



PACIFIC ISLAND STATES- GEOGRAPHY

News: Pacific Island states and Japan strongly opposes China for forceful changes in South China sea.

South China Sea (SCS):

About:

- The **South China Sea** is an arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.
- Bordering states & territories (clockwise from north): the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.
- It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.
- It contains numerous shoals, **reefs, atolls and islands**. The Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal are the most important.

Importance:

- This sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the **Indian Ocean** and the **Pacific Ocean**, through Strait of Malacca.
- According to the **United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD)** one-third of the global shipping passes through it, carrying trillions of trade which makes it a significant geopolitical water body.
- According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, this sea has one-third of the entire world's marine biodiversity and contains lucrative fisheries providing food security to the Southeast Asian nations.
- The SCS is believed to have huge oil and gas reserves beneath its seabed.
- It is one of the world's most heavily trafficked waterways. An estimated USD 3.4 trillion in ship-borne commerce transits the sea each year, including energy supplies to U.S., Japan and South Korea.

India's Growing Stakes in the Region:

- Due to fast-growing trade and investment connections and defense cooperation with the ASEAN states, India would have a stronger motivation to embolden its regional ambitions through the South China Sea issue. This would complicate and "internationalize" the South China Sea disputes.

Offsetting China's Advantage in Sino-Indian Border:

- India would continue to offset China's advantages in the Sino-Indian border by manipulating the South China Sea issue. In fact, India has increased its involvement in the South China Sea sharply since the May 2020 clashes with China in **Galwan Valley**. Given the fragile peace in the border and the cool bilateral relationship, India is likely to utilize the South China Sea issue to restrain China's strengths in the border.

Assistance from the USA:

- India would receive help from the United States to intervene in South China Sea disputes. As there will be ongoing confrontation between China and the United States as well as



stable relations between China and India in the next few years, India would not hesitate to seize the opportunity to gain benefits from Washington and simultaneously counterbalance China's rise through cooperating with the U.S. on the South China Sea issue.



Sources: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/philippines-china-to-set-up-new-channels-to-handle-south-china-sea-rows-source-and-document-say/articleshow/111802888.cms?from=mdr>