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## **Locating US in the Indo-Pacific Region: Implications for China**

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# **LOCATING US IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA**



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**June 2021**

**Manipal Academy of Higher Education**  
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# **LOCATING US IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Geopolitics and  
International Relations in Partial Fulfilment for Master's Degree in  
Geopolitics and International Relations**

**Supervisor**

**DR. MONISH TOURANGBAM**

**By**

**KARTIKEYA GUPT**

**June 2021**



**MANIPAL**  
ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION

*(Deemed to be University under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)*

Date: 28 June 2021

## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Locating US in the Indo-Pacific Region: Implications for China**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Geopolitics and International Relations of Manipal Academy of Higher Education is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

(Kartikeya Gupta)

## CERTIFICATE

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACSA	Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement
AIFV	Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle
ALCM	Air Launched Cruise Missile
AOR	Area of Responsibility
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AIP	Air Independent Propulsion
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
APC	Armored Personnel Carriers
ARIA	Asia Reassurance Initiative Act
ASAT	Anti-Satellite Weapons
ASCM	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BUILD	Better Utilization of Investment Leading to Development
CARAT	Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
COMCASA	Communications Capability and Security Agreement
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPX	Command Post Exercise
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
DFI	Developmental Financial Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
EAS	East Asia Summit
EAEC	East Asia Economic Caucus
EASI	East Asian Strategic Initiative
EDCA	Enhances Defense Cooperation Agreement
EDGE	Enhancing Development and Growth
EMALS	Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System
EU	European Union
FTX	Field Training Exercise
GNP	Gross National Product
GSOMIA	General Security of Military Information Agreement
HADR	Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief
HELE	Highly Efficient Low Emission
HGV	Hypersonic Glide Vehicle
IAMD	Integrated Air and Missile Defence
IDFC	International Development Finance Corporation
IOR	Indian Ocean Region

IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IPSR	Indo-Pacific Strategy Report
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
ITAN	Infrastructure Transactions and Assistance Network
JSDF	Japan Self Defense Forces
JUSEP	Japan-United States Strategic Energy Partnership
JUMPP	Japan-US-Mekong Power Partnership
LACM	Land Attack Cruise Missile
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
LPD	Landing Platform Dock
MaRV	Manoeuvrable Re-entry Vehicle
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MDR	Missile Defense Review
MSRI	Maritime Silk Road Initiative
NDB	New Development Bank
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NSS	National Security Strategy
OBOR	One Belt One Road
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAGF	People's Liberation Army Ground Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PLARF	People's Liberation Army Rocket Force
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
QUAD	Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue
RAS	Replenishment at Sea
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAGAR	Security and Growth for All in the Region
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SAR	Synthetic Aperture Radar
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SFIP	Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework
SSBN	Nuclear Powered Ballistic-Missile Submarine
SSGN	Guided-Missile Nuclear Attack Submarine
TDS	Trilateral Strategic Dialogue
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America

USJ  
USK  
US-SEGA  
USAID  
WTO

United States Forces Japan  
United States Forces Korea  
US Support for Economic Growth in Asia  
United States Agency for International Development  
World Trade Organization



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## **ABSTRACT**

The theme “Locating US in the Indo-Pacific Region: Implications for China” explores the case for a comprehensive approach by the US in the Indo-Pacific region owing to China’s rise plus the ramifications of its involvement for China. The study probes the strategies employed by the US as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region using multiple major theoretical approaches. A novel geostrategic reassessment of China and the US with implications for each other is subject to research. The study also deeply examines the regional security convergence with aspects of strategic balancing between the US and India generated by the common maritime challenge from China.

The dynamics of the global economy’s centre of gravity is shifting from the west to east. If hard and soft power mirrors the flow of economic power, the source for global and political influence will be similarly shifting east in the coming years. Policy formulation for global governance then requires more inclusive engagement of the new and diverse major powers, rather than relying solely on the western nations as has been done prominently in the past century. The transition of international configuration of power has figured with contemporary debates on the relative decline of the US and the rise of China and India as Asian powerhouses exerting considerable influence in international affairs. Also, multilateralism has renewed the significance of diplomacy as the world heads towards a multipolar era in the twenty-first century. The US is cognizant of these changes and its implications for the liberal international order.

The Indo-Pacific has risen as a region of strategic significance in recent times. The maritime geopolitical construct gains salience as the new centre of global economic development owing to the security assurance of global commons and the augmentation of commercial maritime activity. The region is characterized as the most dynamic geopolitical zone, with the US and China as the two dominant powers engaged in an emerging rivalry. In addition, the Indo-Pacific is dotted by the presence of major maritime powers such as India, Japan, and Australia with their own regional spheres of influence. In view of contemporary geopolitical dynamism, the Indo-Pacific regional security landscape has witnessed the emergence of newer politico-security arrangements besides the post-World War II US-led network of security alliances.

The US has played a considerable role in ensuring balance-of-power in the Western Pacific over the past century, prompted by its grand strategy to secure national interests in the region. China's military build-up, its economic rise, and assertive territorial claims has caused concerns among nations in the Indo-Pacific who look towards the US to stabilize the region in the contemporary era. The US regional strategy for the Indo-Pacific initiated with the Asia pivot strategy. This strategy is a follow up to the major US involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The Asia pivot explicitly mentioned the renewed focus of the US on the maritime regions of the Western Pacific and the Eastern Indian Ocean in the policy documents and official speeches of the Obama administration. The Trump administration carried forward the momentum by envisioning the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept grounded in a rules-based order for the maritime region and expanding the nation's engagement with other major maritime powers in the Indo-Pacific region.

China is wary of the latest US approaches to the region and perceives them as a containment strategy to restrain its economic progress. The US-China relations have hit the lowest point in decades since Nixon's visit to China nearly fifty years ago. However, China's response to the US strategy has been sophisticated with its intention to not initiate a new Cold war. Though China has ramped its military modernization to secure its economic interests and is asserting new territorial claims, it is avoiding any serious conflicts with the US. The Indo-Pacific strategy of the US provides a counterbalance to China's rise to ensure regional peace and stability and maintain its hegemony. The implementation of this strategy carries geo-strategic, geo-economic, and security implications for China. Of particular concern to China is the strategic leverage held by the US and new partners like India in the maritime domain and the potential to block trade and transportation of essential resources. The emerging partnership between the US and India is of consequential significance for China's regional interests. Also, China's bilateral relations and negotiations with regional nations is affected by the relationship they share with the US, which complicates its diplomatic efforts. Lastly, China's push for a Sino-centric architecture in Asia is being challenged by the efforts of US and its allies and partners. The US is keen to adopt competitive coexistence with China to preserve regional harmony in the Indo-Pacific region, however such a future relies on Chinese behaviour and actions in the Indo-Pacific region.