

# ISLAMOPHOBIA REFLECTIONS OF THE GEOPOLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE FROM ASIAN-PACIFIC TO THE INDO-PACIFIC: EASTERN TURKISTAN, BANGLADESH AND ROHINGYA

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## INTRODUCTION

The global balance of power has clearly shifted in the twenty-first century, with the United States' relative dominance declining and the world's center of gravity shifting from the Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific. The emergence of Asia's two giants, China and India, has brought attention to the Asia-Pacific area; particularly owing to China's "peaceful ascent," the region has entered a time of rewriting tactics. The idea of Asia-Pacific has now given way to the concept of Indo-Pacific. The term "Indo-Pacific" refers to the view of the Indian and Pacific oceans as a unified 'geopolitical/strategic' area. The fundamental reasoning here is to stress India's power and role as a leader in the 'Raj' tradition rather than to diminish China's notion of dominance in the Asia-Pacific. The term "Indo-Pacific" refers to the convergence of India's "Look East/Move East," China's "Belt and Road," and the United States' "Axis/Rebalancing" objectives. Also, Asia has risen again in the twenty-first century, which is becoming global, and the agenda is changing on a daily basis, and geopolitical tactics have been redefined in this environment.

This geopolitical shift in the area demonstrates that India and China's strength has grown while the United States' influence has shrunk. Asia-Pacific thinking is beginning to give way to Indo-Pacific thinking. The Indian Ocean region overlaps inside the current Asia-Pacific borders, and there is even a scenario of interweaving with the concept of "Indo-Pacific." As a result, Chinese dominance in the Asia-Pacific was deferred, and Indian strength in the Indo-Pacific began to emerge. In terms of the state, although India does not use the phrase "Indo-Pacific," the word "Indian" in "Indo-Pacific" refers to the Indian Ocean, but in New Delhi's view, it refers to India.[1] China and India's similar performances in international politics, which are closely monitored in terms of state policies, civilizational concepts, and "grand strategies," are also closely monitored in terms of democratic and human development. In this regard, there is an increase in anti-Islam and Islamophobia in Asia's backyard, which is likely to become more prominent in global politics and economics in the future years. Within the study's scope, the terms Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific, which refer to the shifting geopolitical power struggle, will be explored, followed by a different viewpoint on the test of growing Asia with Islamophobia.

**ASIA-PASIFIC&INDO-PASIFIC**

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been the sole global superpower. However, as the twenty-first-century approaches, its predominance is waning, and the globe is shifting toward increasing multipolarity.[2] The Group of Eight (G8) has ceded its place in global economic governance to the Group of Twenty (G20); the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) claim to have a greater say in world politics; and many subregional or transregional cooperation institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), claim to have a greater say in world politics. The revival of Russia under Putin, and particularly an increasingly confident China, marks a significant change in the global balance of power toward a greater equilibrium between the Western camp and a growing coalition of nations seeking substantial reform of the current world order. In general, a country's foreign policy is a result of detecting and reacting to the internal and external environments in which its political objectives will be realized. In general, two elements are critical for analyzing a country's view of its foreign policy: first, the political culture within which it conducts foreign policy, and second, the circumstances under which that

impression is created.[3]

The notions of Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific have also been formed by the governments' foreign policies. To begin with, the idea of the Far East is a recent invention; it refers to a geographical description that reflects Western worldviews. During the First and Second World Wars, this term was employed to characterize the countries located in the east of the Asian continent in comparison to Europe and America. In terms of vocabulary, because it is a contemporary idea, this geopolitical concept is utilized for geographical and cultural definitions rather than current political arguments.[4] The phrase "Indo-Pacific" is increasingly being used by governments and regional organizations. It is gradually displacing the formerly popular phrase "Asia-Pacific." The phrase "Indo-Pacific" refers to a variety of notions, some of which are contradictory. These, in turn, are founded on very disparate notions of regional order. What they all have in common is a mention of the significance of a rules-based international order. Because Indo-Pacific is a political phrase, it is neither merely descriptive nor value-neutral. The Trump administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concepts, in particular, intends to restrict China and is, therefore, a reflection of Washington-increasing Beijing's strategic competition. In Beijing, the term "Indo-Pacific" is largely viewed as a US-led containment strategy aimed against China.[5] Many geopolitical scholars, like Robert D. Kaplan, anticipated that the US would emphasize Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean as two major areas in the late 2010s and beyond.[6]

To clarify how the definitions of the phrases Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific basins differ from one another, the Washington administration's regional policies must first be discussed. During the Obama administration, the ideas of "Asia Pivot" and "Rebalancing Asia" defined the United States' Asia-Pacific policy; during the Trump administration, these were replaced with the concept of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." Many political experts believe that the Asia-Pacific region has already taken center stage in global politics. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State M. Campbell[7] provides a concise but difficult critique of the Obama administration's Asian rebalancing policy in his book The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia. His thesis is much the same as Hillary Clinton's piece "America's Third Century," which appeared in Foreign Policy in October 2011. In this piece, Hillary[8] explains why the Asia-Pacific area is crucial for America's future: "the future of politics will be determined in Asia, not in Afghanistan or Iraq, and the

United States will be at the heart of the action." In this environment, the United States is attempting to build an Asia-Pacific front with India, Japan, Australia, and other Southeast Asian allies in order to balance Russia and China. Trump refers to this front as the free and open Indo-Pacific, while Joe Biden speaks of a safe and prosperous Indo-Pacific.[9]

The Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific conceptualizations appear to be a reflection of the region's geopolitical power struggle. Russia and China are rising in the Asia-Pacific region. Those who want to utilize this term acknowledge that Russia and China balance the United States.

**Table:** With reference to the differences between the two terminologies

| Difference between Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific | Indo-Pacific | Asia-Pacific |
|---|---|---|
| • | The Indo-Pacific area consists of the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the landmasses that surround them. | The phrase "Asia-Pacific" refers to the remainder of Asia in the Pacific Ocean. |
| • | This is a developing notion, and most experts believe it has the potential to move power and influence from the West to the East. | This is a suggested proposal that has the backing of Asia's Pacific powers, who are looking for a name to define their shared area. |
| • | Its geographic scope is unknown, although it is claimed to span from the coast of East Africa across the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific, encompassing Japan and Australia. | The Asia Pacific region is divided into three primary regions: northeast Asia, southeast Asia, and Oceania. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • | It is a commercial zone that encompasses both strategic and vital maritime routes. It has anything to do with marine security and collaboration. | It is more of an economic notion than a security concept. The region has had tremendous economic expansion since the late 1980s and is known as the emerging markets Region Dec. |
| • | It works in tandem with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quadrilateral), an informal organization of like-minded countries in the area that includes Australia, Japan, India, and the United States. | The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) is the only international organization that really represents the Asia-Pacific region. |
| • | India is a part of the Indo-Pacific region. | India is not at the heart of the Indo Pasific area. |

**Source:** This table prepared by the author

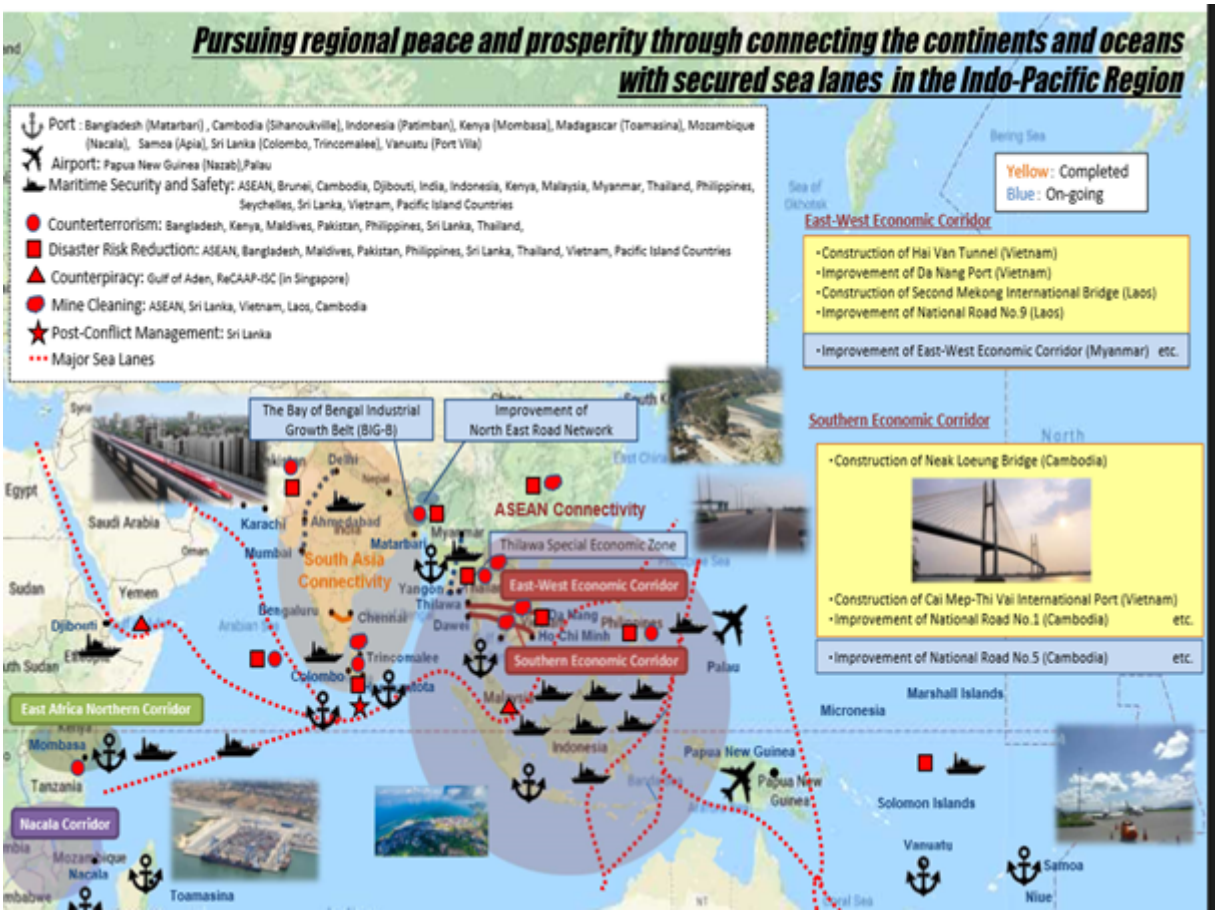
**Figure:** Map of the Indo-Pasific




**Source:** Tertia, Joseph & Perwita, Anak Agung Banyu. (2018). Maritime Security in Indo-Pacific: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects. Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional. 14. 77.

Was "Asia is not one" as Amitav Acharya[10] put it, an allusion to these days? Or was it just the interpretation given by a mental illusion? In terms of geospatial decency, the Indo-Pacific should be viewed as a linked region spanning the Indian and Pacific Oceans. While definitions vary based on each actor and their physical position within the enormous span, it is widely agreed that it stretches from Africa's east coast to the west coast of the United States. The Indo-Pacific is regarded as the heart of the globe in terms of politics and economics because it comprises the world's most significant maritime routes, the world's most populated nations that feed strong energy needs on its edges, and an extension that includes the finest global common resources.[11]

**Figure:** Indicate of an economic corridor in Indo-Pacific




**Source:** The Government of Japan, Towards Free and Open Indo-Pasific, November 2019 (https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf).

However, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's vision of the Indo-Pacific corresponds with that of the United States, with a particular emphasis on extending infrastructure beyond East Asia to the Middle East and Africa. ASEAN countries, which are strategically positioned in the heart of the Indo-Pacific, have given the region a more functional viewpoint by focusing their strategy on four dimensions: maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, and the economy. Japan, as a key ally of the United States in the Asia-Pacific area, plays an essential role in promoting and comprehending the Pacific. Aside from its inherent anxieties as an island nation, Japan's strong alliance with India and the United States stems from Japan's anxiety about China's increasing economic and military capabilities. Last but not least, The " Indo-Pacific Strategy" is led by the United States. The United States has recently proposed the "Indo-Pacific Strategy," which shows the country's focus on the Indian Ocean area. India has risen to prominence among developing economies in recent years as a result of its economic growth. The Asia-Pacific power structure, on the other hand, underwent similar changes once Obama's "Asia-Pacific rebalance" plan was abandoned. Trump's foreign policy has been met with skepticism among Asia-Pacific allies.

If it is evaluated in terms of India, Australia, and other countries, it is necessary to clarify this concept as follows: One of the first countries to establish the notion of "India" was Australia. In the 1960s, Australia contemplated exerting its influence in the "India" region in order to avoid its own Cold War problems. Today, Australia aggressively supports the United States' "Indo-Pacific" policy and highlights its critical role in that strategy, not only because it wants to strengthen US-Australia economic relations but also because it wants to expand its presence and breadth of interests in Southeast Asia. Also, the responses of Southeast Asian countries to the "Indo-Pacific strategy" should be studied. Southeast Asia is becoming a key area that cannot be overlooked in terms of connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Indonesia and Singapore are also supporters of the concept of "Indo-Pacific strategy," and the concept of "Indo-Pacific" will have the opportunity to develop its strategic position due to the location advantages of Indonesia and Singapore. They, on the other hand, do not want to miss out on the benefits of China's economic progress.[12] The economic ties between the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas will inevitably strengthen as a result of globalization and increased regional collaboration. Meanwhile, the world's ocean regions, politics, economy, and security role in increasing the world's political and economic center of gravity is for them to become, both inside and outside the region, and draws players from a large international

collaboration, bringing them into the competition arena.[13]

**Figure:** Map of the Asia-Pacific




**Source:** Oakman, Jodi & Dollard, Maureen & Shimazu, Akihito & Nordin, Rusli. (2016). State of the Art: The Context of Psychosocial Factors at Work in the Asia Pacific? 10.1007/978-3-319-44400-0_1.

Asia- Pacific region of the world is located in or around the Western Pacific Ocean. The region's extent varies depending on the context, although it usually encompasses at least a large portion of East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Russia and nations in the Americas on the coast of the Eastern Pacific Ocean are also included; the Asia-Pacific

the United States. Alternatively, the phrase can refer to all of Asia and Australasia, as well as small/medium/big Pacific island states - for example, when separating the world into broad commercial areas. Though inaccurate, the phrase has gained use in business, finance, and politics since the late 1980s. In reality, despite the variety of the region's economy, the majority of individual nations within the zone are developing markets experiencing fast development.

**Figure:** Asia-Pacific's Trade Road




**Source:** (https://www.behance.net/gallery/36884601/Asia-Pacific-Trade-Routes-(1-map))

## ISLAMOPHOBIA IN ASIA

The word Islamophobia first appeared in the 1990s, and it alluded to a global arena without its own politics, rather than labor as in anti-black racism or capital as in antisemitism. Islamophobia did not replace its racist forerunners; rather, it empowered them in a setting where nation-states could not establish political dominance over non-state environmental, economic, or civilizational factors.[14]

Despite the broad increase of Islamophobia, relatively little academic study on Islamophobia in Asian nations has been conducted. This contrasts with the well-documented issue of Islamophobia in the West. The growth of Islamophobia in Europe and North America has been fueled by an increase in terrorist acts in Europe, a refugee crisis on the same continent, and the development of right-wing nationalist groups.[15] In this part, it is necessary to concentrate on rising Asia's backyard. Justice for All[16] is a human rights group that fights for persecuted Muslim minorities, with a particular focus on the situation of Rohingya, Uighur, and Muslim minorities in India and Kashmir. China's widespread imprisonment of Uighurs. Burma's Rohingya people have been harassed and pushed away. In Delhi, Indians were cut to pieces and burned alive. On the one hand, India has detained many ethnic Bengalis in Assam state because their names do not appear on their citizenship records, while on the other, it has announced that it will expand these camps across the country, particularly in Kashmir, and subject them to a process of moderating segments deemed a security threat. China, on the other hand, has sent Uighur individuals of Uighur ancestry in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to political training camps en masse, while most states and public have carried out protests, and China continues ethnic assimilation. Despite their various names, these camps with the same goal remind us of dark eras in Western history, and foreign news reports on the increase in deaths at the camps create the idea that Asia's rising powers are also going through a dark phase akin to the West. Chinese Islamophobia is an intentional state strategy aimed at laying the groundwork for a future global hegemony. It is based on Chinese political culture's habit of mercilessly crushing any dissent, as well as the ambitions of a man who wishes to control the world's most populous country until his death. Uighurs are currently victims of China's combination of old tradition (Maoism) and contemporary capitalism (surveillance capitalism and terror capitalism). In reality, China's current system is an exception, with a capitalist economy governed by a single-man Communist Party. Clearly, such a dictatorship is neither genuinely capitalist nor communist; rather, it is a dictatorial state on the verge of totalitarianism.[17]

Immigrant Muslims in Assam are now seen as one of the main dangers to the Indian state's security after the 2008 eruptions were followed by a series of similar assaults in January 2009. As a result of the intense pressure on the federal and state governments to discover and arrest illegal immigrants, the Assam Assembly approved the building of two detention camps to hold them in July 2009. In recent years, it has been widely speculated on a worldwide agenda that the National Register of Citizenship, which was implemented as a pilot program in Assam following the general elections, would

Kashmir's status sparked a surge of demonstrations across the country, with laws like the Babri Mosque decision, the Citizenship Law Amendment, and eventually the National Registration of Citizenship being enacted across the country. To avoid being stateless, millions of individuals in India must now demonstrate that their ancestors are from India. Recent events, ranging from militarism in Kashmir to contested detention camps across the nation, have already cemented their position in India's violent history, alongside previous anti-Islamic Ayodya or Gujarat incidents. Despite the fact that what is occurring in India is more sociologically complicated than what is happening in China, both players argue that their comparable initiatives are intended to avoid violence in order to justify their own activities and that they should not meddle in their internal affairs.

Since the late 1970s, Myanmar's government has used discriminatory laws to compel hundreds of thousands of Muslim Rohingya to flee the nation, which is mostly Buddhist. The majority arrived in Bangladesh by land, but some arrived by water in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Because the government refuses to award Rohingya citizenship, many of the group's members lack legal documentation and are effectively stateless. Myanmar's 1948 citizenship legislation was already discriminatory, and the military junta, which seized power in 1962, issued a statute denying the Rohingyas full citizenship two decades later. The junta began giving white cards to numerous Muslims, including Rohingya and non-Rohingya, in the 1990s, and Rohingyas were allowed to register as temporary residents using them until recently. White cards gave you limited privileges, but they weren't proof of citizenship. Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's then de de facto leader, has rejected ethnic cleansing and slammed foreign criticism of her handling of the situation, accusing opponents of inflaming tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in the country.[18] The military takeover in Myanmar has made Rohingya Muslims more vulnerable to the junta's crimes, putting the long-persecuted minority community's future in jeopardy. The crackdown has made it even more difficult for refugees distant from their homes to return securely to their homes.

## CONCLUSION

There are geopolitical power conflicts between different power groupings in international relations. Following their centering on the globe map, nations or hegemonic powers designate the remaining areas depending on their own positions. Concepts like the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East show a Western-centered, particularly European perspective in this setting. The modernization and nationalization movements have been generally successful in establishing a Western-centered vision of international

the focus point. While the area is experiencing war between multiple powers, detention camps, Islamophobia, and migration are on the rise in the backdrop. Islamophobia is an indispensable issue for hegemons; it also forms the basis of the West's security policies and is a reflection of the geopolitical power struggle from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific. While global and regional powers were rising in Asia, studies of Islamophobia in the region were ignored. It is necessary to give importance to the rising Islamophobia in Asia as much as the ones in the West and to produce policies.

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