

BOOK REVIEW

Suranjan Das, Sitaram Sharma, Vivek Mishra (eds.), *India in the United Nations General Assembly. Volume I (1945-1970) & Volume II (1971-2018)* (New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2019), Pages: 669, Price: Rs. 2,480.00

There have been various facets to India's participation in the United Nations (UN) Organization since the global body was founded. Hitherto, not every story regarding India's participation in the UN has been told in detail. While the broad contours of India's participation in the UN remain conspicuously etched in public memory, the details of the relatively lesser important events remain out of public consciousness. To that end, the two volumes on India's participation and role in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is a unique compilation that brings vividly together a record of India's participation in the UNGA since its founding. The volumes are timely as they have been published on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the UN. Perhaps, it also caters to the need for compiling all important speeches of Indian leaders to be able to historically assess Indian position on various issues, such as disarmament, apartheid, and colonialism, among others.

The two volumes capture India's role in the UNGA specifically by bringing together the speeches of the leaders of Indian delegations to the sessions of the UNGA from 1946 to 2018. The volumes do not carry much analyses, except for the introduction which provides a structured primer to India's role in the UNGA. The two volumes bring together a comprehensive collection of statements made by the heads of India's delegation at the UNGA on various issues. As such, the volumes are meant to be source-material for future studies on India's engagement with the United Nations during the past 73 years.

The volumes outline a chronology of events that have required India's attention at the global stage, and the speeches delivered by Indian representatives depict that India was engaged with the UN from the latter's formative stages. India showed a wholehearted commitment to the notion of global governance, and supported the idea of the establishment of the UN. The volumes aptly begin with India's engagement with the UN since its pre-Independence era through the proactive diplomacy of Prime Minister Nehru, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit who led independent India's first delegation to the UN,

Sarojini Naidu who went on to become the first female president of the UNGA in 1953, and Ramaswamy Mudaliar who led the first Indian delegation to sign the UN Charter on 26 June 1945 even before the country's independence.

India was faced with an initial dilemma in the San Francisco Conference (held in April 1945) regarding the nature of its representation as the country was not yet independent, and the nature and composition of the Indian delegation was unilaterally decided by the British government. Nevertheless, India showed its steadfast support for the establishment of the UN and its Charter. India made her official debut in the UN as an independent nation on 19 September 1947. It was in the 1947 session that India had raised its voice against injustices of the world, like racial discrimination in South Africa. The speeches listed in the volumes depict that India's early engagement with the UN was characteristic of a proactive diplomacy on a host of issues concerning national and global concerns. These ranged from a position against bloc politics, sovereignty issues in the countries of Southeast Asia - particularly Vietnam and Indonesia, - to stressing the importance of eliminating atomic, chemical, and biological weapons towards the cause of disarmament. For instance, it is not widely known that on behalf of the Indian delegation in the 1949 UNGA session, Sir Benegal N. Rau had urged the UNGA to take effective action against Dutch atrocities in Indonesia. On the issue of Kashmir, the two volumes bring together almost all the important speeches in the UNGA till date by India on the issue, creating a panoramic spectrum of changing views, from being open to UN arbitration in 1949 to the days of rejecting any third party intervention on the issue.

The year 1953 was an important year in India's relationship with the UN as, for the first time, the country assumed the Chair of the UNGA. Led by personalities like Vijay Lakshmi Pandit and V. K. Krishna Menon, issues like disarmament, decolonisation, and Korean-reunification found immense support from India in the UNGA. The speeches put together in the volumes highlight that no other country made as much effort as India on the issue of making the UN more universal. India urged the representation in the UN of the newly liberated states in Africa as well as of Nepal, Ceylon and Japan. It was on 6 October 1959 that India presented the problems at its border with China at the UNGA for the first time. Of course, India's stance towards China changed after the war in 1962. Although India's lobbying for China's inclusion in the UN can be criticised in hindsight, India was truly in favour of a just and peaceful world. Towards this, the mantra of Asian solidarity that began with India's entry in the UN continued well through the decade of the 1960s. India was among the first countries to recognise Mongolia. India also stood steadfast

with the principles of freedom of aerial and maritime movement, depicted through its position in the Suez Canal crisis in 1956.

In what the volumes call the post-Nehru era starting with his demise in May 1964, India's participation in the UNGA was characterised by Chinese aggression, and the subsequent conflict with Pakistan in 1965. In the late 1960s, India also called for a cessation of American bombings in North Vietnam, derided South Africa's continued apartheid as well as Israel's territorial aggrandisement, and described the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as "unequal and ineffective".

The 1970s marked the UN's 25 years of existence. The issues at hand for India in this decade were far more complex, particularly with another war with Pakistan in 1971, the subsequent creation of Bangladesh, and the huge influx of refugees from East Pakistan. Led by Sardar Swaran Singh, India categorically asserted that refugees must go back and demanded their proper rehabilitation. Furthermore, issues like the SALT treaty between the USA and the Soviet Union, the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, and the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea found Indian support at the UNGA.

The volumes mark an important juncture in the year 1977 with the coming of the first non-Congress government in India when it saw the Foreign Minister in the Janata government, Atal Behari Vajpayee, deliver his famous speech in Hindi in the UN. Between 1980 and 1996, India was worried by a collapse of détente, a stalemate in the disarmament negotiations, the Iran-Iraq discord, and conflicts in Kampuchea and Afghanistan. Among important developments, India became a signatory to an appeal to nuclear-weapon states to halt the testing of nuclear armaments, along with countries like Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden, and Tanzania. This period also saw India's reiteration of support for the Non-Aligned Movement and Group-77. The end of the Cold War, the unification of Germany, and further decolonization in Africa found special mention in India's addresses to the UNGA. In the October 1990 session of the UNGA, the Gujral government was categorical in highlighting Islamabad's violations of human rights in the states of Sind and Baluchistan.

The period between 1998 and 2004 saw India assert its position in the UN, carefully balancing its demand for structural reforms in the UN to include India and a few other countries, with the criticism emerging from its nuclear detonation in 1998, and its reassurance to the world of being a responsible nuclear power. This period also saw India emerge victoriously from the Kargil conflict with Pakistan. The year 2000 marked an important hallmark in UN's history when Prime Minister Vajpayee joined the Millennium Summit of

September 2000 to strongly articulate the urgent need for a global initiative to fight poverty.

The period between 2004 and 2014, marked by the UPA government, saw India joining the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. India also extended support to United Nations agenda in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Issues like poverty eradication, sustainable development, food, energy security, health, and education were highlighted in India's speeches in the UNGA.

A more forceful push for agendas like UN structural reform, a UN mechanism to deal with terrorism (particularly through the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism), and environment consensus came in with the Narendra Modi government in 2014 and his maiden address to the UNGA on 27 September 2014. The UN's recognition of International Yoga Day, the advocacy for the speedy implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030, and the UN's highest environmental honour bestowed on Prime Minister Modi were some of the countable deliverables in the period between 2014 and 2018.

The two volumes are timely and comprehensive, putting together over 70 years of speeches by heads of Indian delegations to the UNGA. Despite the comprehensive literature on India's role in the United Nations that the two volumes pack, they only capture half the story of India's role in the global body. The narration of India's UN story will be fittingly complete if these volumes are followed by another volume documenting India's role in the United Nations Security Council. Nonetheless, the two volumes have put in place a solid reference point for researchers, academicians, and diplomats alike, to look at India's role in the UNGA, and may become the *vade mecum* for future research and reference apropos India's role in the UNGA.

Surbhi Choudhary
Doctoral Research Scholar
Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies,
School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi.



Sreeradha Datta, *Act East Policy and Northeast India*, (New Delhi, Vitasta, 2021), Pages (HB): 352, Price (HB): Rs. 850.00

Northeast India has attracted a lot of scholarly attention from both domestic and international scholars after India's independence. The reasons for this are many. One, monographs on the various tribes of the region written by colonial administrators and published in the early 20th century aroused a lot of curiosity among western as well as Indian scholars about the cultures, languages, food habits, and social institutions of the region. Two, the economy of the region was largely characterised by shifting cultivation, and hunting and gathering (except in the fertile valleys). The same continues even today, albeit on a limited scale, despite official discouragement. Three, the colonial rulers left huge areas of the region to rule themselves according to their customary laws. Even after independence, the region was marked by special legal provisions for the protection of tribal cultures and identities, such as the VI Schedule, Article 371, and the Inner Line Permit. Four, the region witnessed some of the most violent and organised insurgencies as well as passed some of the most draconian laws, like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Even today, there are over 40 underground outfits espousing various kinds of demands, including secession from India. Finally, the coming of foreign tourists and scholars was hugely relaxed during the past couple of decades, making it possible for many of them to do their research in this region.

In the past couple of decades, a plethora of very high-quality books and articles have been published on the region, each of which has tried to come to grips with different issues that have confronted it ever since independence. It is gratifying to note that even the publications by some scholars from the indigenous communities of the region are of equally high standard. However, *Act East Policy and Northeast India* by Sreeradha Datta stands out not only in terms of quality but also in terms of the coverage and topicality. She provides one of the most nuanced readings of the various development plans and programmes initiated by the government of India, especially those that were set in motion after 2014. Her intellectual maturity is well reflected in the way this book has been produced. As an expert on Northeast India and its neighbouring countries, she packs this book with data as well as insights into the numerous issues that challenge the development policies, plans and programmes meant for this region and beyond, such as the Act East Policy.

In the introduction to the book, the author rightly points out that, for a very long time, the security concerns of the region were receiving the

uppermost attention of the state at the cost of its development potential, which was badly affected after its old trade links were snapped by the Partition in 1947, forcing it to be linked with the rest of India only by a narrow land corridor. It was only in early 1990s that the Look East Policy was initiated and, after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in 2014, this was renamed as the Act East Policy (AEP). The main idea behind the AEP was to include the region in India's plan to extend her strategic and economic interests in Southeast Asia by unleashing a series of projects for connecting the region with the countries around it.

In the first chapter, the author outlines the potential of the region's economy, state-wise, which is helpful, as it shows the regional imbalances in the region. She takes cognisance of the agrarian nature of the economy, low industrialisation, insurgency, the anti-outsider sentiment, and poorly developed infrastructure as challenges to turning the region into a growth corridor. The next chapter focuses on transport connectivity within the region, including roads, railways, airways, and waterways. She also provides details of the funds allocated for each project, and the status of each project. This is followed by a chapter on the energy potential of the region. She not only mentions the huge potential of generating electricity from the region's rivers, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Sikkim, but also brings out the huge challenges faced on account of the fragility of the region's ecology and the growing awareness among the people of the region about the risks of building large dams. She also outlines the various plans of the government of India for expanding this sector which, she warns, will not happen as quickly as the government of India or the funding agencies want it to happen. In the next chapter, the author draws the reader's attention to some of the lingering political issues of the region relating to the Naga demand for a Greater Nagaland, other homeland demands, and the citizenship issue of those who have migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan, and later Bangladesh. She deals with the issues of migration and ethnicity in a historical perspective, starting from the Constituent Assembly debates to the present crisis resulting in widespread opposition to the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act.

In the following two chapters, the author focuses on the border economy. Of the two, the first focus is on issues regarding cross-border connectivity, which involves engaging with ASEAN, a bilateral engagement with Bangladesh for reopening the pre-1947 trade routes, and with Bhutan for the free movement of goods carriers. According to the author, although these activities promise a bright future for the participating nations, they are facing serious hurdles

because of the lack of adequate planning, coordination, and consultation. The decision of Bhutan to withdraw from such a transport agreement with India is one such example. The last chapter on the border is more academic, as it is concerned with understanding borderlands from various social science perspectives. This chapter also explores future possibilities at the borders. In both the chapters, the author is optimistic about the economic transformation the opening of the borders can bring to the region as well as to the neighbouring countries, provided certain ground realities of the region are taken care of. There is also a small postscript that summarises the major themes discussed in the book.

Each chapter is well-researched, up-to-date, and written in an easy-to-understand language. The author brings out the challenges in implementing the plans and programmes related to the AEP with great care and clarity. The presentation of her narrative, weaving both primary and open-access data, is lucid. She is not overly critical of the AEP; and yet, she makes cautionary remarks softly wherever it is needed. While she is optimistic about the region being able to benefit from the AEP, she makes her readers aware of the limitations of the region, be it its geographical isolation, its lack of industrial development, or its poor state of infrastructure, all of which can affect the region's capacity to absorb the benefits of the policy.

One of the important reasons for the region's relative backwardness is the special protection provided to the indigenous people of the region under various provisions like the VI Schedule, Article 371, and the Inner Line Permit. While necessary for the protection of the economic and cultural interests of the indigenous people, these provisions are partly responsible for discouraging investment and industrialisation by people from outside the region. While these issues are important to understand the region's backwardness, the author must have her own reasons for not discussing them in this book. Talking about the development of the region, it is also not enough to show how much money has been spent on what, how it has been spent, or how well it has been spent. It is equally important to understand why some of the well-intentioned projects have failed in the region. One may also do well to remember that there was hardly any sign of 'development' in the region, as it is understood generally - except perhaps in Assam to some extent - prior to the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. Thus, in a sense, development projects arrived in the region about a decade later than in other states of India and, in the haste to bring the region at par with the rest of India, a lot of financial leakages could not have been avoided, which resulted in the slow and staggered development of the region.

On the whole, this is a must-read book for any student, scholar, or policy maker interested in this region and its neighbouring countries. I am not aware of any other book that covers all the states of the region in such comprehensive manner as does this book. As one reads this book, one feels as if one is travelling with the author who is also explaining, in a rather simple language, the goings-on in the region with special reference to the AEP.

Dr. Tanka B. Subba
Professor, Department of Anthropology,
North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong,
Former Vice-Chancellor, Sikkim University, Gangtok.



Uttam Kumar Sinha, *Indus Basin Uninterrupted: A History of Territory and Politics from Alexander to Nehru*, (New Delhi, Penguin Random House India, 2021), Pages: 353, Price: Rs. 799.00 (HB)

Marking the completion of sixty years of the Indus Water Treaty, the arrival of *Indus Basin Uninterrupted: A History of Territory and Politics from Alexander to Nehru* (2021) is significant in more ways than one. It gives a chance for readers to delve deeper into the actors, events and official papers which led to the making of this treaty between India and Pakistan. In addition, the author, Uttam Kumar Sinha, unravels the complexities of statecraft from the vantage point of diplomatic negotiations on natural resources. Based on archival research, the book provides a historical account of the river which is known to have proved to be people's lifeline for a vast span of more than three thousand years. The author brings forth a chronology of invasions, conquests, kingdoms, and colonizers with their varied interests, all of which have shaped the course of the river Indus. Though the sub-title mentions the period from Alexander to Nehru, the book also covers the details of some pre-Alexander invaders, and the postscript highlights the contestation around the Indus waters treaty after the demise of Nehru.

The book delves into a labyrinth of official papers, and brings alive a complex journey of peace, conflict, and commerce around the Indus basin. It showcases not only the interdependence and interpenetration of land and water, but also other factors, viz. political identities, social churning as well

as various geographical and economic aspects. The book emphasises that the Indus system of rivers is a powerful symbol of the passage of time, and also the role it has played in stability of the region. The author is an expert on transboundary water issues and hydro politics in South Asia, and has judiciously used the original correspondence and memoirs of key persons to re-assess and re-evaluate the treaty for the 21st century. Undoubtedly, herein lies the strength of the book.

The text is divided into five neatly crafted but well interconnected chapters, followed by a brief postscript. The first part - 'Settlers, Invaders and Successions' - underlines the politico-strategic significance of the Sindh region. It gives a vivid historical account of invaders and successors, with brief chronological details of many of them. The chapter aims at, and succeeds in, showcasing the strengths and weaknesses of successive rulers, vis-à-vis the management of water resources. This chapter also mentions numerous local practices of water conservation, such as *charkha* (wheel in Persian) cultivation by Akbar (p. 39), and the *karez* system of irrigation by the Baloch clans (p. 54), to name a few. The stories of wars and peace, and brief biographical accounts of the various rulers of the Mughal and Tughlaq dynasties enrich the understanding of the treaty in its historical context.

The second part - 'Diplomacy and Commerce on the Indus' - delineates the involvement of the British empire in the Indus basin, and the challenges before diplomatic negotiations which followed. This part begins with a subtitle - 'Minto's three wise men'. To the author, the three envoys - John Malcolm, Charles Metcalf, and Mount Stuart Elphinstone, in their respective missions to Persia, Punjab and Afghanistan - were convinced that the threat of an external enemy lay in its potential to stir an anti-rebellion inside India' (p. 62). In the early 19th century, British officials were dealing with the complexities of diplomacy in different lands. One such attempt was when Metcalfe concluded a treaty of Mutual Friendship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in April 1809 at Amritsar (p. 65). It is remarkable that Lord Dalhousie 'created a separate public works department under which irrigation works were undertaken on an extensive scale, and set about improving inland navigation on the 'silent' Indus (p. 92).

The third part - 'Colonization, Canals and Contestation' - examines the unfolding of state led discourse on development, with specific reference to the Indus basin during the British regime. Sinha aptly remarks that the 'Punjab, with its network of rivers, had to be governed differently, and certainly not in the mercantilist ways which the British were welcomed in the provinces of Bombay and Calcutta' (p.100). A chronology of major irrigation works (p.117)

on the Indus Basin in British India (1859–1947) reflects how the colonial administration undertook canal irrigation as their ‘moral responsibility’ (p. 106). From 1858 to 1921, issues relating to irrigation in the provinces fell under the purview of the Secretary of State (p.118), and under the Government of India Act 1919. Irrigation was made a provincial subject under the purview of Government of India (p.121). Sinha mentions lower riparian angst in the case of the Sindh region in the 19th century. This is equally applicable to water distribution between two neighbouring countries even today.

The fourth part - ‘Partition of Land and Rivers’ - underlines the complexities of the partition. The Indus Basin, with ‘the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab) flowing unhindered into Pakistan, and the eastern rivers (Sutlej, Beas and Ravi) ceaselessly crossing into Pakistan from India, was politically divided, as never before in its history, to meet a political compromise’ (p.146). The highlights of letters exchanged between Nehru and Liaquat Khan are mentioned in detail, and could be of great interest to historians, journalists, and students of diplomacy. Similarly, Kanwar Sain’s (Bikaner Irrigation Department) account (in his memoir) compels the reader to take note of the role of emotions and sentiments in politics. The author also underlines the significance of two more civil engineers - Sarup Singh and A. N. Khosla (Punjab Irrigation Department) - who played an instrumental role in sensitizing the Congress Political leadership (p.150). The details (towards the end of this part) of canal infrastructure (a document prepared by the Punjab Irrigation Department) after independence, draws the attention of readers towards the informative aspects of canal building projects on the basin.

The last part - ‘Making of the Indus Water Treaty’ - unravels the role of the USA and the UN on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, and its implications on bilateral treaties between India and Pakistan. It also underlines the role of the World Bank (WB) to bring both India and Pakistan to the negotiation table. The WB made them formally agree to the proposal of ‘jointly developing and jointly operating the Indus Basin river system’, with the Bank playing the role of the ‘good officer’ (p. 235). The book further enlightens us on regional power politics, and shows how, in the early 1950s, Pakistan played its card of being a lower riparian state to pressurize the WB to act tough on India (p. 241). Eventually, the Bank offered India the three eastern tributaries of the basin, and Pakistan the three western tributaries. While India was ready to accept this arrangement, Pakistan had objections to the same (p. 243). The following two sections in this part - ‘Heated Debate in the Lok Sabha’, and ‘Nehru Convincingly Unconvincing’ - bring alive the finer nuances of ideological differences in the public sphere.

This book is a valuable addition to the existing literature on the complexities of hydro diplomacy in general, and between India and Pakistan in particular. The dangers and prospects of war and peace on issues concerning water as a natural resource are immense, and circumstances play a critical role in the possibility of one or the other. In the postscript, Sinha writes, ‘water, as a ‘lifeline’ issue, is not forgotten history in Pakistan, and the sharing of the waters with India still remains an unfinished business. What also remains unfinished is linking the waters to Kashmir and issues of territoriality’ (p. 280). Towards the end, the book concludes with a perceptive comment that, ‘a new riparian equation between India and Pakistan would need to be worked out beyond the treaty, to ensure that the waters of the Indus basin remain “uninterrupted and uninterruptible”’ (p. 284).

The book is a significant addition to the literature on water as well as on foreign policy. With its interdisciplinary orientation, the book is likely to generate interest among readers of multiple disciplines, including history and geography. The strength of the book lies in the presentation of a developing argument by weaving the minute details extracted from the exchanges in conversations and letters, and also its emphasis on the facts, figures, and data from the numerous available reports. Overall, the book is a must read for those interested in the hydrological aspects of foreign policy/diplomacy.

Dr. Ruchi Shree
Assistant Professor,
PG Department of Political Science,
Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University (TMBU),
Bhagalpur, Bihar.

★ ★ ★

E. Sridharan (ed.), *Eastward Ho? India’s Relations with the Indo-Pacific*, (Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, India, 2021) Pages: 512 (HB), Price: 1,650.00

India’s eastward engagement in the Indo-Pacific arena has been taking place since ancient times. India’s relationship with the Indo-Pacific region has been witnessing dramatic growth as intra-Asian economic integration deepens.

India enjoys a unique geographical location, has seen civilisational evolutions and historical transformations that have opened up possible roles and options for the growing regional power. However, there are security tensions and rivalries due to the economic and strategic rise of China. The Indo-Pacific concept in India's foreign relations has been considered crucial; however, despite this, there is a paucity of serious literature on the subject. The new book, *Eastward Ho? India's Relationship with the Indo-Pacific*, is a timely addition in this regard.

The book offers a bird's eye view of both India striving to establish relationships with the countries lying to its east, and the challenges it has to encounter. It seeks to look at possible roles and options for India against the backdrop of deepening intra-Asian economic integration, and security tensions and rivalries related to the economic and strategic rise of China. The book is part of the Strategic Studies Series (edited by Harsh Pant, Chris Ogden, T.V. Paul, Yogesh Joshi, and Frank O' Donnell) which aims to underscore political, economic, and socio-cultural relations and issues in South Asia, and beyond. It focuses on contemporary trends in the region using historical contexts, and includes theoretical and policy-oriented writings.

The book chronicles the narrative of India's relationship with the Indo-Pacific, and is divided into four parts. Part I looks at the rise of China, and the overall strategic and economic scenario to India's East. Part II deals with India's attempt at managing the rise of China by forging new East Asian partners. Part III is about India's economic relations with the Eastern rim of South Asia - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar - and focuses on Sino-Indian tussle for influence over the Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan. Part IV concludes by analysing India's evolving strategic and economic relations with Southeast Asia. The book is contemporary, and documents exhaustively the conceptualisation and initiation of India's Act East Policy announced by the Modi government in 2014, which began a new era in India's relationship with the East, and has been marked by a more vigorous approach towards high-level exchanges. The book looks closely at the China factor in India's eastward engagement. China's assertiveness in territorial issues, and its aggressive thrust in terms of the Belt and Road initiative, have put Beijing in an influential position in the region.

The first chapter by E. Sridharan explains India's overall approach towards the Indo-Pacific in the context of 'Trade Integration and Security Rivalries' and also engages with the literature on power transitions and rising powers. It poses questions regarding the strategic consequences of the economic

integration of Asia and the economic consequences of the absence of a security consensus in Asia. The chapter poses the larger geopolitical question of what kind of power India will be in the future. It argues that the direction of Indian foreign policy will be substantially dependent on US-China dynamics in the region, and that India's gradual shift towards the USA and its allies and partners will continue. It concludes that India's option should be to ensure that it narrows the gap with China in the fields of economic growth as well as military modernisation.

The next chapter by Swaran Singh, 'The Evolving Asian Security Architecture' talks about the role of the Chinese rise in creating a pan-Asian economic infrastructure, India's co-option by building closer ties with ASEAN, and streamlining various processes of South Asian integration through BIMSTEC, G-20, BRICS, and SCO. In 'China's Perceptions of India', Srikanth Kondapalli talks about the growing economic interdependence between China and India on the one hand, their cooperation in the G-20 summits, and joint setting up of fora like BRICS, and AIIB. On the other hand, contentious territorial issues have raised a bar between bilateral relations. Chinese overtures in the Indian Ocean, CPEC initiatives, and India's Act East Policy and focus on the South China Sea have evoked security concerns in both China and India. Both the chapters delve into how nationalist and assertive trends in both countries have opened the turf for an explicit conflict in the future.

Part II deals with 'Managing the Rise of China', and looks at India's relationship with countries like Japan and Korea. H. S. Prabhakar talks about the growing relationship between India and Japan with their exceptional consensus over a critical maritime connection, growing international responsibilities, rule of law, and an open global trade regime. The symmetry in Modi's 'Made in India' and Abe's 'Abenomics' to transform Japan's economy to revive domestic growth is a strong foundation in their relationship. They have engaged in multilateral or trilateral engagement with other countries in the region based on specific agendas. The success of their partnership is based on the development of a stable, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific order.

The chapter on 'India and Korea' by Vyjayanti Raghavan, also shows how India and Korea are constructively working at a high leadership level towards a broader global engagement, pursuing 'Act East' and 'New Southern' policies. China is a common cause of concern for both countries, which also opens opportunities for the two countries to collaborate in the area of joint

maritime search and rescue exercises, anti-piracy programmes, space technology, personnel exchanges, and pieces of training. It is up to India to play a more important role in the region, especially as countries in the region become increasingly wary of China and are looking for support and an alternative.

Part III focuses on India's relationship within South Asia as Chinese tussle for influence grows. In the chapter '*Politics on the Strategic Himalayas*', Sangeeta Thapliyal looks at the current relationship of New Delhi and Beijing with Nepal and Bhutan. She traces the mythological significance of the Himalayas for India, and how the relationship with these countries has evolved through the influence of geostrategy and geopolitics. Nepal is emerging as a market for China, with Beijing being actively involved in the development of infrastructure, rail, and road links. China has also developed ties with Nepali politicians and army chiefs, even as Indian outreach has weakened. Even though relations remain cautious, there have been direct talks between Bhutan and China on the border settlement issue; Beijing has also attempted to establish contact with the political elite. In China's assessment, the emerging Asian order - with China and India competing for growth - would involve vying for influence in the Himalayan region. In '*Changing Contours of India-Sri Lanka Relations*', P. Sahadevan talks about Sri Lanka which, despite its small geographical size, has been able to manoeuvre a relationship with both the countries, and is vying to limit the strategic depths being attempted by Beijing and New Delhi alike.

Shibhashis Chatterjee discusses India-Bangladesh relations in terms of promises made by the Indian government on development issues, water sharing, migration, and a crackdown on terrorism. He states that the ultimate challenge for India-Bangladesh relations is to move away from geopolitical determinism towards human security and economic prosperity. Bangladesh's polarising domestic politics make it difficult for India to invoke confidence-building measures, and encourages Bangladesh to search for external security guarantees. In the final chapter of the third part, Shankari Sundaraman takes a critical look at India's eastward engagement in her chapter on '*India-Myanmar Relations*'. The Chinese presence in the region remains a cloud on how the relationship is developing. Moreover, the issues of ethnicity and the plight of the Indian community in Myanmar have problematised the situation. Along with this, the 2021 military takeover in Myanmar is a serious setback to the democratic political movement that was welcomed by India. The border issues and connectivity setbacks highlight security challenges on both sides of the border, and require more robust bilateral ties.

The fourth section follows India's historical, strategic, and economic relations with Southeast Asia. Lawrence Prabhakar looks at the 'Evolving Dynamics of India-Singapore Security and Economic Relations'. While Singapore has straddled the US order and the increasing Chinese dominance in the region, the interests of Singapore and India converge. Both the countries are forging strategies to create a dynamic Indo-Pacific vision. Reena Marwah discusses Thailand, calling it 'A Bridge for India to Act East'. For this, India needs to improve the infrastructure and connectivity in its North East. The relationship between the two countries includes trade, combating terrorism, crime, drugs, and human trafficking. India needs to realize that its relationship with Thailand will help in offsetting Chinese presence in the land and maritime space. A half-hearted commitment to the policy has restricted India's influence in the region. The need of the hour is thus to scale up the cultural, economic, and strategic engagement with Thailand and the rest of the region. The author has also contributed another chapter: 'The Philippines Archipelago and Intersecting Interests'. She talks about how the Philippines is trying to soft-balance China. China is the Philippines' fourth-largest trading partner. Even as the SCS ruling was given in favour of Indonesia, the country decided not to go ahead with the ruling, in return for economic doles from China. Even as Indian trade and investment show encouraging signs in the Philippines, they cannot match the Chinese presence in the Filipino economy. Both countries share several commonalities in the name of anti-colonialism, South-South cooperation, a strong democratic polity, and an independent judiciary and press, the relations between the two countries have remained unexplored. India needs to make itself more visible within the ASEAN countries, and must also leverage the strength of its soft power through Ramayana, Buddhism, tourism, and Bollywood.

Baladas Ghoshal has contributed two chapters: 'Vietnam in India's Foreign Policy', and 'India-Malaysia Relations in the Post-Cold War Period'. He talks about India and Vietnam being natural allies, working to ensure the freedom of navigation and open sea lanes of communication, defence ties, and energy security. However, he recognises that both countries cannot afford an open conflict with China, and therefore must avoid provoking Beijing. Malaysia also remains the core of India's Act East policy as the two countries share close cultural ties. However, Malaysian foreign policy has been influenced by Pakistan's anti-India propaganda, and Islam plays a crucial role in their bilateral relations. The Malaysian Prime Ministers' scathing speech on India after the abrogation of Article 370, and India's retaliation does not throw good light. The new government in Malaysia is trying to balance ties; but India needs to

move up the diplomatic chain considering challenges from Pakistan and Chinese diplomacy.

In the last chapter, Shankari Sundararaman writes about Indo-Indonesia relations encompassing various segments, such as strategic engagement, defence and security, comprehensive economic partnership, cultural links, and responding to common challenges. Within the changing economic order, both share a convergence of interests in terms of promoting reforms within organisations like the WTO and G-20 which will address the risks of globalisation for developing countries. However, more needs to be done in terms of the maritime challenges that both countries face. The region is yet to see India's role as a credible security provider, and its role needs to be strategically advanced and implemented.

The book identifies various elements of India's Indo-Pacific approach, and looks deeply into India's partnerships in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Each chapter delves into the economic, cultural, political, and geographical proximity of these countries to India. It underscores the need for New Delhi to expand its footprints across the region, in the wake of growing Chinese capacity and capital presence in the region. The context and timing of a thorough discussion regarding India's policy with the Indo-Pacific are very critical. This book is, therefore, an important contribution to the literature on the subject.

Dr. Shreya Upadhyay,
Assistant Professor,
Christ (Deemed to be) University,
Bangaluru.



T. C. A. Raghavan, Vivek Mishra, *Sapru House: A Story of Institution-Building in World Affairs*, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2021), Pages: 228 (HB), Price: Rs. 736.00 (HB)

Institutions germinate from ideas. They fructify when incubated with passion, vision, and mission. The history of Sapru House illustrates this brilliantly. The leadership of the time, represented by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pt. H. N. Kunjru, and later, Professor Appadurai could recognise, as early as 1943, that countries

like India, in the throes of independence, would need to have an understanding of their positioning in the remapping of the world order driven by the post war reconstruction project. They strongly felt that to grapple with emerging challenges, India needed to have an independent assessment and formulation of the post-colonial world order, and its implications for India.

This provided the rationale and the action for the establishment of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). From inception to global recognition, the journey of the ICWA has been very perceptibly narrated by Ambassador Raghavan - who is a trained JNU-educated historian, and a distinguished diplomat - in the book co-authored with Dr Vivek Mishra in the volume under review. Besides providing the historical account of events in lucid language, the strength of the volume lies in capturing the undercurrents of the time, from the convergence to the contest of perceptions among those who could imagine the future of India in the post-colonial world. The impulse was to have a holistic worldview, with independent expression. This required an autonomous platform to study and promote international issues impinging on India's interest in the then emerging world order.

The importance of the volume lies in its underlining basic concerns of IR and Area Studies expressed at that point of time but remain valid even today. How a country overcomes its colonial legacy by imagining its place in the post-colonial world has been the question then and even now. The Council was very clear from the start that, to contest the colonial baggage, India had to draw from its indigenous wisdom and perspective (see page 13). In fact, by hosting the Asian Relations Conference, the Council provided a platform for articulating an Asian World View which subsequently contributed to the conceptualisation of Nonalignment as a third way to participate in the then emerging global affairs.

Though, over the years, Indian scholarship has been expressing reservations about the Euro/western centric theorization of IR and Area studies, it has yet to provide a coherent alternative of the Indian way of conceptualisation. The reference points remain the western experience and its narrative, couched with Indian illustrations. It is no wonder that explanations fail to read the ground realities. Of late, this realisation has led to the revisiting of ancient Indian writings in the context of a wider debate on IR from the Global South. However, its footprint still remains to be seen.

Similarly, concerns regarding the role of the state in knowledge production particularly as financier of research institutions/projects were raised at the time of the inception of the Council. The concern of the time was that state

financing would erode autonomy and independent critical thinking. The founding fathers of ICWA were very clear that to enjoy autonomy, the financing of the Council should not be from the state. As the names on plaque displayed on page 18 show, there was wide consensus and support on non-state funding. Interestingly, the book tells us that the President and the Prime Minister of India, as symbolic gesture, made a donation of their one-month salary. It was a legitimate concern, which remains valid today. The University Grants Commission is the prime financier of area studies programmes in the Indian Universities. I have had opportunity to be associated with it. The debates and the proceedings of the UGC programmes have been heavily influenced by financial power of the UGC. A perennial query has been about the inadequate policy-oriented contribution of these programs. While the state has been nudging these programmes, the non-state financing has not been an exception to it. Thus, the debate still remains alive because the experience suggests that of the various ways of financing think tanks possibly state funding provides a larger space than market/private funding.

It is commendable that the founding fathers of the Council were very clear that a Delhi centric study of global affairs and foreign policy - especially with reference to neighbours - will be inadequate and insensitive to shared concerns. Hence, as the book points out, they recommended regional branches of the council. As many as seventeen branches of the ICWA were established by 1950 (see page 8). It is ironic that Delhi continues to be the dominant location of these centres of wisdom. It is no wonder that regional empathy fails to get reflected in foreign policy making.

Similarly, the farsightedness of the founding fathers could be seen in their assertion that without adequate fieldwork and knowledge of the local language, research would have limited value. The issue remains valid today, as Indian area studies programs are not sufficiently funded to have meaningful fieldwork to enrich the study of the country. In fact, the paucity of funds has, of late, been forcing ICWA to be dependent on secondary sources only.

The Sapru House story, spanning more than seven decades, is captured vividly in six chapters, including the Epilogue. It begins with an excellent narrative about the personalities and the context leading to making of the ICWA. It captures the vision and the mission that have gone in imagining the project, from its location to the architecture, to its persona as Sapru House, the landmark in the cultural and intellectual life of the city (see page 22). The chapters are further enriched by a synoptic biography of the leading lights, who laid the foundation of it: Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sri H. N. Kunzru and Sri A. Appadurai.

The chapter focusing on the Asian Relations Conference (ARC) is rightly titled 'A Formative Moment' because, as the authors observe, it was the successful hosting of the ARC (24 March to 2 April 1947) that gave the Council a stature of international repute. Understandably, taking the huge responsibility, being only three years old, was a challenge for the Council in all dimensions — be it organisation, logistics or documentation and the agenda setting. However, the scale and reach of ARC required the active support of the government which was available in ample, as pointed out by the book. ARC was seen 'as matter of pride and honour for the country.' (see page 38). Held in the Purina Qila (the 16th century fort), the ARC turned out to be mega event, with the participation of twenty-eight countries. One of the salient features of ARC was the provision for a women's section for participation (see page 38).

The story of institution building also reflects the undercurrents of the time. The domestic political divide found its expression when the Muslim League called the hosting of the ARC as an initiative of the Indian Hindu Congress to 'boost itself politically as a prospective leader of Asiatic people'. The advisory was even issued to Arab countries to boycott the Conference, which was ignored. The Conference not only made the Council confident but also underlined the need to promote rigorous teaching and research on IR and area studies.

The chapter on 'Unbounded Confidence' brings out the multi-faceted 'Mutually Synchronous Relationship' between the newly established Indian School of International Studies (ISIS) and the ICWA. The School was the outcome of the realisation that teaching and research on IR and area studies needed to be systematically pursued and institutionalised. The ISIS was formally inaugurated by then Indian Vice President in October 1955. It can be argued that, with the establishment of ISIS, a new phase of a well-defined programme in IR and Area studies started in India. The chapter provides a detailed account of evolving relationship between the ICWA and the ISIS relationship in shaping the joint library. The Sapru House library has gained its distinct profile as the site where not only books on global affairs are available but national and international journals are also accessible. But the special niche of the library is its UN section set up in 1957, with 7000 documents and the rich clippings of national and international press arranged subject wise. 1957 has been rightly described as the take off stage of growth of the library, with more than 18,000 readers making use of the library in that year.

The next chapter provides details of turbulent times - from 1965 to 1980. This period saw the joint enterprise of the Council and the School reach their

nadir, leading to separation following the establishment of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Despite many efforts to preserve the library, the choice to divide it had to be made. The chapter provides details of the painful process of separation.

The next chapter is an account and assessment of the stagnation and slow growth following the financial constraints caused by the separation. The story of mobilising resources - either by leasing the premises or renting the auditorium for social and commercial functions (including for weddings) killed the spirit and purpose of the ambiance of the ICWA. The deteriorating health of the Council and library led to the demand for a state take over. After a prolonged legal and political battle, it was the ICWA Act 2001 that made a new beginning with the aim of retrieving and regaining the academic stature of Sapru house.

In doing so, as the authors observe, three changes were made: financing by the central government; the Vice President of India being made the president of the Council; the close relationship ICWA with the MEA, aimed at enhancing policy oriented research. Clearly, all the three changes were a negation of the original charter of the council; but as observed, this 'was the outcome of the unfortunate phase of its history in the 1980s and 1990s' (see page143).

The story of Sapru House is narrated in simple and readable language, with details provided in a coherent frame. It is quite informative and a well-crafted narrative spelt out against the backdrop of the unfolding geopolitical dynamics of the time. Indeed, it is a good contribution to literature about institutional history and IR and Area studies in India.

Professor Girijesh Pant
Former Dean School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi.



Blanche Rocha D'Souza, *Harnessing the Trade Winds* (New Delhi, Pentagon, 2021), Pages: 204 (HB), Price: Rs. 995.00 (HB)

The author of *Harnessing the Trade Winds* was fond of reading, and her own experience of living and working in Kenya triggered her interest in exploring the history of the Indian presence in East Africa. Working with the Library of

Congress in Nairobi opened the doors for her to read extensively from diverse sources. The book contains 15 pages of invaluable references of books, official records, newspaper reports, periodicals, memoirs, speeches and statements. The author also collected source material from Mumbai, Goa, and other places. This reflects her dedication, perseverance, and diligence in compiling material for writing the book.

It is often said that people of the Indian sub-continent have been poor record keepers and narrators of historical events. Knowledge was passed on orally across communities and generations. The author, therefore, mostly relies on non-Indian sources for her text. She makes an interesting observation: that, since ancient times, the Indian trader was skilled in oral mathematics and accounts, but was otherwise rather illiterate. Consequently, the trading class was unable to leave written descriptions of their lives and times. Labourers and artisans venturing out of Indian shores for livelihood were also mostly illiterate.

The author has painstakingly collected at one place the sparse references scattered across ancient texts on the contacts between Bharat, Egypt, and the Roman Empire. It is claimed that the Egyptian Mummies were wrapped in Indian silk. The author firmly believes that migration of peoples in pre-historic times took place both by land and sea. However, more archaeological evidence is required to substantiate this assertion.

The author attempts to establish that trade between the west Indian and east African coasts flourished centuries before the advent of Europeans, and that this trade was plied and controlled by Indians. The author also concludes that the traders from India, Arabia, and Persia had been visiting the east African coast before the Iron Age in small sailing boats called dhows, which were propelled by the Trade Winds.

The mid-first century Greek text *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* has both direct and indirect references about trade and trade routes to East Africa, and further to north Western India. Apparently, Indian dhows traded with Egypt through the Red Sea, which was then a province of Rome.

It is interesting that, in 1154, Al-Idris from the Mediterranean recorded that iron ore, which was purer and more malleable than the ones mined in India, was a major export product to India. This ore was smelted to produce steel for weapons and tools. It is recorded that, in 1611, more than 30,000 masons and labourers came from the Portuguese colonies of Goa to build a fort in Mombasa. Many Indians stayed back as they found more lucrative occupations in the fast-growing town of Mombasa.

The author makes an important point that Hindu traders never brought their families to Africa; but ‘the Khojas and Bohras bring their wives and families and become permanent settlers’ (page 33). Many Goans, who had converted to Catholicism, made their homes in Mozambique after marrying African women.

The book asserts that the Indian traders had a mutually beneficial and harmonious relationship with Arab rulers of Zanzibar as well as Arab entrepreneurs, adventurers, and sailors. Between 1828 and 1856, Seyyid Said, the first resident Sultan of Zanzibar, ‘fostered the growth of the Indian community in Zanzibar by giving them complete religious, social, and economic freedom, by cultivating personal relationships with the best of men, and using them for administrative and financial services’ (page 47). Said had moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar and, in the growth of Zanzibar as an entrepot for foreign trade with Africa, Indian traders and financiers played a crucial role.

The wealthier Indians were merchants, moneylenders, and bankers; while the less wealthy became craftsmen. Indian shopkeepers, or ‘Dookawallahs’, performed the important function of supplying the Africans in the hinterland with the necessities of life.

Indian traders had a major share in marketing 60 percent of copra, and all the clove crop of Zanzibar. Indian bankers financed the caravans going into the interior of Africa, offering credit at great risk. Indian traders imported cotton clothes, indigo dyes, hardware, grain, spices, and beads from Surat, and exchanged these for ivory, hides, cloves, copra, gums and many other animal products.

The author has quoted from the *Chronicles of the Indian Societies of Zanzibar*, and noted that in the 1870s, an Indian named Jairam Sewaji, was the Custom Master of Zanzibar; and he used to invite the Sultan for Diwali celebrations in his office.

After Seyyid Said’s death in 1858, the decisions of succeeding Sultans were greatly influenced by the Europeans, which led to the decline in the influence of the Indian Diaspora.

From 1826 to 1892, the Customs collection at Zanzibar was managed by Indians. With the entry of the colonial administration, the Indians were gradually marginalised. For instance, the dominance of Indian traders in the clove industry was deliberately diluted by administrative measures favouring the Arabs.

Indian labour and artisans were used in building the Ugandan Railway in 1896. Of the 32,000 Indians who came to East Africa to build the railroad, almost half settled down in the new unfamiliar land. It is revealing to note that even before this, almost 13,000 Indians were living and working in East Africa in partnership with the Arabs. A substantial group of merchants (numbering about 7,000) was based in Zanzibar and the main coastal towns.

Indian merchants ventured into the interior of East Africa along with the advancing railway line, establishing small shops and administrative posts, and helping the change from a barter economy to a money-based economy.

The Hilton Yong Commission Report in 1927 observed that “the Indian middleman is a necessary link in the chain of distribution. The European cannot afford to trade on the small scale and the small margin of profit on which the Indian subsists” (see page 80).

The book details the significant success of Indians in sugarcane plantations in Uganda, producing 5,000 tons of white sugar per year. Indians also introduced the cotton industry in Uganda. Later, Africans took over the cotton plantations while ‘the Indians concentrated on the ginning, marketing, and export trade.’

The first Indian Political Organization in British East Africa was the ‘Mombasa Indian Association’, formed in 1900. In Kenya, the Indians protested against unreasonable taxation and, in 1921, Indians declared ‘No taxation without representation’, which gave rise to the ‘Indian Question’ in 1923. Indians kept to their trading and financing activities, and had no political aspirations. However, in 1919, in order to protect their commercial interests and capital outlay in Uganda, they formed the Central Council of Indian Association in Kampala, Jinja, and Mbale. In 1914, the East Africa Indian National Congress was constituted.

The book compellingly notes that ‘the greatest triumph of European racism was the way in which it succeeded in deflecting African hostility from the European to a safely helpless scapegoat, the Indian’ (page 95). For instance, in Nairobi, Indians were blamed for the lack of sanitation. But ‘it was a problem created as the community was denied full civic rights, forbidden by law to build, own or rent property outside the town, and restricted within certain area’ (page 95). This was similar to the South African practice of Apartheid.

Chapter 15 deals with the importance of the monsoon winds in the emergence of Zanzibar as the centre of trade with India. The Trade Winds occupy two belts between latitudes 5 North and 25 South of the equator. For

centuries, the Arabs and Indians knew how to use the monsoon winds which blew their dhows South-West towards Africa between December and March, and North-East towards India from April to August. While the Arabs 'hugged' the shore, the Indians relied on the winds to take them to Africa, and bring them back safely home. However, Zanzibar was usually the southern limit for this wind dependent sailing. Consequently, Zanzibar emerged as the preferred destination and a major entrepot.

The author makes an important contribution to tracing and narrating the history of the traders and travellers from India interacting with the people of Africa and Arabia in the ancient times. This old and enduring contact has not yet been sufficiently explored by historians and scholars.

Ambassador Skand Ranjan Tayal
Former Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea,
Former Consul General of India at Johannesburg and at Houston.

