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School of Asia
Pacific Affairs

Sea Power in the Indo-Pacific: Geopolitics, Strategic Culture, and International Order

PhD Oral Presentation

How has sea power affected maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, and what are the driving factors behind sea power development? This dissertation addresses these questions by bridging English School international relations theory with sea power theories. Specifically, it argues that, beyond conventional geopolitical factors, maritime strategic culture plays a crucial role in shaping sea power development.

The vast maritime geography of the Indo-Pacific makes sea power a vital component of state power. This suggests that the concept of the balance of power should be understood, more precisely, as the balance of sea power. Within this established balance of sea power, states tend to employ sea power for non-military operations such as naval diplomacy and grey-zone tactics to influence maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, given the high costs of warfare.

This dissertation tests this hypothesis through six case studies: the U.S., China, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and India. Process tracing serves as the primary methodology to support the argument, while statistical modelling is used as a secondary method to supplement the analysis.

Speaker

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Details

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