Washington's growing regional ambitions.
- India has resisted U.S. attempts to act as a supra-regional authority, especially in mediating India–Pakistan disputes.
- This ambition was hinted during Operation Sindoor (May 2025) and reinforced by Trump's repeated meetings with Pakistani leaders.
- **Regional Outreach by the U.S.** – Mr. Gor's visits to Kathmandu, Thimphu, Dhaka, and Colombo highlight U.S. efforts to expand influence across South Asia.
- With SAARC and BIMSTEC weakened by India's tensions with Pakistan and Bangladesh, the U.S. is stepping into the vacuum; this creates U.S in direct

competition with China.

What are the implications for India due to this shift?

- **Recasting India's Strategic Position** – India has placed the Indo-Pacific at the center of its strategic thinking since 2018.
- The U.S. move suggests a possible downgrading of India's role in U.S. regional strategy & broader attempt by Washington to reframe the region and India's position within it.
- **Maritime Coalitions & Alternatives** – Prime Minister Modi's upcoming meetings with Japan, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand are crucial.
- India should explore alternative maritime coalitions and revive the Australia–India–Japan trilateral to maintain influence in the Indo-Pacific.
- **West Asia Policy Revisions** – The U.S.–Iran ceasefire and shifting power structures demand a *rapid revision of India's West Asia policy*.
- India's policy was once a finely balanced approach now appears tilted towards Israel and the United Arab Emirates.
- New Delhi must reconsider its compliance with U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil and the Chabahar port, given Washington's evolving stance.
- **Reviving Existing Institutions** – India must revive SAARC, strengthen BIMSTEC and other pan-regional initiatives to reassert leadership and prevent being sidelined.
- Platforms like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and upcoming SCO summit offer opportunities for India to balance external pressures.

What lies ahead?

- Concerns over the U.S.'s moves across India's geographies may seem contrary to the bonhomie at the Modi-Trump meeting at the G-7 meet in France, and the red carpet for Mr. Rubio's India visit.
- New Delhi must plan strategically, acknowledging that the shifts run far beyond the symbolic prefix drop and reflect a recalibration of U.S. priorities across Asia.

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Reference

The Hindu | PACOM, the deeper meaning behind a dropped prefix

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