

## BOOK REVIEW

Mohammad Badrul Alam (ed.), *Contours of India's Foreign Policy: Changes and Challenges* (New Delhi: Reference Press, 2014), Pages: 325, Price: Rs. 975.00.

Innumerable books on Indian foreign policy have been published and more must be in the pipeline. The relevance of this book lies in the fact that it is an edited volume where a large number of young scholars have attempted to present their analysis and understanding of Indian foreign policy. These scholars have been teaching in various academic institutions or are employed by reputed research institutes. Five authors are senior professors and twelve happen to be new generation scholars.

Seasoned analysts and commentators have been airing their views on diverse aspects of Indian foreign policy for long. The time has come to listen to the younger lot as well. This book is a very modest attempt in that direction.

The book contours in detail India's continuously evolving foreign and economic policy and challenges that are in tune with the changing times. The volume contains seventeen chapters by scholars from India's premier universities and think tanks. The book has been successful in combining different strands, such as growing environmental concerns and the politics of it, the increasing role of the Diaspora in contemporary international relations, and the emerging role of Indian States under the federal structure of the Constitution on certain aspects of Indian foreign policy and diplomacy.

A large number of chapters have concentrated on examining India's engagement with other countries from relational perspectives. Major world powers, some significant regions, and India's diverse relationship with them have been included in the volume. These authors have largely sought to deal with India's bilateral ties with a specific country or a region. Continuity as well as changes in India's foreign policy and persistent challenges have been examined by them.

Sanjukta Banerji Bhattacharya's chapter on India-Africa relations at a continental, regional, and local level is an insightful piece. She has drawn attention to India's growing needs of natural resources from Africa and has analysed how India has begun to play an important role as a key driver of growth in Africa.

Sitakanta Mishra's chapter on nuclear diplomacy is a good contribution. It effectively explains India's diplomatic success in transitioning from a nuclear apartheid country to a responsible nuclear state, and its strategy of nuclear energy alignment with multiple global players. Most of the member countries of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) targeted India's nuclear programme for long and denied technology and equipment related to nuclear field. The Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation agreement brought great success to India by enabling it to conduct legitimate nuclear trade.

Muhammad Samir Hussain on India-US relations and the Pakistan factor correctly makes an assessment that Washington's approach towards India and Pakistan will as usual revolve around American pragmatism and not American values. He has argued that the US will follow a policy of hard-headed engagement with both India and Pakistan to achieve its regional and global objectives.

In this age of globalisation, trade, investment and other economic factors play a substantive role in a country's foreign policy. Some chapters in the book rightly highlight India's economic engagement with relevant countries. How economic bridges cement overall ties between nations, have been emphasised in chapters related to India's relations with the United States, the European Union, West Asian countries, and Japan and China as well.

With respect to India's relations with some neighbouring countries, including Bhutan, the author recommends that India needs to leverage its geographical proximity, economic and cultural relationship going back a thousand years, and economic complementarities to enhance its strategic, trade and economic ties with those countries.

The editor, himself a prolific author, has contributed an article on India-Japan relations. In the light of the emerging strategic importance of Indo-Japan ties for peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region, it is a necessary and timely article.

It is important to note that the book is not a compilation of conference proceedings. The editor has planned selected themes and collected relevant articles to bring out this volume. The book could have been more comprehensive if it had included some more regions, a few more themes and if the content page had been better organised. For example, the section on India and major powers includes articles on two regions -Africa and Southeast Asia. There is an article on India's relations with West Asia. All these regions could have been included under one sub-heading. Likewise, the section on India and its neighbours has conspicuously excluded Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal.

In fact, the editor could have developed a completely new section on regional organisations, such as the SAARC, the ASEAN, the IORA, and could have included the chapter on the EU in the section. The vicissitudes faced by all these groupings and the challenges India faces could have added value to the book. The article on West Asia largely covers the political and security aspects of Indian diplomacy. It is relevant, but a separate chapter on energy security issue could have been included to augment its relevance.

It is certainly easy to plan an edited book, but collecting chapters on all intended themes is difficult. The editor thus, despite the shortcomings, has managed to put seventeen chapters in a volume on Indian foreign policy, which is commendable.

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PR Kumaraswamy (ed.), *Persian Gulf 2013: India's Relations with the Region*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2014), Pages: 305, Price: Rs 795.00.

The 'West Asian Region' stretching north and south of the Persian Gulf, across to Turkey in the West and Egypt in Africa has always been an area of prime focus in international politics. It has served as a land bridge between the East and West since medieval times (the Old Silk route). While vast oil and gas resources have made the region strategically significant, the threat of terrorism emanating from Islamic fundamentalist ideology has remained a cause for global concern.

Although the wider region is important, it is the Persian Gulf region, which is a part of India's extended neighbourhood that serves the country's key national interests and is of vital strategic importance. The region is home to more than 6.5 million Indians, many of whom have been there for

generations and contribute more than US\$ 35 billion in remittances. India's economic and commercial engagement with this region is more than US\$ 160 billion per annum. It is a source of more than 65 per cent of India's oil and gas requirements and hence, critical for its energy security. Despite numerous intra-regional issues, which are often contradictory and conflicting in nature, India has successfully managed an independent multi-vector policy with each of the nations.

The outbreak of the popular protests in the Arab world since December 2010 has significantly changed the geopolitical and strategic landscape of the region. The popular uprisings and the subsequent regime change have brought the region again into the limelight. At the same time, old problems like the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry, the Iranian nuclear issue, the continuing turmoil in Iraq and Yemen, etc. continue to haunt the region. The involvement of the extra-regional powers like the US, the EU, Russia, and China adds further to the complex regional intrigue. The rise of Islamists in mainstream politics in the region especially Egypt and Tunisia seems to be another crucial development.

In the light of the evolving regional strategic environment as also long-term interests in the region, it becomes essential for India to monitor and study the developments extremely carefully. In this context, PR Kumaraswamy's edited volume on the Persian Gulf not only recognises the importance of the Gulf region, but also attempts to draw the attention of Indian policy makers towards this vital region.

Persian Gulf 2013 is a useful volume for readers looking for insights into major developments in the Gulf region in 2012. The book is very well laid in the form of country wise chapters, which help the reader in assimilating issues better, along with an exhaustive introductory chapter that provides excellent contextual linkages.

The editor highlights the primacy of the Persian Gulf region in the context of India and its neighbourhood, and underscores that despite this acknowledged primacy, the Persian Gulf has inadequate attention from Indian policy makers and think tanks. The region continues to draw attention only for controversies and conflict. Discussions tend to commence with 'civilization links' but fail to tread more important issues. He highlights the importance given by the British to the Persian Gulf region during their rule in India wherein their decisions on the Gulf region were administered from the Bombay Presidency. The imperial connections were however not leveraged by Independent India, shunning it as colonial baggage. The editor also highlights the use of the term

‘West Asia’ instead of ‘Middle East’ in India, calling it a disregard to common expressions used not only by the international community but also by the concerned countries of the region.

The Introduction is exhaustive and gives an excellent overview of the prevailing as well as emerging dynamics in the region. Commencing from historical links, it takes the reader through various issues, which have had an impact on India’s relations with the region in the post-independence era. The Arab-Israeli conflict, India’s support to the Palestine cause resulting in ‘non-relations’ with Israel for four decades, the Pakistan factor, the post Cold-War transformation in India’s Middle East policy that among other things led to kick-starting a formal and important relationship with Israel, etc. have been highlighted. In a specific mention to the Persian Gulf, the chapter highlights the importance of India’s economic engagement with the region and its criticality to India’s energy security. Commencing from a meagre US\$ 6.2 billion, the trade with the Middle East in 2011–12 had expanded to US \$205 Billion with six out of the top 25 trading partners for India being from the Persian Gulf region. Citing the India Hydrocarbon Vision 2025, the editor highlights the importance of the Gulf region to India’s energy security requirements. The last part of the chapter outlines some of the major challenges that India faces in its relations with the Gulf region. One of the major challenges in seeking closer ties with the countries in the region is the interstate conflict and rivalries wherein improving relations with one could be seen as adversarial by the other. The author claims that the great power rivalry involving the US, Russia, China and Japan as well as the Sino-Indian political cooperation will be tested in the manner in which they manage the Gulf region, especially its energy resources.

Lack of India’s engagement at the highest level including visits by the Prime Minister or the President, the mishandling of the visit of Omani Sultan in 2012 and the perceived indifference to the ‘Arab Spring’ developments indicate towards India’s neglect of the region, which is not only a concern but also a challenge. The US role in the region, the Indo-Iran ties and its impact on India’s relations with the US and the region, the diminishing role of Pakistan and the resultant space for enhancement in Indo-Saudi Arabia ties, the rise of China and the intensifying sectarian divide in the region are other major political challenges for India. In the economic sphere, the rising energy demands and the challenge to meet these from the Gulf region, the need to create the right environment to attract investors from the region as also the need to find avenues to balance the trade imbalance, which is presently skewed in favour of the Gulf countries, are cited as major challenges. Despite the

undeniable importance of the region to India, it has not received adequate attention. The editor underlines the importance of understanding the complexities of the region as a precursor to formulating meaningful policy options for India.

The following chapters (2–10) deal with each of the countries in the region; the GCC countries, Yemen, Iran and Iraq. The chapters are uniformly laid out and focus on the basic issues, domestic, political and economic developments in each of the countries in 2012 and their engagement with India. For anyone looking to follow key moments in the country's history in 2012, these chapters provide very useful and relevant information. Key events affecting the nations have been covered in each chapter. Detailed endnotes make it very relevant reference material for further research. Well laid out tables, uniform layout of chapters and inputs from authoritative sources make the assimilation even more comprehensive. The mention of external players like the US, China, Pakistan and even Russia in influencing the discourse of respective countries and their impact on their relations with India are relevant to the context. Some of the chapters (Iran, Chapter 3) have also enumerated and discussed problems and challenges in their relations with India, which give a good insight for policy makers and analysts in seeking solutions and paving a path for better bilateral ties.

The chapters, in their quest for uniformity have, however, missed some important issues, which could be considered necessary in discussing the country. In addition, the interface of each of these countries with the region, especially in the context of historical issues as well as current issues (the Arab Spring) would have made the chapter comprehensive. In the case of Bahrain (Chapter 2), the involvement of Saudi Arabia is very important, but does not get adequate mention in the section on Saudi Arabia. In the case of Iran (Chapter 3), its nuclear issue, its involvement in the Syrian crisis, the impact of the Arab spring on its expansion in regional influence would have made this chapter more comprehensive. Similarly, on Iraq (Chapter 4), the discussion on external players could have included Iran, being so important in shaping Iraq's outlook.

The chapter on Saudi Arabia (Chapter 8) is very well laid out and especially addresses key Indian concerns, namely, its defence relations and Hajj. However, it does not adequately cover Saudi Arabia's role in the region especially in the context of Iran, the GCC, and Israel. Yemen (Chapter 10), often called the battlefield for proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have looked more comprehensive with the mention of their role under the section of external players.

The last two chapters focus on the GCC and policy options for India. The GCC's role and stance on regional issues and the critical issue of the GCC security could have been given separate attention. The last chapter on policy options is very well laid out and clearly lays out the broad contours for policy makers to enhance engagement with the Gulf region.

Persian Gulf 2013 is the second edition in the series, the first being Persian Gulf 2012, a kindle version. For scholars, policy makers and readers interested in the Persian Gulf region, it is a 'must read'.

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Vishal Chandra (ed.), *India's Neighbourhood: The Armies of South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), Pages: 167, Price: 795.00.

Territorial integrity is of vital interest for modern nations. In the twenty-first century the international security environment has deteriorated rapidly with the emergence of violent non-state actors. A nation's security today is threatened more by non-conventional threats from unknown violent non-state actors rather than conventional threats from other enemy nations. Hence, the role of the defence forces in securing a nation from such threats has become extremely challenging. In this context, any work that examines the role, relevance and status of the army is extremely pertinent. One needs to compliment the authors for attempting to analyse the armies in India's neighbourhood.

Vishal Chandra, in the first chapter, examines Afghanistan, a nation whose future existence is precariously placed. This concise but detailed chapter includes a long introduction to Afghanistan's troubled and chaotic security environment. It details the implications of the proposed US and NATO troop drawdown post-2014, which as noted, is highly ambiguous. Obama's extreme dissatisfaction with Karzai and willingness for a complete withdrawal mean

that it is impossible to say for sure what the US will end up doing, and the author does a good job explaining this. He raises some very relevant questions regarding just how representative the Afghan National Army of this divided and diverse nation is. The explanation of Afghanistan's geography is adequate, and the author covers most areas well, even shoehorning in a section about the army's nascent Air Corps. He explains lucidly, the training and mentoring of the army. His language is precise, and he makes it easy to understand the plethora of serious problems faced by the Afghan National Army. Credit must be given to the author for not attempting to force a conclusion at odds with the tone of his article. He reiterates the hard, realistic view taken of Afghanistan and its army; that this is a country and an army that are very vulnerable to falling apart with disastrous consequences.

Smruti S. Pattanaik, in the second chapter, has vividly analysed the role played by the army in Bangladesh. The author has systematically classified the chapter into various themes. Interestingly, she has attempted to provide a security framework for Bangladesh before discussing the evolution and structure of its army. The author has rightly pointed out that Bangladesh is constantly facing domestic and external security threats. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of Bangladesh's threat perception (pp. 31-40), which otherwise is not so noticeable. The recruitment procedure and budgeting section (p. 43 and 44) provides clarity to the reader on how serious Bangladesh is on matters of security and defence. The chapter also discusses its civil-military relationship and the inclusion of the 'people's perspective' (p. 48 and 52) is a value add. The chapter is reader friendly and the author explains the contents in simple language.

Anand Kumar, in the third chapter, elaborates on the geographical and strategic significance of a tiny landlocked country like Bhutan. The author has given a very succinct description of the domestic and external threat perceptions encircling this nation. The chapter highlights the origin and evolution of the Royal Army along with its structural formation. This provides the reader with critical insight into how the army is divided into various branches. The chapter also talks about its civil-military relationship, which has always been cordial. The language is simple which makes it more reader friendly. The detailed analysis of the security co-operation between India and Bhutan is useful. The section on 'National Army in People's Perception' is an interesting add-on to the chapter. Overall, the chapter is comprehensive with detailed statistics to support the analysis.

Alok Bansal's analysis, in the fourth chapter, begins by rightly emphasising the geostrategic significance of Maldives especially from an Indian perspective.



The author follows a similar methodology in the other chapters by initially identifying the threats faced by Maldives. He classifies this into three categories – internal, external and environmental. Subsequently, Bansal identifies terrorism as the most significant internal threat. Bansal’s analysis on how religious intolerance is expanding due to rising tourism, the lifeline of the Maldivian economy, is compelling yet brief. He is correct in warning that pandering to extremist views will pose a dangerous threat for Maldivian tourism over time. Bansal goes on to enumerate how small states like Maldives are more vulnerable to external security challenges. The author’s description of environmental threats from the rising sea level and coastal erosion is accurate. The exploring of a new homeland could have been analysed further, especially the implications of Maldives approaching the Indian Government for land in the wake of an emergency. This chapter, like other chapters, would have been more useful if the implications for India would have been also analysed in detail. Overall, the chapter is a good read.

Nihar Nayak, in the fifth chapter, has attempted to analyse one of the lesser-studied armies in the subcontinent, the Nepal army. He does a good job at describing an army, in a state of flux, under the charge of its former enemies in a politically chaotic state. The author has divided his review into eight poorly ordered sections with a large, detailed appendix. He examines Nepal’s Security Environment as both internal and external issues for the government rather than restricting himself to traditional security threats. This analysis is short but fairly comprehensive. In the absence of any overarching strategy or military doctrine, the section on Nepal’s operational doctrine is brief. The author also examines the army’s structure, formation and control while keeping into account the unusual prevailing circumstances. The tables are especially informative in showing the army’s looming ethnic issues.

In the sixth chapter, *The Army of Pakistan: Dominant by Default*, the sub-themes along with the sub-headings are used by the author. The description of the ‘Strategic Thought’ of the army is an interesting section. However, the relationship between the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has not been highlighted in the chapter. Additionally, the army’s role in nuclear Pakistan is also missing. Overall, the chapter, in simple language, is an easy read. The content does give a good understanding of the nature of the army’s dominance. The ‘Ethnic Composition’ and the ‘Defense Budget’ has been explained in detail.

Dr. Mayilvaganan, in chapter seven, has successfully traced the origin and evolution of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and linked it to the major political developments in the nation. The author discusses the army keeping in mind

the major internal and external security threats for Sri Lanka. He has touched upon major issues related to the army including funding, weapons, evolution, structure, and civil-military relations. One of the important aspects covered by the author is the ethnic composition and its related influence on the civil-military relations. He has also addressed the attitudes of various ethnic groups towards the army. The author has discussed the impact of the 30-year civil war on the SLA. Thus, the chapter will also prove useful for those interested in reading about the LTTE and the ethnic conflict. He has described the various channels from which the SLA has sourced its weapons and has touched upon the future of the SLA.

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David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), Pages: 342, Price: Rs. 1,317.12.

David Kilcullen is one of the most celebrated and influential counterinsurgency experts today. Based on his academic background in the political anthropology of conflict and his personal experiences in counterinsurgency operations as a light infantry officer and later as a senior counterinsurgency advisor to the United States government in Iraq and Afghanistan, Kilcullen has written extensively on counterinsurgency, strategy and irregular warfare. His previous books, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (2009) and *Counterinsurgency* (2010) respectively discuss how, like a contagion, Islamist terrorists/insurgents take advantage of any conflict situation in a society to gain the support of the population and establish themselves, and how counterinsurgency operations should focus on neutralising the networks of terrorists/insurgents through a "strategy of disaggregation". *Out of Mountains: The Coming Age of the*

*Urban Guerrilla* is Kilcullen's latest offering, and this time around he brings his focus to bear on urban insurgency.

Kilcullen asserts that future conflicts will not take place in remote, forested, mountainous and rural areas but will occur in densely populated, ungoverned, and digitally connected cities of the low income countries because conflict invariably happens where people are and in future it will be cities where the maximum population will be concentrated. He reinforces his argument by citing various studies in demography and economic geography that have identified four "megatrends" shaping future conflicts: population growth, urbanisation, littoralisation, and connectedness. According to him, a look at the present trends in population growth and urbanisation indicate that rapid urbanisation is taking place along coastal belts in the less developed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America where inhabitants have increased access to internet and mobile phones. By 2050, approximately 75 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas.

However, why and how would these cities become centres of conflict and violence? Kilcullen argues that every city has a carrying capacity and overstretching of this capacity results in conflicts. In low income countries, rapid urbanisation is accompanied by increased rural to urban migration, which puts enormous population pressure on a city's resources such as housing, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, etc. As the pressure increases, the city administration fails to provide its inhabitants with basic amenities and security, thus creating pockets of poverty, unemployment, pollution, lawlessness and organised crime. He refers to these cities as "feral cities", a term borrowed from Richard Norton. A feral city is where governance has collapsed at the local level, especially in the slums and periurban areas, and criminal gangs, drug lords and extremists swiftly move in to fill the vacuum. These non-state actors take advantage of the sense of alienation and marginalisation among the slum dwellers and exploit the illicit networks such as smuggling, trafficking of drugs, weapons and contraband to establish and consolidate their groups, as well as to fight off external intervention. Mogadishu is a typical feral city.

In any insurgency, the support of the local population is vital. Kilcullen explains that non-state actors establish their dominance among the population through "competitive control". He argues that by employing a wide spectrum of tactics such as coercion, administration and persuasion, non-state actors create a normative, predictable and orderly system, thereby lulling the local population into believing that they are in a secure and safe environment. He, however, stresses that it is coercion to which the population responds the most because faced with a powerful authority people will do exactly what is

told to them in order to be safe. Thus, through an admixture of brutal force and a modicum of governance, the Taliban, the Hezbollah, the Shower Posse of Tivoli Garden in Kingston city and the Warlords in Mogadishu have drawn strength from their respective populace.

Emphasising the security risk posed by an ungoverned conurbation with highly connected inhabitants having easy and increased access to the internet and mobile phone, Kilcullen demonstrates how during the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, city dwellers with access to Facebook, Twitter, and Skype were not only able to connect with their fellow countrymen and sustain the protest, but also solicit help from the outside world. Further, weapon-making manuals downloaded from the internet enabled them to manufacture weapons and arm themselves. Kilcullen also states that future urban conflicts will constitute a wide spectrum of threats with its high end characterised by terrorism or state sponsored proxy war like in Mumbai, and its low end will feature urban 'ferality' by internal actors as witnessed in Mogadishu, as well as an in-between hybrid form where government and non-state actors enjoy a symbiotic relationship such as in Tivoli gardens in Kingston. While offering solutions, he argues that every city should be seen as a separate entity and not part of a state and should be analysed as such. It is important to understand the behaviour of the city, its networks and flows and accordingly undertake measures to make it resilient.

In all, *Out of the Mountains* offers a number of interesting insights about how cities degenerate into areas of lawlessness and how criminal gangs, terrorists and government/interventionist forces try to control these ungoverned spaces. It is a well-researched book and draws strength from the author's extensive fieldwork in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Indonesia, etc. However, it is not an easy book to read as it has far too many arguments and incidents for a reader to keep track of. Besides, in its effort to drive home a point, the book often becomes repetitive and tedious.

More substantially, it ignores the history of urban insurgency. Urban insurgency is not a new phenomenon and history is replete with numerous such instances. History also tells us that urban insurgency has never succeeded. The most recent episode of urban insurgency was recorded in the late 1960s and early 1970s when insurgents in Latin America similarly argued that the world is fast urbanising and urban centres teeming with people would provide safe haven; but their efforts did not bring any revolution in the urban areas and they were defeated by the superior might of the state. Interestingly, despite their proven failure, scholars and strategists have remained fascinated with urban guerrilla warfare and have produced a trove of books and articles since

the early 1990s predicting the re-emergence of urban insurgency. Kilcullen's book belongs to this genre.

Furthermore, Kilcullen combines terrorism, insurgency and criminal activities within the same spectrum without distinguishing political violence from criminal violence. Kilcullen appears to make the case for sustained Western interventions in less developed countries when he suggests that a good mix of local knowledge and external expertise is most desirable for solving future urban conflicts. His suggestion to deploy military means to provide minimum levels of security first and to then employ other means to address the root causes of a conflict seem to tally well with America's present interventionist streak. Outside interventions invariably exacerbate conflicts or even open a Pandora's Box, as is evident in Iraq or Syria. It is best to strengthen the capacities of existing governments to deal with the challenges they face; not only do they have greater legitimacy in the eyes of the locals but the very act of strengthened state capacity will also increase their legitimacy. Political violence demands political solutions.

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P. P. Shukla (ed.), *INDIA-US Partnership: Asian Challenges & Beyond*, Wisdom Tree Publications (2014), New Delhi, Pages: 208, Price: Rs. 716.00

As a joint project by the Heritage Foundation and the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), this book has a set of perceptive and exhaustive essays on bilateral dimensions of the India-US relationship as well as the political and economic analysis of selected Asian neighbours of India that have a bearing on this relationship. These neighbours are China, Myanmar and Afghanistan. The editor, Ambassador Prabhat Shukla has given a crisp editor's note and a concise and lucid introductory chapter on the economic and political dynamics

of the Asia Pacific region as it impinges on the US-India bilateral space. It is important to bear in mind that the book's dateline was middle-2013,

At a time when diverse commentators have ascribed various uncomplimentary comments on the bilateral relationship this book provides a useful reader friendly expose on central issues of concern to both. The essays on the third countries describe the powerful ambience with which the partnership has to come to terms with.

China looms large and hogs space. It contains analyses by former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal, Director Walter Lohman, and Senior Research Fellow Lisa Curtis of the Heritage Foundation, followed by full chapters devoted to China's economy, intelligence system, military modernisation, as well as Tibet and how it figures in the strategic perspective of India, and its relations with the US.

These chapters are not sequentially constraining for the reader as they complement each other in painting a full picture. The narrative on the bilateral relations brings out areas of convergence that culminated in the India-US nuclear cooperation agreement and the flow of numerous high level visits.

However, as Kanwal Sibal underlines in his incisive essay, '...one needs to sift current reality from future possibilities'. He discusses the strategic partnership and the US expectations of India being the linchpin in the US strategy of rebalancing, as emphasised by the US Defence Secretary Panetta in June 2012. That expression would seem a bit remote to an observer in Delhi in March 2014 with India preoccupied by the upcoming general elections, the government under the election commission's moral code of conduct and minimalism dictating diplomatic activities even as challenging issues accumulate.

Sibal recalls statements of Panetta in Delhi and former Secretary of State Clinton in Washington to the effect that rather than dramatic breakthroughs of the earlier phase there was a need for steady, focused cooperation and efforts to work through 'the inevitable differences'. In short, the strategic partnership is 'work in progress'. However, he points out to the unique potential by referring to the joint statement at the end of the Strategic Dialogue in Washington DC in June 2012. The joint statement covered "virtually every aspect of bilateral relationship: Politics, strategy, security, defence, intelligence, nuclear cooperation, space, energy, trade and investment, science and technology, higher education and empowerment". The checklist can be useful to an analyst from today's standpoint for assessing how the relationship is faring.

The essays by the US scholars, from the Heritage Foundation, provide their perspectives. Again, as things stood in 2012–13, Lisa Curtis emphasises that Indian leaders must “convince a sceptical bureaucracy and public that long held suspicions of the US are unmerited and explain how the American pivot towards Asia serves India’s own fundamental security interests”. Seen from the present state of the flux, that has characterised the international situation for past several years, that emphasis might evoke at best a demur, and at worst, a full range of rhetoric eloquence among Indian commentators. The US side perceives considerable uphill tasks about civil nuclear cooperation and liability, high technology transfers, defence ties and supply relationship despite the MMRCA set back.

Lisa Curtis also points out that there is a perception in Washington that New Delhi is focused primarily on acquisition of technology rather than discussing strategically significant issues with US counterparts. She also dwells at some length on Washington being relatively forthcoming on sensitive technology transfers, even as she acknowledges that New Delhi views it differently. This disconnect does not sit well with the US Defence Department’s efforts to reform rules and regulations governing defence exports to India and to work with India to address the bureaucratic processes in both countries for facilitating enhanced defence trade.

Highlighting the strategic imperative given the challenge of rising China and the confluence of democratic values, she implores both sides to go the extra mile to maintain confidence in relations. An illustration of this extra mile from the US side would be to pay heed to India’s concerns about Afghanistan and for India to align its nuclear liability legislation with internationally accepted norms.

Having thus, outlined the areas for work to be done by both sides, the other chapters detail the situation in the neighbourhood, in countries such as Myanmar, Afghanistan and China, but avoid zooming in on the proverbial elephant in the room, Pakistan. These chapters are thorough and full of factual content as well as the occasional counter-factual points such as, “It is in India’s interest for the US to remain engaged in Burma....It cannot, however, achieve the larger strategic purpose of balancing China without the US, and keeping the US engaged is going to take continued progress on Burmese political reforms” (Lohman). Considering the credulity-straining explanations of brutal attacks on media persons in Pakistan as work of non-state actors, and the US’ attitude to such explanations, the highlighted political reforms in Myanmar may be received with scepticism.

The chapter on Afghanistan by Gen. Sawhney lays out India's apprehensions, underlines its fragility, and the reversibility of its gains made so far. It details what would be needed for post ISAF (The International Security Assistance Force congratulates) Afghanistan to coalesce peacefully to stability. Domestic factors in Afghanistan, in his assessment, are not limited to Taliban as he discusses the salient issues in relation to the security forces and the incoming transition. Some of these are the shape and composition of the Afghan National Army (ANA), the associated manpower policies, logistics and administration, funding requirements and the need to create/strengthen and institutionalise a cohesive security structure in Afghanistan. How India and US view these aspects will be important for their bilateral ties.

The major part of this book is focused on diverse aspects of China and its shadow on the India-US ties. Director of VIF, Mr. Ajit Doval has done a magisterial piece on the Chinese Intelligence system. Coming from an eminent professional with profound experience of intelligence and sharp insights, this essay alone may be worth the price tag of the book. He traces the evolution of the intelligence machinery in China beginning with the time of the historic dynastic rulers to the inception of the PRC, and then through the cultural revolution to the Deng era and up to present times when, among other things, China is seen with formidable cyber intelligence and the sweep in this regard of the dreaded PLA unit 61398. Rather than paraphrasing briefly what this essay conveys so meticulously, my counsel to the reader would be to go through the rewarding reading experience. The author concludes, "China envisions for itself a big power role and is silently but steadily, building up its intelligence capabilities commensurate with that vision".

Short essays on China's military modernisation, economy and doings in Tibet complement the picture. The military modernisation undertaken by the PLA is discussed by Dean Cheng, scholar in the Heritage Foundation, covering the dimensions of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR). The essay proceeds with the observation that China has lacked combat experience since its last war with Vietnam in 1979 and has sought to make this up by close examination of other countries' wars, in particular the US operations in the Gulf Wars. The roles of multiple trappings of high technology in modern warfare and the US prowess in that regard have guided PLA's modernisation. Joint operations involving two or more services under a single command and a single plan, as was the case in the first Gulf war, have inspired the Chinese military to see the future of warfare and its requirements. The role of space based assets, the IT, as well as the cyber sphere have been the principal drivers of their C4ISR plans.



In a short but engaging essay on the Chinese economy, V. Ananth Nageswaran, an independent financial consultant in Singapore, brings out some aspects of China's growth trajectory that are not normally covered in popular media. He analyses China's credit policy, the constraints of export led growth and diminishing prospects of it in a time of crisis prone global economic situation, and the implications of what he calls wasteful and excessive investment, with a focus on economies of some Chinese cities. He argues that the mechanisms deployed to raise debts for investments in both needed and unneeded infrastructure have been complex and opaque. He cites the example of an audit of 36 local governments in Chinese cities published in June 2012, which found ten of them with outstanding debts exceeding the previous year's income. Moreover, the ratios of the required debt payment against the income for fourteen local governments were above the permissible redline of 25 per cent. He expected the total Chinese government debt to be about 10.7 trillion Yuan by 2010. In the light of the growth slowdown, he cites analyses to say that China would have to choose between short term low quality growth and financial system safety.

As regards the main theme of the book, namely, India-US relations, the complexity of the Chinese impact on them is aptly conveyed in editor Prabhat Shukla's pithy line, "Until now, America has been looking to cooperate with an India that is strong enough to be a balancer to China, but not strong enough to cause concern to Pakistan".

The relationship is perched delicately in the twilight of domestic politics in both countries – President Obama's problems in the Hill and broad expectations of a stable set up after the general elections in India. The imperative for both have to maintain clarity of purpose and to expeditiously attend to the required course correction. This book contains a good deal that will be handy in this context.

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Rumel Dahiya (ed.), *Review of Developments in the Gulf Region*, Pentagon Press, (2014), New Delhi, Pages: 210, Price: Rs. 695.00

The title of the book under review, and the subtitle - namely, “Prospects and Challenges for India in the Next Two Decades”, together sum up quite appropriately, the content of the volume. It is the outcome of a study undertaken by the Institute for Defence Studies, which was coordinated and edited by Brig Rumel Dahiya, (Retd.) on a region that is of critical importance for India for political, economical, social and geo-strategic reasons. The book analyses the impact of recent major developments in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and in the wider West Asian region covering Iran, Yemen, Egypt and Turkey, to understand their likely future evolution and the resulting opportunities and problems that they would create for India.

The content of the book is well structured. It has seven sections, starting with the “Introduction”, which outlines the framework of the book. The next five sections are the five succeeding chapters covering separately the trends in India’s relations with the Gulf countries with regard to issues of political and strategic ties, security, energy, trade, and Indian migrants in the region, in that order. Each chapter includes a brief abstract and concludes with listings of key drivers of change along with recommendations for the policy makers. A novel and interesting feature of the study is the seventh and final section, which provides three possible scenarios for the year 2030 for the West Asian region as a whole, based on the key drivers identified in the earlier chapters. Most of the chapters contain useful statistical tables and with the exception of the section named “Scenarios”, all the remaining six sections contain notes and references. An index is provided at the end of the book.

The section “Introduction” covers broadly, the reasons why the Gulf is important for India. It also identifies the main actors, not just in the Gulf but also in the wider West Asian region, namely, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Yemen, whose roles would have a bearing on the developments in the Gulf. This section also explains why and how India’s bilateral and multilateral interactions have been limited to the levels currently seen. The reasons given range from the differences in the respective governing structures - such as democratic in India versus monarchic in the Gulf countries, at the national level, to the negative role of Pakistan at the regional level, and to their being on the opposite sides during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the major changes in the Indian foreign and economic policies; India’s energy

requirements combined with the US reducing its energy dependence on the Gulf region; Iran's nuclear ambitions and its control over the Straits of Hormuz with implications for India's oil supplies; the impact of the "Arab spring"; and the Shia-Sunni rivalry are some of the themes visualised as having determining influences on the trajectory of Indo-Gulf relations.

The basic thesis of the chapter on strengthening political and strategic ties between India and the Gulf is that in the past our relations were dominated solely by energy imports from the region and our exports to that region. The lack of political depth in our relations has been ascribed to several factors besides those already noted in the "Introduction". These include Pakistan's propaganda against India with regard to Kashmir and Bangladesh; India's links initially and for several succeeding decades with the secular and leftist governments in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, and its recognition of Israel. Another significant factor mentioned is the perception in the Gulf of soft-peddalling by India with respect to both, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The end of the Cold War had not only removed the geo-political divide between India and the Gulf countries but the former was seen by the latter in the glow of the attention given by the US, the current sole superpower, in its new global-security-architecture-in-the-making. Furthermore, several new issues have been identified where the interests of India and the GCC states converge. Thus, terrorism, which was of great interest to India only, has become significant after 9/11 for the Gulf states as well, driven by both domestic and external, mainly Western, compulsions. Other issues mentioned are maritime security, and illegal trafficking in narcotics and small arms. All of these have led to the deepening of political and geo-strategic ties between India and the GCC countries. A visible indication of this trend is seen in the several exchanges of high-level visits during the first decade of this century and particularly reflected in the visit to India for the first time of the Saudi Arabian King in 2006 and the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, also for the first time, to Saudi Arabia in 2010.

There appears to be considerable overlap between the chapter on political and strategic relations and the one on security in the Gulf region. Thus, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Shia-Sunni rivalry, the impact of the Arab Spring as well as the role of the US in the region, which is in the process of withdrawing from Iraq and becoming less dependent on Gulf energy supplies, are mentioned in both places. The new issues in the latter chapter relate to the implications of the progressive build-up of Iraq, its re-emergence in 10–15 years as a military power and its special ties with Iran; the outcome of the crisis in

Syria, which will have influence on the Shia-Sunni rivalry; the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons linked to Iran; and the vast US/Western military presence, initially as part of the Cold War and seen by the GCC countries as guarantees against Left-inspired domestic uprisings, and subsequently against Iran after its Islamic Revolution, and now against Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Indian interests in the region are deemed to lie in regional political stability, securing the sea-lanes for energy supplies and other trade, as well as for the safety of its six million citizens working in the region. This is acknowledged and reflected in, inter alia, the upgrading of bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia to “strategic partnership” and the formation of a joint committee to explore defence cooperation. Examples have been brought together about initiatives in the defence sector with other countries, some having taken place as early as 1972 with Oman, which is the closest geographical neighbour of India among the GCC countries. One important issue discussed, relates to the role India can play in the Gulf security architecture- maritime security, counter-terrorism, provision of military training, equipment, and joint exercises, or even as a regional interlocutor admitted as an Associate Member of the GCC as a part of India’s “Look West” policy. The major question not answered is to what extent India would be allowed to play its due role by external forces like the US and Pakistan.

The chapters on energy, trade and Indian migration provide very valuable statistical material at individual bilateral levels, which clearly attest to the great importance of the Gulf countries for India’s energy security as well as for economic and social development. For example, according to the figures provided, in 2010, 63 per cent of India’s energy imports were sourced from the Gulf region. What adds long-term significance to this figure is that currently, around four-fifths of proven oil reserves and nearly half of the proven gas reserves with the world’s top ten ranking countries in those two energy sectors respectively are located in West Asian geographical proximity and the lower cost of production further adds to the importance of the region as an energy source for India. At the same time, the discovery of shale gas in the US and elsewhere would imply the attractiveness of the burgeoning Indian market for the Gulf countries, with of course, competition for India from China.

Similarly, with growing population and increasing prosperity, the Gulf countries offer an increasingly large market for India’s agricultural products, manufactured goods and economic services. India’s own economic liberalisation offers opportunities to the GCC economies, mainly based on

energy resources, to invest in India in the food, health and infrastructural sectors among others, in a win-win situation. However, the efforts to conclude a Free Trade Agreement have stalled for various reasons, including resistance by domestic economic agents that are likely to be adversely affected by open competition, the global financial crisis and regional political disturbances.

The oil boom of the 1970s in the Gulf combined with their small manpower resources had encouraged Indian migrants to work on a multitude of developmental projects in individual GCC states. At present, there are over six million Indians working in the Gulf who remit around US \$ 30 billion annually. The significance of this already- impressive figure is that it constitutes one-third of the total annual foreign remittance received by India and accounts for about 3–4 per cent of the GDP. Besides the issue of local political disturbance under the influence of Arab Spring, sectarian conflicts and other security concerns, a major challenge to consolidation and continued expansion of Indian manpower presence in the region, lies in the indigenisation efforts by all the GCC countries as evidenced by Bahrain's recent political problems and Saudi Arabia's "Nitaqat" programmes. Thus, it is recommended that India needs to look at various initiatives for the migrants not only at bilateral level but also at the multilateral level, like the Colombo Process under the auspices of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The concluding section looks at three different, but possible scenarios for the Gulf of 2030. The first one extrapolates the current trends with its usual uncertainties with India being unable to go beyond a sub-optimal role. The second one is based on a major breakthrough in the GCC-Iran relations with regard to the nuclear issue. In this scenario, the region has moved towards the Turkish model of a moderate Islamic society. India's role remains confined to "nudging" the GCC states along the democratisation process and, for reasons not explained, India's closer security ties with the region in this scenario is based on a presumed rapprochement with Pakistan, which is a major breakthrough in itself, as far as India is concerned. The third scenario envisages a nuclear Iran with obvious serious political, economic and social consequences. It includes the regional nuclear arms race; sectarian conflicts; full scale sanctions against Iran including complete prohibition of oil trade; the Iranian threat of blocking Straits of Hormuz; economic downturn and capital flight from the region; attacks on migrant labour, etc. Based on these three scenarios, certain recommendations have been made. While these seem reasonable enough, none of them appears to be of the "out-of-the-box" variety.

In conclusion, one would like to acknowledge that the facts, figures and the analyses provided are quite insightful and cover considerable ground for a slim volume of 177 pages only. Overall, the book is certainly a welcome addition to the considerable literature on a subject of great importance to India's development and diplomacy.

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