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# China and the Indo-Pacific

Maneuvers and Manifestations

*Edited by*  
Swaran Singh · Reena Marwah



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Swaran Singh · Reena Marwah  
Editors


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## PREFACE

This volume seeks to present both sides of the discourse on Indo-Pacific geopolitics: the mainstream one—the genesis of which is credited to Japan but is lately led by the United States and its friends—and also the other led one by China and only mutely joined together by several recipients of its largely one-sided trade and investments. Over the years, US-led narratives in the name of Free and Open Indo-Pacific have seen China heralding its own vision of a shared destiny of humankind and, at least indirectly, the Chinese have also begun to engage with the Indo-Pacific geopolitics. China, however, remains committed to using the term Asia-Pacific thereby emphasising the continental perspectives of the region.

Both these narratives of the US and China remain located in this region's larger drift from the post-World War II geo-strategic US-led security architecture of hub-and-spokes to post-Cold War geo-economic realignments making China the largest economic partner for most littoral nations. No doubt US has also sought to reinforce its economic leadership—from Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation to Trans-Pacific Partnership to Indo-Pacific Economic Forum—and China has also made inroads in the regional security architecture by building of port facilities—from Djibouti to Hambantota, Gwadar, to Solomon Islands—yet the US remains the leader in security management while China has emerged as the locomotive of regional economic growth and epi-centre for regional production and supply chains.

The intriguing question that this volume seeks to explore is how China, the main trigger for this combined growth and change—and therefore trigger for novel imaginations of this confluence of Pacific and Indian Ocean—has largely remained an outlier in US-led mainstream Indo-Pacific geopolitical discourses? This is where contributors of this volume have sought to deconstruct various conceptual and operative outlines of both US-led and Chinese narratives to elucidate their overlaps as also their distinctive core and its drivers. Do these new outlines emanate from the larger drift from the geo-strategic and geo-economic churning and transformations set in motion by this unprecedented economic rise of China? Do they also adequately reflect how under President Xi Jinping this economic prowess has been used by China in cultivating and expanding its political influence which is today guiding and goading the evolving future trajectories of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics?

The economic and the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific, meanwhile, appears bifurcating—led respectively by China and the United States—often witnessing eruptions on issues relating to trade, technology and Taiwan—which have become all the more complicated by the long-drawn coronavirus pandemic followed by the Ukraine crisis which have further sharpened US-China contestations. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the epi-centre of global powers competition has clearly shifted to the Indo-Pacific region igniting a new competition between China as the new rising power and an established power i.e. the United States; and, where the US-led global order finds itself challenged by a move towards Pax-Sinica.

It is evident that ‘China centrality’ of global production and supply chains, reinforced through its state-driven project-based infrastructure-binge is fast diminishing the erstwhile clout of the US. China’s leaders have consistently made clear their desire to have their political and economic models respected. It has been a consistent feature of Chinese foreign policy to push for deference to its ‘core interests’. The multiple strands of the Belt and Road Initiative have seen a host of counteracting responses including its Indo-Pacific narratives and the Quad initiatives among others; the most recent one being the trilateral grouping of Australia, the U.K., and the US, viz. the AUKUS. This is where dissecting their underlying visions and conceptual constructs become critical to understand their evolving mutual policies and perceptions as also their global implications.

It is in this complex backdrop, that this book seeks to examine the evolving contours and dimensions of Western imaginations of China as also China's own response to various Western multilateral initiatives. Contributors specifically explicate China's Indo-Pacific strategies in the context of the strategies of United States, Japan, ASEAN, European Union, Australia and India. In the second part they specifically explore Chinese expositions. Together they seek to reveal how China's medium-term strategy envisages a non-hostile external environment in order to focus on its core interests; how by reducing dependence of littoral nations of the Indo-Pacific region on the United States it seeks to increase their engagement with China. China's expanding economic outreach and influence across the Indo-Pacific littorals has likewise provided a new boost to US-led expositions and initiatives which are often seen as being China-driven thereby inviting intermittent responses from Beijing and this action-reaction has become increasingly palpable. It calls for a serious debate to scrutinise China's vision as also its increasing centrality and influence in the moulding and unfolding of Indo-Pacific geopolitics.

New Delhi, India

Swaran Singh  
Reena Marwah



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume titled, *China and the Indo-Pacific: Maneuvers and Manifestations* is an outcome of the two-days International Conference held in April 2021. Authors' papers after their Abstracts were selected had to go through multiple stages of rigorous selection and editing process, before these were presented within the sub-themes of Conceptualisation of Multilateralism, Major Powers engagement, China in the Indo-Pacific, Issues and future trends. Discussants were provided papers in advance and authors received their oral and written responses. The authors were then required to substantively revise their papers as chapters based on the comments received from the discussants during the conference as also comments received from Editors.

At the outset, Editors take this opportunity to thank each of the conference session chairpersons and discussants, whose valuable inputs helped to enrich the contributions of the authors. We are particularly grateful to Dr. E. Sridharan, Prof. Munim Barai, Prof. Nirmal Jindal, Prof. B.R. Deepak, Prof. Sophana Srichampa, Prof. Lailufar Yasmin, Prof. Lakhwinder Singh and Prof. Sukhpal Singh for chairing various sessions. Our thanks are also due to the large number of scholars who participated in this two-day conference and engaged the presenters with pointed questions. Conference participants are also acknowledged for their candid sharing of views.

This volume also acknowledges the perseverance of several authors whose papers were revised a few times and all of them have contributed to

enriching the book. This volume comprising 11 chapters would not have been possible without the kind cooperation of the production and editorial team of Palgrave Macmillan. Each one deserves our sincere thanks and appreciation. All research interns of our Association of Asia Scholars, led by Dr. Silky Kaur were continuously engaged in ensuring the success of the conference and deserve our appreciation. Finally, we are grateful to our families for being our constant strength in enabling us to complete this seminal work.

Prof. Swaran Singh  
Prof. Reena Marwah

## PRAISE FOR *CHINA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC*

“This ground-breaking compendium by a group of scholars - both established and emerging - presents a critical deconstructing of both the conceptual as also operative elements of what appears to be two distinct narratives; mainstream one led by the United States and a gradually emerging counter from China’s leaders. Seen from Indian perspectives it presents useful analysis for India’s policy makers to fathom the ever evolving trajectories likely to shape the contours of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics in the coming years.”

—Harsh V Pant, *Professor of International Relations, King’s College London*

“At a time of accelerating competition in the Indo-Pacific region, this is an extremely timely and important contribution. This book brings together a great and diverse group of excellent scholars to analyze the rapidly evolving Indo-pacific strategies of all key players in the region and beyond, with fascinating individual insights. Edited by two renowned editors, this is a must-read volume to make sense of current geopolitical dynamics.”

—Yves Tiberghien, *University of British Columbia, Professor of Political Science and Konwakai Chair in Japanese Research*

“A brilliant blending of opposing yet determined interrogations complicates the simultaneity of China’s reluctant engagement with narratives of Indo-Pacific geopolitics aimed at a joint alert to its rise and corresponding practices of mutual moulding that not only reconfigures major actors but also entangles China.”

—Chih-yu Shih, *Professor of Political Science, National Taiwan University*

“A timely volume with an Excellent Set of Contributions perfectly assembled by the Editors. Useful reading material for libraries, researchers and policy practitioners to understand the current and future Chinese strategies in Indo-Pacific. The volume presents a balanced and fine overview of Indo-Pacific, highlighting bilateral and mini-lateral politics.”

—Jagannath Panda, *Head, Stockholm Centre for South Asian & Indo-Pacific Affairs, ISDP, Sweden & Director, Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YACPS), Japan*

“The United States, some European and Asian countries have issued strategic documents on the Indo-Pacific, and scholars and politicians from various countries are paying close attention to China’s response. This monograph, edited by Prof. Swaran Singh and Prof. Reena Marwah, brings together the assessment of China’s status and role in the Indo-Pacific framework by important scholars in the field of international relations, highlighting the concerns and perceptions of relevant countries on China. Chinese scholars will be able to gain a better understanding of the views of the outside world through this book.”

—Prof. Su Hao, *China Foreign Affairs University, Beijing*

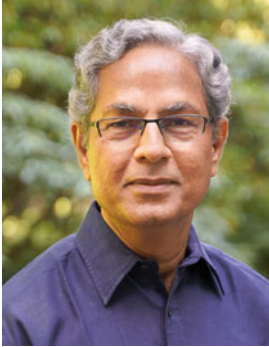
# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>China’s Engagement and the Indo-Pacific</b>	<b>1</b>
	Swaran Singh and Reena Marwah	
<b>2</b>	<b>Decoding ‘Sovereign Strategic Networks’ in the Indo-Pacific: Contesting China’s ‘Ascendant-Rise’</b>	<b>21</b>
	Dattesh D. Parulekar	
<b>3</b>	<b>US–China Strategic Competition: Through the Matrix of Complex Interdependence</b>	<b>41</b>
	Rubina Waseem	
<b>4</b>	<b>Sino-Japanese Relations: Drivers and Obstacles in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision</b>	<b>55</b>
	Stephen R. Nagy	
<b>5</b>	<b>ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Motivations, Opportunities, and Challenges</b>	<b>75</b>
	Don McLain Gill	
<b>6</b>	<b>China in EU’s Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific</b>	<b>93</b>
	Claudia Astarita	

<b>7</b>	<b>Evolving Indo-Pacific Multilateralism: China Factor in Australia's Perspectives</b>	<b>121</b>
	Artyom A. Garin	
<b>8</b>	<b>The Community of Shared Futures: China's Counter to Indo-Pacific Narratives</b>	<b>145</b>
	Devendra Kumar Bishnoi	
<b>9</b>	<b>China's Regional Engagement and Quad: Mapping Conceptual Dynamics</b>	<b>171</b>
	Mrittika Guha Sarkar	
<b>10</b>	<b>China's Engagement with the Pacific Islands</b>	<b>195</b>
	Madhura Bane	
<b>11</b>	<b>China's Maneuvers in South Asia</b>	<b>217</b>
	Reena Marwah and Abhishek Verma	
	<b>Index</b>	<b>241</b>

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AAGC	Asia-Africa Growth Corridor
ACFTA	ASEAN–China Free Trade Area
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AOIP	ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia UK US
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
BCIM	Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar
BDN	Blue Dot Network
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation
BRF	Belt and Road Forum
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAFTA	China-ASEAN Free Trade Area
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CECA	Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CLMV	Cambodia Lao PDR Myanmar Vietnam

CMEC	China Myanmar Economic Corridor
CORPATs	Coordinated Patrols
COTRI	China Outbound Tourism Research Institute
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPICEDC	China-Pacific Islands Countries Economic Development and Cooperation
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Transpacific Partnership
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
DSTO	Defence Science and Technology Organisation
EAS	East Asia Summit
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOIP	Free and Open Indo Pacific
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GAME	Guidelines for Air Military Encounters
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPOI	Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative
LAWs	Lethal Autonomous Weapon systems
MANPADS	Man-Portable Air Defense Systems
MDA	Market Development Assistance
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRJA	Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
OBOR	One Belt One Road
OSOWOG	One-Sun-One-World-One-Grid
PIC's	Pacific Islands Countries
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PQI	Partnership for Quality Infrastructure
PRC	People's Republic of China
QSD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
RIMPAC	Rim of the Asia Pacific
RSCI	Resilient Supply Chain Initiative
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation



SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on Law of the Seas
WB	World Bank
WW2	World War Two

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 7.1	Australian Defence White Papers (1976–2016)	124
Table 10.1	China’s exports to the select PIC’s	199
Table 10.2	Donors: a comparative assessment	201
Table 10.3	China’s Aid in USD million (spent) on Pacific Islands in 2009 and 2019	205
Table 10.4	Taiwan’s Aid in USD million (spent) on Pacific Islands in 2009 and 2019	206
Table 11.1	South Asian countries: GDP, Debt, HDI, 2022	223
Table 11.2	Chinese debt as a percentage of total debt of South Asian countries	224
Table 11.3	Chinese projects in Pakistan and Nepal	228
Table 11.4	Chinese projects in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Maldives	231