
Book Reviews

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Paul, T.V., *The Warrior State: Pakistan and the Contemporary World* (Gurgaon: Random House, 2014). Pp. 257, Price ₹ 499.

Pakistan has been described by many as garrison state, praetorian state, failed state, etc. to describe the role of the army and the failure of democratic institutions to take root. Some Pakistanis attribute the role of generals in politics to inefficiency, endemic corruption and institutional failure of the civil administration which were the reasons for sending four civilian governments packing between 1988 and 1999. Some argue that Pakistan's emergence as a national security state provided a role for the army and explains its dependence on external aid to sustain economically. Its willingness to emerge as a frontline state in the anti-Soviet jihad and later in the war on terror has made many scholars to refer to Pakistan also as a rentier state. Its relationship with China and emergence of a security state revolves around the threat of India. In this book, T.V. Paul analyses unlike the states in nineteenth century Europe why Pakistan emerged as a warrior state. Author argues that while the Western European states set out for themselves twin goal of welfare and legitimacy; states like South Korea, Taiwan who also have existential threat managed to develop itself but Pakistan failed which the author attributes to geostrategic curse.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The author analyses the evolution of Pakistan as a state, its security doctrine, its constant quest for parity with India and how its turbulent history gave to the emergence of a warrior state. Pakistan's self-perception as a successor of the Moghul Empire, its self-assumed role as protector of largely Sunni Muslim interest has coloured its contest with India (pp. 25–26).

The authors have compared other Muslim countries like Turkey, Egypt and Indonesia that in the past were ruled by the army with Pakistan to explain the trajectory of its evolvement as a warrior state. On the other hand, the author explains why states like Taiwan and South Korea which faces military threat managed to achieve significant economic development. Pakistan's problem according to the author is that it could not develop indigenous sources to sustain its economy and depended on bailout packages of the IMF backed by the western fear of its collapse. The paranoia of the nuclear state hosting all kind of militant organisations going bankrupt has influenced the approach of the Western countries and Pakistan has successfully exploited these apprehensions for short-term gain.

Its turbulent history has not allowed the country to build strong democratic institutions which the author has attributed to the role of military and its spy agency, the ISI. According to the author the dysfunctional social and political institutions have provided space to the growth of violent extremist groups (p. 35). The 2013 election was first political transition from one democratic regime to another through electoral process. The author in Chapter 3 argues that increased media scrutiny of the military for their acts of omission and commission has dented the coup making capacity of the military. However,

the recent attack on Hamid Mir and subsequent clamp on Geo TV and the division within media on the issue also reflects that media scrutiny has no impact on the behaviour of the army. The ISI has been responsible for attack, intimidation, disappearance and in some cases killing of journalists.

In Chapter 4, the author discusses Pakistan as the garrison state and argues 'Pakistan's warrior state has been deeply entrenched in the political, social and economic order of the country since 1950s' (p. 70). Role of military has been decisive and democracy project has failed to take root as its external supporters have developed significant stake with the military. Army retains veto power with or without constitutional power, for example the now amended Article 58(2b). Hussain Haqqani describes this model as non-coup coup. Pakistan Army has moved from being 'ruler type' to 'arbitrator type' and many in Pakistan look at the military as a political alternative. There are several explanations for the evolution of garrison cum hybrid democracy in Pakistan ranging from being a national security state, emergence of strong military bureaucratic institutions, role of a Punjabi dominated army which brings in its historical cultural dimension to bear on its attitude, powered by military Inc. coupled with civilian weakness and a middle class that is beholden to the military as the ultimate saviour of Pakistan.

According to the author, Pakistan's geostrategic urge of achieving parity with India driven by its quest for 'territory, power, status and national identity' (p. 95) is a major reason for its emergence as a warrior state. Pakistan posits itself as a successor of Moghul Empire and felt that the Muslims lost their power to the British. It has also inherited British strategic ideas that influence its approach to Afghanistan—its other neighbour. The author in Chapter 5 explains how Pakistan's relations with the US and China have helped it to maintain 'truncated power symmetry with India' (p. 95) and how its strategic location has become a curse that has not allowed it to pursue alternative security strategies or economic prosperity.

Religion and politics has contributed to the emergence of warrior state. Islam as an identity has failed to bind disparate groups divided on ethnic and sectarian line. Author argues that economic development, equitable distribution of incomes could have served the cause of national unity better. However, leaders' choice of using Islam has backfired. This is true in the case of all the rulers of Pakistan who used religion to suit their political purpose with varying success. According to the author, Zia's Islamisation opened the flood gate of Wahhabi influence which has infiltrated madrasa education and provided scores of jihadis to be used by the ISI in its proxy war against India and Afghanistan. The country also emerged as a major hub of radical Islam and it is unlikely to be reversed anytime soon.

Pakistan's development as a warrior state has its own trajectory as the author explains in Chapter 7 where he compares it with three Muslim countries like Turkey, Egypt and Indonesia and two non-Muslim states like South Korea and Taiwan. However, it needs to be emphasised though there are some similarities between Pakistan and these countries but a major factor that defines Pakistan's ideology and identity is in relations to India. None of these five countries have deep seated ideological rivalry that is rooted in two-nation theory.

Where is the 'Warrior State' headed? According to the author it is trapped in the paradigm itself. Its war-making effort through conventional preparedness as well as using non-state actor has backfired on the country itself. Its 'fear of India' and 'fear of losing control over Afghanistan' makes its 'insecurity a reality' (p. 185). The author argues that trade and engagement with the adversary would ensure its economic security but the chance of the 'warrior state' to transform itself looks improbable.

T.V. Paul analyses and persuasive arguments make the book a compelling reading. The book adopts an interesting framework of war and development analogy that helped in the transformation of European state to examine the case of Pakistan. It also compares Pakistan with other states both Muslim and non-Muslim states with similar strategic environment to explain why Pakistan followed

a different trajectory and evolved as a warrior state. It is a must read book for those who have an interest in understanding Pakistan. While there is not much one can disagree with the author, the conceptualisation of warrior state elicits some questions: how long a warrior state can pursue its geo-strategic role with borrowed money? Can the non-state actors fulfil the warrior states geopolitical ambition? Can the warrior state bear the internal cost? What happens to the security of the warrior state when its strategic assets become its security nightmare? While Pakistan is a rentier state to the US and China, it is a warmongering state than a warrior state to India and Afghanistan which tries to provoke its neighbours by sponsoring terrorism and testing their patience.

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De, Prabir (Ed.), *ASEAN–India Deepening Economic Partnership in Mekong Region* (New Delhi: Research and Information System for Developing Countries, 2014). Pp. 309, Price: ₹ 750.

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The saga of India's interactions with the countries of the Mekong region bears testimony to a rich and shared heritage, etched indelibly in various facets of life, including popular cultures, religious practices, social customs, art and architecture and other historical facts. The atavistic impact of ancient Indian civilisation was so deeply entrenched in this region that, some historians designated the Mekong region (and other parts of Southeast Asia) as 'Farther India' or 'Greater India', suggesting that the area was situated within the sphere of Indian cultural influence. History testifies to the major upheavals in relations between India and the Mekong countries (Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar), dawning with the precolonial and colonial era and into the Cold War period, when the ties they shared were occasionally disrupted, depending on the exigencies of the times. With the ushering in of the post-Cold War period and India's announcement of the 'Look East' policy in 1991, the Mekong Region gained currency in its foreign policy realm. Furthermore, the integration of the Mekong countries within the ASEAN ambit as full members rejuvenated the ties that had been temporarily untethered and provided impetus to political, strategic and economic relations between India and the Mekong countries in the ambience of globalisation and mutual interdependence.

The Mekong region is salient within the spectrum of India's 'Look East' policy from both the economic and strategic perspectives. This significance hinges on certain closely intertwined aspects, particularly, enhanced connectivity and associated development of India's beleaguered north-eastern region; second, the Mekong region constitutes the hub of India's sub-regional initiatives of the ilk of BIMSTEC/Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and MGCI/Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative; and finally, since India can counter-weigh China's burgeoning economic and strategic profile by greater involvement in the developmental ventures in the region, either on a bilateral pedestal or through the ASEAN-engineered Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) programme. Despite its salience, it deserves recall that, India's 'Look East' policy, in its First Phase (1991–2002) primarily concentrated on greater politico-economic coordination with the economically developed, founding members of ASEAN rather than on laying accent on the economically

weak, politically vulnerable and lately incorporated ASEAN brethren—the IndoChina states (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and Myanmar. It was in the Second ‘Look East’ Phase (since 2003) that New Delhi focused on the new ASEAN members. Premised on this rationale of emerging optimism in India’s relations with the Mekong countries, the book under review is a timely, novel and commendable endeavour, dealing meticulously with the challenges and prospects of economic partnership between India and the Mekong countries (the countries discussed herein are Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos).

This volume, published under the aegis of RIS, is a compilation of 12 articles and its constellation of contributors belong to a wide spectrum ranging from the Director General and Director (National Economic Research Institute of Vientiane), Chief of Policy Trade and Trade Facilitation (UNESCAP) et al. senior academicians associated with premier universities and research institutions to research scholars from both India and its Mekong counterparts. The assimilation of these scholars under one umbrella by the editor remains quite innovative and praiseworthy. The discussion of the challenges and prospects of economic cooperation between India and the Mekong countries being the pivot, the subject matter may be broadly accommodated under three sections: first, an overall analysis of the potential and limitations of India–Mekong economic/trade cooperation in the context of regional integration (four chapters); second, the country-specific analysis of India’s economic cooperation and policy recommendations for bolstering this initiative (five chapters); and finally, sectoral studies dealing with connectivity, Information and Communication Technology/ICT and Bio-Industry, which offer immense opportunities for bilateral cooperation (three chapters). The adept sequencing and contents of the chapters have invested the book with seamlessness and lucidity respectively, thereby, making it simultaneously an informative and gratifying piece of study.

The chapters in the first section are enriched with mathematical depiction and constitute the bulwark on which the individual-level analyses in the succeeding part of the book are anchored. In this section, to begin with, Mia Mikic’s chapter on ‘Global Challenges, Regional Integration and India–Mekong Cooperation’ attempts to burst the bubble of acknowledging Preferential Trading Agreements (PTAs) as trade facilitators, contending that PTAs also act as trade diverters. On the basis of this contention, the author gives an in-depth qualitative and empirical analysis of trade relations between India and Mekong countries, besides highlighting the features of the global and regional trading regime. The second chapter, ‘Trade Relations of China and India with the Mekong Region’, by Dibyendu Maiti argues that the Mekong countries are expected to derive greater advantages from the competitiveness between the dominant regional actors, particularly India and China. While scrutinising the trade relations of China and India on a comparative matrix with the Mekong Countries, he acknowledges China’s greater degree of engagement with this region, though, not ruling out the future potential for India–Mekong trade. In her analysis on ‘Challenges and Prospects of Mekong–India Trade’, Amita Batra, while underscoring the compass for augmentation of trade ties, identifies the roadblock they need to transcend in order to realise the optimal potential, which gains significance in the Mekong countries’ quest for achieving the necessary balance in trade relations with India on the one hand, and China, on the other. The final chapter in this section, ‘Trade Costs in the India–Mekong Region: Identifying Policy Priorities for Trade Facilitation’ by Yann Duval and Chorthip Utoktham, evaluates the nature of interaction between trade costs and trade facilitation in the Indo-Mekong paradigm. While examining the direct bearing that reduced trade costs have on bolstering economic relations, the authors suggest a series of trade facilitation measures which could effectively lower the trade costs.

With respect to the country-based analysis contained in the subsequent section, Tridib Chakraborti provides the ‘Indian’ perspective and the Cambodian, Laotian, Thai and Vietnamese perceptions are presented by Sorin Sok, Leeber Leebouapao et al., Suthiphand Chirathivat et al. and Nguyen Huy

Hoang, respectively. In his incisive study, Tridib Chakraborti commends the trajectory of India's cooperation with the Mekong countries, and, while figuring out areas like trade, tourism, culture, education and connectivity, in which India could play a proactive and contributory role, recommends policies for stepping up its regional economic profile. His caveat that these measures need to be sustained if India wants to 'regain the historical space', particularly when pitted against the escalating regional penetration of China, deserves highlight in view of the Mekong region's salience in the corpus of India's 'Look East' policy and its associated developmental concerns for the Northeast. This chapter merits special mention for being the most updated one, in which, the trade figures between India and the countries under review (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) have been followed up till 2012–2013. The rest of the contributions in this section emphasise the array of challenges to and prospects of India's economic rendezvous with its Mekong brethren. The contributors ascertain factors like: the lack of sustainable sources of finance, concrete framework for implementation of projects, pertaining to hard and soft connectivity, public–private partnership, etc. as major impediments strewn in the boulevard of Indo-Mekong interactions. In the same breath, the authors identify determinants, for instance, enhanced market access, either through more vibrant transportation and communication links or Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), trade complementarity, financial integration, private sector development, committed leadership etc. for improving the visage of economic coordination both at the bilateral and multi-lateral realms.

In the final section, the chapters embark on a sector-based enquiry of India–Mekong economic cooperation. In his analysis on 'India–Mekong Connectivity: the Emerging Architecture', Prabir De underscores the importance of improved connectivity for not only facilitating trade and shoring up the region's overall economic architecture, but also for expediting the dynamics of regional integration. Given this premise, the author astutely contends that an integrated regional transport network would yield larger economic benefits to the Mekong region and cites the instances of projects like the Delhi–Hanoi Railway Link, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, etc. Simultaneously, he draws attention to the absence of appropriate policies and regulations at the governmental levels, which has a bearing on the implementation of infrastructure projects. He deems it judicious on the parts of the concerned decision makers to identify the 'missing links' and address them pragmatically, for fostering the further projected development of India–Mekong relations. In the penultimate chapter, 'Harnessing Southern Capabilities for Addressing Southern Problems', K.J. Joseph emphasises the relevance of South–South Cooperation in the context of the ICT revolution and explores the collaborative prospects, thereby, bridging the digital divide between the founding and later entrants of ASEAN. The author identifies the *ASEAN–India Vision 2020* document as the roadmap for focusing on the tools of cooperation in ICT, so as to facilitate regional integration and inclusive development of the Mekong nations. Finally, Vu Nguyen Thanh, in his chapter, 'Current Status of Vietnam's Bio-Industry and Prospects for India–Vietnam Cooperation', examines the current position and future possibilities of bilateral collaboration in biotechnology in the backdrop of the immense opportunities for growth of this industry in the Asia-Pacific region, which is projected to reach US\$ 318 billion in 2014.

Summarily then, the book discusses and envelopes various aspects of Indo-Mekong economic coordination lucidly and comprehensively. The analyses are resource-rich, supported by trade data, graphs, charts and other mathematical representations. In particular, the editor deserves deep appreciation for assembling contributors from both sides of the spectrum, thereby, adding a new dimension and novelty to this book. However, though references to Myanmar have been made in some chapters, the book could have included a separate chapter on Myanmar, since it constitutes an integral part of India's Mekong policy. Besides, a comparative analysis of the economic dynamism of India and the founding members of ASEAN vis-à-vis the Mekong countries could have been contemplated. Notwithstanding these minor

limitations, this book is a thought provoking, welcome addition to the mine of literature on India's thrust, achievements and shortcomings pertaining to the Mekong region and will be an asset for scholars, academicians, policy makers, practitioners and those generally interested in perusing the political-economic dynamics between India and its Mekong partners.

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Clinton, Hillary Rodham, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014). Pp. 635, Price not mentioned.

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This book is a memoir of Hillary Clinton as the 67th Secretary of State of the United States of America shortly after leaving the Department of State—of the extraordinary four years (from 2009 to 2013) in office and the years that followed. She has described the international diplomacy during her term. Divided into six parts, it describes on how to secure the American leadership in the twenty-first century. This book delves into three categories of challenges of the country: The problems it inherited, including two wars and a global financial crisis; the new, often unexpected events and emerging threats, from the shifting sands of the Middle East to the turbulent waters of the Pacific to the uncharted terrain of cyberspace; and the opportunities presented by globalisation that could help lay the foundation for American prosperity and leadership in the twenty-first century.

While each person faces choices in one's life that can be described as 'hard', hard choices for leaders of nations mean differences between war and peace, poverty and prosperity. Hillary Clinton has described how nations and leaders cooperate and sometimes do not, and how decisions and events at a far of land impacts the lives of common people elsewhere. The book talks about the exceptional strengths of America and what it can take to thrive compete domestically and in foreign policy. It describes the situation of the US in beginning of the twenty-first century amidst great challenges like events of 9/11, American invasion in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Great Recession and how the first Obama administration tackled these.

Barack Obama is a peripheral figure in *Hard Choices*. Meeting with him just after their campaign battle for nomination against each other was like two teenagers on an awkward first date¹ and finally agreed to help in uniting the party that led to a decisive victory and inauguration of Obama as the 44th president of the USA. She admitted that she was fortunate to have lost to a candidate who had similar views as hers and had shown that she was best suited to be the nation's chief diplomat, the president's principal foreign policy advisor and the CEO of an expansive Department of State.

Secretary Clinton's descriptions of diplomatic conversations at the highest levels, with the living former secretaries of state, offer an insight into international relations, as does her analysis of how America could make the best use of 'smart power' to deliver security and prosperity in a rapidly changing world, one in which the relative economic and military decline of America had been predicted by

analysts, due to the growing influence of China, Russia and Iran and even of non-state actors like the al-Qaeda.

Clinton chose Asia to be her first journey as secretary of state, sending a message to this largest continent that and also to the world that America was back to help shape the future of Asia, visit key allies and manage the increasingly complex relations with countries like China and counter the threats posed by the unpredictable dictatorship of North Korea. The origin of the term Indo-Pacific can be traced to this trip of Clinton when she outlined the American pivot strategy of bringing India fully into the fold of the political scene of Asia-Pacific. The reason outlined here was that having another large democracy could encourage other countries towards political and economic openness instead of following the Chinese example of autocratic state capitalism. She was sure that the US and India had entered into a mature phase of relationship, with converging economic imperatives and diplomatic priorities. However, on the issue of climate change (which represented a national security threat for the US as well as a major test for its leadership) in strong words she called on India to share the mission and responsibility of reducing carbon emissions.

In this book Hillary Clinton reminisced her passionate plea for the protection of human rights when she directed the US Embassy staff in Beijing to come to the rescue of Chen Guangcheng—a civil rights activist who had escaped from house arrest in Shandong province. This incident, she understood was a call for America to stand for freedom and take responsibility to remain *the beacon for dissidents and dreamers all over the world*² and ‘make human rights a human reality’.

Clinton remained committed that the US had a chance to constructively help Burma move from dictatorship to democracy, especially after her meeting with the icon of the Burmese pro-democracy movement and the Nobel Peace awardee Aung San Suu Kyi.

To its credit, Clinton’s memoir is serious, sober and substantive. Taking the reader along on her journey representing the US as President Obama’s top diplomat, she provides a sophisticated analysis of many of the world’s most complicated hot spots. She delves into war and peace, where she discusses the Obama administration’s ‘surge’ strategy to eliminate the safe havens of terrorism from Afghanistan and Pakistan and also provide security and services to the citizens and train the Afghan military forces. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Clinton admitted, was the linchpin of the American mission in Afghanistan. This served her a lesson to balance idealism and pragmatism as Karzai regularly frustrated his American counterparts blaming Americans more than the Taliban for the violence in his country. The drawdown of foreign troops was gradually put into effect after the successful Operation Neptune Spear that killed Osama bin Laden at his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May 2011.

Talking about the assassinated Benazir Bhutto’s autobiography, *Daughter of Destiny*, she says: ‘It tells a riveting story of how determination, hard work, and political smarts enabled her rise to power in a society where many women lived in strict isolation, called purdah’.³ Nevertheless, she offered a cold-eyed view of international affairs. US–Pakistani relationship, she writes, is based on mutual interest, not trust, despite billions of dollars the US contributed till date. Clinton remained confident of engaging directly with people of Pakistan when they blamed the US for the instability of their country. She remained committed that the areas where violent extremism and conflicts occupy the centre stage, it was imperative for America to be engaged in the hardest places with the toughest challenges around the world.

Secretary Clinton enthusiastically stated that the American alliance with Europe is worth more than gold, an alliance of values, rooted in deep commitment to liberty and democracy. The fragile European economy following the recession called in a renewed effort on the part of the Obama administration to help itself and the continent out of the crisis. Clinton was described as the right Hercules for this task

by the former British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. She acknowledged the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's determination of steering Germany in these difficult times and *carrying Europe on her shoulders*.⁴ She commended the extraordinary contribution of Europe in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which remains essential for meeting the evolving threats of the twenty-first century and her desire to expand the US–EU partnership especially in the economic and energy sector. She described vividly as to how she played an instrumental role in making Armenia sign an agreement to at least open up negotiations and formal diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was described by Clinton that hard men like him presented hard choices. His long-term czarist attitude of controlling nations on its borders, dominating them and reducing the influence of the US in Central and Eastern Europe, besides creating a powerful supra-national union capable of becoming a pole in the modern world. She found it difficult to strike a balance amidst his views of geopolitics as a zero-sum game which has one winner and the other necessarily a loser. His expansionist tendencies was hinted by the Russian occupation in Georgia and later made clear by the annexation of Crimea—both widely criticised by the international community. Reports of fraud in the 2012 parliamentary elections of Russia stirred up Russians to protest against Putin. When Clinton urged transparency and accountability, Putin lashed out at her that she had given the signal for the protests. But she rebuked him bluntly, *I can just see people in Moscow waking up and saying Hillary Clinton wants us to go demonstrate*.⁵ In strong words Clinton expresses that Russians under Putin remains frozen between the past they cannot let go of and the future they cannot bring themselves to embrace.

Clinton urges people to think of Latin America beyond being a land of coups and crime and as a region that has made remarkable economic and political progress, the destination of over 40 per cent of the US exports. She took on the responsibility of implementing president Obama's 'equal partnership' approach with the Americas. Guided by the progress and prosperity of many states in the African continent and also inspired by Nelson Mandela she directed the State Department to work towards supporting the other places where poverty, chaos and privation continued to dominate. She was committed to the cause of building a stronger Africa having a just, equal and humane society and gradually moving towards the dream of '*a world of democracy and respect for human rights, a world freed from the horrors of poverty, hunger, deprivation and ignorance*'.⁶

During her tenure, Clinton was fervently in favour of bringing Israel and Palestine on to the negotiating table, by making them understand the necessity of compromises and the need for the two to disentangle themselves from history, for long-term peace of all citizens. Across the Arab world, from Tunisia to Egypt, from Yemen to Syria, the youth were eager for better education, jobs, health care and responsible governance. Amidst such demands and support for them going viral through social media, America tried to carefully balance its democratic values and strategic interests without taking sides. The challenge Clinton faced was providing security and stability of these countries in face of old enmities across faith, ethnic, economic and geographic divides. On the crisis in Libya she did not favour unilateral American action, as she took the lesson learnt when she made the mistake of her life when she voted for the Iraq war.

Following the events of a video that was inflammatory and hurt the sentiments of Muslims across the world, and the threat by a Florida pastor to burn their holy text to mark the ninth anniversary of 9/11, the American embassy compound in Benghazi, Libya was attacked which killed four of its officers on duty. Describing this attack as a crushing blow, she confessed that one of the hardest choices the US and leaders ever have to make is to send those who serve the nation into the way of the harm. She described Iran's support for terrorism and aggression as a threat to the US and its allies, which would compromise its illustrious civilisation and impoverish the masses.

With recession looming large when she entered office, Clinton engaged in 'economic statecraft' and stood up to protectionism and mercantilism, sought to attract more foreign direct investment into USA and worked to capitalise on the energy revolution that was helping to drive its domestic recovery and shape the global strategic landscape.

Clinton's concern for the societies and people across the world is imminent when she fervently spoke for labour rights and women's rights, as women from across the spectrum of the society come to deal with outrageous sexism. She makes a fervent case for labour rights, and full participation of women, youth and LGBT people in the society. She talked of the ambitious goal of 'an AIDS-free generation'. She visited a recovery centre for survivors of human trafficking in Cambodia in 2010. She cancelled her diplomatic assignment to Asia to oversee the relief efforts when the disastrous earthquake hit Haiti. She worked closely with the USAID head Dr Rajiv Shah to launch the US Global Development Lab, which would focus on breakthrough solutions in water, health, nutrition, energy, education and climate change.

While defending American classified intelligence and admonishing stealth agents like Snowden, she focused on helping civil society across the world to harness technology and social media to hold governments accountable, document abuses and empower marginalised groups, including women and the youth, *regardless of frontiers*.⁷

Beneath its strenuously statesmanlike surface, *Hard Choices* tells us what it takes to evolve from a clever, passionately idealistic young feminist into a broad tough enough and cynical enough for the highest office. With the passion to never quit to make efforts to build a better world, she made a moving appeal to all countries that, *real democracy means every citizen has the right to live, work and worship as they choose, whether they are man or woman, Muslim or Christian, or from any other background. Real democracy means that no group or faction or leader can impose their will, their ideology, their religion, and their desires on anyone else*.⁸

Conclusions

Her transition from the First Lady, to being a Senator to taking up the responsibility of the job of Secretary of State is clearly indicative of the confident consciousness and growing perceptions that the final transition would be to being the first woman of the great country. The book claims to be about the past, but really it is about the future. This book reveals the conviction of a general citizen to becoming the President and serves as an example to young women around the world. Although she has yet to declare that she will contest, in *Hard Choices* Clinton makes clear in every calculated sentence that her interest is not in being a former anything, but a future president of the US. Her book is similar to a 600-page State of the Union address, which raises every issue that needs due mention and thus demonstrates her readiness to become the president.

Despite all troubles, she remained optimistic about America's future, in its resilience and re-invention. She believed that American leadership has been earned over centuries through generations, but agreed that, there are few problems in the world that the country can solve alone but was confident that there were fewer which could be solved without the US. By the time she exited the Department of State, she was zealous about her tenure of and summed up her experience as America's chief diplomat in the words of a former British prime minister: *diplomatic victories are made up of a series of microscopic advantages: of a judicious suggestion here, of an opportune civility there, of a wise concession at one moment here, of a far-sighted persistence at another, of sleepless tact, immovable calmness, and patience that no folly, no provocation, no blunder can shake*.⁹

This book can be regarded as an elaborate text for America's Foreign Policy of the first Obama administration as it details out the ways in which it confronted great challenges in a perilous time and is therefore intended for anyone who is inquisitive about the values for which America stands for in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. Chapter 1, 2008: Team of Rivals, p. 3.
2. Chapter 5, Beijing: The Dissident, p. 100.
3. Chapter: Pakistan: National Honor, p. 177.
4. Chapter: Europe: Ties that Bind, p. 211.
5. Chapter: Russia: Reset and Regression, p. 237.
6. Chapter: Africa: Guns or Growth, p. 298.
7. Chapter: 21st Century Statecraft: Digital Diplomacy in a Networked World, p. 557.
8. Chapter: Human Rights: Unfinished Business, p. 575.
9. Chapter: Europe Ties that Bind, p. 208.

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Ganguli, Sreemati, *Russia and the Central Asian Republics: Post-Soviet Engagements* (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt. Ltd in collaboration with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies and Ltd, 2013). Pp. 137, Price ₹ 495.

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Russian foreign policy, as it evolved in the Post-Soviet period or more precisely after the end of the Cold War, has experienced a marked shift in priorities often based on the exigencies as well as long-term needs. This has been revealed in the case of Russian policy towards Central Asia as well. As the title of the book under review suggests the post-Soviet engagements between Russia and the Central Asian republics owe much to the subtle changes in the regional geopolitics due to emergence of the five newly independent republics in the Central Asian region. However, initially, as the author who herself is an expert on Russian Studies has pointed out, there was a lack of clarity as well as direction in the Russian foreign policy due to the vacillations in Russian standpoint vis-à-vis the rise of nations in its neighbourhood. This was followed by a more positive Russian attention particularly towards the Central Asian region due to a number of events affecting the security scenario of the region which helped shape a firm policy to be pursued by Moscow. Right from the Tajik crises (1992) to the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan (1996) and the US-led War against Terror (2001) and more recent Colour Revolutions in the post-Soviet Republics of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005) played a major role in determining Russia's approach towards the Central Asian region.

What one could find in the book is that the author traces the evolution of Russian foreign policy towards Central Asia from the era of Tsarist regime where military superiority was the instrument of claiming regional superiority to the post-disintegration era where Russia's search for a global status

pushed her to claim relevance in the immediate neighbourhood, the 'Near Abroad' or the Central Asian region. For a proper understanding of the core subject the book has been divided into five chapters in addition to Introduction. While introducing the subject, the author revisits the down fall of the former USSR from a position of being a super power to its subsequent realisation of staying relevant in the world arena of power struggle. Such realisation for seeking a new identity and a place of its own in the world arena has been discussed in length in the first chapter entitled 'The Perspective: Russia's Search for a New Status'. The author finds it prudent to highlight the fact that despite the disintegration of the USSR the status of Russia continues to be of importance and relevance in the global arena mainly due to the revival and reinterpretation of old concepts and doctrines. This led to the realisation that Russia can still command considerable power and influence in the post-Soviet space. This identity crisis 'has as much been related to whether Russia is a European or Eurasian power, as to whether Russia is a regional or a global power' (p. 7). The author has focused more on the latter question by projecting this interlinked and interdependent search for status as the perspective, against which Russia's relationship with the Central Asian region has evolved and developed.

The second chapter entitled 'The Context and the Process of Russia's Engagements' deliberate upon two themes: (a) challenges faced by the Central Asian states in the post-Soviet period in order to contextualise it for Russia's involvement in the region, and (b) Russia's engagement with the Central Asian states in order to clarify the shifts and trends in Russian foreign policy orientations towards the region. In terms of challenges faced by the Central Asian states in the post-Soviet period one could find in this chapter not only the economic dimension but also the security concerns such as terrorism and illegal trafficking of arms and narcotics that led to the Russian involvement in the region. Russian involvement was also due to the growing Chinese and western involvement in this geo-politico-strategic region for increasing their sphere of being in the phased manner in accordance with the demand of the day. A major shift took place under Putin when Moscow for the first time came to see the Central Asian states as its strategic partners that could 'contribute substantially to Russia's security on its southern flank, while protecting their own' (p. 30). The period that followed has been witnessing a period of challenges for Russia to not only checkmating growing western moves in Central Asia but also engaging the region more effectively for its own benefit.

The post-Cold War perspective on Russia's search for global significance as well as the evolution of politico-strategic relations between Russia and Central Asia have been dealt with in the third chapter entitled 'Relationship in the Post-Cold War Era: Development of Bondings'. Security, energy and migration have been the three key spheres in which Russia has been successful to create and maintain interdependent relationship with the Central Asian republics (CARs). Russian relations with the CARs the post-Cold War era saw a new dimension in the field of security cooperation. The growth of terrorism, religious extremism and narcotics trafficking created a common ground for Russia and CARs to evolve a common strategic cooperation to deal with the challenges. A series of treaties/regional cooperation organisations to deal with security related issues were initiated by Russia such as, the 1992 Collective Security Treaty (CST) which was renamed as CST organisation in 2002, the 1995 Common Air Defence Treaty, and the 1996 Unified Anti-Taliban Coalition. In addition, Russia jointly initiated with China the Shanghai-5 which was renamed as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2000. Russia also joined the Kazakhstan initiated Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 1994 which held its first summit in 2002. All these pledged to avoid military action against member states and to jointly defend external aggression.

Russian awareness of energy and subsequently of the same by CARs saw growth of international partnership with major oil companies which led to development of oil exploration and transportation facilities. Russia shared a space with CARs in the field of developing energy potential of the region.

Meanwhile, bilateral energy agreements entered into by CARs with Russia signify their strive to gain self-reliance and also to break free from any extraneous influences. This is seen as a major victory for Russian policy makers as Russian prominence on Caspian Sea was also acknowledged. On the issue of bonding of migration, the author clearly highlights the fact that the economic capacity as well as the demographic need of Russia to absorb the migrant labour force from CARs and the effects of remittances of these labours on their countries has created a unique interdependency. The soft and accommodative approach of Russia saw the absorption of over 10 million people in Russia as migrants and asylum seekers during 1990–2003. The resultant growth in economy was phenomenal as during 1999–2003 the economy in Russia registered 22 per cent growth, thus pointing to a strong bond of interdependence between Russia and the CARs, which still continues.

The fourth chapter entitled 'Foreign Policy Options for the Central Asian States: Challenges for Russia' provides an account of the trajectory of the foreign policy orientations of the CARs which indicates that there are limits to Russia's advantages in this space. The author's analysis clearly shows that for the first time, the CARs have got the opportunity of choice, that is, to choose foreign policy options of their own and that is the most important trend in the post-Soviet period. The whole discussion in this chapter focuses on finding out the CARs' foreign policy implications for Russia in the light of extent and range of involvement of other powers in the region which reveals that Russia has limitations in manoeuvrability and employing strategic leverages, particularly in energy and security spheres. That puts effective constraints on Russia's geo-strategic ambitions in the Central Asian region.

The fifth and the last chapter concludes the main theme of the book by pointing out that in the post-Soviet period Russia does have the need and desire to become and stay as the single significant power in the Central Asian region. However, as it is a 'post-imperial power', rather than a 'neo-imperial power' (p. 119), the author argues that Russia employs the strategy of developing bonds of interdependency and of engagements with CARs in those areas where it still practices comparative strategic advantages. This is a much more effective strategy for Russia as it is less hegemonic in nature and has long-term implications. Such strategy has been working positively in developing a post-Soviet relationship with Central Asia in all areas of mutual concerns.

The book, therefore, is an extensive work undertaken by the author who includes minute details with lot of references and explanations to understand the entire scenario of Russia–Central Asia relations in the post-Cold War period. The book could prove to be useful for not only researchers and scholars of Russian and Central Asian Studies but also others interested in getting acquainted with the foreign policies of Russia and the Central Asian Republics in the post-Cold War geostrategic environment.

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Political transition and evolution of democracy in South Asia have been relatively gradual as compared to the West. Survival of democracy itself has confronted various challenges in the past and Nepal has

been undergoing such a critical phase for the past couple of years in the latest political context of South Asia. Nepal has been witnessing various ups and downs and political turmoil after the historic end of monarchy in 2006. However, the subsequent Maoist ascendancy in Nepal failed to meet the expectations of the people and this land-locked country has fallen into political instability and internal power struggle among the various political parties of Nepal. Thus, the contemporary history of Nepal has become an interesting area to explore the nuances of the country's transition from a monarchy to a republic even as it still struggles to realise this after half decade. The book under review is relevant and important in this context and the author with his journalistic experience has added more episodes. It gives us a glimpse into the multiple dimensions of the complex political situation of contemporary Nepal. The contemporary history of this Himalayan state starts with a struggle against the autocratic Rana regime and the subsequent consolidation of power in Nepal's politics amongst the Maoist's, Monarchy and mainstream political parties that formed a triangular structure. On other hand, externally, Nepal as a political entity is situated between two giant neighbours—India and China. Therefore, for its own survival, Nepal has been following a strategy for years that is called the policy of 'equidistance' as regards India and China, whilst simultaneously playing the 'China card' against India.

In the course of history, people of Nepal have seen various ups and down in politics which have had a serious reflection on society as well. Over the last 50 years Nepal has been a theatre of political and social transformation and its climax came in the last decade of the twentieth century, when the democratic movement was intensified and thereafter, Nepal witnessed a changing political and social space, like the emergence of Maoist movement in Nepal (1996–2006); initiation of the second democratic movement; Janjati movement; Madhesi movement; abolition of monarchy; the proclamation of a secular and republic Nepal from the erstwhile Hindu nation, etc. to name a few. Other important developments in the political landscape included the entry of Maoists into mainstream politics after the first Constituent Assembly elections (2008), initiation of the constitution-making process and peace process, democratic process and the emergence of constitutional and governance crisis. All these events are indicative of the political and social changes in contemporary Nepal. In this book, the author attempts to explore the underlying process of this transition.

In the first section of this book, 'Politics of Gradual Evolution', the author highlights the reasons, origin and development of the people's war in Nepal. It is debated that besides class, there was discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of caste, gender, region, nationality and ethnicity (p. 22). A small section of society, the Bahun and the Chhetris communities controlled the power and resources of the Tarai region, whereas the Madhesi who mainly lived in the plains, were deprived of opportunities and power. Janjati, the indigenous people of this country and their distinct identity were in a crisis due to majoritarian Hindu culture. The Dalits were subjected of untouchability for a long period of time and women suffered a lot under the patriarchal structure. Moreover, in the period following the first democratic movement (1990) Nepal witnessed a crisis of governance, widespread corruption, chronic poverty, continued exclusion of caste and ethnic communities from the governance and politics. It was against this background that the Maoist movement emerged.

In the second part, 'Politics of Partial Sovereignty', the author argues that Nepal's contemporary history cannot be written without mentioning the name of India. As we know, Nepal's relationship with India is close, complex, multifaceted and unique in character and scope. People-to-people contacts provide a foundation to these sets of relations. India shares its border with Nepal and the two countries enjoy historic and friendly relations. Geographical reality, socio-economic links and cultural interaction bring the two countries to each other. The author focuses on India's involvement in Nepal's politics and its role in the democratic transition in Nepal. Further, the author describes various nuances of India's

influence in Nepal's politics and society and its role in the shaping of contemporary Nepal. India has played a strong and decisive role in all the successful restorations of democracy in Nepal, and India continues to be a major player in assisting Nepal's democratization and determining the political path of this nation.

India played an important role in bringing the Maoists into the mainstream politics of Nepal. Consequently, a seven party alliance (SPA) was organised to jointly oppose the royal takeover. On 22 November 2005, the Maoists joined the parties against the king and signed a 12-point understanding. In this process India played a crucial role. Not only did the agreement put forward a vision for reinstating parliamentary democracy and abolishing the constitutional monarchy from Nepal, but it also succeeded in making the Maoists agree in favour of democratic principles in the governance of the country. However, there were various stakeholders in the shaping of India's policy towards Nepal. For example, political parties (CPI (M), CPI, BJP, JDU and NCP), Hindu religious groups (RSS, VHP), the Army, the business community, and bordering states (UP, Bihar, etc.). Thus, the domestic politics of both countries has impacted India–Nepal relations in which the political parties and leadership of India have played an important role.

In the third part, 'Politics of Inclusive Nationalism', the author discusses the causes and genesis of the Madhesi movement in Nepal. After 10 years of the people's war and following the second *Jan Andolan* which started in 2006, the 240 years-old institution of monarchy was abolished but domination of the latter in the political and economic structure is still prevalent since that period. The Tarai people are historically marginalized in Nepal's society. It was a battle for inclusive participation of all social groups in politics. The Bahun (12.74 per cent of Nepal's population), the Chettaris (15.8 per cent), Thakuri (1.47 per cent), Sanyasi (0.88 per cent) castes are the politically, culturally and resource dominant groups.

The social structure of Nepal is multiethnic, multilingual, and multireligious. If one looks at the history of Nepal, power had been hegemonised by the hilly people, whereas the Tarai people (also known as Madhesi) were not only exploited but also had not been recognised as Nepal's citizens. Because the ruling elite of Nepal assumed that the Madhesi are of Indian origin and that they have extra-territorial loyalty towards India; therefore, they were discriminated against and excluded from the power structure and public resource of Nepal. In 2007, the Madhesi movement had consolidated vehemently under Upendra Yadav. Before the emergence of this movement, Madhesi concerns were represented largely by the mainstream political party of Nepal, primarily Nepali Congress (NC), CPN (UML). But they had not been able to fulfil their aspirations. After the second democratic upsurge the excluded and disadvantaged Madhesi section started agitating for their own rights and demands. One important principle of the Madhesi movement was inclusiveness and decentralization of power. Later, these principles drove the federalism debate in the politics of the country.

In the last section of this book title 'Politics of Shanti Sambidhan', the author maintains that Nepal's present democratic transition started with the Jan Andolan-I (1990) and it is still ongoing. Since then, not a single political party could give a stable government to country. This has led to constitutional and governance crisis. In 2006, the second democratic movement was started by both Maoist and mainstream political party against monarchy. Finally, the monarchy was abolished and Nepal became a republic and a secular country. In 2008, the first historic Constituent Assembly election were held and the Maoists emerged as the majority party in this elections. The Constituent Assembly (CA) got a mandate of two years to draft a new constitution, but the Constituent Assembly extended its tenure four times and was dissolved in May 2012. Now without any concrete result, the constitution and peace process has been derailed and constitution has yet to be written. Two main issue of disagreement have been the nature

of a federal structure (ethnicity-based or geographical) and the type of government (presidential or Westminster). An explicit polarisation has emerged in Nepal between the supporters of identity-based federalism and its opponents. The demand of federalism in Nepal has been spontaneous, given its multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural society. After a prolonged struggle, the monarchy was abolished and Nepal proclaimed itself as a secular republic from a Hindu nation. In spite of this, federal constitution could not be delivered after the five years of the first Constituent Assembly elections. This political backdrop of Nepal has given birth to dissent in every political party and among the political leaders. The Janjati people are in unrest, the Madhesi are in dissension, and everyone -from a person on the street to a well-heeled person -is in a state of discord. But the author argues that in this situation of turmoil, everyone is optimistic about the democratic future of Nepal. However, this passionate view cannot ensure people's power in Nepal, as politics is always unpredictable as well as uncertain. This book is a wonderful addition to the contemporary literature on Nepal politics and its confrontation with democracy and aspiration for republican form of government. However, in many areas the author has failed to support his points with adequate references. Though, the work is intended for general readers, it is also useful for scholars and policymakers who are interested in the current political developments in Nepal. The thematic design and laborious collection of facts in the book are commendable, and in conclusion, this book is worthy for readers.

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