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## THE CONCEPT OF THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

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### Abstract

The term 'Indo-Pacific region' (IPR) was first used in international studies by the Indian researcher G.S. Khurana, who included in this concept the maritime space that unites the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, all Asian (up to the Middle East) and even North African countries, highlighting the connecting elements of 'energy routes'.

Therefore, this article is devoted to the concept of the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), which is a new geopolitical concept in which India is being introduced. This Asian country is now seen as one of the most important elements of the region because of its enormous potential. Therefore, Western countries are trying to 'win' it over and bring it into the 'leading four' of the ITR (the United States, Japan, India, and Australia). To understand how India has become a "key element" of the RIIT, the authors analyse the main factors that influenced this.

It is shown that the US views interaction with India as a 'bearing axle' in the American strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. The concept of the Indo-Pacific region has a clear anti-Chinese orientation and is created as a counterweight to the main initiative of the People's Republic of China 'One Belt, One Road'. As for India's participation in the new format, Delhi's difficult relations with Beijing, the rivalry of the two countries on the Asian continent, and the concerns of India, the United States, Japan and many Asian countries about China's actions in the South China Sea are taken into account here. The role of the concept of IPR as a key element of the modern India's foreign policy strategy is considered, the importance of economic, security, civilizational and cultural factors in this process is analyzed.

**Keywords:** the concept of the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), India's role, India's foreign policy strategy, economic, security, civilizational and cultural factors

## КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ІНДІЙСЬКО-ТИХООКЕАНСЬКОГО РЕГІОНУ: РОЛЬ І ЗНАЧЕННЯ ІНДІЇ

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### Анотація

Термін «Індо-Тихоокеанський регіон» (ІТР) вперше у міжнародній тематиці використав індійський дослідник Г.С. Хурана, який до цього поняття включив морський простір, що об'єднує Індійський океан і західну частину Тихого океану, усі азійські (аж до Близького Сходу) і навіть північно-африканські країни, виділивши при цьому сполучні елементи «енергетичних шляхів».

Стаття присвячена розгляду концепції Індійсько-Тихоокеанського регіону (ІТР), який є новим геополітичним концептом, до якого вводиться Індія. Ця азійська країна розглядається сьогодні одним із найважливіших елементів цього регіону через її величезний потенціал. Тому країни Заходу намагаються «перетягнути» її на свій бік і ввести до «керівної четвірки» зі створення ІТР (США, Японія, Індія, Австралія). Для розуміння того як Індія перетворилася на «ключовий елемент» ІТР автори дають аналіз основних чинників, які вплинули на це.

Автори акцентують увагу на тому, що США розглядають взаємодію з Індією як «несучу вісь» в американській стратегії в Азійсько-тихоокеанському регіоні. Концепція Індійсько-Тихоокеанського регіону має явну антикитайську спрямованість і створюється як противага основній ініціативі КНР «Один пояс – один шлях». Що стосується участі Індії у новому форматі, то тут враховуються непрості відносини Делі з Пекіном, суперництво двох країн на Азійському континенті й занепокоєння Індії, Сполучених Штатів, Японії і багатьох країн Азії з приводу дій Китаю в Південно-Китайському морі. Розглядається роль концепту ІТР як ключового елементу зовнішньополітичної стратегії сучасної Індії, аналізується значення у цьому процесі економічних, безпекових та цивілізаційно-культурних чинників.

**Ключові слова:** концепт Індійсько-Тихоокеанського регіону (ІТР), роль Індії, зовнішньополітична стратегія Індії, економічні, безпекові, цивілізаційно-культурні чинники

**Formulation of the problem.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept of the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), which characterizes India's central position in the regional dimension, is gaining more and more geopolitical importance. It should be singled out a number of countries that purposefully promote the concept of the Indo-Pacific region. These include the USA, India, Japan, and Australia. Moreover, in each country, the role of the term in the official discourse and the specific content of the concept of IPR depend significantly on foreign political factors and the domestic political situation, they can be inclusive (India) or exclusive (USA). ITR becomes both an object of implementation of India's foreign policy

strategy and a positioning tool on the international arena, which prompts consideration of the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Indian interpretation of this concept.

**Last researchers' analysis of the problem.** The concept of ITR is increasingly attracting the attention of scientists. In particular, the greatest emphasis on the object of research is shown by Indian scientists – G.S. Khurana (Khurana, 2007), R. Suresh (Suresh, 2020), C.R. Mohan (Mohan, 2013, 2006) A. Muzamdar (Muzamdar, 2021). Among the Ukrainian scientists who research the factors of formation and directions of implementation of India's foreign policy, we should mention O.I. Lukash (Lukash, 2015, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c), O. Bordilovska (Bordilovska, 2023). N. Gorodnya (Gorodnya, 2022), examines the specifics of India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policies. Let's note the research of a specialist of the National Institute of Strategic Studies of Ukraine (Republic of India..., 2022). US documents (The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, 2022) and speeches of the leaders of the states belonging to the ITR region ('Confluence of the Two Seas'..., 2007; Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue, 2018) – were important in conducting the research.

**The purpose of the study** is to consider the Indian understanding of the concept of IPR, to analyze to what extent the new geopolitical phenomenon affects India.

**The results and discussions.** The term 'Indo-Pacific region' (IPR) was first used in international topics by the Indian researcher G.S. Khurana in his 2007 article on economic security in India-Japan relations (Khurana, 2007). To the concept of 'Indo-Pacific' it included the sea space that unites the Indian Ocean and the western part of the Pacific Ocean, and among the territories and states adjacent to it, the author indicated all Asian (up to the Middle East) and even North African ones, and as connecting elements he singled out 'energy pathways'. In some works, G.S. Khurana is even named almost the main author of the mentioned term, despite borrowing the latter from another scientific field.

Regarding the assessments of other Indian scientists, R. Bhatia and V. Sakhuja call the term 'IPR' more 'reliable and modern' in comparison with the traditional concept of 'APR' (Bhatia & Sakhuja, 2014). In their opinion, considerations related to the naval factor and the rivalry between India and China for spheres of influence also became the primary basis for such a situation. At the same time, in India itself there are critics of the new discourse and the new approach, who point to a number of contradictions within New Delhi's Indo-Pacific strategy (contradictions in the US-China-India vector are meant).

Indian authors note that for India the transition of the term 'Indo-Pacific' from the scientific plane to the field of political discourse occurred in 2011. It is noteworthy that the former Prime Minister of India M. Singh used it in relations not only with the United States and its immediate allies in the region, but also with their ASEAN partners. His successor, the current Prime Minister of India N. Modi continued to use this concept in his speeches. However, if M. Singh's rhetoric was characterized by the use of 'IPR' as a convenient terminological format, N. Modi went much further in this regard, continuing the conceptualization of the concept. By this, in particular, we mean the 'Indo-Pacific Initiative' put forward by him during the summit of the countries of East Asia in 2019. This initiative was also focused on the concepts of stability and security in the region, and to a large extent focused on the maritime component.

It should be noted here that Japan made a notable contribution to the development of the IPR concept. At the governmental level, the term 'Indo-Pacific' was first used by Japanese Prime Minister S. Abe during his term as Prime Minister in 2006-2007. Speaking in the Parliament of India on August 22, 2007, he used the term for the first time as a geopolitical discourse ('Confluence of the Two Seas', 2007). Then, in the 2010s, the IPR discourse experienced a rapid evolution in Japanese political practice. In 2012, S. Abe, without using the term 'Indo-Pacific', in one of his articles proclaimed the inseparability of peace, free navigation and stability in the Pacific Ocean from similar principles in the Indian Ocean. And already in 2013, during one of his speeches in the USA, he actively used the relevant terminology of IPR. It is also worth noting that 2016 marked a new stage in the

implementation of the term at the government level: S. Abe announced the adoption of the concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

As for the formation of American views on the development of the geopolitical concept of IPR, it began in the period of 2000-2010s. It was believed that after protracted wars and failures in attempts to build a peaceful life in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US should turn its attention to the Asia-Pacific region, while trying to attract dynamically developing India into its orbit. Thus, in 2011, B. Obama and H. Clinton announced a 'strategic pivot to Asia'. The development of the IPR concept continued under President D. Trump – on June 1, 2019, the US Ministry of Defense released the first official document dedicated to IPR – the Indo-Pacific Strategy (Strategy Report, 2019). In general, this strategy was based on the American strategic documents previously published by the Trump administration: The National Security Strategy (2017) and The National Defense Strategy (2018).

Based on these documents, the ultimate goal of promoting the American project of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' became obvious – to contain the PRC, whose ambitions began to threaten the United States not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also in the Indian Ocean. After the election of the President of the United States J. Biden, in May 2021, an initial document The Outline of the US Strategy for the Indo-Pacific Region was adopted. And a full-fledged US Indo-Pacific strategy was published on the White House website in February 2022. This document revealed the new presidential administration's strategic vision for "a key region on which America's security and prosperity will depend" (The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, 2022).

Thus, a brief overview of the formation of the new geopolitical discourse, as well as the concept of IPR, shows that the new concept in a short chronological period went through a difficult path of formation, covering the leading states of the modern world and exerting a significant influence on their foreign policy strategies.

Most Indian and other foreign authors note that the concept of IPR in the Indian political discourse is a 'key element' of India's long-term foreign policy strategy at the current stage. Understanding the imperatives on which the Indian leadership rests regarding this concept, is extremely important, since the concept itself originated in India and plays an extremely important role for it – helping to form a base for expanding its political, cultural, economic and military influence. At the same time, the idea of IPR in Indian political elites and expert circles is dynamically transformed depending on the tasks that India sets for itself.

An example of such a transformation recently is the shift of the focus of Indian foreign policy activity towards the Indian Ocean. Herewith, the concept of IPR remains central in the Indian foreign policy discourse. At the same time, some changes are taking place: the Indian Ocean (with its coastal territories) is given the most important role in the security sphere, and the rest of the IPR space is the economic and cultural historical sphere, i.e. in this zone of the region, India does not seek to achieve military dominance. This transformation has resulted from major changes in both India's domestic politics and economy, as well as changes on the world political scene in recent years.

In this regard, it should be noted that with the end of the Cold War and the change in the foreign policy situation in India, there was a demand for a new strategy that would allow the country to find a place in the changed world and achieve the main goal of becoming one of the leading states. The beginning of this process was laid within the framework of the Look East policy (since the 1990s), which provided for an economic and political reorientation towards the countries of Southeast Asia.

It should be noted that at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, India successfully carried out economic reform and modernization, fruitfully developed relations with neighboring South Asian countries (Lukash, 2018b: 275), tested nuclear weapons, and ended the Kargil conflict with Pakistan. The growth rate of its economy reached almost 9% per year. Indian elites hoped that India would soon catch up with China in terms of economic development and, as a result, they had an increased desire to expand India's

spheres of influence. The latter could only be done by going beyond the Indian Ocean and including the western Pacific Ocean in this sphere.

Along the way, India would inevitably enter into a confrontation with China in one form or another, which needed a strong navy. Therefore, at the end of the 1990s, a powerful lobby was formed in the Indian elites, which supported the development of the Indian Navy and advocated maritime expansion. However, after the defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the elections, the government of Manmohan Singh (Prime Minister of India in 2004-2014) came to power, which paid relatively little attention to the Chinese threat and did not consider the Indian and especially the Pacific Oceans as zones of confrontation with China.

This situation changed only after the election victory of N. Modi (Prime Minister of India since 2014), under whom the *Look East* policy was renamed *Act East* (Muzamdar, 2021: 359) to emphasize the importance of Southeast Asia and ASEAN for India's security framework. However, N. Modi expressed his official position on IPR only a few years later – in his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, 2018.

The Shangri-La Dialogue Asian Security Summit is an annual intergovernmental security forum held by an independent think tank – the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in which defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and other military leaders of 28 APR countries participate. The forum got its name from the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore, where it has been held since 2002. The summit is a platform for discussing the most important political issues, as well as defense and security issues in the region.

Speaking at this summit in 2018, the Prime Minister of India linked the concept of IPR with the *Act East* and SAGAR projects (India's doctrine of maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Security and Growth for All in the Region) and emphasized the main role of ASEAN in IPR, as well as the inclusiveness of the new region. According to him, the basis of the Indo-Pacific region should be an order based on exact rules.

In total, N. Modi singled out six most important features of the IPR: 1. An open, free (inclusive) region, which includes both countries that are geographically present in it, as well as those that have their own interests there; 2. The center of IPR is Southeast Asia; ASEAN will continue to play a key role in the region; 3. In the IPR there should be a generally recognized order based on respect for sovereignty, priority of law, territorial integrity, equal rights of states regardless of their size, economic and military power; 4. IPR countries should have equal access to the sea and air space of the region in accordance with international law and strive to coordinate efforts in the fight against crime and terrorism, in the preservation of ecology and the development of the maritime economy; 5. IPR as a region benefits from globalization; this requires an open, stable, rules-based trade regime that will be successful for all countries in the Indo-Pacific region; 6. It is necessary to strengthen the internal connectivity of the IPR region, strengthen mutual complementarity and mutual trust – this will unite and strengthen the region. 'Building bridges of trust' should take place alongside the construction of infrastructure (Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue, 2018).

The concept of IPR has firmly entered the Indian foreign policy discourse. In order to understand how it turned into a 'key element' that determines India's relations with the countries of this region, how its foreign policy is built in modern conditions, it is necessary to analyze the main factors that significantly influence the Indian concept of IPR and determine the main directions of its foreign policy strategies. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish security-political, economic and civilizational-cultural factors.

**Security and political (Chinese) factor.** Most of the Indian as well as other foreign authors point out that the main rival and competitor of India is China, which has a negative perception of the concept of IPR. According to Indian analysts, the Chinese are implementing the formula 'multipolar world, unipolar Asia', where there is no place for India as a regional leader. The perception of China as the main threat forms in India the



relevant prerequisites for determining the leading direction of security in the concept of IPR (Brewster, 2018: 55).

Indian experts believe that China threatens India from four directions. The first is Pakistan, with which the PRC actually has allied relations and which receives a large number of Chinese loans and weapons. The second is the line of de facto control in the Himalayas, where China disputes India's ownership of a number of territories that, according to Beijing's position, were historically part of Tibet. The third is Southeast Asia, where the political and economic influence of the PRC is constantly growing, and in the future, according to the Indians, a scenario is possible in which some of the countries in the region will lose their sovereignty and fall under China's dominance. The fourth is the Indian Ocean region, in which the Chinese side is implementing the String of Pearls strategy, seeking to gain control over the chain of ports surrounding India with the help of expensive infrastructure projects; in case of a conflict, these ports can be used by the Chinese Navy for an economic blockade of India (Rajesh & Sharma, 2017).

As rightly noted in the analytical study of Ukrainian experts entitled Republic of India: a growing power, India has an advantage in terms of forces in the direction of Pakistan. A full-fledged war in the Himalayas (taking into account the complexity of the terrain, difficult natural conditions and the specifics of warfare), which would threaten the existence of India as an independent state, is hardly possible in the near future. The eastern (Southeast Asia) and southern (Indian Ocean region) directions appear to be the most vulnerable (Republic of India: A Power on the Rise, 2022).

Geographically, these two sub-regions are included, and within the framework of the IPR conceptualization, India emphasizes, on the one hand, the development of relations with the island states of the Indian Ocean (the SAGAR project), and on the other hand, strengthening contacts with the countries of Southeast Asia, on whose position it depends, in particular, whether China will have ports in the Indian Ocean, whether a canal will be built across the Isthmus of Kra, and whether the Chinese Navy's strike squadron will be able to pass through the Straits of Malacca if necessary.

From India's point of view, the Chinese strategy String of pearls is a significant danger. The essence of the strategy is the construction of various infrastructure facilities (deep-water ports, repair docks, naval bases) in China's friendly countries on the northern coast of the Indian Ocean. China's goal is to reach the borders of this ocean, and the so-called 'pearls' should help it build strategic ties with countries along maritime transport corridors: from the Middle East to the South China Sea, in order to protect its interests and ensure energy security, reducing dependence from the Strait of Malacca, through which almost 80% of Chinese energy imports pass.

The problem for China is that the states that are actively advocating for the approval and development of the IPR concept are also members of the Quad Group of Nations, a strategic dialogue between Australia, India, the United States and Japan, which perceived by China and a number of other countries as an anti-Chinese alliance. China views this dialogue as an attempt by major powers, primarily the United States, to curb its progress in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, China has its own mega-regional project – One Belt, One Road, which covers IPR as well. The fact that the IPR concept is positioned as a serious alternative to this Chinese project increases the India-China confrontation.

During the work of the founding Quad summit (March, 2021), four strategic directions of cooperation were outlined, which correspond to the interests of the participants of the Quad and determine the main directions of India's foreign policy cooperation in the field of security with Australia, the United States and Japan within the framework of IPR: 1) maritime security in the East and South China Seas and the Indian Ocean; 2) security of logistics chains: supply of critically important goods, in particular medical purposes; 3) provision of technological advantages, especially in the field of information and telecommunication technologies, space exploration; 5G technologies; 4) the development of diplomatic initiatives aimed at deepening cooperation with the

states of the region and the development of economic cooperation with ASEAN, APEC and other structures located in the IPR zone.

N. Modi expressed his willingness to participate in the Quad project after B. Obama's visit to India in 2015. Speaking at the founding Quad Summit in March 2021 with a separate statement, he called its members a 'four of global good' ready to work to promote shared values and promote a secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Experts note that such a step may indicate India's revision of the traditional principle of 'strategic autonomy' of the traditional policy of neutrality, rapprochement with the US and other Western countries, and a desire to play an active role in ITR (Joint Statement from Quad Leaders, 2021).

At the same time, the desire to maintain strategic autonomy, the reluctance to turn into a junior ally of the US in the fight against China, force India to increase contacts with ASEAN, with the countries of Southeast Asia, which pursue an independent policy. However, relying on the Quad seems to have no alternative in the context of ASEAN's military weakness and the absence of other mechanisms in the region aimed at containing China.

**Economic factors.** India had to find its niche in the economic space that was formed after the end of the Cold War, and it made a bet on the development of the service sector. This option was considered by Indian and Western economists as an opportunity of quick transition to a post-industrial society. For all the advantages of reform and modernization carried out in India at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the structure of the Indian economy (where the service sector occupies more than 40%) has its disadvantages: India is unable to compete with China in terms of industrial production and at the same time does not want to play the former role of an intermediary and transshipment center in Sino-European trade.

Thus, India found itself in a difficult position: during the actual transfer of the world economy center of gravity to the East, China turned out to be the main beneficiary, which is perceived by the Indian elites as the main rival. The fear of becoming economically dependent on China turned into India's rejection of the Chinese concept of One Belt, One Road, announced in 2012.

In 2013, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, announced the launch of another initiative – the Maritime Silk Road of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The large-scale infrastructure project aimed to connect mainland Chinese ports with ports in Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe. Indian experts perceived this strategy negatively, suggesting that China plans to use leased ports in the IPR zone as full-fledged naval bases in the event of a conflict with India to carry out a 'strategic encirclement' of India (Mohan, 2013).

As a result, the concept of IPR began to be perceived in the Indian expert community and in political elites as an alternative to the concept of String of pearls and the Maritime Silk Road initiative. This, in turn, required a rethinking of the very format of the IPR and the filling of its economic component, so that it would be able to compete with Chinese initiatives, strategies and with the main Chinese project – One Belt, One Road.

Since the Indian leadership understood that economically India is weaker than China and cannot afford to spend significant funds on strengthening its position in the region, it seemed appropriate to try to find an alternative format of the economic basis for the Indian IPR concept. The fact that the Indo-Pacific region is a huge economic conglomerate, where 60% of the world's population lives, 60% of the world's GDP is produced, and two-thirds of the increase in world wealth is taken into account here (Shevchuk, 2021).

In the conditions developed in India, there was a choice: to develop local formats of interaction, to bet on the expansion of bilateral economic relations with the countries of Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea and the USA, or to join one of the emerging megablocs. As a result, it chose a comprehensive approach, using all these options at the same time. India intensified its work with regional trade and economic blocs (SAARC and BIMSTEC) (Lukash, 2018), in which it is the undisputed leader; implemented a number of joint

infrastructure projects involving investments and technologies from Japan, successfully developed cooperation with the SEA countries and projects with ASEAN (Gorodnia, 2022: 261); expressed interest in participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), conducted negotiations on membership in the Comprehensive Regional Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The most promising option seemed to be joining one of the regional megablocs, which can allow the states included in them to integrate into already existing trade and production chains or build new ones, thereby stimulating the development of their economies.

At the time of the formation of the IPR concept, there was one mega block project in the region – TPP, a preferential trade agreement between 12 countries of the Asia-Pacific region, the purpose of which was to reduce tariff barriers, regulate internal rules in such areas as labor law, ecology, intellectual property etc. The question of joining the TPP caused great debate in Indian economic and political circles. As a result, India did not join the mega bloc. The main argument of the Indian leadership was that the TPP cannot play the role of a regional trade block that corresponds to India's foreign policy strategy, and therefore become the economic basis for the IPR.

Another potential megablock for India was called *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership* (RCEP). This is a 'free trade area plus' agreement, it covers 10 ASEAN member states and 5 states with which ASEAN has already signed free trade agreements. This megablock includes 3 developed and 12 developing countries. Negotiations began in 2012, and the Agreement on the establishment of the RCEP was signed in Hanoi on November 15, 2020. The introduction of this megablock creates the world's largest free trade zone with approximately 2.2 billion consumers and a GDP of \$28 trillion, which is more than 32% of the total world GDP.

Although joining the mega bloc would obviously have the same negative consequences as joining the TPP, India could still count on securing its interests with the support of most member countries, many of whom feared Chinese dominance and were are interested in attracting another powerful economy to the megablock, which could become a counterweight for the PRC.

However, in 2019, India pulled out of the RCEP negotiations due to strained relations with China and fears that some sectors of its economy could not withstand additional competition in the domestic market. According to Indian experts, additional factors that led to India's decision to withdraw from the negotiations were the following: lack of real prospects for a significant increase in exports of goods and services; preservation of non-tariff barriers in trade; imperfection in determining the origin of goods; lack of effective internal market protection mechanisms. In addition, the negotiating partners did not take into account India's position, which was to exclude the most favored nation treatment of the investment agreement, because India did not want to give preferences in this area to states with which it has territorial disputes (Havrylenko & Shyrokyi, 2021).

Neither the considered megablocks (TPP, RCEP), nor subregional integration projects (see, for example: SAGAR, 2015) (Asia Africa Growth Corridor Partnership, 2017), nor the latest infrastructure concepts and initiatives (see, for example: the infrastructure initiative Asia Africa Growth Corridor, AAGC, 2017) (Asia Africa Growth Corridor Partnership, 2017), nor the largest megaprojects (see, for example: the Blue Dot Network megaproject, BDN, 2019) (Blue Dot Network Vision Statement) do not allow India to solve the main task: to build an economic basis for IPR that would correspond to its vision. The best solution to this task, according to the Indian leadership, could be the formation of a single trade and economic system of IPR with many centers – India, ASEAN, Japan, the People's Republic of China, Russia, Australia, the USA, where all foreign participants would recognize the special interests of India in the region of India ocean and would be ready to open borders for Indian goods and services.



It is obvious that the creation of such a structure in the modern world is in principle unlikely. Therefore, India will most likely try to create a sustainable foundation for IPR through international bilateral treaties and multilateral structures. Another option is also possible – India's joining any megablock or infrastructure initiative, including the one announced at the last G-20 summit in September, 2023) (Bordilovska, 2023).

The second option is likely to be implemented only if its benefits in the eyes of the Indian elites outweigh the obvious disadvantages. As a key criterion of benefit, first of all, the rapid growth of the Indian economy can be singled out, which will allow it to take a more important position in the region in the near future and put on the agenda the question of revising its role in the economic structure of IPR.

*Civilizational and cultural factors.* Cultural ties and awareness of civilizational unity play an important role in Indian foreign policy discourse; they are actively used to solve foreign policy problems and tasks. Mentions of a single cultural and religious space connecting India and the countries of South-East Asia are found in many works of Indian authors, which thus explain the need to include the IPR countries in the orbit of Indian influence. The leadership of India regularly appeals to this thesis, and since 2014, when N. Modi came to power; the emphasis on the cultural component in the foreign policy discourse has significantly increased.

In the speeches of many Indian politicians, there is often a mention of the fact that in the development of the SEA countries, they were significantly influenced by Indian culture and religion (the fact that many countries of the IPR have adopted Buddhism, the homeland of which is India, is mentioned, as well as numerous other cultural and linguistic borrowings). This emphasizes that Indians have become bearers of the most important civilizational and cultural values for near and far countries. Attention is focused on the fact that India, whose development was historically interrupted by Muslim and then European invasions, will again turn into a leading power in the region.

Such a policy of 'soft power' allows India to ensure its presence in the political discourse of the IPR without significant financial investments and an increase in military spending. The ruling party (BDP) has from the very beginning paid close attention to cultural and civilizational issues, many political figures and the majority of the ruling elite consider these issues to be central in the conduct of foreign policy both within the framework of the South Asian sub-region and in the format of the Indo-Pacific region.

Analyzing the civilizational and cultural factors and their influence on the features of India's foreign policy in the IPR format, it is important to note the specificity of the modern Indian foreign policy vision, which has its historical roots in the cultural and philosophical foundations of ancient Indian civilization.

The need for the formation of a new foreign policy vision arose in India with the growth of its economic power and the appearance of claims to the role of one of the centers of the multipolar world, it is designed to substantiate and strengthen these aspirations. Such a vision was proposed in the early 2000s by the famous Indian political scientist S.R. Mohan. He took as a basis the common for Indians ancient idea of the world as a complex structure that can be depicted in the form of a mandala – a geometric symbol, the key element of which is concentric circles. At the center is India itself; it is surrounded by three circles, within the limits of the near – the so-called zone of immediate neighborhood, the states of South Asia are located; within the limits of the second, in the extended neighborhood zone – the countries of Southeast Asia, East Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia; the last third circle includes the rest of the world (Mohan, 2006).

The countries in the near circle are of strategic importance for India, and in case of danger, India does not rule out the use of force there (for example, the Indo-Pakistani conflicts in the state of Jammu and Kashmir); in the countries of the 2<sup>nd</sup> circle, it prefers to act mainly by economic methods, as a peace-loving state that upholds the priority of international law, the principles of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence (these principles also apply to the 3<sup>rd</sup> circle).

This concept, as it follows from the speeches of Indian officials, quite aptly describes the reflective view of the Indian leadership on the world and Indian foreign policy. Thus, as early as 2006, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs P. Mukherjee in one of his speeches mentioned the 'Indian paradigm' of security: the expansion of concentric circles of interaction from the center outward, and in another he explained that the region of India's 'extended neighborhood' includes West Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region. A little later, this formulation was repeated by the famous Indian diplomat S. Menon. Many other leading Indian diplomats and political figures defined Indian foreign policy in the same terms. The stability of this vision is explained by its correspondence to the views of modern Indian leaders, which directly stem from ancient traditional Indian ideas about the structure of the world.

Peculiarities of modern India's interaction with the outside world, conditioned by democratic ideals, arose on the basis of ancient traditions. In the future, they were creatively developed and determined by the concept of nonviolent resistance of M. Gandhi, the five principles of peaceful coexistence ('pancha shila') of J. Nehru, as well as the spread of the Non-Aligned Movement in the 1960s.

Modern India is building a peaceful foreign policy using the tools of multilateral diplomacy, in particular in the IPR, where it acts on behalf of developing states (or states of the Global South). The guiding idea underlying India's positioning in the global dimension is pluralism and inclusiveness for different ethnic groups, cultures and traditions, religions and philosophies such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, in their harmonious coexistence within one state (or one region), the guarantee of which is the well-known ancient Indian principle of 'unity in diversity' (Lukash, 2015).

To promote economic growth and attract foreign investors, the Indian government has taken a course to gradually get rid of the image of a poor and illiterate country. For this purpose, back in 1996, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF). Its purpose is to increase awareness of Indian products in foreign markets, as well as to attract foreign investment. In this aspect, human capital (especially the numerous Indian youth) is an equally attractive instrument of 'soft politics'.

The country has also received international recognition for its important role in solving global human problems. In particular, it is a leader among the countries of South Asia in matters of humanitarian aid delivery. First of all, the state actively participates in the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) program. The Indian Defense Forces, under the auspices of the Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff (HQ IDS), conducts humanitarian activities inside and outside the country. India is actively involved in capacity building within the framework of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). India's humanitarian activities to eliminate the consequences of natural disasters and provide medical aid within the framework of relevant associations (including in the active fight against the spread of COVID-19) have a positive effect on the perception of the Indian state by international partners in IPR.

**Conclusions.** Summing up, it is necessary to highlight the following: IPR as a new geopolitical concept (and, accordingly, a discourse) appeared in international political theory and practice relatively recently (2007 can be considered an approximate date); it goes through a rather complicated path of development, as it differs to some extent in the content and interpretation of specific tasks in different countries participating in its formation and dissemination. Similarities and differences between the concepts of APR and IPR are that the more established term APR generally refers to a macro-region, including the political and socio-economic space adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, while IPR represents a discourse of a wider than APR, geopolitical space (macrorregion), which includes two oceans – the Indian and the Pacific, as well as the territories of countries adjacent to them.

The emergence of the discourse and concept of IPR is undoubtedly connected with important, substantial geopolitical and geo-economics changes that have taken place in the

system of modern international relations, due to the rapid growth of economic opportunities and the spread of China's influence and ambitions in the world, especially in the Asia Pacific region, the aggravation of American-Chinese rivalry, the development of new geopolitical configurations in the USA–China–India formats. The inclusion of India and the Indian Ocean in the new concept indicates the need and desire of the leading world powers (the USA, Japan, and Australia) to limit or stop Chinese expansionism; using India as a powerful deterrent (the creation of a quadrilateral dialogue with the participation of India is a confirmation of this). The geopolitical concept of IPR has a particularly important role and significance for India, in modern conditions it has become a 'key element' of its long-term foreign policy strategy. Economic, security, civilizational and cultural factors that determine the development of modern India are the strong basis and catalysts of this process.

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