

Tilman Pradt, *China's New Foreign Policy: Military Modernisation, Multilateralism and the 'China Threat'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 208.

Today China has emerged as an important global player and a discourse on its foreign policy has become a significant topic in International Relations. The book under review is an important contribution by Tilman Pradt based on his doctoral research study which is a qualitative analysis of China's current foreign policy in the context of its military advancements and role of its multilateral approaches in transforming its image from 'a country posing threat to its neighbours' to 'a country offering cooperative partnerships to its neighbours' (p.2). The author discusses the strategies China used to manage its image problem in the early 1990s. Two incidents - the Tiananmen Square events of 1989 and the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995–96 resulted in the Republic's isolation in the international system. It was also projected as a country posing a threat to its Asian neighbours such as Japan and some members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These perceptions were amplified due to China's pursuit of modernising its Armed Forces.

While discussing military advancement, the author argues that this was not the only factor that contributed towards China's threat perceptions, other factors such as its behaviour in international disputes and the military strategy of its Army also mattered. He states that 'the perception of a state as either friend or foe and the resulting expectations about its future behaviour (and intentions) are more important for a threat assessment than mere hard military capability facts' (p.45). Pradt objectively looks at China's threatening moves towards Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and in some respects, Indonesia, in disputes between 1990 and 2015 and analyses how its behaviour contributed towards building its image as an aggressive country. Chinese actions in the South China Sea such as 'occupation of Mischief Reef', construction of several outposts in the Spratly Islands archipelago raised concerns in Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei which are important claimants to these Islands. The supporters of the 'China threat' theory viewed its aggressive policy towards Taiwan as a confirmation of their point of view. Further, China's military exercises with Russia, Pakistan and Iran (amongst others), and test firing the direct ascent Anti-Satellite

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(ASAT) missile on January 11, 2007 caused apprehensions in the United States (p.63):

China's military strategy underwent a decisive change under Chairman Deng Xiaoping, who abandoned the old paradigm of People's War – *rénmín zhànzhng*) in favour of a more mechanised strategy (p.69).

The new strategy focused on ensuring national unity and sovereignty by adequately addressing multiple challenges the country was facing. The first pillar of this strategy was how to deal with separatism in the Xinjiang autonomous region and in Tibet, including the unresolved problem of the status of Taiwan. The second pillar was to maintain peace and stability to ensure sustainable socioeconomic development of China. The third pillar worked to ensure territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, especially in border disputes with Japan, India, and the issues in South China Sea.

China's image improved when it joined the US-led War on Terror in the aftermath of 9/11. The author argues that improved relations with the US and its Asian neighbours provided a conducive environment for the Republic's economic development (p.98). This economic strength enhanced national aspirations to exhibit some power, especially military power in the form of military exercises and parades. But this continued to worry the US which increased its maritime presence in the Asia-Pacific region (p. 104).

Discussing China's relationship with ASEAN, the author looks at its participation in arms control regimes and international financial systems. He argues that although all the parties, including ASEAN claimants to SCS islands are part of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, most are also acting unilaterally to consolidate their territorial claims. Pradt highlights the importance of SCS in the context of sea lanes, islands and raw material reserves, especially oil and natural gas. He stresses that the settlement of territorial disputes would be beneficial to all the concerned claimants, and notes that China's new foreign policy will determine whether it will use its military power or find a political settlement of these disputes.

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In subsequent chapters, he shares the proceedings of an Indonesian Workshop series entitled ‘Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea’ which emphasised that any progress in multilateral cooperation would be important for regional peace and improvement of China–ASEAN relations. Although China’s foreign policy continues to see a major shift in its economic relations with ASEAN countries, its foreign policy on political and security issues has not shown any change since the early 1990s. In conclusion, the author notes that China’s foreign policy is guided by its geopolitical goals that are mostly fulfilled through economic and business initiatives. The main argument of the book is that China’s new foreign policy, in order to meet its regional and geopolitical interests, adopted different approaches based on economic development, enhancing its military power, building multilateral cooperation and managing its image issue. In this respect, its foreign policy during the Jiang Zemin and the Hu Jintao administration was less assertive and more cooperative, but the current administration under Xi Jinping appears to be more assertive and less concerned about the image issue.

The book provides insight on PLA’s modernisation efforts since the early 1990s till 2010 and its impact on regional security. Furthermore, it presents interesting analysis of how China was able to effectively complete the difficult task of fixing its image problem while concurrently fulfilling its military modernisation vision. It helps in understanding China’s new initiatives such as the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the mega Belt and Road Initiative which are economic tools to achieve its geopolitical goals.

Reviewed by Muhammad Munir, Research Fellow, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Pakistan.

Michael Eric Dyson, *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 236.

The book being reviewed is authored by Michael Eric Dyson, who himself is a black American. He is a *New York Times* op-ed contributor, professor at Georgetown University, MSNBC political analyst, contributing editor for the *New Republic*, and the best-selling author of seventeen books, including *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*, which won the American Book Award. The author interviewed former President Barack Obama while he was writing the book under review.

The United States (US) made history when the first ever ‘black American’, with a supposedly Muslim background, bearing an African tag, became President of the sole super power the world has ever seen in terms of military, technology, and economics. He entered the White House at a momentous time, keeping in view the aggression and discrimination the blacks had been facing (and continue to face) in the US. The country witnessed a strong movement after the Civil War when Martin Luther King Jr. started the Civil Rights Movement for equality of black people, which led to his assassination. Having this background in mind, Dyson plunges into the significance of Barack Obama’s notable administration and its impacts on the changing dynamics of ‘race’ in America. He elucidates how ‘race’ molded Obama’s character, profession, and administration.

Dyson, in the beginning of the book, reveals that Obama’s presidency revolved around a complex paradox:

[H]e is at once a representative of the country, a representative of the change the country has endured, and a representative of the people [black Americans] to whom change has been long denied and for whom that change has meant the most (p. 2).

The author defends the term ‘black presidency’ by arguing that he does not intend to limit it, he rather implies that for the first time in the history of the US, a black American had been honoured and entrusted with presidency by the people. In the introduction, Dyson writes:

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Of course critics may read 'black presidency' as a term that denies Obama the agency and individuality that mark genuine social and moral achievement. To say 'black presidency' is already to have reduced Obama's presidency to something less than any other presidency. But the term also imbues the presidency for the first time with the true promise of democracy on which this country was founded (p. 3).

Dyson does not hesitate to assert that the image of the US which was tarnished during the two terms of George W. Bush was restored by Obama. This is relatively true as Obama won the first election under the famous slogan of 'change' referring to 'change' in the policies and perception of people around the world about America (p. 91). In his April 2009 speech in Strasbourg (France), Obama criticised US hostility on foreign soils. He went on to say that the people in America tend to forget the role of Europe in world affairs as they had become preoccupied with the impression of US 'exceptionalism.' This becomes evident when one leafs through the history of US foreign and defence policies during President Obama's tenure during which he more often talked about taking allies along in world affairs. On numerous occasions, he even said that America alone cannot solve world problems, ranging from Syria to Ukraine and from poverty to climate change in an ever complex world.

President Obama was famous for his speeches, eloquence, and metaphors, but interestingly, Dyson seeks to expose the narrowness of his speeches and their impact on African-Americans in the country. The author criticises Obama when he coaxes them to follow the law of the country, which according to Dyson is the same as following the *status quo* as far as politics of race are concerned (p. 36), because he wanted to keep the 'white vote' intact, even after winning the elections (p. 37). The author goes on to claim that Obama did not seem to care about losing his 'black' support. However, the author is unjustified when he criticises the Obama Health Care Plan and other initiatives, which according to him are not specifically for the poor blacks, rather:

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...in helping everybody he helps black folk; it is that in helping black folk he helps America. Tackling race and solving the problems of the black and the poor make America a stronger nation (p. 103).

Dyson also argues that Obama boycotted the 2009 United Nations World Conference against Racism (WCAR) due to increased pressure from the Jewish lobby in the country (p. 103).

The major weakness of the book stems from the very term 'black presidency' as it gives a negative connotation. This weakness further gets entrenched when one looks at the author's own background, and one can feel his bias about the political culture of his country which is dominated by white Americans. Another weakness of the book is that the author has devoted most of his writing on President Obama's speeches about race politics in the country, which are in contradiction with his actions for black American communities during his two terms. No matter how much Obama disappointed black Americans, the fact remains that he symbolised his community and it was again the United States as a country of diversity, which paved the way for a black man to become the President and represent his countrymen. At the same time, this could be strength of the book as it is written by an African-American who has greater personal insights about race politics of the US. In addition, the author sets out to explain Obama's political journey keeping in view the tumultuous history of the blacks and a complicated present where incidents of police brutality against African Americans not only continue but are increasing manifold.

The book is recommended for those who are interested in US history, internal politics, and American society, for it sheds light on Obama's life and career in a society and administration that is predominantly 'white' in character.

Reviewed by Khalid Chandio, Research Fellow, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Pakistan.

Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, February 2016), 240.

Jakub J. Grygiel, Associate Professor at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and A. Wess Mitchell, President of the Center for European Policy Analysis in the book *The Unquiet Frontier* give a persuasive case study of United States (US) alliances with the frontier states and their role in preserving the global security architecture. The authors believe that the international system build by the US although in place, is very fragile (p.13). They argue that other state allies have emerged as the ‘glue’ of US-led global order by containing the Soviet Union during and in the post-Cold War period by sustaining the stability and prosperity created after an allied victory (p.4).

According to the authors, Washington, throughout its history relied on temporary arrangements and avoided permanent alliances but since the end of Cold War, America has maintained alliances with states situated near strategic crossroads, choke points and arteries of the world such as South Korea, Thailand, Singapore in East Asia; Israel and moderate Arab states like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in the Middle East; and Hungary, Romania, Poland in Central Europe (p.1). Most American allies are geographically located close to its international competitors like China, Iran and Russia. These allies, being militarily weak look toward the US as their ultimate security provider and guarantor of their national independence in their respective regions (pp. 2-3). The authors elaborate that these alliances have been costly for America both strategically and financially (p.4). The US has provided wide array of support to these allies in the form of formal or informal security guarantees, a nuclear umbrella, economic, political and military aid, and even diplomatic support. In fact, according to the authors, the US has paid a kind of ‘premium sponsorship’ supporting them in their regional disputes (p.4).

Viewing the relative costs and benefits of the US ally network, the authors explain that the ‘maintenance’ of US allies has changed due to adjustments in the global geopolitics and resurgence of revisionist states (p.6). Grygiel and Mitchell point to the US economic landscape and

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budget constraints and most importantly, the ‘deprioritisation’ of Washington’s long-standing relations with traditional allies in pursuit of grand bargains with large power rivals (p.6). They also discuss the general perception among allies about the American ‘decline’ and changes in its capabilities as a key driver of retrenchment from frontier regions like Central Europe, littoral East Asia and the Persian Gulf (p.8). The geographical distance i.e. geopolitical insularity of America also provide it with ‘free security’ and prevents involvement in other regions (p.18). Technological superiority in terms of naval and nuclear forces along with ideological conviction i.e. minimal involvement outside its hemisphere and decrease in military presence and overseas commitments under Obama Administration’s desire to focus attention and resources on domestic policies have eventually led to ‘deprioritisation’ of allies (p.20-28).

Grygiel and Mitchell also examine the probing behaviour of revisionist states Russia, Iran and China under the hypothesis that the US is retreating (p.44). Defining probing as the ‘low-intensity and low-risk test aimed at gauging the opposing state’s power and will to maintain the security and influence over the region’ (p.43), they argue that rising powers have employed probing techniques in the global periphery to test America’s resolve in the Twenty-First Century because probing curtails the risk of war, avoids direct confrontation and is an easy way to show off freshly acquired capabilities and aspirations (pp.46-47). According to them, the American system of extended deterrence is working but it is very weak (pp.78-79), therefore, its allies have been compelled to search for coping mechanisms such as military self-help, regional caucusing and pursuing strategies aimed at mollifying or accommodating nearby threatening states (pp. 80-110). In all three regions i.e. East Asia, Middle East and Central Europe, American allies have altered their diplomatic postures and national strategic outlook in response to the changing security environment (p.80). However, Grygiel and Mitchell claim that the allied coping responses need to be channeled and the only way is through US security presence (p.116).

Discussing the benefits of alliances for the US, the authors see them as tools of geopolitical management that enhance the country’s ability to compete against rival states by deterring war, checking the growth of large power rivals, and attracting small powers to the side of the global *status*

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quo (pp.118-120). Authors describe alliances as *War-prevention Mechanisms* (p.121), *Containment Tools* (p.125), *Balancing Tools* (p.130) and as a *Status Quo Preservers* (p.135). While highlighting their military benefits, they characterise them as *Capability Aggregators* (p.137) and as *Power projection Tools* (p.144). According to both scholars, the value of alliances for the US will increase in the years ahead (p.154), rather than becoming a hindrance since they are seen as a strategic necessity and crucial for extending US primacy in the competitive global environment (p.118). They refer to the work of strategists such as Sir Harold Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, and Walter Lippmann that the US, being a maritime power, can use as forward deployed alliances in the rimlands of Eurasia, and illustrate that offshore balancing is likely to become more tempting for the US to alleviate the pressures of geopolitical competition abroad and financial retrenchment at home (p.159). They stress the need to strengthen America's two main pillars of extended deterrence - political will and military effectiveness (p.165). The book ends on the notion that alliances are imperative for the US and it should fight to maintain them (p.190).

The Unquiet Frontier is a well-articulated and thoughtful study about significance of US allies and their link with its foreign policy. Grygiel and Mitchell provide a thorough explication of the general benefits of alliances by using geography, history, and classical geopolitical analyses to explain why the United States must not retreat from global leadership. The book is an important contribution to the literature on US behaviour with respect to its allies in the changing security and strategic international environment.

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Lars-Christian U. Talseth, *The Politics of Power: EU-Russia Energy Relations in the 21st Century* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 329.

The Politics of Power: EU-Russia Energy Relations in the 21st Century explores how the Energy Dialogue (ED) between European Union (EU) and Russia failed because of political mistrust. Commencing in 2000, the basis of the dialogue was to establish a legally binding energy partnership under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (p. 1). It was a time when the energy crisis was critical and the EU was in dire need of an energy supplier, with Russia being the primary option. So, 'how and why did the EU–Russia ED fail to define and create a legally binding energy partnership?' To answer this, the author tries to look at their wider relationship with relevant but non-participating stakeholders and events. The author maintains that the political dynamics of European leadership and interests underpin the supposedly strategic partnership. He builds five propositions suggesting that:

The Energy Dialogue's failure was a result of (1) ideas and conflicting worldviews, (2) conflicting political interests, (3) diverging business and economic interests, (4) geoeconomic interests, imperatives or events, or (5) conflicting legal institutional frameworks (p. 8).

Furthermore, the author tries to answer three pertinent questions regarding the Dialogue:

Was the Energy Dialogue's failure to define and create a legally binding energy partnership due to its interlocutors' inability to find a mutually acceptable way to put this partnership into words? Second, why were there initial differences between Russia and the EU? Third, what does make Russia and EU incompatible? (p. 12).

By analysing the answers to these three questions, the author reaches the conclusion that for any partnership of dialogue, common understanding between the parties is a must.

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While discussing its various contours the author refers to Mikhail Bakhtin theory 'Dialogic' (p. 172) which is a combination of dialogue and logic, and represents the current dialogue process happening between Russia and the countries around it. The countries interpret the dialogues by means of language or jargons they use and it makes this relationship dialogical. He believes that the configuration of relations leads to the configuration of narratives wherein historical underpinnings build contemporary discourse. To elaborate the idea, the author presents six narrative clusters in the first chapter - the European, the EU15, Russia's Euro-Asian, the Statist, the Dual State and the Post-Imperial narrative (p. 34), and concludes that national interests and strategic environment affect narratives. The chapter *The Political Dialogue* explores the setbacks to the dialogues in their infancy. Examining the initial five years, he senses vigour in the initiative of Romano Prodi (p. 215) - President of the European Commission, and Vladimir Putin - then Russian Prime Minister. However, by 2005, the Dialogue faded, and started to divulge political discontent due to Russian attempts to shape a united narrative. By 2003-04, the author claims that Kremlin was growing increasingly annoyed with the process. The EU was desperate because the EC was not allowed significant participation in the Dialogue and Russia was worried because of the increasing decision-making power of its private sector. As a result, these representation problems continued to disrupt it.

The author explains how inability to develop a common understanding affected the Dialogue process between the EU and Russia. Throughout the dialogue process, the parties could not let go off their authoritative or persuasive tendencies, and thus, remained unable to establish a joint way forward. Moreover, both failed to effectively converge their geopolitical interest with geoeconomics - critical for its success.

Talseth also notes that the Dialogue was a failure because of its interlocutors unable to establish a common narrative for cooperation, and regional political events. For example, Russia's application of market prices to gas exports to Ukraine in 2006 and the Russo-Georgian conflict in 2008 threatened the energy security of Europe. 80 per cent decrease of Russian national gas supplier Gazprom's exports to Europe because of pricing disagreement with Ukraine turned cooperative relations into

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confrontation. In 2014, the process was ultimately suspended because of Russian annexation of Crimea, and subsequent war in eastern Ukraine.

The author has traced a brief history of power politics between EU and Russia giving balanced analysis. What Russia had originally wanted was an investment guarantee as well as technological cooperation. To this end, the Russian government put forward scores of initiatives but all in vain - convergence of geopolitics with geoeconomics did not see light of day.

The book is a treat to read as it is one of its own kind on European Union and Russian energy politics. While both sides lacked the flexibility to operationalise the Energy Dialogue, the fact remains that both need one another to meet their energy needs; and, for that purpose, a revived endeavour to build common narrative on Energy is required. It can be concluded that international politics is similar to the politics of power; and, energy resources are the ultimate power in contemporary times, making Energy Politics the order of the day.

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Markus Daechsel, *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 313.

The book titled *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* is written by Markus Daechsel, a famous historian and economist, who has authored many books on development. He is currently a senior lecturer of Modern Islamic History at the Royal Holloway University of London in the United Kingdom.

The book looks at how the capital of Pakistan Islamabad was developed during the 1950s and 1960s through the lens of post-colonial development, Islam and development in general in the country. According to the author, the present-day world is highly complex where hard power has been replaced by soft power and neo-imperialism has replaced colonialism. He believes that states should be free and sovereign to carry out development programmes, which for Pakistan has not been the case.

The book starts with a brief introduction, focusing on the main architect of international development in Pakistan - Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis – a Greek architect who is now famous for being the lead planner behind Islamabad’s urban development. He was hired in the 1950s for preparing a blueprint of urban development in the country. Given his Greek heritage, Doxiadis had no interest or sufficient knowledge about Pakistan nor of its politics. Hence, as an international entrepreneur and town planner, he was not answerable to any local political authority (p. 14). This very characteristic differentiated him from other local architects and politicians. Even though Doxiadis died in 1975, his personal diaries and writings chronicle his work well and have been used by Daechsel as primary sources for the book.

The first section of the book revolves around Doxiadis and his working style, i.e. how he came to Pakistan, interacted with people and conducted his surveys. He was the first renowned architect to visit Pakistan at that time. After World War II, he had seen and participated in the development of Greece. In addition, he carried out architectural projects and town planning ventures in several countries including Iran, Libya, Sudan, and Ethiopia. He coined the term *Ekistics* in 1942, which formed the basis of his 1968 book and is now also an academic periodical

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published from Greece. Doxiadis believed that human settlements are like living organisms which can evolve and this process of evolution can be guided using Ekistic knowledge – that is understanding the interaction between and within human groups - infrastructure, agriculture, shelter, jobs - and the environment and how it affects personal and collective well-being (p. 37).

According to the author, there is a huge difference between the developed and underdeveloped world and when international experts began to analyse Pakistan's future as a young state, it was considered an underdeveloped country (p. 53). To remove this tag, Liaquat Ali Khan who was the first Prime Minister of Pakistan (15 August 1947 – 16 October 1951) visited the United States and brought aid and investment to the country (p. 58). With this investment rose the need for a developer/consultant/ architect to carry out development ventures. The US Government's Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) hired Doxiadis for this purpose. Doxiadis did his homework before coming to Pakistan (p. 68). He visited Pakistan a number of times, and travelled by train and road for conducting interviews of locals, and also conducted air surveillance of the land. He fought for authority as a consultant so that he was sovereign in his decisions for proper execution of his development plans (p. 98).

The second section of the book discusses his efforts and the problems he encountered while working in Pakistan, including the political issues that obstructed his work. He was hired as Chief Advisor of Housing and Settlements and wrote a 356-page document titled 'Pakistan Ekistics – Problem, Policies and Program' (p. 113). He also presented a Five-Year Plan called the 'Great Plan' which failed because of both bureaucratic hurdles and the incompatibility of the concept of 'Ekistics' given Pakistan's ground realities (p. 118). Doxiadis also proposed the idea of a new separate capital. General Ayub Khan had also presented a similar idea for a separate capital in the North of Pakistan because the military headquarters were in Rawalpindi. After taking over power in 1958, Ayub decided to pursue Doxiadis' idea to develop a new capital for Pakistan. Karachi was the first option, thus, a project was presented, i.e. 'Greater Karachi Scheme', which was not approved (p. 128).

The third section of the book is about Islam, modernity and management of a city like Islamabad. It specifically deals with the

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external factors that affected execution of Doxiadis' development plan of Islamabad as a new capital. The Greek architect aspired to dovetail pure Islamic culture with modernity in Islamabad. In his project, he also included ideas of other architects and what locals expected in their city (p. 197). He faced circulation, labour, democracy, and time management issues from rival consultants and government officials (p. 243).

Daechsel's book portrays the economic, political and social milieu of Pakistan in the 50s and 60s. While it is an informative read, it fails to capture the nuances of Pakistan's internal discourse surrounding a nascent country's development priorities. The theoretical framework and complex economic terms used may make it a little difficult to understand for those who have not studied Economics. Its strength, on the other hand, lies in the use of primary sources like letters, official government reports and personal diaries as his foundational material. The book is useful for development authorities, aspiring architects and students of Rural Development Studies and Economics as it explains how town development should be carried out and what is meant by *real* development. It is also a first of its kind that explains how Islamabad was established and developed as a capital city and also reviews Doxiadis' other projects like the satellite towns around Karachi, the university campus in Lahore, and colleges in Sargodha and Rawalpindi (p. 289).

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