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## India as Counterbalance to China: USA

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **Trump administration declassified a document** which asserted that a **strong India**, in cooperation with like-minded countries, would **act as a counterbalance to China** in the **strategic Indo-Pacific region**.

The document on the **USA strategic framework for the Indo-Pacific** from 2018 outlines objectives, challenges and strategies with regard to China, North Korea, India and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Key Points

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- **Challenges for USA:**

- Maintaining **USA's strategic primacy in the Indo-pacific** and **stopping China** from establishing illiberal spheres of influence.
- Ensuring that **North Korea does not threaten the USA**.
- **Advancing the USA economic leadership globally** while pushing fair and reciprocal trade.

- **Aspects Related to India:**

India is a **preferred partner on security issues** and to cooperate to preserve maritime security and **counter Chinese influence** in South Asia and Southeast Asia. To achieve this, **USA aims to:**

- **Support India's aspiration to be a leading global power**, highlighting its compatibility with the USA, Japanese and Australian vision of the Indo-Pacific.
- Work with India **"toward domestic economic reform"**.
- **Enhance defence cooperation** and interoperability.
- **Provide greater leadership roles for India** in the **East Asia Summit** and **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus**.
- **Support India's Act East policy**.

- **India vis-a-vis China:**
  - **Help India addressing disputes with China:** USA aims to support India via military, diplomatic and intelligence channels to **help address continental challenges** such as the **border dispute with China** and resolution of disputes over rivers, including the **Brahmaputra** and other rivers facing diversion by China.
  - **Supporting India's reservations against Belt Road Initiative:** USA seeks the transparent infrastructure-debt practices in the countries facing debt due to Chinese financing under **Belt Road Initiative**.
  - **Working with India and Japan:** To help finance projects that enhance regional connectivity between India and countries of the region.
- **India-USA Relations:**
  - **Shared democratic values** and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues.
  - **Broad-based and multi-sectoral relationship** covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology and **cyber security** etc.
  - **People to people connection:** Vibrant people-to-people interaction and support across the political spectrum in both countries nurture bilateral relationships between the two countries.
  - USA has signed **defence agreements** with India to provide **military information and mutual logistics support**. These are:
    - The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).
    - The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).
    - The Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA).
    - The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA): It was the result of the **Indo-United States (US) 2+2 talks**.
- **Recent USA-China Rivalries:**
  - **Competition for dominating world finances:** To counter the USA-dominated International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization, China has come out with alternative financial institutions like **Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank**, and **New Development Bank**.
  - **Contending influence over international groupings:** In order to contain rising China's assertiveness, the USA under its 'pivot to Asia policy' has launched a **Quad initiative**, **Indo pacific narrative**. Most recently, the USA proposed to expand G7 to G-11 without including China in it.
  - **New Cold War:** USA-China confrontation is on multiple fronts including ideological and cultural hegemonic rivalry, trade wars which has often been called the **New Cold War**.

## Way Forward

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- **Maintain interest oriented balancing:** India should realise its rising global power and rather than getting enmeshed in USA-China rivalry, **it should prioritize its own interests and growth by maintaining peaceful mutual relationships.**
- **Promote Multilateralism:** India can promote new multilateralism under the aegis of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**- which relies on restructuring both the economic order and societal behaviour for equitable sustainable development.

**Source: TH**