



## Indo-Pacific Trilateral Dialogue

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### Why in News

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Recently, **India, Australia and France** held a dialogue for the first time under a **trilateral framework**. The three sides have **agreed to hold the dialogue on an annual basis**.

### Key Points

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- **Focus: Enhancing cooperation** in the Indo-Pacific Region. **Australia**, along with **France**, has emerged as a **major strategic partner for India** in the Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region (IOR), especially in the maritime domain. For instance:
  - India has **logistics agreements** with both countries. The logistics agreement provides for easier access to supplies of goods and services.
  - There is significant cooperation in information exchange for **Maritime Domain Awareness**.

France was the first country to deploy a Liaison Officer at the **Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR)** as part of efforts to improve Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).
  - India conducted its **first joint patrols** with France in Reunion Island (western Indian ocean) in February 2020.
- **Chinese Factor:**
  - The trilateral cooperation will help to take on China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region. E.g in South China Sea.
  - This trilateral cooperation is an addition to the **Quad** which comprises the USA, Japan, Australia and India.
  - It also adds diplomatic muscle to the global coalition that is shaping up to counter China's belligerence.

- **Issues Discussed:**

- Possibility of **enhancing maritime security cooperation** between the three countries in the Indo-Pacific region.  
It also includes areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime domain awareness, mutual logistics support and capacity-building of friendly countries.
- **Development cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region**, initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance** and **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, and the need for a **reformed multilateralism**.
- **Cooperation on marine global commons**. It includes **blue economy**, **marine biodiversity** and **environmental challenges** such as marine pollution.
- **Practical cooperation at the trilateral and regional level**, including through regional organisations such as **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** and the **Indian Ocean Commission**.
- The increased salience of **resilient and reliable supply chains**.  
India, Australia and Japan recently inked an initiative to build resilient supply chains, which is named as **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)**. France may join this initiative too.
- **Emerging challenges** in the context of **Covid-19 pandemic**, including the financial impact of the pandemic on the Indian Ocean region countries.

## **Significance of the Indo-Pacific Region**

- In 2018 **Shangrila Dialogue** India had clearly indicated the geographical reach of **India's idea of the Indo-Pacific**, which starts from **Africa to the America**, which covers both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, in tandem with that of Japan.
- It is a very **rich region in terms of natural resources** (fisheries, oil, gas) as well as mineral resources.
- **Trade of some of the major economies** like China, Japan, Korea or the west coast of the United States goes through this region.
- About 50% of **India's trade** is conducted through the South China Sea. India has been one of the major players in the region. **India conducts many naval exercises** with the United States, countries of ASEAN, Japan, Korea and Vietnam.
- The international community including India wants freedom of navigation, freedom of over flights in the region.



## Way Forward

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France and Australia are India's key partners in the Indo-Pacific region. The meeting provided a unique opportunity to build upon the progress that the three countries have achieved bilaterally in recent years.

**Source: IE**