
Book Reviews

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C. V. Ranganathan and Sanjeev Kumar (Eds), *China and the Eurasian Region: Geographic and Geopolitical Influences*. New Delhi: ICWA, 2018, pp. i–xxii + 1–301, ₹995. ISBN: 978-93-83445-31-8.

China, which is India's largest neighbour, is perhaps its most important yet most complex relationship. This relationship operates at multifarious levels and also in intertwined bilateral, regional and international contexts. In these contexts, India has to engage with a China, which 'is on course to become, in the coming years, the world's largest economy in absolute terms...' to 'be among the top one to three trading nations in the world' (Preface, IV). Its massive defence modernisation follows the same growth trajectory. With this huge economic and military heft, China under Xi Jinping has reached the stage where it demands 'a new type of great power relations', accepting greater global role and responsibilities for itself. In recent years, India–China relations have felt the heat of this great power transition. Therefore, while studying China has always been important for Indian scholars, this has assumed even greater priority in the present context in which India's place in Xi's Chinese Dream of 'a new type of major power relations' is uncertain. A Core Group on China at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi has made an important contribution by publishing volumes on China in recent times. The present volume under review is the latest in the series.

C. V. Ranganathan and Sanjeev Kumar have arranged a comprehensive list of papers on China's foreign policy engagements and external relations in this volume. The edited volume underscores and analyses themes such as the relevance of ideology in Chinese foreign policy making, the role of the environment and institutions in shaping Chinese foreign policy and its domestic public perceptions. Besides, the book discusses and analyses China's engagement with countries and sub-regions in Eurasia.

In her contribution to the volume, *The Guiding Principles of China's Foreign Policy: The Persistence of Ideology*, Madhu Bhalla problematises the conventional binary of the 'ideological' foreign policy of the Maoist era and the 'pragmatic' foreign policy in the post-Mao era. She argues that Chinese foreign policy under every leadership from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping has been based on certain guiding principles. These principles have been inflexible on the Chinese insistence

on a just 'global power distribution', as envisaged by China. On the other hand, these principles display enough interpretative flexibility and tactically employ 'tradition, history, culture and military and security doctrines', as per the nature and choices of the regime of the time (p. 16). In terms of pointing to the continuity in foreign policy articulation, this diagnosis is convincing. However, changing guiding principles need to be located in an evolving communist 'cosmology' in China. Notwithstanding its concerns about China's own interests and standing, Maoist China emphasised Marxist-Leninist ideals of emancipation of the proletariat. Revolutionary socialist reconstruction was envisaged as the method to achieve these ideals. Later, Dengist China underscored prosperity as the method for emancipation, de-emphasising revolutionary commitments. At present, the discourse weaves around national glory in Confucian terms, which comes close to celebrating the Han race, and asserting China's 'primacy' in its neighbourhood. This further deepens doubts about the sincerity in China's official Marxist-Leninist ideals and raises doubts about its sincerity in questioning 'unfair' global power distribution. China's dissatisfaction against global power distribution appears to stem from its own aspirations for great power status. In terms of the thematic dimensions of the book, Sonika Gupta, Mugur Zlotea and Sanjeev Kumar cover important topics such as the recent public perception of Chinese foreign policy and foreign policy making environment and institutions, respectively. Gupta and Zlotea's chapter, 'Recent Public Perceptions of Chinese Foreign Policy', captures China's willingness and the assertion of its ability to 'take on a larger role in global governance' (p. 260). Their research in social media indicates how Chinese national psyche has transited from a 'weak country mentality to a strong country mentality' (p. 261). This social transformation and China's proactive and assertive foreign policy are mutually reinforcing and interact with each other. An interaction between nationalist sentiments and assertive foreign policy may be best seen in China's aggressive approach towards its maritime claims in the East China Sea (ECS) and the South China Sea (SCS) (pp. 260–261). Kumar underlines the role of increased stakeholders and the widened scope of public debate on Chinese foreign policy in his contribution 'Foreign Policy-Making Environment and Institutions in China'. He argues that China has developed 'a more pluralistic environment' of Chinese foreign policy making that, importantly, includes research institutes and public opinion through the Internet (pp. 252–254). May be, he could also have explored at some length whether research institutes and nationalistic public opinion feed into each other.

The book has, however, greater focus on China's relations with some major regions and countries in recent years. Alka Acharya has taken a comprehensive look at China–South Asia relations. This reviewer would argue that the South Asian region has felt the notable impact of Xi Jinping pushing his Chinese Dream. Under Xi Jinping, China has pushed open regionalism in South Asia under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI, particularly its flagship China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has created strains in India–China relations, manifested in several direct and indirect ways: India's objection to CPEC and the Masood Azhar issue. This phase has seen the narrative of peace, stability and development in India–China relations coming under stress. Giving the historical

evolution of China's relations with South Asia, Acharya has captured the complexities of the present, particularly in India–China relations. She reminds China that it will have to work in tandem with India, not only pragmatically but strategically as well, if it wants to contribute to development and growth in the region (p. 49). Srikanth Kondapalli analyses China's success in achieving its policy objectives in East Asia in the chapter: 'China's East Asian Contest—Minimalist and Maximalist Issues'. He argues that

[I]n order to pursue its rise, China had been experimenting with different policies— at the economic level, had been promoting mutually beneficial relations and at the diplomatic, political and strategic levels, Beijing had exhibited a nuanced policy of creating a wedge in the US-led alliances in the region. (p. 122)

He argues that China has achieved considerable success in its objectives. East Asia, particularly Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese capital and technology, has contributed to China's rise tremendously. The countries of the region extend their support to the PRC's One-China policy. Whether China has been able to create a wedge in the US-led alliances would be, however, premature to assert; though recent developments such as improvement in China–Japan relations and China–Vietnam relations in the wake of Trump's uncertainty are a gain for China.

Perhaps the single most important geopolitical event in the ongoing period is Trump's trade war on China. After initial lack of clarity regarding relations with China, which the Chinese construed as the lack of resolve on part of President Trump, the trade war seemed to have caught Xi Jinping unawares. Although the future and the end-result of the trade war is unknown, what can safely be said is that the trade war is much more than a war on trade deficit. For many, this trade war comes from the US questioning of Nixon-Kissinger perceptions on China, and failure of expectations of China eventually becoming a democracy and respectful towards human rights. The declaration of US Pivot to Asia in 2011 may have indicated this. USA's perceptions of China not playing by the rules in the economic and the strategic arenas are in the root of this disappointment. Theft and forced transfer of technology and China not showing respect to UNCLOS in the SCS are some of the US concerns that go far beyond the issue of trade deficit. The US identifying China as a strategic competitor in its latest national security strategy and defence strategy documents points to a new phase in Sino–US relations, which is not of China's liking and choice and is likely to continue for some years to come. Chintamani Mahapatra discusses and analyses the issues and strains involved in US–China relations across the spectrum in his contribution 'Sino–US Relations in the Wavering Global Order'. He concludes that Asia, which is a hotbed of nuclear, conventional, non-conventional terrorism and other political problems, cannot afford the outbreak of rivalry between the two giants, USA and China. Asia needs meaningful groupings such as India–Japan–USA, and also USA–China–India (pp. 185–186). In juxtaposition to tensions in Sino–US relations, China and Russia being on the same side of the geopolitical divide is also a notable contemporary development, which one should not lose sight of. However, the exact meaning of their being on the same side is always open to scrutiny. Will they develop mutual political, diplomatic and military commitments

vis-à-vis each other in their respective confrontation with the US-led West remains in the realm of academic speculation. Besides, we are also aware of latent reciprocal mistrust involved in Sino–Russian relations with reference to China’s growing clout in Central Asia and the massive Chinese migration in the Russian Far East, and Russia’s unarticulated discomfort with China’s rise (pp. 209–210). Considering this, Nandan Unnikrishnan and Uma Purushothaman have rightly posed a question in the title of their chapter—‘China and Russia: From Difficult Neighbours to Strategic Partners?’

On the whole, the book is an important topical reference for China’s engagement with some important regions and countries. However, it should have had an overarching theme, more clearly running in the contributions. Some of the chapters should have been more analytical. At present, historical evolution and descriptive parts weigh heavy on the analysis. Finally, as the Preface to the book outlines its justification citing the importance of China for India, the absence of a separate chapter on India–China relations leaves the book incomplete. Although the chapter on China and South Asia as well as the other chapters in their concluding sections discuss some implications for India, a full-fledged contribution, in the end of the book, on India–China relations in the larger geopolitical scenario would have concluded the volume fittingly.

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T. V. Paul (Ed.), *The China–India Rivalry in the Globalization Era.* New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2019, ₹1195, pp. 351. ISBN: 978-93-5287-520-7.

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The China–India rivalry is one of two enduring strategic issues India faces in South Asia. The other is India’s relationship with Pakistan. Yet India’s approach to both varies in almost all parameters. T. V. Paul’s book is driven by the question of why the two long-term conflicts encourage vastly different approaches and responses and what are factors behind the rivalry with China. Paul argues that the nature of the conflict, and the fact that it does not relate to the definition of national identity within India, differentiates the India–China rivalry from the one with Pakistan. Pakistan’s revisionist and irredentist agenda leads to a more visceral conflict and the ‘differences are higher for all factors of rivalry’ than is the case with China. This also allows the persistent India–China rivalry to be managed.

The collection of papers in the book take off from Paul’s introduction where he lists the factors of competition/rivalry and cooperation between the two countries. These range from the conflict over the border, the competition over global status, differing conceptions of the international order and ensuing balance of power strategies, the control and acquisition of energy resources and of water, divergent