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**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 2, 2011 9:41 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** FW: Shyam Saran: Mapping the Indo-Pacific

FYI

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**From:** Burns, William J  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 01, 2011 8:40 PM  
**To:** Sullivan, Jacob J  
**Subject:** Re: Shyam Saran: Mapping the Indo-Pacific

Very interesting. Menon's predecessor as FS, and played a big role when we finished civ nuke deal in 2008.

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**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 01, 2011 08:30 PM  
**To:** Burns, William J  
**Subject:** FW: Shyam Saran: Mapping the Indo-Pacific

Definitely worth a read.

## Mapping the Indo-Pacific

Shyam Saran

Sat Oct 29 2011

*Over the past year, the term “Indo-Pacific” has gained currency in strategic discourse in India. From a geopolitical perspective it represents the inclusion of the Western Pacific within the range of India’s security interests, thus stretching beyond the traditional focus on the Indian Ocean theatre.*

It is a logical corollary to India’s Look East policy having graduated to an Engage East policy. **The fastest growing component of India’s external economic relations is its engagement with ASEAN, China and Japan and, more lately, Australia. This has resulted in a growing density of maritime traffic through the Indian Ocean and radiating all along the Western Pacific littoral. These have created a seamless stretch of ocean space linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In another sense, it is also a reflection of the concept of the Asia-Pacific, which hitherto excluded India, expanding westwards to encompass the subcontinent as its integral part. As India’s regional and global profile increases, it will inevitably gravitate towards the centre of this expanded geopolitical and geo-economic space. The concept of an Indo-Pacific theatre fits in neatly with this evolving trend.**

The extension of India's strategic perspective to include the Pacific will undoubtedly have a number of consequences. **China has already reacted by asking India to stay away from the South China Sea, which we have politely and rightly rejected. By contrast, most Southeast Asian countries and Japan welcome a larger presence of Indian naval assets in the region. If the ongoing upgrade of India-Australia ties endures, then it is likely that the stretch of ocean which lies between the two countries will become a shared responsibility along with Indonesia. India has, in the recent past, developed a network of security arrangements with several countries in the region. We expect this to continue.**

As an interesting aside to the recent controversy over India's forays into the South China Sea, I wish to draw attention to a recent article by Zhang Wenmu in the Global Times, which appears to draw back from the severe threats issued to India. Zhang says: "Unlike Japan, India's intervention into the affairs of the South China Sea is at the most to just show its presence there. India's top priority in terms of national security lies in the Indian Ocean instead of the South China Sea." So there is nothing for China to get exercised about!

What about the United States, which is and is committed to remain the pre-eminent power in the Pacific and deploys a strong presence in the Indian Ocean? **In a speech at Honolulu in October 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used the phrase "Indo-Pacific" to describe a newly emerged and integrated theatre. She spoke about how the US was "expanding our work with the Indian navy in the Pacific because we understand how important the Indo-Pacific basin is to global trade and commerce." This is an explicit and significant reflection of the growing strategic convergence between the two countries with respect to the region.**

Clinton has gone even further in the latest issue of the journal Foreign Policy. She has used phraseology which is new and has important implications. She writes: "The Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics, stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the Western shores of the Americas. The region spans two oceans — the Pacific and the Indian — that are increasingly linked by shipping and strategy."

**It may be noted that here is a categorical American acknowledgement that the Asia-Pacific fully encompasses the Indian subcontinent. It also acknowledges that the Indian and Pacific Oceans constitute an inter-linked geopolitical space, not only because it is important to "global trade and commerce" but also because they impact on strategy. Lest this message be missed, Clinton goes on further to say: "How we translate the growing connection between the Indian and Pacific Oceans into an operational concept is a question that we need to answer if we are to adapt to the new challenges in the region."**

This is an important statement and one which, frankly, could have issued from an Indian strategist, so accurately does it reflect how we perceive our own role in the region. **What is important is the assertion, which is new, that it is not only necessary to acknowledge the inter-linkage between the two oceans but how this is to be translated into an "operational concept". Here is an agenda item not only for our strategic dialogue with the US and major stake-holders in the region. I would not exclude China, but it will have to decide whether it is ready to embrace an inclusive approach to dealing with the new challenges or insists on an exclusionary strategy, based on a narrow definition of its own security interests.**

**It is also noteworthy that the US, which has avoided the use of the term “Indian subcontinent” in favour of the more politically correct “South Asia”, has reverted to the earlier formulation. This is significant because it figures in a very important policy document at the level of the secretary of state. I do not think it is random. It has been my argument that while South Asia is divided into several independent and sovereign entities, the region is a single geopolitical unit by virtue of history, geography and cultural affinity. As the largest state in the region, India’s security perspective necessarily transcends these political boundaries. In that sense, the term Indian subcontinent reflects a living reality and not a throw back to some outdated colonial artifice. That the US is belatedly acknowledging this reality is a good sign.**

*The writer is a former foreign secretary*