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## Mingjiang Li & K. M. Kemburi (Eds.). *China's Power and Asian Security*. London: Routledge, 2015.

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**Mingjiang Li & K. M. Kemburi (Eds.). *China's Power and Asian Security*.  
London: Routledge, 2015.**

The three-decade-long 'rise' of China—in economic, political, and military terms—has had an immense impact on international relations in the shaping of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Systemically, China—while forging its own strategic space in the dynamic post-Cold War global order—has on the one hand offered massive economic opportunities to many Southeast Asian, African, and Latin America countries—which have benefitted from Chinese infrastructure investment and aid—and on the other hand has generated significant strategic challenges to other countries as China's rapid military transformation has followed its economic transformation. *China's Power and Asian Security* takes a comprehensive look at the structural opportunities and challenges that the growing Chinese power generates and the limits and constraints the very same system poses to the expansion of China's power in Asia.

The work brings in an interesting mix of thematic approaches to the table. To give material proof to China's rise, scholars first provide a detailed account of China's growing economic and political influence and military power. The work then outlines Beijing's own assessments of its power and China's historical, present, and future role in the regional security order. For balance, the work subsequently builds a comprehensive image of the regional actors' perceptions of China's growing power. The United States' strategic "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia-Pacific—intended to provide the region with reassurance of continuing, unwavering American military, diplomatic, and economic support—is given considerable space and offers an important "counter-argument" to Beijing's own perceptions of its regional role. Importantly, scholars compare Washington and Beijing's perceptions about the American "pivot" to Asia. Put together, the work's first and second parts provide exhaustive coverage of these debates and thus build on the title's strength, making an important contribution to the China power and US pivot literature, combining the often-cited material factors (economic and military power) with ideational views or perceptions about China's power and the Sino-US rivalry.

Building on existing literature, which details the partly cooperative, partly competitive Sino-US relationship dynamic in the region and the countries' respective perceptions of one another, the book adds to the literature by giving voice to the region "outside" the dichotomous great power relationship. The work introduces the perspectives of not only the Indo-Asia-Pacific's other "rising" or "returning" great powers—such as Japan and India—but also the region's aspiring middle powers, like Australia and South Korea, as well as the region's only viable multilateral institution, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). By assessing these actors' diverse perceptions of and reactions to China's rise, whether balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or refusing to choose sides between Beijing and Washington, scholars underline the structural constraints that limit China's regional power and necessarily shape the nature (more competitive or cooperative) of Beijing's future policies.

Complementing the unit-level analysis of the regional perceptions about China's power, the scholars assess China's rise in the context of different sub-regional dynamics in complex security environments in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, offering a more complete picture of the systemic impact China's economic, political, and military rise has had and would likely have in the Indo-Asia-Pacific in the future, along with an analysis of how these increasingly interconnected *units* adapt and shape their strategic spaces within the overarching context of the Sino-US strategic rivalry. The work's comprehensiveness builds on this combination, looking first at the overarching Sino-US great power relationship and how it radiates systemic pressures to the broader Indo-Asia-Pacific security order. This overarching relationship is then set into a 'hierarchical-like' regional context that covers the region's other great powers, middle powers, and small or weak powers, as well as ASEAN in their respective sub-regional geopolitical and balance of power dynamics.

The inherent quality of the work's analytical comprehensiveness also becomes the title's main weakness. The nuanced and detailed analyses of each sub-region not only build an image of international relations in the given area, wherein the growing power of China remains the context, the analyses also present a nuanced picture of that unit's overall international relations—rather than maintaining a narrow focus solely on reactions to China's rise. As such, however, the focused aim of the work, namely an analysis of China's power and the regional perceptions thereof and structural reactions thereto, loses its analytical coherence and strength. Therefore, the work's various themes lack a unifying string. Interestingly, the compilation lacks a conclusion that would offer scholars' findings from the region's diverse perceptions of and reactions to China's rise.

The diversity of perspectives in the region would be a clear conclusion that would complicate China's foreign policy and restrict China's regional assertiveness. Despite increasing economic (inter)dependencies and subsequent trade imbalances that create political power asymmetries (particularly between China and its weaker neighbors in South and Southeast Asia), any overtly aggressive move by Beijing will reinforce states' insecurities or feeling of vulnerability vis-à-vis China and turn them against Beijing, likely leading them to seek support from or facilitate a stronger relationship with American (and increasingly Japanese and Indian) powers to form a balance against China. Indeed, in Asia, security concerns continue to trump economics. *China's Power and Asian Security* is an important read for students of international relations, political economy, and security studies. Its chapters provide a comprehensive understanding of Asia's perceptions of China's growing influence in the region. Significantly, the book adds to the literature by reviewing the rise of China first through China's own eyes and second through regional perceptions of China's growing power and, ultimately, through each unit or sub-region's structural reaction to the same systemic change, which has so vividly animated the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century regional and global order.

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