

BOOK REVIEWS

Uday Mahurkar, *Marching with a Billion: Analysing Narendra Modi's Government at Midterm* (Gurugram, Penguin Random House India, 2017) Pages: 288, Price: Rs. 499.00

This book is largely an assessment of the performances of the Modi Government that came to rule India after receiving a massive mandate from the electorate in May 2014. While it may seem to be an all-round appraisal of several issues, it is in fact an essential read for diplomats and foreign policy scholars, as the book provides enormous information and insight regarding the working of various ministries and departments that are useful to understand the dynamics that impact foreign and national security policy of the country.

This book can also be easily prescribed to the academic community, who may not find academic exactitude and rigor in research that could have gone into it, but the mountain of information, including primary source materials, will be of use to them to make their analysis of where the Modi government is headed and where it lacks either in policy making or implementation of its declared programmes.

Politicians, especially opposition political leaders of all hues will discover in this book certain developments in the last three years that make the country proud. They may also hit upon certain sources of inspiration and simultaneously find loopholes that they would like to capitalise on for electoral purposes.

The author has mentioned several aspects related to Modi's personality and evolution as a leader, yet the book is not a biography. Nor is the book an academic exercise making serious comparisons with performances of other leaders or political parties at midterm. Clearly, this is neither an opposition-led, rhetoric-packed attempt to defame the government, nor is it a government-inspired propaganda mission.

It consists of biographical sketches, government programmes and schemes that may be construed as plain propaganda, makes critical observations on issues that could provide fodder to opposition political parties, and also includes compilation of information that would be of considerable use for academic exercises and media commentaries.

Significantly, this book covers many aspects of domestic developments in India in the last three years that have wide ranging implications for India's stand on global issues, and the Indian foreign policy. The transformation in

the society brought about by good governance initiatives, steps taken to further open up the domestic market for foreign investors and traders, measures for speedy disposals of project applications and combating corrupt practices will complement the country's foreign as well as economic policies.

Thus, this book has something or the other to offer to various people in diverse professions. It will also be valuable to future historians who shall attempt to examine India's domestic development as well as where India stands in the world order in times to come.

It consists of eight chapters. However, the key issues in the book that draw considerable attention are: "A Digital-techno revolution in the Making", good governance as an "Agent of Change", "Building India" through infrastructure development, and smart fiscal management, developing "team work" to promote "Collective Responsibility", and a foreign policy strategy that is bold and assertive where necessary and that is marked by a new style of diplomacy combining symbolism with substance.

The author through the chapters has tried to underscore some developments in the last three years of the Modi government that would positively influence India's persona in the world and, by implication, India's engagement with the international community. In his assessment of the economic performance of the Modi government at mid-term, the author gives high marks to the government as India's GDP growth rate is now ahead of China and because India has emerged as the number one destination of foreign direct investment. Moreover, India has left behind Japan to become the third largest domestic market for civil aviation which signifies, among other things, the purchasing power increase among the people.

Second, champions of democracy abroad will certainly appreciate "good governance" promoted by the Modi government. For the first time in Indian history, the government has created the 'My Gov' app that involves people at the grass root level to be part of the decision making process on various issues. Several ministries now seek views of the people on critical issues before taking decisions and even seek feedback on government programmes and policies. The author gives several examples of it and one such instance states that 2.5 lakhs people gave their opinion on the new education policy before the report was finalised.

Good governance also involves combating corruption and the author points out that the Modi government has eliminated the "Transfer and Posting Raj" and has taken several steps to remove the "middlemen", so that several government schemes to empower people, alleviate poverty, generate employment and fight diseases reach the target.

Describing the prime minister as a man of the people and the only leader to have travelled to 450 out of 688 districts in India through his political career, the author credits him as an innovative thinker, pragmatic policy maker and a strict leader who monitors proper implementation of policies and programmes.

There is no doubt that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has got massive foreign fan following and admirers. Connecting with Indians abroad does bring wealth, talent and other benefits to the country. The author also has high praise for Modi's foreign policy. One full chapter is devoted to Modi's engagement with the rest of the world, his foreign policy style and his state-of-the-art diplomatic initiatives. As prime minister elect his invitation to all SAARC leaders to attend his inauguration, as prime minister, Modi's periodic interactions with leaders of major powers, his stand on climate change, the innovative methods he has come up with to counter Pakistani propaganda and designs, his interactions with the overseas Indians, the 'make in India' scheme, the creation of suitable environment for doing business in India, roping in foreign investors for infrastructural developments, and turning urban areas into smart cities are clearly examples of out-of-the box thinking and constructive activities that would earn friends for India in the international community.

Moreover, the surgical strike against Pakistan-based terrorists, raising the issue of human rights violation in Baluchistan, upholding freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, strengthening defence/security ties with Japan, Vietnam, Australia and others, and proposals for Sagarmala and Asia-Africa economic corridor are trademarks of Modi's leadership.

This book is a micro and macro investigation of Modi government's performances, a sort of report card that contains achievements and failures. While achievements are certainly more, according to the author, there are places where the drawbacks, difficulties, and performances below expectations are also mentioned. While Narendra Modi has been awarded kudos for his achievements and leadership, Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi have also been given their share of credit at selected places in the book.

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Shyam Saran, *How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century*, (New Delhi, Juggernaut Books, 2017), Pages: x + 312, Price: Rs. 599.00

Shyam Saran, one of India's foremost diplomats, gives a guided tour in "How India Sees the World". He traces India's foreign policy since independence including the most important of relationships, which is with China, and the most difficult one, which is with Pakistan, as the world passed through the Cold War. Non-Alignment was how Nehru maintained India's strategic autonomy until the recent return to a more democratic Westphalian concert of sovereign states marked by multipolarity in the international system. In the epilogue he opines that the international community requires better management given increasing interdependence among states and growing stresses of climate change. It also needs security in the fields of energy, space, the cyber domain, etc. Most of his predecessors who have dealt with shaping India's foreign policies would identify with most of his analyses and prescriptions, though individual experience might suggest variations.

The early concept of statecraft in India by Kautilya and others is recognised in the title. The author rightly concludes that the Arthshastra remains valid and a successful ruler needs a secure base at home, sufficient capacity to project power abroad, and a willingness to use all diplomatic tools including blandishment, bribery, deception and even resorting to war. India once excelled in the use of soft power. Religion and culture; art and craft; trade and finance; and all manner of human discourse spread out from the Indian epicentre in caravans, and through trade routes by land and by sea. India would do well to recall its ancient outreach devoid of imperial motivation as well as its modern endowments as it crafts a global role.

The partition of India was undoubtedly a disaster as it broke up what had been a historic, political and geographical unit for millennia. India has had to work overtime in maintaining its traditions of plurality and tolerance while accelerating growth with equity so that we might become an example and a magnet for our neighbours and thus restore a semblance of that past. Given our disproportionate size India has to be patient and helpful without being patronising. Ultimately this would be best achieved with open and porous borders and accelerated regional cooperation. How can we square this with our current security paranoia? Sub regional cooperation like BBIN points to a way, but that needs genuine commitment from the political leadership and implementation by the bureaucracy, security and intelligence, with support

from academia, the media etc. The need is to implement efficiently without undue fanfare.

The military hold over political power in Pakistan predicated on permanent hostility towards India makes it hold out even as other neighbours have gradually accepted regional cooperation. The unquestioning support of the US and Western military and political leadership may be withering but China remains their all-weather friend. Paradoxically, Pakistan may only acquiesce to regional cooperation when we ratchet up India's economic and military capacity as to make their dream of parity a chimera. Can we also somehow convince China that CPEC would bring everyone richer dividends under an Indo-Pak cooperation umbrella? Meanwhile, as the author recommends, we must keep bilateral bridges open and functioning. This may be difficult but not impossible for a country that still swears by Gandhian ideals, even if it bends them from time to time.

South Asia does need priority. However, that would be futile without considering an Asian system which should include China and East Asia, the ASEAN, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and Central Asia. Our engagement with West Asia should also be raised beyond ensuring energy security and the wellbeing of the Indian Diaspora and India needs to become gradually involved in stabilising that volatile region. This could enable many organisations including SAARC, ESCAP, SCO, APEC, EAS, and RCEP etc. to work more effectively together. The slogan of Act East following on Look East is repeated often, and many speak highly of BIMSTEC. However, action is not commensurate with the rhetoric. Rising economies like Vietnam and Indonesia do not figure highly on our radar. The promising ASEAN India Centre is still to take off. We have abandoned BCIM, the Kunming South Asian Think Tank Forum and other useful projects that could do much to improve connectivity and regional development that would also benefit BIMSTEC. We are pumping out gas from offshore fields leased to us by Myanmar to China for lack of pipelines, which could serve our deprived Northeast. We should stand firm where China seeks to impose its own concepts of Road and Belt. Nevertheless, there may be merit in being flexible and seeking cooperation where possible as well as facing competition with China in our neighbourhood. Reality demands we provide a much greater allotment of resources to both.

Indian and Chinese civilisations were the envy of the world from ancient times till Europe's quest for empires forced a decline. In that period there was little political contact although the author provides fascinating details of the manifold exchanges over centuries. His comparative comments on the two civilisations deserve serious consideration. In the current era, after

a brief honeymoon, the relations soured and the 1962 conflict elevated the boundary and territorial dispute to a peak. Unfortunately, it remains unresolved and both sides are responsible. When formal talks began in 1980 I led the Indian delegation. The Chinese appeared still willing to accept the “package” proposed by Premier Chou En-Lai to Pandit Nehru. Chairman Deng Xiaoping even tried to force the pace by advocating it to a visiting Indian journalist just before the first round of talks. The Indian government at that time was not willing to negotiate seriously on that basis. By the time we were ready for some compromise the Chinese stand had hardened. Even the long period of border tranquillity highlighted during the first Vajpayee visit and codified in subsequent agreements is no longer hailed as remarkable. It is just possible that after Doklam the Chinese, hitherto heavily involved in OBOR, and with several other high profile external initiatives have found it necessary to concede more leverage to India but that must remain in the realm of speculation.

China now claims a major global role given the diminishing responses of the US to challenges in the last decade. It has rallied to support globalisation, its version of climate change, etc. No one can doubt its capacity as an economic partner although it is said to be expensive. Given its size and other endowments, India has little choice but to consider following although there is good reason to doubt whether either country is fully aware of future problems and costs. India would have to make up the formidable deficit that already exists with China. My assessment coincides with that of the author that no single power can establish hegemony in today’s world.

In the chapter on Nepal, the dilemma of dealing with smaller neighbours is brought out vividly. Our own political parties have taught us that populism is a game in which politicians delight while playing to the gallery and it is much easier with neighbours. I have seen this in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the damage is considerable. Indian diplomacy should be geared towards safeguarding harmony rather than seeking cheap popularity at home or abroad. The very simple exchange of enclaves between Indian and Bangladesh was delayed for decades because of political gamesmanship in India. Using the European method of arranging frequent weekend retreats at resorts between politicians and officials to thrash out such problems would be worth an attempt. The much more complex issue of Farraka did yield to such an approach. A senior Irish diplomat who played a leading role in the Good Friday Agreement that ended the Northern Ireland conflict remarked to me, “There is always a compromise waiting to be made. You have to sell it till all or most buy it”.

The USA, Europe and many other countries do remain relevant. However, today almost every great power is retreating and the emerging powers in Asia deserve attention.

Most diplomats focus on either bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. Shyam Saran has excelled in both. Among his multilateral achievements was the feat of getting India out of the nuclear non-proliferation stranglehold. With the unexpected help of George Bush, India under Manmohan Singh became a recognised nuclear weapon state outside the P5 with some but not excessive restrictions. Nuclear power, although a clean source, has become unpopular and this diminished our dividend but not the achievement. Those of us who faced the unmitigated wrath of the non-proliferation lobby with its unabashed and vicious support of nuclear apartheid against the universally accepted goal of total nuclear disarmament had cause to celebrate. The second was the battle to preserve the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. That was lost at Copenhagen due to Obama and others and more so in Paris. The author and many of his Indian and Chinese colleagues rightly claim that the world will live to rue this.

Satow's *Guide to Diplomacy* was recommended to Shyam Saran as a textbook for young diplomats. Saran's book is a worthy and livelier replacement for the current entrants into the Indian Foreign Service and their foreign colleagues.

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Former Secretary,
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Former Ambassador to Japan and Belgium.

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Rajiv Dogra, *Durand's Curse: A Line Across the Pathan Heart*, (New Delhi, Rupa Publications, 2017), Pages: 256, Price: Rs. 595.00

As Pakistan rationalises a Berlin Wall-style divide between the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan, that it began constructing in June 2017, Rajiv Dogra's timely book, *Durand's Curse: A Line Across the Pathan Heart*, comes in handy with a detailed historical account of the drawing of the Durand Line, which the author emphatically calls "Durand's Curse". With a complete

disregard for the Afghan opinion, the external powers then (Britain, 1893) and now (Pakistan, 2017) have arbitrarily executed their decisions, without “worrying over the future of those divided by [t]his line” (p.127). In a repeat of history, Islamabad plans to fence up the 2,500 kilometres frontier despite protests from Kabul. While Pakistan’s military on 18 October 2017 said that the fencing would help prevent terrorist attacks in both countries, Kabul has shown displeasure at such a decision arguing that that the barrier would divide families along the tribal belt.

Writing about the turbulent history of the Afghans, the present book, which is divided into 32 chapters, discusses the political machinations that had gone into the drawing of the Durand line, starting with “benign neglect” in the 1830s (p.20) to “a long period of hatred between the two” (p.43), following the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842). Bearing a devastating impact on the British morale, the war was described by GR Gleigh, a chaplain attached to the defeated army (p.42), in the following words:

It was a war begun for no wise purpose, carried on with a strange mixture of rashness and timidity, brought to a close after suffering and disaster, without much glory attached either to the government which directed, or the great body of troops which waged it. Not one benefit, political or military, was acquired with this war.

This British interference in Afghanistan was guided by the politics of “transfer of power” from one Amir to another. In the summer of 1839, the British army marched up the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan with an aim to replace Dost Mohammad, “...the Amir that the British did not like with Shah Shuja, who was their puppet” (p.37). The choice of implanting pliant rulers in the home country was done to assist the British in their military designs – like the “Forward Policy” adopted by Lord Edward Lytton, who came to India as the Viceroy in 1876 with the “instructions to take decisive measures for counteracting the dangers of Russian advance in Central Asia, and in particular for re-establishing [the British] influence in Afghanistan” (p.66).

Lytton, who “wasn’t just aggressive in his policies; [but] also abrasive in his personal conduct” (p.66), provoked the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878), which was opposed by the doubters in the British Cabinet, “who were worried that another setback in Kabul might lead to a repeat of the Indian War of Independence in 1857” (p.72). The doubters had learnt from history, in this case the First Anglo-Afghan War, when the defeat of the British army had an effect beyond Afghanistan on their “compatriots back in India” where the Afghan victory in the war became a “symbol of possibility” (p.46). “It showed

that the British army was not invincible,” writes Dogra, giving them “hope that freedom from foreign rule was feasible”.

Running parallel to the British blunder in Kabul was another drama that was unfolding in Central Asia. Even as they [British and Russia] continued to play the Great Game, the two were, “despite their differences and rivalries”, writes Dogra, “often interconnected and supportive of each other” (p.47). However, the writer does not throw enough light on the details about this interconnectedness and support that Britain and Russia rendered to each other, leaving the reader curious on this huge gap in the narrative.

Moving further beyond the Second World War, Dogra writes about the setting of stage for the future Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rehman, who had till Sher Ali’s death in 1879 lived in exile in Central Asia and began to march towards Kabul, only to be installed as the Amir on 22 July 1880. His reign started with favourable developments in London. With the defeat of Disraeli in the elections, Lytton resigned from his post. “The new Prime Minister Gladstone was opposed to the colonial lobby generally... [He] appointed Lord Rippon as the viceroy, and his liberal Cabinet decided to abandon the Forward Policy” (p.82). Rehman turned out to be the most successful Amir of Afghanistan in the nineteenth century. “It was Abdur Rehman who united Afghanistan in the shape that we see today. Yet this was the man Durand wanted overthrown” (p.109).

After more than a decade old rule, the Amir, in “a deed of deception”, signed two documents. “The agreement about the northern part fixes the boundary between Afghanistan and Russia. The agreement with British is about the ‘sphere of influence’ in Afghanistan’s eastern and southern frontier. The latter piece of paper was to become known as ‘the Durand Agreement’. It was signed in a language that Amir Abdur Rehman had no knowledge of” (p 121).

In writing about the drawing of the Durand Line, the author erroneously compares it with the Radcliffe Line that divides India and Pakistan. Criticising the drawing of the Durand Line as a “casual affair”, unlike the Radcliffe Line that was “carefully and meticulously drawn”, Dogra states,

Such lines should be the result of careful work done by cartographers over several weeks. To give an example, Radcliffe Line between India and Pakistan is roughly of the same length as the Durand Line. But Cyril Radcliffe did not casually draw a line across a small map. He was assisted by a team of professionals, consulted a variety of people, including politicians, bureaucrats, cartographers and many others (p126).

In comparing the two Lines, Dogra ignores the political context that led to the drawing of the two lines. One needs to see the location of the colonial power while making such comparisons. The Durand came into existence more than half a century before the Radcliffe. The former was the time when the British were establishing and consolidating the Empire in the sub-continent; while on the other hand, the latter was part of British decolonisation in the twentieth century. Thus, Durand's "casual" approach ought to be different from Radcliffe's "careful" approach, owing to the political vicissitudes – the former as an occupying force while the latter as a withdrawing force.

Meanwhile, the nature of the [Durand] Line continues to be under debate. "Was it definitive?" asks Dogra, further adding, "It has been 124 years since the Agreement was allegedly signed, but it continues to remain a topic of contest and debate. There are question marks about its authenticity as also its intent. Was it meant to demarcate borders or was it a temporary arrangement?"

Placing this question in contemporary international politics where Afghanistan is seen opposing Pakistan on the question of building fence on the Durand Line, one needs to go back in time and refer to the historical texts that quote Durand as saying, "The tribes on the Indian side are not to be considered as within British territory. They are simply under our influence in the technical sense of the term, that is to say, so far as the Amir is concerned and as far as they submit to our influence or we exert it" (p144). Thus, Durand clearly used the term 'influence' rather than 'border'. However, the line became a "demarcation of sovereignty" (p145) as some British officials "twisted the sense of the text to suit what they thought was more suitable to British interests" (p155).

"The sphere of influence" that "became 'territory' in the modified British view" has been inflicted with violence and bloodshed since the 1870s when the British started pursuing the Forward Policy that resulted in an increase of territory as well as brought in war that continues to haunt even today on both sides of the Durand – ten Provinces of Afghanistan and the tribal belt of Pakistan.

With the partition of the Indian sub-continent, "Pakistan" became "essential to the British project because through it the UK could control the main artery leading into Central Asia" (p170). As Dogra aptly writes, "Self-interest rather than law and justice shaped Britain's view on Pakistan as a successor state. So even as Pakistan was being rewarded for its strategic location, Afghanistan was being punished for it" (p184). Incidentally, the British military chiefs of

staff, who had become enthusiastic proponents of Pakistan, had noted, “The area of Pakistan is strategically the most important in the continent of India and the majority of our strategic requirements could be met”.

Lack of references in many places prevents the book from being an important source for academia, policy makers and scholars working on Afghanistan. The book could have been a valuable addition to the scholarship on Afghanistan, but for this lacuna.

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Securing India: Vivekananda International Foundation Perspective - Issues and Trends, (New Delhi, Wisdom Tree, 2017), Pages: 202, Price: Rs. 1,495.00

This is a compilation brought out by Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi, comprising contributions from some of the most renowned experts in India’s strategic circle. Tethered around the theme, ‘Securing India’, the compilation also goes by the tag of inaugural publication of its kind from the institute. It comprehensively covers India’s security and connectivity concerns with regard to nuclear weapons, Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, the Arab world, the BIMSTEC nations, the Indian Ocean and larger South Asia. Thematically transcending beyond geopolitics, it evokes nuclear security and deterrence, increasing radicalisation, climate change and weaponisation of outer space; all under the overarching needs of a modern India that was cherished by Swami Vivekananda.

The book begins with a chapter from General NC Vij, Director VIF, examining India’s nuclear deterrence. The dilemma of a nuclear response for a country like India has been analysed well against four thresholds. The chapter candidly talks about limitations of India’s nuclear doctrine and the resultant deterrence effect on Pakistan, especially in the context of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW). It further clarifies that owing primarily to Pakistan’s TNWs, its ability to use them in a targeted and localised way against India may have increased. The resultant asymmetry is stacked against India. If India chooses

to respond in a retaliatory fashion by acquiring TNWs or high-yielding bombs, it will debilitate the sanctity of India's nuclear deterrence. Pointing out India's capability gap with China, the author urges a flexible nuclear doctrine. To fill the gaps that have been pointed out, the chapter ends with a few recommendations like development of low-yield weapons and developing alternate combat capabilities. However, it desists from suggesting any major change to the existing nuclear doctrine of India.

Moving away from the earlier theme, the second chapter talks about the contemporary relevance of Swami Vivekananda's message and vision. It talks about Vivekananda as a symbol of aspiring India and his yearning for India to take her rightful place in the world. The importance of this chapter accords itself to the resonance of his vision even today in its contemporariness and relevance. Enkindling Vivekananda's preoccupation with India and her future, the chapter by Anirban Ganguly incorporates anecdotal analysis to revive the sage's idea of national regeneration. To a large extent, the themes chosen for deliberation in this compilation could be imagined as issues that, if worked upon, could catapult India to its rightful place in the modern world.

The third chapter by S. Gurumurthy makes a case for India-specific economic model on top of the existing post-War economic models, which have been institutionalised by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral economic organisations. Criticising the existing model as One Size Fits All (OSFA), which peaked during the 1990s, the author argues that the G-20, the World Bank and the United Nations have all rejected the OSFA and instead have turned to a nation-specific, and culture-centric economic model. Holding western education and globalisation responsible for the perpetuation of economic models such as the OSFA, the author credits the NITI AYOJ under the Modi government for recognising the need for an India-specific developmental model. The author, however, somewhat ambitiously, gives the impression that India might be on the cusp of banishing the OSFA model.

Discussing the evolving US foreign policy under Donald Trump and its implications for India in the next chapter, Kanwal Sibal argues that Trump's election raised a great deal of uncertainty abroad because of his unorthodox outlook. Highlighting the inconsistencies of Trump's presidency the author underscores that India is not a priority country for Trump. The perception that India is moving rapidly in the US camp does not augur well for India's own relations with Russia, as it dilutes the geopolitical importance of groupings such as Russia-India-China (RIC), BRICS, SCO, etc. The emerging Chinese challenge to American power in the Asia-Pacific has been succinctly summed

up in the line, 'If the US loses its hegemony, the process will start in the Asia-Pacific'. The deteriorating relation between Washington and Moscow has been discussed in the context of changing balance of power where growing China-Russia proximity is a result of combined US-EU pressure.

In a candid assessment, Ashok K. Kantha acknowledges that the current India-China relation is suffering from differences and suspicion, and more importantly, has entered a phase that is poised to present more challenges through 'an uncertain mix of cooperation and competition'. Donald Trump has not only added to this uncertainty but has also provided China the requisite time and space to consolidate as a global power. Citing five reasons for the emergence of China the author links its growing Asian dominance to the complexity of China-India relations especially involving India's NSG membership, the Chinese opposition to the listing of Masood Azhar under the UN list, and roadblocks in the border issue. The chapter ends on a positive note with models of *modus vivendi* exploring opportunities for collaboration between India and China.

The chapter by Prabhat P. Shukla delves into the nature of the China-Pakistan nexus and reveals that it has been building up over the decades since the 1960s. The author holds the 2005 Sino-Pakistan Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Neighbourly Relations as the mainstay of Chinese economic and strategic commitments in Pakistan. Giving a history of events in China and Pakistan that show their combined unfavourable approach to India, the author argues that Chinese support has emboldened Pakistan to not just confront India but also the US forces in Afghanistan. The China-Pakistan nexus is only growing and proves increasingly detrimental to India with credible reports about the presence of Chinese troops on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control. The author also cautions India about some developments that point towards Russia gradually being drawn into the China-Pakistan nexus. In a spirit of continuity, the next chapter by Tilak Devasher probes the evolving dynamics in Pakistan by looking at the nature of its democracy, political dynamics, civil-military relations, terrorism and internal security, the state of economy, and the foreign policy. The author concludes that Pakistan is in a state of flux. Since the chapter was written when Nawaz Sharif was still the prime minister, it rightly foresees his uncertain position due to the Panama Paper leaks. In essence, Pakistan's internal and external relations have been portrayed as being on a downward spiral and the consequent need of a visionary leadership to bring the country back on tracks has also been voiced.

Writing about 'prospects and problems of transition and stability in Afghanistan', Ravi Sawhney and Sushant Sareen give the account of the

fragile situation in Afghanistan as a result of ascendancy of Taliban, presence of terrorist groups like Islamic State that have found presence in the country recently, only 60 percent of Afghanistan's territory remaining under the government, a weak economy, and a fraught political situation. However, the chapter's main thrust lies on a more pressing concern for the country; the new Great Game being played by Russia and China along with a hostile neighbourhood policy followed by Pakistan towards Afghanistan. The authors rightly point out external interference in Afghanistan as the greatest challenge. History is evidence to such an assessment.

The next three chapters deal with important issues such as connectivity, geography and geopolitics. Tariq Karim takes up the need for restoring connectivity in South Asia for regional development. The author makes a strong case for restoring connectivity through Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) in South Asia. Linking this connectivity architecture with history, the author feels that linking South Asia with Southeast Asia could address the developmental challenges faced by both the regions. The theme in this chapter that river connectivity is of primary importance has been built upon in the following chapter. Anil Chopra reiterates in the next chapter that the Indian Ocean is central to India's economy and prosperity. The author outlines the need for 'organizational wherewithal and coordination apparatus' to aggressively pursue the current government's maritime policy. The Indian Ocean has proved crucial in the twenty-first century, when all nations, big and small, are focusing seawards. Returning to regional connectivity between South and Southeast Asia, Rajeev Mitter discusses the emerging contours of the BIMSTEC. Calling the BIMSTEC a conduit of connectivity to further India's Act East policy by prioritising its north-eastern region, the author commends the BIMSTEC Outreach Summit in Goa in October 2016 as a shot in the arm of sub-regional connectivity.

Dinkar Srivastav comprehensively sums up the developments, and nature of transition in the Arab World. He outlines three major events of the twenty-first century – 9/11, the Arab Spring and the regional sectarian divide – which have shaped the region's history and affected the rest of the world. The author rightly predicts that although hydrocarbons still remain important to most of the world, the OPEC's control on global oil markets is declining. This has immense potential to alter regional politics in the Arab World.

The last three chapters move away from issues of hardcore geo-politics to focus on other immediate threats faced by India such as radicalisation, climate change and security challenges emerging from the weaponisation of outer space. In the first of the three chapters, Alvite Ningthoujam and C.D.

Sahay assess the seriousness of threats emerging from radicalisation. Importantly, they suggest kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to deal with radicalisation. The chapter lays greater stress on developing counter-strategies and counter-narratives especially by Islamic institutions, scholars and relevant civilian establishments as ways to deal with increasing radicalisation world over. Chandrashekar Dasgupta, in the next chapter, highlights the major implications of the new climate change regime for India, as India's emissions are only going to increase as the nation goes forward. In the last chapter, Davider Kumar brings to focus the security challenge as a result of increasing weaponisation of outer space, an area often neglected in security narratives. The challenges mainly emerge from the 'crowded, contested and competitive' nature of space as well as those of debris, traffic management and development of ballistic and anti-ballistic missile systems.

This book is a rare bringing-together of experts to reflect on a spectrum of issues leashed to the theme of security. While the themes augur well, the chapters could have been thematically organised in a better way from the perspectives of continuity and flow. The book is a value addition, particularly concerning its comprehensive coverage of India's security concerns. The current relevance of the issues discussed in this book posits it as a useful compendium for scholars and students of foreign policy from all backgrounds.

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Gopal Suri, *China's Expanding Military Maritime Footprint in the Indian Ocean Region: India's Response*, (New Delhi, 2017, Pentagon Press), Pages: 120, Price: Rs. 349.00

The Indian Ocean is increasingly becoming a focus of global strategic attention. It is at navigational cross-roads at a time when global trade is largely seaborne. Its strategic order, underpinned largely by US military might, especially the US Navy, is also beginning to reflect shifts in global geopolitics. Questions are beginning to be raised regarding how long this strategic order will be able

to meet the emerging challenges to its stability, be they the hard power 'traditional' ones or the more insidious, creeping 'non-traditional' ones, such as climate change. The current strategic architecture is, by and large, considered favourable by India which is also expanding its maritime footprint, largely on account of the convergence of strategic interests with the USA in the post-Cold War period. From a purely strategic point of view in the current circumstances, India's peninsular configuration places it at a geo-strategic advantage given its proximity to these global navigation routes, making it somewhat easier for it to attempt a re-shaping of the strategic order for the future. One element in the challenges to the current strategic order in the Indian Ocean is the expanding military maritime footprint of China. This raises two questions: is the Chinese entry 'disruptive'? And, can China be 'co-opted' into this maritime order in a non-disruptive way?

In his 'Foreword' to the volume, General N. C. Vij (Retd.) explains that China's entry into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) would have been understandable in the 'normal course of [the] nation building endeavour'; but India's wariness arises from 'the intention, and the means and methods that China adopts' in registering its presence in the region. The author of this book, Commodore Gopal Suri, delves into this important aspect of the current challenges to the Indian Ocean strategic order. As a serving Indian Naval officer with an established reputation for strategic analysis, especially military maritime affairs, and a wide experience in international think tank networking, he is eminently qualified to do so due to his familiarity both with scholastic writings, including Chinese, and policy-related thinking concerning the Indian Ocean.

The author's operating assumption is that the expanding military maritime footprint of China in the Indian Ocean does represent a challenge to India's strategic interests; '(i)t is this mutual suspicion that forms the background, against which any action by the two countries are viewed by each other' (p. 101). Accompanied by a brief historical background explaining the part the Indian Ocean has played in India's history since time immemorial, he describes its contemporary significance in world affairs in terms of maritime trade, international shipping lanes, piracy and, not least, the location of a number of politically unstable states spawning Jihadi terrorism and transnational criminal activity.

The various chapters are a useful aggregation of current information for a reader to get a clear snapshot of Chinese activities. The chapter on China's interests deals with issues like energy security, including oil and gas and their transportation; investments and trade, including quest for natural resources,

minerals, metals and ores, interests in deep sea exploration; and concerns about piracy. Its growing stakes in regional maritime security are spurring Beijing's ambitions for power projection as befitting a great power. This great power ambition is also manifest in its increasing security cooperation with unstable countries having sizeable Chinese investments. The same concerns drive it to create capacity in the form of support facilities, for the protection and evacuation of its citizens, the most recent being the one at Djibouti. Chinese diplomats and military figures also engage with IOR institutions and other Indian Ocean think tank processes where they seek to promote the Chinese security perspective. Apart from these interests, China also harbours the apprehension that the USA - and now India - may seek to impede its growing presence for their own purposes.

In the subsequent chapters, the author provides a narrative of the evolution of Chinese military maritime strategy and the place of Indian Ocean in it. A conceptual construct of 'Two Oceans', embracing the Western Pacific and Northern Indian Ocean (p. 47), has been elaborated by Chinese strategists in the current decade. Such strategising, no doubt, is being met by the countervailing 'Indo-Pacific' construct which seems to be taking shape currently, albeit with quite different connotations. The author posits that Chinese naval infrastructure capacity building as well as its naval and military diplomacy is in pursuance to its 'Two Oceans' strategy. China's military strategy White Paper (2015) and the 13th Five Year Plan (2016–2020), including the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), are part of this capacity building and, in the author's opinion, indicative of the lack of Chinese acceptance of the existing international and regional maritime order (p. 50). Chinese maritime strategy towards the Indian Ocean Region is geared to overcoming its vulnerabilities labelled as the 'Malacca Dilemma' even as the IOR is its secondary area of priority. As China seeks to achieve as first priority, 'an uneasy balance' in the Western Pacific, the author predicts that, at a subsequent stage, it will turn to the IOR 'with a more aggressive strategy to achieve possibly more expanded objectives' (p. 55). He cites its ongoing efforts in building operational naval capacity to support this prediction. After this analysis, the author examines at length the Chinese initiatives in the IOR, including the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - especially the role of the Gwadar port, which can be described, in the author's view, as an attempt to establish 'an obvious leadership role for China' (p. 62). He is also of the opinion that the acquisition of 'a military base at Djibouti' (p. 62) marks a change in the Chinese policy of not having military bases in the IOR. His description of the course of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor or CPEC

and Gwadar leads him to the conclusion that the port is 'as near a figurative encirclement of South Asia as actually possible' (p. 68).

The author goes on to describe at length the ongoing Chinese infrastructure construction programmes for ports and gas and oil pipelines and their governance patterns, leading to a dependency relationship and stronger Chinese leverages with host governments: these projects are geared at overcoming its 'Malacca Dilemma', and to expanding its strategic influence in the IOR littoral. In this effort, the Chinese government tends to focus on countries which are under-developed or developing, enabling it to, possibly, use such facilities for military purposes. The Chinese maritime military activity in the IOR is also growing concomitantly with the expansion of its commercial infrastructure to develop operational capabilities for its military use at some stage in the future. In a separate chapter devoted to the subject, the author details countries and areas where PLA N personnel are present, where Chinese intelligence gathering ships are increasing their activities, and where it is selling weapons, et cetera. Under the guise of anti-piracy patrols since 2008, PLA N ships, submarines, and personnel are developing capabilities to operate in the Indian Ocean waters in increasingly larger numbers. These deployments also include task forces. A vital aspect of this operational experience is the development of interoperability capabilities as part of its anti-piracy operations in collaboration with other participating countries. Apart from a description of the current capabilities of the Djibouti base, the author mentions the use of other ports in the IOR littoral, which are used by the Chinese navy for re-supply or Operational Turnaround (OTR). He gives figures of arms sales by the Chinese government to various littoral countries, including to Pakistan, in significant quantities.

The author cautions that the Chinese navy's constant presence in the IOR has to be factored in by India and other regional powers. The lack of a Chinese carrier group in the IOR, a capability which is still 5-8 years away, gives India a 'window of opportunity' (p. 99) to consolidate its position, something the Indian naval leadership is conscious of. He recommends that the Indian Navy, along with diplomacy, should build in elements of deterrence and compellence in future deployments. This also involves strengthening maritime strategic partnerships with countries like the USA, Japan, and others like Indonesia. Weaving into this prognosis and the larger context of the fraught India-China relationship, the author concentrates on India's response in his last chapter. He lists out India's current concerns *vis-à-vis* Chinese military maritime presence in the IOR which is, to an extent, a summary of Chinese activities described in the previous chapters. One critical conclusion of the

author is that current Chinese military maritime capacities do not, as yet, endow it with a significant power projection capability. His suggestions to meet the growing Chinese challenge are pragmatic, and are, undoubtedly, being considered in India's evolving strategy. These relate to countervailing diplomacy, naval capacity building (including intelligence), a regional security framework based on Prime Minister Modi's SAGAR speech on the Indian Ocean and, no less significantly, maritime engagement with China 'which can ensure reduction of mutual suspicion' (p. 109).

This is a most useful book which provides a snapshot of the current level of Chinese military maritime activity in the IOR with excellent charts and graphs, and extensive citations from Chinese sources. It is also a plea to quicken Indian efforts in terms of diplomacy and naval capacity building, so as to prevent the strategic balance being altered in China's favour in the IOR. Correctly pointing at the existing 'window of opportunity', it suggests a certain strategy to co-opt Chinese presence into the existing maritime order based on the recognition of its legitimate interests, as envisaged in Prime Minister Modi's SAGAR speech, whilst Chinese naval capacity is limited.

The reviewer, however, wishes that the author, given his wide scholastic and professional experience, had dwelt more on the unfolding response of India and other countries, especially the USA and Japan, to the growing Chinese footprint to complete the current strategic picture and its inherent trends. Also, the potential unravelling of the existing IOR strategic framework to the detriment of India, in the face of the gathering challenges, cannot be singularly attributed to Chinese activities. A more detailed strategic assessment of Indian responses, some of them being similar to his own recommendations, would have completed the picture for the reader. Although the author does talk about various IOR ports as 'pearls', taking up the metaphor of the Chinese 'string of pearls', this reviewer's opinion is that none of these 'pearls' can be so described as these can, in fact, become liabilities for China in the event of its serious confrontation with the USA - or, for that matter, with India. Their evolution into 'pearls' would, by itself, invite a serious crisis.

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