

Clash of Strategies in the Indo-Pacific: Challenge of Preserving the Equilibrium

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The Indo-Pacific is witnessing a fierce strategic competition among players to gain pre-eminence using different tools. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategies are used as a means to exert pressure on the competitors and to gain support from others in achieving strategic objectives. The Indo-Pacific strategies continue to clash tilting the geostrategic balance in one's favour and dividing the strategically critical ocean space led by the US and China. As no other maritime space has a diverse geostrategic and geopolitical environment similar to the Indo-Pacific, these strategy clashes have the potential to impact global peace and stability. It is in the above context that this research focuses on analysing how the clash of Indo-Pacific strategies among the leading players could impact the Indo-Pacific equilibrium leading to global instability. A combination of descriptive, analytical, qualitative, and empirical research types was adopted in analysing respective Indo-Pacific strategies and initiatives. The impact of major players led by the US, China, regional organizations and other players was analysed to comprehend the resultant impact on the Indo-Pacific stability. The study found that there are strategic implications on maritime security, trade, regional cooperation, strategic options of regional players, and Indo-Pacific equilibrium with adverse influence on global stability. The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic have further complicated the already complex Indo-Pacific geopolitical setting. Further, no comprehensive study has focused on the regional and global implications of existing Indo-Pacific strategies and initiatives. The findings will also help Sri Lanka to better position in the Indo-Pacific.

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