



## **‘Indo-Pacific’ the Chinese Narrative and a Possible Counter-Strategy**

**Speaker:** Antara Ghosal Singh

**Chair:** Zorawar Daulet Singh

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### **ICS Seminar Room**

The seminar began with a brief introduction of the research related to Indo-Pacific by Mr. Zorawar Daulet Singh, adjunct fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), who presented that the debates and research toward Indo-Pacific were increasing, and many regions and countries in Asia were involved, expect China. He argued that the perspective of China in this area was of importance.

The presentation by the speaker was divided into four parts.

The first part focused on the reason of why the speaker chose this topic, which was succinct and terse. In this part, the speaker made comparison of the different attitudes between China and other countries, such as, Australia, Japan, the U.S.A., India and Europe and Chinese official discourses and Chinese strategic community and scholars. Against the background of Indo-Pacific showing its prominence in the global strategic circles, compared with other countries, Chinese narratives of Indo-Pacific seemed more silent, even mute. What was different from Chinese official discourses was the attitude of Chinese strategic community and scholars, who put lot of attention into this topic, and thus generating many debates. Those were the speaker’s motivations of penetrating into this area.

The second part of the speech was about the prediction on the Indo-Pacific. Among all the opinions, there were many different voices, but they still shared something in common. About those different views, the speaker categorized them into three sub-themes, which included the containment of China theme, the U.S.A. reinstating its

dominance in Asia and the rise of India and Indian Ocean. In the aspect of the containment of China theme, Chinese strategic community and scholar regarded it as something like “Asian NATO” or “Cold-War 2.0” and it threatened the China’s energy lifeline, targeted China’s rise at a multiple level and the “going out” strategy of the Chinese Navy, blocked China away from sea and opposed China’s “One Belt and One Road” initiative and development model. About the second theme, that was, U.S.A. reinstating its dominance in Asia, the speaker mentioned that those scholars who stood at this side argued that this conception was not only to contain China, but the US’s shifting its interest or strategy center to Asia. Earlier the US’s Asian policy focused on China, Japan and South Korea. However, with the rise of China and India, the economic potential of this region has been increased and will show more importance within the next decade. The US, whose influence on this region has been weakened, needed to ensure its presence on this region. The last argument was about the rise of India and Indian Ocean. Scholars held the US’s strategy of balancing Asia has shifted from China to India after Donald Trump was appointed the President of the United States. What US did was that it considered India as a major power to target the rise of China. Traditionally, the Indo-Pacific region included U.S A., northeast Asia, southeast Asia and south Pacific, but did not include India Ocean. What Chinese strategists and scholars held in common was that they disagreed to the reformation of the conception of Indo-Pacific, which showed the new political reality related to the prominence of India and Indian Ocean. They argued that the construction of the regional order should not be based on the western concept of Balance of Power Theory which promoted competition, containment and conflicts but rooted in Asian traditions of coexistence and friendly exchanges.

The fourth part was concerned with Chinese countermeasures. There were several possible measures that China should commit, according to Chinese strategists. One of the most important was that China should improve its relationship with India. In order to achieve this, scholars advocated that it was time to accept new idea and new thinking. China and India still owned so much space to cooperate with each other. The second

proposal was to build a shared order where China was more tolerant to the India's increasing presence in the western Pacific, welcomed India's active policy and explored India-China's cooperation in the Third World. The speaker also mentioned that some scholars argued that China should improve its participation in Indo-Pacific frame to make it more inclusive. The strategists thought that Indo-Pacific strategy of the U.S.A. could not ignore China's existence, and it was only through cooperation and coordination with China, the stabilization of Indo-Pacific can be ensured.

Finally, two conclusions have been drawn. One was that away from the global attention, China was developing its own vision and version of the Indo-Pacific, while the other was that sooner or later, China will actively seek to incorporate these propositions and interpretations in the construction and development of Indo-Pacific.

### **About the Speaker**

**Antara Ghosal Singh** is presently working as a Research Associate at the Delhi Policy Group (DPG). She is an alumna of Tsinghua University and Beijing Language and Culture University, China and National Central University, Taiwan. Her area of research is Chinese foreign policy, Chinese politics, China's domestic developments and China-India relations. She has a list of publications in both national and international journals and websites. She also curates a monthly publication, DPG China Monitor, which features the dominant Chinese narrative on important developments both within and outside China exclusively from Chinese language sources. Before joining academic research, she has worked as a journalist for about 4 years with some of the leading national dailies like the Times of India and the Deccan Chronicle Group.

*Report prepared by Fay Zhong, research intern, Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS)*

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