

## BOOK REVIEW

Jagannath P. Panda (Ed), *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Corridors, Connectivity and Contours*, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2019), Price: ₹ 1280.00, Pages: 364.

The book titled *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Corridors, Connectivity and Contours*, edited by Jagannath P. Panda, is a timely compendium giving a detailed analysis of India-Japan relations which is the “most promising bilateral relationship of the 21st century”. The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s ‘Confluence of Two Seas’ speech in the Indian Parliament in 2007, recognised the geopolitical realities in the emergence of the Indo-Pacific, and the converging interests of India and Japan in the region. In the first chapter titled *India-Japan Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: A Primer*, Panda highlights that the Indo-Pacific region is set to become the ‘nerve centre’ of the emerging international order as it offers both opportunities for cooperation as well as possibilities of competition. The chapter highlights the shared view of both the countries on the Indo-Pacific, and their focus on building ‘connectivity and quality infrastructure in an inclusive and transparent manner’. China’s increasing assertiveness, especially its unilateral and autarchic infrastructural initiative of BRI, is a common concern for India and Japan. The book reiterates the significance of India’s Northeast region in cementing India-Japan relations, bolstered by the multiple project investments by Japan in the region.

The book is divided into four thematic parts to analyse the different aspects of India-Japan relations. Part one of the book is dedicated to exploring the relationship in the context of inter-continental connectivity, focusing on prospects of cooperation in Central Asia and Africa. It emphasises the India-Japan relationship as being the “balancer to peace and prosperity” in the Indo-Pacific. The fundamentals of this relationship - which include the complementary approach to maritime disputes, a free and fair trading environment, the promotion of a transparent regional trading environment, and trans-regional connectivity - have ‘caused discomfort’ to China’s approach in the region. However, there is need to pursue the relationship beyond the Indo-Pacific. A ‘Eurasia’ framework of cooperation, which is currently missing, can become the most important strategic fulcrum of India-Japan global ties.

Historically, Japan was one of the first countries to apply the Silk Road concept in its engagement with the Central Asia and the Caucasus region. Nevertheless, it was never to view the region through the lens of imperialism. That historical connect needs to be revisited. On the other hand, India's relationship with Central Asia, based mainly on goodwill and welcomed by the countries in the region as a 'soft balancer', has got a push with India's membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). India through its 'Connect Central Asia policy', and Japan by revisiting its 'Eurasian Diplomacy' of the 1990s should enhance their outreach in the region. The author emphasises that the China factor would play an important role in furthering India-Japan ties in Central Asia, by pursuing various infrastructural and developmental projects in the region. A trilateral framework of India-Japan-EU could possibly be extended to Central Asia. Another region which needs to be focused on to further the Indo-Japan relationship is Africa. Health and agriculture particularly and, of course, the connectivity infrastructure under the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) are the sectors where the expertise of India and Japan and the needs of African countries can synergise.

Part Two of the book focuses on analysing the relationship under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with particular focus on infrastructure connectivity and corridors as well as the role of technology in furthering bilateral ties. The 'institutionalisation' of bilateral relations in the form of Annual Summit meetings since 2006 has resulted in consistent engagement at the Prime Ministerial level between the two countries. Academic and research institutions are also playing an important role at the Track II level to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Japan's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in India has been crucial in areas like power, transportation, communication, irrigation, environment, and those sectors connected with human needs. A crucial role has been played by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). K. V. Kesavan in his chapter titled *Infrastructure Connectivity and Corridors in Prime Minister Modi's Japan Policy*, highlights the significant role of Japan's economic diplomacy under Shinzo Abe - often referred to as 'Abenomics' - and the efforts of the current government in New Delhi by highlighting the flagship projects initiated since Prime Minister Modi has come to power, including the Delhi-Mumbai Freight Corridor, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the initiatives in the Northeast region, the High-speed rail project, and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) announced in 2016. India's growing economy - with a number of

schemes like Make in India and Digital India - has provided more space for financial and technological collaborations with Japan. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIPS) and India's Act East Policy have played a crucial role in bringing the two countries closer than ever. However, the chapter also highlights that while FOIPS is intent upon promoting infrastructure and connectivity, it has not been able to make much progress in concrete terms. It is important to identify specific projects, and also to coordinate actions with various regional platforms - like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), to name a few. FOIPS also needs to look for partners apart from India, Australia, and the USA, to cooperate with ASEAN members. There is also a need to have a consensus on the approach to China.

A. D. Gnanagurunathan's chapter titled *Technology and Resource Imperatives in India-Japan Relations*, argues that instead of a dominant narrative of 'security', the focus in the India-Japan relationship should be on 'technology' - particularly emerging technologies like cloud technology, the Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced energy storage, all of which should be focus areas. India and Japan have immense potential for joint exploration in space, both by collaboration of government space research agencies as well as the private sector.

The third part of the book is dedicated to analysing the economic aspects of bilateral ties. It argues that the rise of China in the region as a 'centripetal force' in economic and strategic terms has played a crucial role in determining strategic equations in the region, including pushing for closer trade, defence, and security relations between India and Japan. In an interesting analysis, Raviprasad Narayanan in his chapter titled *The Asian Context: Chinese Economy and India-Japan Ties*, argues that China's One Belt and Road (OBOR) initiative (launched in 2013) was, in a way, a counter to the US 'pivot' announced in 2012. While US led regionalism has focused on economic liberalisation and deregulation, China has focused on development. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)*, China is using its economic power and foreign policy to reshape the regional order which challenges western models and institutions. The USA's disengagement from regional multilateralism has created a vacuum, allowing China to expand its influence in the region. The decision to walk out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trump Administration's preference for bilateralism rather than multilateralism has further given a step up to China in the Indo-

Pacific. Given the current scenario, the democratic and strategically autonomous India has the potential to re-orient the strategic and economic centre of gravity away from China.

In her chapter titled *Infrastructure Financing and Institutional Statecraft: Japan's Role in India's Modernisation*, Titli Basu argues that infrastructure plays an important role in enabling regional value chains and economic engagement through connectivity. Japan needs to leverage its leading position in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to pursue its partnership for quality infrastructure in the region. For Japan, the partnership for infrastructure allows the reinvigoration of its economy as well as the consolidation of its strategic partnerships with like-minded countries. The Indo-Pacific Vision 2025 is one of the top priorities of the India-Japan partnership. Development cooperation is an important element in determining Japan's foreign policy approach. It is in Japan's interest to support an economically strong India in the region. India is the largest development partner of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Collaborating with ADB and JICA will help realise the objective of constructing infrastructure in India which will integrate the country better in the regional value chains and the industrial networks of emerging economies of South and Southeast Asia. There is an 'infrastructure imbalance' in Asia which creates an environment for competition. China and Japan are the only two players who have the ability to fill the demand and supply gap in the region. The dynamic equations among Asian players (mainly China, Japan, and India) define Asia's infrastructure geopolitics.

The last part of the book explores and analyses the convergence of interests between India and Japan in the maritime realm. Abhay Kumar Singh in his chapter, on *India-Japan Strategic Partnership: Imperatives for Ensuring 'Good Order at Sea' in the Indo-Pacific*, highlights that the idea of the 'confluence of the two seas' is essentially rediscovering historical strategic homogeneity in Maritime Asia, when a crucial role was played by the monsoon winds connecting the two Oceans in the past. Presently, given their vital strategic and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region, both India and Japan have a shared interest in maintaining 'Good order at Sea' as also a shared strategic approach in the region.

Focusing on the western Indo-Pacific region, Kenta Aoki in his chapter on *Chabahar: The Fault-line in India-Japan Infrastructure Cooperation*, argues that Chabahar is a fault-line in India-Japan infrastructure cooperation. He argues that, Chabahar is, in a way, a counter to China's BRI and the China-Pakistan axis. At the same time, it plays a crucial role in India's 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is a crucial region for energy and also provides a

vast market. The angle of Afghanistan is also crucial as Chabahar will reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan. However, Japan is concerned about China's assertiveness in the East and South China Sea but is less committed to Chabahar than India which, to a certain extent, is due to its relations with the USA. As Iran looks to push for developing the port in addition to India, it may consider China as an important source of assistance, which may allow the latter to expand its influence in the western part of the Indo-Pacific.

India and Japan share a certain degree of concern towards China's growing naval capability and its impact on the Bay of Bengal region. On the other hand, the USA would be willing to encourage India and Japan to step up their engagement in the region. China is expanding its naval capabilities beyond its immediate shores, with the idea of 'open/far seas' protection mentioned in its Defence White Paper 2015. The book focuses on evaluating China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and its geopolitical implications in the larger Indian Ocean region, with particular focus on the Bay of Bengal. The blue water naval capability of the PLA Navy with support facilities in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, and Djibouti has made for China's significant presence in the region. The possibility of nuclear armed vessels of the major players operating in this maritime space in the near future indicates the possibility of the deterioration of the security scenario in the region. Takuya Shimodaria's chapter titled *China's Maritime Policy in the Bay of Bengal: How does it Affect India's and Japan's Maritime Interests?*, argues for pushing connectivity through BIMSTEC and the EU. He also argues for exploring the prospects of Quad-Sino cooperation.

As global politics enters into an era where competition over resources will dominate international relations, global attention has shifted to the maritime sphere, bringing the significance of the Indian Ocean to the fore. India's Act East Policy and Japan's FOIPS converges in the Bay of Bengal sub-region. Given the rapidly increasing militarisation of the Indian Ocean, a peaceful, and stable maritime domain in the Bay of Bengal is difficult to have. As India seeks to collaborate with like-minded countries in the region, and seeks to upgrade maritime and inland infrastructure, Japan will be an important partner. Also, with a technological edge, Japan can be a significant partner in enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief/ Search and Rescue (HADR/SAR) capabilities, to enhance maritime security.

Overall, the book under review is an analytical description of the various facets of India-Japan relations in the changing geo-political and geo-economic

scenarios of the Indo-Pacific. It also engages in a macro analysis of progress in bilateral relations under the Abe administration in Japan and the Modi government in New Delhi. It is comprehensive and reader friendly. The compendium flows lucidly in scaling recent developments, and analysing future prospects of bilateral cooperation, focusing especially on infrastructure and connectivity which have been key focus areas in recent years in the context of the Indo-Pacific. In a nutshell, the book is a meticulous compilation of well researched papers, and provides a valuable addition to existing literature on India-Japan relations.

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Krishnan Srinivasan, James Mayall, Sanjay Pulipaka (Eds.), *Values in Foreign Policy: Investigating Ideals and Interests* (London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), Pages: xxii + 293, Price: Rs. 833.00

In a country's foreign policy, what comes first? Values or national interest? The answer is obvious: national interest will always triumph. Yet, a deeper examination reveals that most countries feel the need to wrap their foreign policy in terms of values, some universal ones like those contained in the UN Charter, and some very specific and unique to their respective cultures and historical experiences. Equally, values are sacrificed when national interests are considered supreme. Values often hide power play. This is particularly true of the more powerful countries.

Culture is a compelling determinant of an individual's behaviour. This is true of the leaders also. Different countries have different value systems which define their outlook. In the USA, American exceptionalism is considered self-evident. The EU prides itself on values of enlightenment - that is, secularism, democracy, and the rule of law. China is pursuing its "China Dream", which is ostensibly based on the ancient value of "harmony" arising out of Confucian thought. Russia describes itself as the historic

saviour of the European civilisation, and is increasingly embracing the values of orthodox Christianity. Islamic countries expound values rooted in the Quran and the Hadith. India regards itself as a proponent of the value system enshrined in ideals of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is a family), non-violence, peace, and cooperation. Japan is beginning to talk about ‘Asian values’ which respect hierarchy and places community over the individual. The question that arises is: where there are multiple value systems prevalent in the world, is it possible to arrive at a minimal consensus on a certain universal value system which would guide each country’s foreign policy?

The editors of the book *Values in Foreign Policy* have done an excellent job of putting together a number of thoughtful essays which investigate the link between values and foreign policy and its practice in different countries. Their main motivation for writing the book is to examine “whether, despite differences between cultures, there is any reasonable prospect of arriving at a consensus on a universal set of values to which all countries can subscribe” (p. 3). The book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on how culture impacts the foreign policy of countries.

The introductory scene-setting chapter provides the analytical framework for the chapters that follow. The chapter goes into such issues as values and rights; the theory and tradition of values in western and eastern cultures; and the role of values like secularism and modernity in the formulation and practice of foreign policy. The subsequent essays deal with the values and foreign policies of the USA, Germany, Russia, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, China, South Korea, and Japan. Based on the case study of Turkey and Iran, the book has a chapter on Islamic values in foreign policy. The debate on Western vs. Asian values has been covered very well in the last chapter of the book.

The book helps the reader to reflect on how values will shape the emerging world order. The world is becoming multipolar. Globalisation has reinforced identities. Diversity is the norm. Liberal values are under attack. Globalisation’s limits have been severely exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging powers, no longer content with the dominance of western values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, accept them with a lot of conditionalities and caveats. Instead, they highlight the value systems rooted in their own cultures and belief systems. Particular attention needs to be paid to the Chinese, Indian, Japanese and the Islamic countries’ value systems, and how they relate to Western institutions and values.

Several essays in the book enter into controversial and less frequented territories. The onslaught of terrorism and radicalisation has led to the debate on the role of religion in foreign policies. Community rights vs. individual rights is also a deeply contested area. Samuel Huntington had warned of the impending clash between civilisations, which in reality means a clash of cultures. Globalization has, paradoxically, fragmented the world into numerous identities, each crying for its place. Nation-states are also under pressure from their constituents. How identities shape the future world order remains to be seen. The debate on “values” becomes important in this context.

Western values - on which the current world order is based - are under challenge. The western world is losing its moral high ground. Western countries are finding it difficult to defend the liberal values rooted in the Enlightenment. Secularism is under attack. In his chapter, James Mayall notes that, “religious toleration is again under threat as a result of the combined pressures of immigration and a rise in religious extremism” (p. 32).

Postmodernism has triggered a crisis of values in Europe. Fredrik Erixon argues that, in Europe, the concept of power has been modified “in a political and institutional atmosphere of postmodernism” (p. 32). European foreign policy is located somewhere between the old concept of modernism and a vision of pan European political personality (p. 44). In Europe, Germany is an interesting case. It has been content to play second fiddle in the post-war years. Having become the most powerful economy in Europe, it remains to be seen whether its post-war values of ‘modesty’, the ‘western identity’, ‘civil power’, and ‘multilateralism’ will remain intact as Europe reshapes itself after Brexit, the refugee crisis, and the corona virus onslaught. Amit Das Gupta, in his chapter, notes that these values are likely to stay even as Europe begins to change (p. 60). One cannot be too sure.

A big rethink on values is underway in the USA after Donald Trump became President. William Antholish, reflecting on Trump’s “America First” policy, notes that he has reopened the question of whether the USA should pursue universal values from which it has gained in the past, or, whether it should become an inward-looking country, abandoning global responsibilities and engagements. The USA seems to be retreating from global commitments. This has already impacted a wide range of global issues. Further, for Trumpian policies to become durable, Trump will have to challenge “the pro-democracy ethos” shaped over generations in the United States. (p.78). Trump has reopened the isolationism debate in US foreign policy that goes back to the foundation days of the republic.

In his chapter on values in western foreign policy, Bruno Macaes ponders whether one can speak of values in foreign policy in a world driven by power considerations. Contrasting the Fukuyama model of eventual convergence of all values to western values, with that of Samuel Huntington's model of the impending clash between different civilisations, Macaes proposes a third way to modern society. He writes, "there are numerous paths, naturally, different visions of what a modern society looks like" (p. 88). This realistic vision of modern society resembles the Upanishadic dictum, "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti", which literally means "Truth is one, the wise perceive it differently".

Hari Vasudevan and Tatiana Shaumian tell us how Vladimir Putin has been busy revising Russian foreign policy, imparting fresh meanings to western notions of sovereignty, democracy, and market economics (p. 93). Foundations like Russki Mir, and the revived Russian Historical Society have been tasked to write a new official history. The state is openly engaging with religion, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, as also Islam and Buddhism as practiced in Russia (p. 104-105).

Mehmet Ozkan and Kingshuk Chatterjee examine the foreign policies of Turkey and Iran to understand the importance of Islamic values in foreign policy. Turkey is a secular country following Islamic values, while Iran is an Islamic country where foreign policy is dictated by geopolitics. They point out that,

Today, unlike in the past, religious diplomacy has acquired a much more sophisticated and comprehensive form ... In the coming years, it is extremely likely that the use of Islam and the political language of Islam in diplomatic activities of both Iran and Turkey will continue to expand in scope as both a source of inspiration for policy formulation and the language of legitimacy (p. 129).

Examining the evolution of values in Indian foreign policy since the time of Mahatama Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to the present day, Krishnan Srinivasan points out that, "it is hard to separate Indian civilisation, philosophy and rationality. All contributed to the evolution of foreign policy, as did Hinduism ..." (p. 136). Hinduism, at its core, has "*dharma* or righteous conduct that rights follow the performance of duties and obligations discharged" (p. 136). This is a very important observation that might need to be discussed in the context of today's turbulent world. Krishnan, however, feels that the ethical, idealistic foreign policy of the early years, based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, universal disarmament et cetera are being discarded (p.

144-145). In his view, today's foreign policy has shifted rightwards: "A new assertiveness is reflected in symbols of patriotism and respect for the military. In foreign affairs, there is no reference to philosophical values other than 'Hindutva'" (p. 148).

Krishnan notes that there is a certain exceptionalism to India's policies (p. 150). He is right. The concept of India being a *Vishwaguru*, or the teacher of the world, is strong in the Indian psyche. This is because of a strong Indian heritage in philosophy, thought, culture, science, and technology. Krishnan observes that Indian core values are "grounded in India's soft power - the power of ideas, spirituality, literature, music, cinema, arts, pluralist democracy, the power of culture and civilisation along with the firm conviction that the world can learn from India moral leadership" (p. 150).

It is not that India is not pragmatic. In Krishnan's view, "India will engage in strategic and transactional partnerships where its political and economic gains are evident; but the nature of the aspirations remains potentially averse to its greater integration with the global system ... These two aspects will remain the dominant values in Indian foreign policy, irrespective of the party which is elected to form the government in New Delhi" (p. 150).

Krishnan is right in pointing out that India's foreign policy is becoming transactional. Yet, it is not divorced from values. Modi, deeply rooted in ancient Indian civilisation and culture, has repeatedly talked about India's cultural heritage as a source of ideas for Indian policies. The declaration of 21 June as International Day of Yoga by the UN has given a great boost to India's soft power.

Krishnan feels that the ideology of "Hindutva" is increasingly defining India's foreign policy. However, he does not define Hindutva. The fact is that Hindutva has not been mentioned in any official statement. There is no common understanding of what constitutes the Hindutva ideology. Hindutva cannot be equated with Hinduism, which is a much broader term. Most Indians easily relate to the epics, Vedanta, and the universalism of Vedic and Upanishadic teachings as they do with the Constitution, and the values of secularism, understood as respect for all religions. Indians need not be defensive about their philosophical and cultural heritage which has relevant messages for the contemporary conflict-ridden world. Swami Vivekananda's understanding of Hinduism resonates well with the concept of a plural society. He does not discard tradition, spirituality, and morality; and he yet exhorts his countrymen to embrace modernity without uprooting themselves from the Hindu religion.

In her essay, Dewi Fortuna Anwar says that values play an important role in Indonesia's foreign policy. Indonesia accepts democracy and human rights as universal values; but the "application of these values has been more selective" (p. 189). Non-interference in each other's internal affairs remains critical to maintaining regional harmony which "still weighs more than any principled stance on universal values within Indonesia ..." (p. 189). Apart from universal values, Indonesia practices peaceful coexistence, harmony, and mediation to resolve conflicts, takes part in international peacekeeping operations, and believes in interfaith dialogue and moderate Islam.

China's *realpolitik* is heavily clothed in Confucian values, which the Chinese Communist Party and the government are now promoting avidly. In his chapter, Zhang Lihua posits, "Once one can understand the values of traditional Chinese culture, one can truly understand Chinese diplomacy" (p. 193). The core values, according to him, are "harmony between humans and nature, harmony between humans and society, harmony between persons." The Chinese government's security concept features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation (p. 197). The value of harmony is derived from Tai Chi philosophy and yin-yang dialectics (p. 199). The author says that Chinese diplomacy is informed by the concept of benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, faithfulness, and harmony. The essay uncritically puts forward the official position of the Chinese government. The author overlooks the fact that China's actual conduct appears to be far different from the values it professes to practice. This is apparent in China's conduct in the South China Sea.

According to Lee Seong Hyon, South Korea's foreign policy is less governed by values or philosophy, and more by "its orientation towards the dominant power in the region" (p. 209). South Korea has shifted from value orientation to a value-neutral position in an uncertain world. China has been and will remain a big factor in South Korea's foreign policy because historically Korea has lived in a Sino-centric world order for centuries. As China rises, South Korea may be "inching closer towards China in its new geopolitical strategic calculus, gradually decoupling its relations with Washington" (p. 216). The author notes that it was in 2012 that South Korea's Foreign Ministry announced the so-called core values of the country's foreign policy: namely, "putting the national interest first, serving the public, contributing to humanity, and aiming for the best" (p. 221). President Moon wants to play a balancing role between the regional powers. In a departure from Korea's traditional behaviour, South Korea is aiming to become a middle power. The author

says, “today, South Korea’s foreign policy is experimenting with a new identity with a new set of guiding values” (p. 222).

Due to its unique circumstances, Japan has always been engaged in balancing Western values with Japanese traditions. In a thoughtful essay, Tadashi Anno says that values are essentially diplomatic rhetoric. A stronger state can project its own values and standards overseas, but ‘smaller and secondary states’ articulate their values essentially to position themselves within an already given international order (p. 227). In Japan’s case, sovereignty, nonaggression, the Western values of human rights, and post-modern values such as environmental protection have played an important role in defining its foreign policy (p. 229). The military defeat turned Japan into a pacifist country. Japan’s pacifism contributed to international peace and security (p. 232). Japan adopted Western values to integrate with the Western alliance system.

The author points out that appeal to universal values has, however, not diminished the importance of older, indigenous values and ideas (p. 234). Japanese culture is, however, underplayed in Japanese formulations. When Japan talks about culture, it refers to the mainstream of western culture, and not the distinctiveness of Japanese traditions (p. 234). However, as Japan grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, its foreign policy rhetoric began to emphasise that Japan was a distinct civilisation, with its own unique culture. But, in the post-Cold War era, Japan’s foreign policy rhetoric began to de-emphasise the uniqueness of Japanese culture, and started putting more emphasis on the universality of values such as liberty, democracy, and human rights. This helped Japan to align with the USA during the times of international tensions. Like other Asian states, Japan also has the desire to assert its own indigenous values; but it has been less forthcoming in defining the core elements of its culture. “Underneath the rhetoric of universal values and proactive pacifism, it is easy to see the stirrings of more traditional national identity. This is visible in the continuing debate within the country over history issues, immigration, demographic crisis, and so on” (p. 245). The author observes that, “It is not impossible that more openly nationalistic undercurrents may come to the fore in Japan’s foreign policy rhetoric” (p. 245). But, “in the foreseeable future, it is likely that Japan will continue to take its stand on the defence of a liberal international order with its universal values, tempered by a modest plea for cultural pluralism” (p. 245).

Many Asian leaders in the past, ranging from Nehru, Tagore Lee Kuan Yew to Mahathir, have talked about Asian values. In the concluding chapter

of the book, Ravi Velloor investigates whether there is anything like Asian values. He says, “beyond deep stress on family values, education, a strong work ethic, and stress on frugality and saving - values that may be changing in some parts of Asia lately- it is not easy to identify what could be called Asian values” (p. 266). He says, “Asia, and East Asian states particularly, continues to be ... wary of Europe’s tendency to stress democracy, human rights, climate change, migration, and other bleeding heart issues” (p. 266). That is where the talk of Asian values becomes audible.

There are several interesting takeaways from the book. First, values are important in foreign policy even though the actual conduct of states is driven by power politics and pragmatism. Second, values change with time. Third, Western values were considered universal; but these were devices to establish a hegemonic world order based on Western ideas. This is now changing. Fourth, the quest for universal values for a new world is on, but inconclusive. Fifth, the Asian values debate will gather momentum in the coming years.

The book is a collection of diverse, unrelated viewpoints of individual authors. Although the editors have tried to provide a connecting link between the different essays, no common view on values and foreign policies emerges. Furthermore, the book also does not discuss such existential issues as the threat of climate change, the growing inequality in society, the unacceptably high level of violence in the world, and the mounting curbs on human rights due to terrorism, radicalisation, and even global pandemics such as COVID-19. Environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity will have a tremendous impact on mankind. Can values be useful in resolving these issues? This question becomes irrelevant when we talk about values and foreign policy. The world is facing multiple crises. The role of religion in foreign policy will increase in the future. In a time of adversity, people tend to become religious.

The foreign policy concerns are not just state-centric. Foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. Domestic policy is, in turn, driven by the people. People matter because behaviour is impacted by their values and belief systems. The leading International Relations (IR) theories are silent on the question of values, although the constructivism theory does talk about identities and ideas. Morality, ethics, and spirituality - which otherwise have a deep impact on individuals - are no-go areas for IR theories. That is why the discourse on values is incomplete, as the chasm between individual’s values and the state’s values has not been bridged. Foreign policy cannot be value-neutral. Culture has a visible impact on the behaviour of nations. The book

could have discussed these issues at some length. Despite this shortcoming, the book makes a useful contribution to the debate on values, culture, and foreign policy.

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Pooja Bhatt, *Nine Dash Line: Deciphering the South China Sea Conundrum*, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2020), Pages: 288 pages (HB), Price: Rs. 980.00

The South China Sea and the maritime disputes of the littoral countries with China have held the attention of the world for the last few decades, and more so in the recent past. The South China Sea (SCS) has been the springboard for China's global maritime ambitions which have captured the attention of the world. The Nine Dash Line (NDL) signifies these Chinese ambitions, and the eponymous book is a timely collation of the variegated issues which surround this vexatious problem. The author has set out to answer some difficult questions on the importance of the NDL in China's geopolitical ambitions, and the likely trajectory of its actions in support of its claims.

A glance at the contents of the book indicates its ambitious scope which encompasses several aspects of the SCS dispute. While one may disagree as to whether the NDL is 'special', there is no argument with the fact that it is different. The dashes of the line, as the author points out, are not uniform in their dispersion; nor has Beijing provided the exact geographical coordinates. The etching out of the tenuous legalities (or illegalities) of China's claims against the background of relevant international maritime law provides the required context for an adequate understanding of this aspect of the SCS dispute by a maritime scholar. China's 'rise to power', and the ambiguity of the NDL maintained by Beijing in this process, has been sketched out well, although it is arguable whether the NDL is a 'means to realise the Chinese Dream'. The book has also attempted to provide a comprehensive and succinct

understanding of the claims of the other littorals in the dispute and their relations with China, especially in the light of China's enormous economic heft in the region. China's employment of its maritime might through the PLA Navy (PLAN), its Coast Guard, and the maritime militia, has been illustrated in a separate chapter. The book has also comprehensively examined the economic aspects that have led to the increasing importance of the SCS, not just to the littorals, but to other stakeholders. The book ends with a look at environmental issues, which China has been accused of violating by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in its award of July 2016.

The brief history of Chinese maritime activities in the SCS, outlined in the first chapter, makes for interesting reading. A closer look at the Chinese 'withdrawal' from the sea, and the subsequent continental focus after the 16th century would have provided a more nuanced understanding of China's current obsession with the maritime dimension. The historiography of the NDL, especially its origins, and the development of the Chinese position, post UNCLOS, provides the relevant context for understanding the current situation. China's ambiguity, possibly intended, comes through when its current position is examined against a background of the existent international legal regime and its domestic laws. While the author's position on the 'ambiguity' of artificially reclaimed islands/rocks is tenuous, China's ability to exploit ambiguities in the international regime has bred a new dimension to warfare - 'lawfare'. China's ability to explore such loopholes, and shape its response through the building up of internal capabilities in its maritime law enforcement organisations is explained in some detail. The relevance of the PCA verdict has been elucidated in detail, and the author's recommendation of a "supranational entity" for such issues while valid, may not be a viable proposition, considering the onus of adherence placed on the disputing parties in the current international arbitration system.

The book has dwelt on China's growing presence on the global stage as a rising power while elaborating its ambitions. Highlighting China's recalcitrant attitude as witnessed in the SCS, would have added balance to the discussion on China's evolving global role. The importance of the 'China Dream' as evidenced in President Xi's speeches, and echoed in the Defence White Papers of 2013 and 2019, clearly bring out China's aspiration "to emerge as a global maritime power". An appreciation of the significance of the NDL, both as a political symbol and as an operational axiom in China's strategic military calculus, can bring a better understanding to China's need for the NDL. China's leveraging of its economic might to gain advantage, or at the very least, ensure cooperation on disputed issues with most of the littorals is evident in

some of the cited examples. The consensus reached by China with Brunei - after it joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - that the dispute was “not an issue for ASEAN”, illustrates China’s economic heft. The ongoing negotiations for the Code of Conduct signify this trend, with none of the countries willing to publicly express their differences with China’s position. China’s penchant for utilising its military might to assert its claims in the SCS has been illustrated by the examples of the various incidents in the Paracels, Scarborough Shoal, and the Johnson Reef. A detailed analysis of these incidents, along with the actions undertaken by the claimants, provide a deeper insight into the issues that make this dispute so intractable. A short study of the PLAN, the PLAN Air Force, the China Coast Guard and the maritime Militia provides the reader with a reasonable understanding of the capabilities that China can bring to bear in this dispute. The ‘gray zone’ operations of the Chinese maritime forces, especially the maritime militia, in assertion of Chinese maritime claims, exemplify the challenges that the littoral countries and other stakeholders, like the USA, have to face in the region. The author surmises correctly that the Chinese will continue to retain these “critical tools” in the pursuit of their maritime interests.

The chapter on the economic importance of the SCS explains the criticality of trade flows through the region upon which China is “most reliant”. While the tentative nature of the data is mentioned by the author, the importance of this trade to China and the littorals cannot be understated. The reference to various studies, like those undertaken by the CIIS and the US EIA, on the oil and gas reserves in the SCS, underlines the continued importance of these waters well into the future. Notwithstanding the challenges of deep water mining, developments in technology, and China’s efforts at undertaking joint ventures could see the exploitation of these resources in the future. Chinese interest in exploiting reserves in the periphery of the NDL is seen as another cause for their presence in this region as also China’s recent collaboration with other countries. The book also examines the SCS dispute through the environmental perspective, and highlights the damage wrought by China’s activities like dredging, overfishing, and poaching. The inherent duality of China’s stand while examining its domestic environmental laws and its international stance, especially its reticence on the monitoring of ‘nationally appropriate action’, is evident.

The author’s conclusion about the resoluteness of China’s claims to the NDL and the waters therein, notwithstanding the ambiguity and the recent absence of reference to the NDL, signifies China’s approach to this issue well into the future. While China may want a stable neighbourhood, it is also clear

that it wants a periphery of “like-minded leaderships” in these countries. While China may repeatedly quote a ‘shared future for humanity’, it cannot be mistaken for one based on equality.

All in all, the book is a comprehensive compilation of the various dimensions of the SCS dispute. The author has made a commendable effort to draw all these strands together, and provide a sound understanding of China’s approach and its ambitions. While the inscrutability of Chinese ambitions is a constant, some of the opacity surrounding its motives has been explained in this book. This book also adds to the Indian scholarly works on the subject and, at the same time, outlines further avenues for study. The book is a must-read for all those concerned about the developments in the SCS. The easy style and absence of jargon will also appeal to the lay reader. It makes a worthy contribution to the Indian corpus on ‘China-knowledge’.

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