

Parameters Of Asian Security

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INDIA'S APPROACH TO ASIA: STRATEGY, GEOPOLITICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

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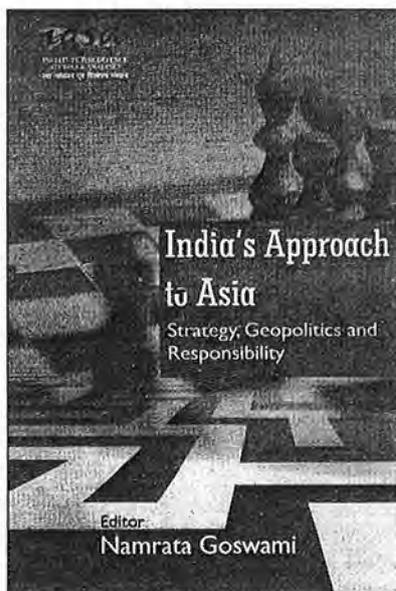
India's Approach to Asia: Strategy, Geopolitics and Responsibility

is a collection of thirty erudite papers by eminent scholars from across the globe. It also includes a special address by Barry Buzan, one of the doyens in the field of international security, and an introductory paper by the editor that lucidly connects the dots to the central theme. This book is a product of a seminar on Asian Security held in early 2015 at Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi. The

seminar, according to the coordinator and editor of the book, aimed at answering a few key questions related to India and Asia. Those questions included examining the role that India can play in shaping the structural and normative parameters for Asian security, India's strategic preferences and choices for Asia's security future, perspectives of the United States and the major powers of Asia on India's role in Asian Security, examining if India has transcended its regional role as a South Asian power to the broader regional context of Asia, and crystal gazing some key scenarios that India will have to respond to in the next decade.

The resultant thirty papers were presented across ten thematic sessions in the seminar, and are arranged in similar sections in the book. The editor's curtain raiser is a good primer on Indian approach to strategy and sets the template for the book and builds the ground for the seminar. The introduction also aggregates some key ideas from each contributing scholar. In crafting that introduction the editor uses one significant essay and two media articles as a reference line to weave that backdrop on India's strategic culture. The essay is from George Tanham's *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay* published by RAND in 1992. The two lesser known, yet significant, media articles from the *Economist* published in 2013 are 'India as a Great Power: Know Your Own Strength' and 'Can India become a Great Power?'. All of them essentially examined India's strategic culture, a significant precursor to drawing the contours of its approach.

The book begins with the special address by Barry Buzan. In his discourse about 'Rising Powers and the International System', he draws up a broad, global perspective of security trends, and informs the reader of an emerging world order, where power will be more diffused than what it is now. This, he foresees, will make regional structures more important. Defining the contours of Regional Security Complexes has been one of Buzan's key contributions to the



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domain of International Security. Buzan argues that the absence of any alternate ideology has made the concert of capitalist states the order of the day. One of the key issues he raises is that the present single hegemon, the USA, is on the decline, and there is a high likelihood that the global systems will be *under managed*. According to him, the emerging powers China and India do not appear to be keen to police the globe. Buzan's estimate of rising powers raises some questions that scholars and statesmen need to ponder. With two Asian Powers rising, will the world be managed differently? Is there such a thing as an Asian type of management? What lessons can be learned from the management so far? After all, China and India were the major powers of the pre-imperialist age.

The book then takes the reader through sub sections that discuss the Asian Regional Order, India's Strategic Partnerships, Asian Economies and Resource Competition, The Rise of China, Maritime Security, Cyber, Space, Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Security, Strategic Regions of Asia and Future Trends and Scenarios. Among the papers in the book, one that caught my attention was by D.S. Rajan, an eminent China Scholar who contributed a paper titled 'China and its Territorial Disputes: An Increasing Security Dilemma'. In this paper, he discusses a mixed bag of border issues related to China including that with India, Bhutan, North Korea and its Maritime disputes. He warns of a security dilemma in Asia wherein motivations for collective security against a rising China is balanced out by worries about Chinese reactions and a likely arms race in Asia. He also states that Chinese assertive behaviour will continue fuelling this dilemma, despite the talk of a peaceful rise.

Overall this book is the result of well-planned and well timed seminar with scholarly papers. Its relevance stemmed from the fact that a new government was settling down in India and new ideas were being churned. One may have liked to see the immediate neighbourhood, energy and climate change as sub-themes especially in the hindsight of the crisis that occurred in the Maldives and more importantly in Nepal. The compilation however, is a highly recommended read for the strategic community.

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The Alchemy of Empire: Abject Materials And the Technologies Of Colonialism by Rajani Sudan unravels the non-European origins of Enlightenment science. By focussing on the mundane materials of empire-building, this study demonstrates that the East India Company deployed the field of alchemy to make sense of the new worlds they confronted.

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