



Rise of the Indo-Pacific: Perspectives, Dimensions and Challenges

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The Indo-Pacific is the name of two combined a geographical areas comprising of tropical waters of Indian Ocean and Central and West Pacific Ocean, spanning from Western shore of North America to Eastern coast of India. The Indo-Pacific is also known as Indo West Pacific or Indo Asia Pacific. The Indo-Pacific region is home to of 68% world population, holding 62% of World GDP. This economic corridor first got attention in 2007 when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed about the region in his speech. The Indo-Pacific was conceptualised during the Indo-US Strategic Dialogue in 2013. Indo-Pacific Region has gained prominence due to the rise of China which has called for closer scrutiny of Chinese intent, from countries like USA, Japan and other powerful countries that have strategic and geopolitical interest in the region. The necessity felt by larger powers to cooperate in the Indo-Pacific Region is helping regional countries to boost economy through Regional, Bilateral and Multilateral forums. I selected this book 'Rise of The Indo-Pacific: Perspectives, Dimensions and Challenges' for book review to understand the present perspectives, policies and strategies of the member countries of this region.

This book is a collection of papers presented as a sequel to a two-day workshop held in Delhi, in 2019 on "Emerging Security Order in Indo-Pacific: Issues and Challenges". It has 16 articles written by various scholars, organised into three Chapters- Major Power Perspectives, Regional Security Issues and Non-Traditional Security Threats.

First Chapter deals with Major Power Perspectives in Indo-Pacific.

In the introductory article on *American Perspective on the Indo-Pacific*, Prof. K.P. Vijayalaxmi explained how and why the shifts of thinking in U.S came to focus towards Indo-Pacific. She also provides brief picture of gains to US and its strategy behind the Indo-Pacific.

In the article *Indo-Pacific Region and Japan's Security Dilemma*, R.S. Yadav explained Japan's outlook towards the Indo-Pacific. Japan is making foreign policy considering three aspects: Japan's foreign policy moorings, its global alignment's with power centres and its geo-political setting in these three dimensions. Because of rising economic, military, and nuclear power and the diplomatic initiatives of China and North Korea in this region, how a sense of insecurity permeates

Japanese thinking is highlighted. To ensure security, according to author, Japan has two ways: one, to increase its capability and other is to develop strong ties with neighbouring countries.

In the article *Peace and Security in the Indian Ocean Region: An Indian Perspective*, Vivek Mishra analysed India's balanced approach towards Indian Ocean Region and its strategy of engaging with all countries in the region, without antagonising them.

In the article *Maritime Tension in Indo-Pacific: Study of the US approach to access and stability in the South China Sea*, Obja Borah Hazarika examines how China is continually spreading its power, exercising military potential and creating artificial infrastructure in South China Sea. The Chinese actions in this region have created multi-dimensional security challenges regarding claiming of land, claiming of Sovereignty, militarisation and Freedom of Navigation. The author here analysed the US approach and its position on the Freedom of Navigation in South China Sea.

In the article *China's role in promoting Maritime Stability in Indo Pacific*, Huo Wenle described China's negative attitude towards the Indo-Pacific and Quad concepts since China perceives these as potential security threats in South China Sea, East China Sea and The Taiwan Strait. In the author's analysis, though China has willingness to bring stability in this region but its own territorial and maritime claims may hinder in this process.

Second Chapter on Regional Security Issues analysed prevailing security issues in the Indian-Ocean Region.

In the article *Unrelenting Challenge to Regional Stability: China's Push for Control over South China Sea*, Dr. Netajee Abhinandan explored the issue of China's efforts to gain and maintain control over South China Sea from the perspectives of India and ASEAN and India and China. The author examines the strategies and India's role to resolve regional disputes.

In the article *Rise of QUAD: Perspectives from Member Countries*, Monish Tourangbam explored perspectives of four countries on multipolar order of QUAD. The rationale, feasible trajectory and limitations of QUAD are examined from geo-political and geo-economic perspectives.

In the article *Regional Responses to QUAD*, Urbi Das analysed the regional (South East Asian Nations and China) responses to the QUAD alliances in the Indo-Pacific area and the responses of QUAD members on how they are looking at the equation of shifting power.

In the article *Language as a Soft-power in Indo-Pacific Area: Role of Technology in Promoting Chinese Language*, Liu Jinxiu explored how China, as a part of Soft Power Diplomacy, is spreading Chinese language through technology, games and scholarship and other online courses to spread their culture and value specially in the Indo-Pacific Region.

In the article *ASEAN Centrality in Promoting Harmony and Stability in the Indo-Pacific*, Sachin Tiwari analysed the notion of centrality of ASEAN, security structure of this region, and the role of important forums like ARF. The author also explained to what extent ASEAN provides peace and progress in the Indo-Pacific Region.

In the article *Regionalism and Evolving Coalition Building in the Indo-Pacific Region*, Prerna Chahar showed four key areas of challenges and opportunities in this area by examining historical

and changing power shift of regional and sub-regional power in this area. Further, how 'regionalism' as a concept is architected here, with the revival of QUAD and amid changing regional security in this region.

Third Chapter on Non-Traditional Security threats analyzed major security threats in this region.

In the article *Complex Dynamics of Terrorism in the Indo-Pacific Region*, Souravie Ghimiray mentioned that Indo-Pacific Region Countries faced amalgamation of terrorism. The author identified three types of existing terrorism - Islamic extremism including support of terrorist groups by Pakistan, Ethno-nationalist & separatist movements, and, transnational terrorism, for example ISIS. To eradicate this problem and instability, states have taken different counter terrorism security approaches ranging from security, law, socio-economic, ideological and educational policies. For curbing the threats of terrorism, states have taken several initiatives like policing, information sharing and regional co-operation.

In the article *Nuclear Proliferation in the Indo-Pacific: Role of United States*, Upma Kashyap analysed how U.S.A's deterrence in this region protected and supported allies to develop nuclear power while on the other hand imposing sanctions on Iran and North Korea to curtail proliferation. The author focused on how U.S.A will attempt to create a balance among allies for nuclear deterrence and work on counter strategy to deal with China and North Korea.

In the article *Environmental Insecurity in the Indo-Pacific Region: Regional Co-operation and challenges*, Merieleen Engtipi presented as to how, though known for rich bio-diversity and marine resources, the region is facing environmental insecurity on account of overuse of resources, environmental pollution, marine pollution, deforestation, and slash and burn. Due to these reasons, the region suffered extreme climatic events. The author had tried to explore and address environmental security concerns of this region through an analysis of the policy framework of different organisations like Indian Ocean Rim Association, East Asian Region, South East Asian region, Pacific Ocean Region, etc, which face multifarious challenges in this region for sustainable development.

In the article *Health in Foreign Policy: A Study of the Indo-Pacific Region*, Shantesh K. Singh analysed as to how after the OSLO Declaration health became integral part of foreign policy in this region, first of Japan then China and India. This countries in this region are attempting to link health and foreign policy to achieve human security, control of several health related issues and national economic goals. The author observes that countries like Japan, China and India are now giving priority to trade and investment in health related goods and services.

In the article *Unorganising the 'Organised': Drug Trafficking in the Indo-Pacific Region as a Non-Traditional Security Threat*, Sweta Kumari Thakur explored many non-traditional security threats like illicit business, drug trafficking, chronic poverty, money laundering, corruption and racketing with political backing in this region. The author pointed to lack of cooperation as a reason in addressing these issues where poor countries can't take measures because of incompetency and powerful, rich countries are unwilling to co-operate.

The title indicates the purpose as to perspectives, dimensions and challenges in the rise of Indo-Pacific region. In the three chapters, various scholars have highlighted the perspectives of major powers in the Indo-Pacific, critical regional security issues, non-traditional security threats including environmental, health and human security angles, role of soft power, rise of QUAD, challenges to the ASEAN centrality and regionalism. Considering the objectives of the book, this wide coverage, it is felt, does justice to the title.

The authors have comprehensively addressed the multi-dimensional issues that encompass Indo-Pacific as a region. The Editor of this book, on his part, has compiled and presented the articles in a cogent manner, commencing from major power perspectives, regional perspectives and intra-regional issues. The book addresses many important issues, for example- Bilateral and Multilateral relations between countries, major powers in this area and their activities and influence, economic growth and challenges. Regional security and Non-traditional security issues, threats, and strategies taken by different countries to overcome such challenges as well as Soft Power Diplomacy in this area.

While the issues and challenges addressed by the authors are common, each have dealt them from their own perspective analysis which facilitates understanding the common issues from different viewpoints. It is also seen that each author has endeavoured to analyse the respective issues more than merely narrating. The articles were written on the basis of secondary data. Since there was no use of primary data, Empirical data collection methods are not observed here.

What I realised after going through this book was, had the Editor included the perspectives of weak countries in the region, the understanding of the dimensions of challenges and possible solutions would have been more comprehensive. By adding their perspective, it would help to give readers insight on the current situation of weak countries, how can they participate and improve their economic, political and regional power equation in an equitable manner.

This book is a combination of many author's perspective on the Indo-Pacific. By reading this book one may get a holistic idea on the rise of The Indo-Pacific from the past, present and future perspectives. It will also facilitate an appreciation of who the major powers in this region are, who are the rising powers and how will they will impact and control economic, political and other aspects in the region. This book can help two types of readers in two ways: First type of readers are those who have no or less knowledge regarding the Indo-Pacific region, like students of International Relations and emerging young scholars whose area of interest spans this region.

This book has been published recently and it contains adequate amount of analysis which is based on secondary data. Applying Empirical Data Collection methods, if recent or updated data on the Indo-Pacific is used to revise this version of the book, it will help the second type of readers who have sound knowledge on the Indo-Pacific and are working/ writing on the Indo-Pacific as analysts or policy makers. In its present form also, it will help scholars and policy makers to arrive at an enhanced understanding of Indo-Pacific, considering that till recently, the IR scholars had generally dealt with the region in a piecemeal manner.

In concluding remarks, I would like to admit that this book enriched my own knowledge regarding sub regionalism, regionalism, soft power diplomacy, bilateral & multilateral relationship,

economic and geopolitical issues in Indo-Pacific region. Added to these, a clearer understanding of the existing traditional and non-traditional security threats in the Indo-Pacific Region has also been facilitated by this book.