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Q6(b)

## **India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyze**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Indian Foreign Policy

Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy; institutions of policy-making; continuity and change.

### **Core demand of the question**

- Define free and open Indo-Pacific as India's interest (sea lanes, ASEAN, against closed spheres)
- **Name partners:** Quad, Japan, US, Australia, France, ASEAN, others
- **Link connectivity:** SAGAR, IPOI, IMEC, Chabahar, supply chains
- **Analyse limits:** China, resources, ASEAN caution

### **Revision summary**

FOIP for India is an open maritime order, not a Chinese lake or a U.S. private canal.

- **Core partners:** Japan, the United States, Australia, France and ASEAN; Quad is the sharpest minilateral.

Connectivity - SAGAR, IPOI, IMEC, Chabahar, INSTC, digital public goods - is the other half of 'assurance'.

The strategy is sound; neighbourhood leakage and thin shipyard capacity make it incomplete.

A portfolio of partners, not one ally, is the actual policy.

### **Introduction**

A **free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)** is, for India, a maritime order in which sea lanes, data and rules are not a Chinese lake or an American private canal. The question's wording is accurate: Delhi keeps strongest ties with partners who **assure** that order and who **connect** India to the rest of the world. Analysis must name the partners and test the assurance.

### **Body**

#### **Partners who assure FOIP**

**Japan** authored much of the FOIP language and funds quality infrastructure. The **United States** brings navy, intelligence and deterrence that India will not duplicate soon. **Australia** is an Indian Ocean resident power in the Quad. **France** is the extra-Quad European with Reunion, a jet and submarine relationship, and a dislike of spheres. **ASEAN is the legitimacy core: without it, FOIP looks like containment cosplay.** **United Kingdom, South Korea** and **Vietnam** sit in the second ring. These ties are not identical: the U.S. wants more alignment; ASEAN wants less naming of China; France wants European strategic autonomy that still sells Rafales.

## Connectivity as the other half

Assurance without connectivity is a patrol. India's **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region), **IPOI**, **Chabahar** into Afghanistan-Central Asia, **IMEC** after the G20, and the older **INSTC** are attempts to guarantee greater access than the Malacca-and-China route. Digital public infrastructure exports, ITEC training, and semiconductor friendships with Japan and the U.S. are connectivity of another kind. The EU talks (Q6(c)) belong here once tariffs push Europe to find non-U.S. markets.

## Analysis

The strategy is **sound and incomplete**. It is sound because India's trade and energy move on water, and because a unipolar Asia is a trap. It is incomplete because the neighbourhood - Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka - can still host Chinese logistics; because **IMEC** is a drawing until rails and politics exist; and because India still under-builds ships and ports relative to the rhetoric. Partners assure FOIP only if India is a **capable hinge**, not a speech. Quad exercises are real. So is ASEAN's refusal to be a member of anyone's diamond.

- **Thus India maintains strong ties with FOIP partners** as a portfolio: America for deterrence, Japan for capital, ASEAN for political cover, Europe for technology and hedge against Trump tariffs. No single partner guarantees the ocean. The portfolio is the policy.

## Flow diagram

Free and open Indo-Pacific -> Quad US JP AU  
 Free and open Indo-Pacific -> France ASEAN  
 Free and open Indo-Pacific -> SAGAR IPOI IMEC Chabahar  
 SAGAR IPOI IMEC Chabahar -> World connectivity

## Conclusion

FOIP partners are those who keep the Indo-Pacific from becoming a closed sphere and who thicken India's routes to the world. The portfolio is right. Delivery still depends on Indian capacity and on ASEAN's consent.

## Facts & figures

### SAGAR

Security and Growth for All in the Region - India's Indian Ocean public-goods frame.

### IPOI

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, India's FOIP-compatible cooperation agenda with ASEAN in the room.

### IMEC

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor announced around the G20: a connectivity hedge still at the political-map stage.

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