

# Critical Book Review: Maritime Security Complexes Of The Indo-Pacific Region

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Book "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region" is authored by Dr Vijay Sakhuja, who holds MPhil and PhD degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Dr Sakhuja is a former Director of the National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi and a former officer of the Indian Navy. The co-author, Dr W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar, is a researcher and professor specializing in International Relations and Strategic Studies. He was previously associated with the Department of Political Science at Madras Christian College. The publication emerged towards the conclusion of 2022 and pertained to maritime strategic and national security literature. Its primary focus lies in exploring theoretical perspectives concerning the advancements within the Indo-Pacific maritime security sphere.

It assesses regional challenges and opportunities around Indo-Pacific security and is visualized through complex regional security theory lenses. It reveals the highly tense emerging order in the Indo-Pacific maritime zones. The fusion of academic expertise and practical viewpoints will stimulate analytical thought and aid India in formulating, expressing, and constructing maritime doctrines specifically designed to effectively address the current and future dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.

The contemporary issues raised in the book deal with the Indo-pacific challenges and opportunities which come at a time when it is becoming the more contested space both from the economic and strategic point of view. The Book relies on the pretext that the geopolitical framework known as the Indo-Pacific Region has gradually developed over the past decade. In 2007, the former Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, highlighted the increasing closeness between Japan (symbolized by the Pacific Ocean) and India (symbolized by the Indian Ocean) during his address to the Indian Parliament. Abe characterized the convergence of these two seas as a vibrant combination of freedom and prosperity, with the Indian and Pacific Oceans forming a cohesive entity with discernible geographic boundaries. While initially discussed within the context of India-Japan relations, the concept of the Indo-Pacific Region has since solidified within the global order.

## 2. SUMMARY

The Book commences by examining the theoretical dimension of the subject matter. In Chapter 1, the theoretical framework of Regional Security Complexes (RSCs) is expounded upon. This framework is based on the work of British political scientist Barry Buzan. The RSC Theory emphasizes the significance of territoriality as a fundamental element in understanding international security dynamics, particularly within the context of the post-Cold War era. The theory highlights the regional level as a crucial factor in conducting a comprehensive analysis of international security. It acknowledges the neorealist perspectives by recognizing the emergence of regional security dynamics in inter-state relations. The RSC Theory also incorporates constructivist viewpoints by acknowledging the importance of identity factors within a regional security complex.

Chapter 2 of the Book provides a concise overview of the geographical attributes and historical linkages within the sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific Region, emphasizing their contemporary consequence. The Indo-Pacific Region, formed by merging the Indian and Pacific oceans, encompasses the littoral areas of Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas. This chapter examines the region's historical connections and post-colonial developments marked by cultural, identity, and economic conflicts.

Chapters 3 to 5 delve into the dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region and its sub-regions, namely the North Arabian Sea Crescent and the Bay of Bengal. Chapter 6 explores the dynamics of the Western Pacific Ocean, a sub-region of the Pacific Ocean. These chapters explore various strategic aspects of these sub-regions, including both traditional and non-traditional security threats, geographical characteristics, economic attributes, inter-state relations, and the interactions between regional and extra-regional powers. They highlight how these sub-regions, while engaged in intra-regional power struggles, also contribute to the more considerable rivalry between the United States and China, directly or indirectly.

This Book has a dedicated chapter addressing the naval nuclear dynamics within the Indo-Pacific Region. This chapter explores the growing trend among nuclear-armed nations and newly emerging nuclear states to deploy nuclear capabilities at sea. Pursuing naval nuclear deployment is driven primarily by flexible targeting, discreet and secure launch capabilities.

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Moreover, the chapter delves into the security challenges stemming from Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation.

The Book includes an appendix with proceedings from the joint ICWA and CPPR one-day conference in August 2021 titled "Strategic Futures: Regional Maritime Security Complexes."

### **3. Analysis of Content**

The Indo-Pacific region's geography, history, and modern formulations have significant implications for maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The conjunction of the Indian and Pacific Oceans creates an interconnected maritime space that impacts the Indian Ocean's security dynamics. Historical ties and shared cultural heritage among regional nations shape cooperative frameworks and mutual interests in maintaining stability and safeguarding sea lines of communication. Moreover, the evolving strategic landscape, emerging threats, and power rivalries in the Indo-Pacific necessitate a comprehensive approach to maritime security, emphasizing cooperation, information sharing, and collective efforts to address common challenges in the Indian Ocean, providing a comprehensive and cooperative approach to address the region's evolving security dynamics and challenges. By promoting a rules-based order, enhancing interoperability, and facilitating information sharing and capacity building, the framework strengthens maritime domain awareness, combats transnational threats such as piracy, terrorism, and illicit activities, and safeguards vital sea lines of communication. It fosters regional stability, encourages responsible behaviour, and promotes cooperation among regional and extra-regional stakeholders, thereby contributing to the overall security and prosperity of the Indian Ocean region.

This Book expands their knowledge about the complexities of the Indo-Pacific and moves beyond the simplistic narratives often portrayed in popular discussions. It comprehensively examines the diverse factors shaping the region's security landscape, including historical connections, geopolitical considerations, and emerging challenges.

The Book provides constructive perceptions of the nuances of the Indo-Pacific Region, highlighting the interplay between territorial and regional entities and shedding light on both theoretical frameworks and empirical aspects. It is an authoritative resource that will equip us with a broader understanding of the region's security dynamics and the complexities of its sub-regions.

### **4. Style and Writing Quality**

The author of "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region" demonstrates a commendable style and exceptional writing quality throughout the Book. Their scholarly, precise writing profoundly understands the complex subject matter.

The author thoroughly grasps the Indo-Pacific region's maritime security challenges, presenting a well-structured and coherent topic analysis. Their writing effectively combines theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence, giving readers a nuanced understanding of the region's maritime security dynamics.

The Book's content shows the author's attention to detail and meticulous research. They offer insightful observations and analyses supported by various primary and secondary sources. Integrating case studies and practical instances adds depth and richness to the discussions, allowing readers to connect theoretical concepts with practical realities.

Furthermore, the author's literature style is accessible and engaging, causing the Book appealing to scholars and general readers interested in maritime security. Complex ideas are explained clearly, and technical terminology is appropriately defined, ensuring readers can easily navigate the subject.

The author's style and writing quality in "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region" exemplify scholarly excellence. Their expertise, meticulous research, clarity of expression, and incorporation of case studies make this Book an invaluable resource for anyone seeking a comprehensive understanding of the maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **5. Strengths and Weaknesses**

Firstly, the Indo-Pacific Region, although seen as a unified concept, is not a homogeneous entity. Consequently, employing the RSC theory reveals the diversity arising from the interaction between territorial and regional components and the subsequent implications of Indo-Pacific security dynamics.

Contrary to common perception, building upon the preceding point, the Indo-Pacific Region encompasses more than just the rivalry between China and democratic nations like India, the US, Australia, and Japan. This Book explores the region's intricacies that extend beyond the simplistic binary often prevalent in popular and academic discussions. It delves into both the theoretical and empirical aspects of the Indo-Pacific Region.

The Book highlights the prevailing perception of the Indo-Pacific Region being solely defined by the rivalry between China and democratic nations can oversimplify the complex dynamics at play. This oversimplification may overlook other significant regional actors, issues, and nuances, limiting the understanding of comprehensive security challenges. The weakness of popular and academic discourses in thoroughly examining the nuanced aspects of the Indo-Pacific Region can restrict the depth of understanding and analysis. This limitation may hinder the formulation of practical strategies and policies to address emerging challenges and opportunities.

## **6. Conclusion**

The book "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region" appeals to research scholars and general readers due to its relevance and informative content. It is essential for anyone who wishes to stay informed about the evolving developments in the Indo-Pacific Region to read this Book. By doing so, readers can understand the intricate security dynamics that shape the region and its sub-regions. This Book serves as a valuable resource for expanding one's knowledge and gaining insights into the diverse challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific, catering to academic interests and those seeking a broader understanding of regional security.

I recommend that individuals interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the security dynamics of the Indo-Pacific Region and its sub-regions should consider reading the book "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region." This Book is valuable for research scholars seeking in-depth analysis and general readers who want to stay informed about the developments in the region.

Whether one is an academic researcher or a general reader interested in global affairs, "Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region" offers a valuable opportunity to enhance knowledge and gain a more comprehensive perspective on this vital region.