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## K. Raja Reddy (Ed.). Foreign Policy of India and Asia-Pacific. New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2012.

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The growing expansion of trade, investment, and production linkages with the transition of power from the West to the East has increased the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region, which is home to economic powerhouses like China, India, and Japan as well as emerging economies like Indonesia and Vietnam. The region has also drawn attention because of the security issues related to the South China Sea and Korean Peninsula. Many scholars agree that the actor dominating this region will dominate world politics. For this reason, multiple actors are involved in the struggle for supremacy of this region. In this existing geo-political environment, India is acutely aware of China's growing influence and the PRC's policy of excluding the US from the region. In his new edited volume, *Foreign Policy of India and Asia-Pacific*, K. Raja Reddy examines the foreign policy of India, whose mantra is peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and whose foreign policy, according to Reddy, seeks to meet the demands of an interdependent world. The essays written by the scholars analyze, from many inter-disciplinary and vantage points, the involvement of many actors in the Asia-Pacific and, their respective foreign policy agendas, along with an interpretation of those agendas and positions from an Indian perspective.

The first chapter is written by A.N. Ram, who contends that there has been a remarkable rise in trade between India and Southeast Asia. This rise has been facilitated by the introduction of India's Look East Policy (LEP)<sup>1</sup>, adopted in the early 1990s. The growing partnership among regional actors as a result of this policy changed the perception of India as an International actor and strengthened New Delhi's international strategic and economic importance. The LEP, originally envisioned as primarily an economic policy, has now acquired a strategic dimension. Reddy argues that the LEP takes India's domestic priorities and concerns into account and that these priorities form an indispensable core around which foreign policy is oriented.

Kripa Sridharan highlights the geo-political importance of Southeast Asia to the US, the European countries, and the three Asian Powers, China, India, and Japan. She points out that India has emerged as a significant new player in the struggle for supremacy in the region joining the US, Japan, and China. Of China, she asserts, "The ASEAN platform allows Beijing not only to project a credible image of itself as a responsible rising power" (p.27) but also to weaken the Japanese economy in the region. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 and the ASEAN-Plus Three (APT) in 1997 brought cooperation between Northeast India and the Southeast Asian nations. However, she says, a more meaningful regionalism would lead to greater cohesion and consolidation instead of merely expanding the regional platform for external actors.

The third chapter is by Ganganath Jha, a well-known Indian expert on Southeast Asia. Jha warns that the development of Al-Qaida in the Arab world and Jemaah Islamiyah (Ji) in Southeast Asia after the 9/11 incident have alarmed the international community. The suppressing of such terror by military means, lead by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq, is

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<sup>1</sup> India's 1991 Look East Policy was implemented in order to cultivate economic and strategic relationships with the nations of Southeast Asia in order to bolster India's standing as a regional power and a counterweight to the strategic influence of China. The LEP marked a strategic shift in India's foreign policy orientation, with the new approach including a focus on expanding regional markets, investment, and industrial development, as well as strategic and military cooperation with other nations concerned with the expansion of China's economic and strategic influence.

counter-productive, asserts Jha. Instead, he says, a more culturally embedded approach is essential in India and among the nations who are a part of the ASEAN relationship. As an example, he cites how China has used the traditional wisdom of Buddhism and Confucianism to strengthen ties with ASEAN in the post-financial crisis (1997) era, which enabled China to emerge as the largest ASEAN trading partner in 2006. Jha also argues that India-Pakistan disputes precipitated the debacle of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)<sup>2</sup>. Kashmir remained volatile, and trans-border terrorism was supported by one against the other. India is geopolitically connected with ASEAN states through land borders of 1600 kilometres with Myanmar. It has maritime borders of thousands of kilometres with ASEAN states in the Indian Ocean alongside the Bay of Bengal. Considering the commonalities among Southeast Asian nations, India and ASEAN working together can prove to be mutual beneficiaries in the realms of energy, IT, and other joint ventures, all of which will be an integral part of a common market by 2020.

Tridib Chakraborti delves into the pattern of cooperation among ASEAN member nations and describes the region as being a genuine community despite the diverse histories and, social and political backgrounds of its member nations, along with the countless instances of external and internal “interference” that are negotiated by ASEAN members. Through its existence over more than four decades, the collaboration among the ASEAN members has been maintained, and the region’s organizational cohesion has been retained because of the nature of the organization as an “articulated community.” Mala Selvaraju discusses the rise of India, which has strengthened the trade between ASEAN and India to US\$30 billion in 2006. She warns that India’s road to membership within ASEAN is not smooth, as there is a strong rivalry between the “rising tiger” (China) and the “rising elephant” (India). However, the conflicting interests of these giants will not lead to serious instability in the region.

V. Suryanarayan takes on the communal politics in the political system of Malaysia and its implications for the Malaysian Indian community. The increasing Islamization of the country and destruction of Hindu temples in the process pose serious threats to the Hindu way of life. He points out that Indians (7.1 percent) are the most disadvantaged section in the country in the socio-political sphere and predicts turbulent times in the coming years.

M. Prayaga and A. Lakshmana Chetty analyze the deadly cyclone (named “Nargis”) in 2008 in Myanmar. The military junta sought international help, which had been declined on an earlier occasion but was readily provided by global community this time. Regrettably, the issue of cyclone relief became a source of tension within the already strained relations between the Western countries and the military regime of Myanmar. Syed Ali Mujtaba highlights the tug of war between the “call of conscience” and the real politics in India-Myanmar relations. He points out that developing India’s northeast region (through the ‘Look East Policy’) and reaching out to ASEAN member nations while simultaneously

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<sup>2</sup> SAARC is a regional organization founded in 1985 and currently has 8 member countries to chalk out their differences and promote welfare of the people, to improve quality of their life and accelerate economic growth. SAARC has bolstered regional unity and cooperation in the way it was envisaged to have. In this regard, it is compared with processes such the ASEAN or the European Union (EU). However, the asymmetrical distribution of capabilities between the member states, the capital-centric approach to regional integration, and the inability of national regimes to view cross-border commonalities, as nodes of cooperation between countries rather than sensitive zones are debacles for SAARC.

implementing a strategic policy to contain Chinese influence in Myanmar are the factors compelling India to develop proactive relations with Myanmar at this time.

C. Ravindranatha Reddy analyzes the importance of Vietnam in India-Vietnam strategic partnerships. Vietnam, the geographic center of the ASEAN member nations, enjoys a unique role within the ASEAN organization, as a strong Vietnam can contribute not only to peace in the region but also to stability of Asia within the world market. For India, establishing a special relationship with Vietnam can counterbalance China's power and act as a psychological restraint. Y. Yagama Reddy elaborates the idea of regionalism, which has been emerging as a potent force in the process of globalization. He contends that a vast region like the Asia-Pacific is identified as an "entity." G.V.C. Naidu focuses on how India has become an important player in the changing strategy of American foreign policy. The US involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq may result in a new line of thinking about "arrangements" or "coalitions" instead of its "alliances." In this regard, India's strategic importance as a "friend" to the US in realizing its objectives in the Asia-Pacific is increasing remarkably.

S. Utham Kumar Jamadhagni contends that the construct of Asia-Pacific as a single region is an oversimplification of the complicated relationships that each Asia-Pacific country shares with other nations on three different continents: North America, Europe, and Asia. The multiple members of the Asia-Pacific region and their respective relationships with major powers on other continents make for a complicated web of relationships among all players. India is a recent actor in the region, and its addition to the group brings with it both further challenges and opportunities. For example, though India has recently been recognized as part of this region, its historical exclusion in security architecture is a major impediment. He argues that India's membership within APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, a free trade forum for Pacific Rim member economies that seeks to promote economic cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific region, could be the best means to enhance India's contribution to the world economy. Sudhir Singh asserts that the growing Indian profile in the international system has provided an opportunity for the US to use India as a check against China. Toward this end, the US administration has convinced Japan to have a better relationship with India in the hopes that these changing relationships will have an immediate impact on peace, security, and human security development within Asia-Pacific.

C. Sheela Reddy and N. Amareswaran highlight the growing importance of Asia-Pacific and the maintenance of peace and stability within its borders. Considering the increasing competition between India and China for strategic space in Asia and Africa, New Delhi should support any proposal that favors the US presence in the Asia-Pacific in order to avoid Chinese domination in the area. B. Srinivasulu and V. Ramesh Babu elaborate on the Four Asian Tigers, (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) policy of export-driven economic development and how their economies were taken over by India and China by a strategy involving cheap labor instead. Rajaram Panda analyzes Kevin Rudd's<sup>3</sup> unsuccessful efforts to build security architecture for the Asia-Pacific community. Rabindra

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Rudd was Australia's 26<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister, held office from 2007 to 2010, and 11 weeks in 2013. He defeated the conservative coalition headed by John Howard during the elections held in November 2007. On 24 June 2010, he became one of the few leaders to be removed by their own party (Australian Labor Party) in their first term as Prime Minister. In June 2013, Rudd swore again as prime minister after he was voted Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party. Following Labor's defeat in the September 2013 federal election, Kevin Rudd resigned from Parliament.

Sen discusses the flurry of exchanges and visits by the leaders of India and China in recent times and sees them as attempts to bring bilateral relationships between the two nations in a new direction. However, he contends that China is not happy with India's aspiration for permanent membership in the UN Security Council, and he views the Indo-US nuclear deal as undermining the non-proliferation agreement.

D. S. Rajan highlights China's attempt to establish "harmony" in the Asia-Pacific region and its proposal to set up a regional security cooperation. As a check, however, Japan and the Southeast Asian nations look to the US and India for balancing and confidence building, respectively. G. Jayachandra Reddy discusses the possible avenues of cooperation between India and Australia towards achieving energy security. India's dependence on the import of raw materials, science and technology, are the main elements in the partnership. P. Munirathnam Reddy and E. Subbaram Krishnaiah explain the contentious issues of the nation building process in Fiji among two racial groups: Indigenous Fijians and Fiji Indians. India's involvement in the navigation of this process would be of immense benefit since the Indian government has already extended its assistance in the infrastructure development and the development of rural areas in Fiji. G. Vijay Kumar Reddy and M. Prayaga present the Indian contribution to the growth and development of New Zealand and the continuing practice of native Fiji Indian cultures in New Zealand.

Unlike most edited works, this edited volume has neither an introduction nor conclusion. Some of the chapters (e.g., chapters six and eight) have not provided endnotes and it look more like journalistic pieces than academic research papers. The volume also does not highlight the future of India and Asia-Pacific in a complete manner, other than naming a few different country-specific problems. The book also does not deal with the limitations of India's Asian vision, which Stephen Cohen calls India's "Inner Ring," except for a brief description of it in chapters one and three. Finally, and the most importantly, the book is hesitant in discussing the rise of India's maritime power and its strategic vision in the Asia-Pacific to act as a capable power against an assertive China.

Despite these shortcomings, the book highlights a clear message that after nearly half a century of piloting a Non-Alignment Movement, India is moderately asserting itself on the world scene, a move that has been facilitated by the LEP, a cornerstone of India's foreign policy. The book deals with India's strategic partnerships with key regional actors, noting that its rapid growth of trade and investment links will soon place India as a major actor in shaping regional politics in the Asia-Pacific. This work will be a valuable resource for researchers dealing with foreign policy of India and Asia-Pacific.

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