

BOOK REVIEW

S. Jaishankar, *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*, (New Delhi, Harper Collins India, 2020), Pages: 240 (HB), Price: Rs. 296.54 (K), Rs. 558.00 (HB).

The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World provides an analysis of Indian approaches dealing with the turbulence caused by the rapid shifting of the global balance of power. The Corona Virus pandemic has further heightened the uncertainty, and made the world even more volatile. How is India coping with the task of designing a foreign policy for uncertain times? The book offers useful insights.

Set against the backdrop of India's rise, the author points to emerging dimensions in India's foreign policy. The crucial point he makes is that, in an uncertain world, India must develop its own narrative, strategies, approaches, and solutions to the problems rather than react to someone else's compulsions, and live on borrowed wisdom.

The book has emerged from the authors' various lectures and talks given at different fora following his retirement as India's Foreign Secretary in 2018 after a 41-year long rich diplomatic career, and before he became the External Affairs Minister in May 2019 in Prime Minister Modi's cabinet. During his long diplomatic career, S. Jaishankar served as India's Ambassador to several countries, including the USA, China, and Singapore.

Being a Minister, the author would understandably be balanced and careful in his expression lest it impacts India's relations with other countries. However, that has not prevented him from stating what was wrong and what was right and India's 70-year long foreign policy journey. He divides this evolution into six phases: namely, 1947–1962 (optimistic nonalignment); 1962–1971 (realism and recovery); 1971–1991 (regional assertion); 1991–1998 (nuclear power); 1998–2014 (as a balancing power); and the beginning of a new phase from 2014 onwards when Modi became the Prime Minister. Each phase ends with a defining event: the Sino-Indian War of 1962; the dismemberment of Pakistan's in 1971; the opening of the Indian economy in 1991; the nuclear tests of 1998; the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2005; and the beginning of Prime Minister Modi's first term in 2014. The author's approach in the book is conceptual rather than descriptive. This enhances the value of the book manifold. The

book has eight chapters and an Epilogue. Each chapter can be read as a standalone chapter.

The first chapter, “The Lessons of Awadh”, points to a historical weakness in Indian leadership’s character: namely, the preoccupation of its rulers with little things, and an indifference to larger global trends. In the process, Indians lost out to the East India Company which was essentially a trading company but eventually came to rule the entire country by exploiting the infighting among Indian rulers and their self-obsessions. Pointing out to the famous Satyajit Ray film *Shatranj Ke Khilari*, the author describes this tendency as the ‘Awadh’ syndrome. He asks, “Will the world continue to define India, or will India now define itself? Awadh remains the symbol of the former to this day” (page 17).

The second chapter, “The Art of the Disruption”, examines the consequences of the rebalancing that is under way as US dominance declines, and China emerges as a challenger to the western-dominated order. To many countries, including India, the new balance of power will bring new opportunities. The author says that it is vital that “India makes the most of convergences with others, and helps achieve an overall balance by forging more contemporary ties on every major account” (page 26). He goes on to say that the world is becoming increasingly multipolar. It is the new balance of power rather than collective security that will become important (page 32). India will have to engage in a diverse set of partnerships more creatively (page 42). The theme that India should build partnerships with like-minded countries with whom it shares common values runs through the book.

The third chapter, “Krishna’s Choice”, is one of the most original and thought-provoking essays. It relates the events described in the famous Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, which is an account of the Great War fought by the Pandavas and their cousins the Kauravas. This is made to represent contemporary scenarios. While the stories in the epic are fascinating in their own right, it is the lessons in strategy that the *Mahabharata* provides which concern the author. These answer Western criticism which often points out that India has no tradition in strategic thinking. The stories in the *Mahabharata* revolve around the personal dilemmas of the characters involved, the choices they make, and the consequences that flow from these choices. The *Mahabharata* contains the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna helps the reluctant warrior Arjuna achieve strategic clarity about the war which he almost refused to fight. In the *Shanti Parva* section, the epic has a detailed account of the statecraft which the patriarch Bhishma Pitamah taught Yudhisthira when he became king after winning the war.

The author draws attention to the critical issues dealt with in the *Mahabharata*, such as the rule of law; the conditions in which these rules can be violated; the importance of building a credible narrative based on the *dharma* or ethical conduct; the art of disruption and dissimulation in diplomacy and war-fighting; the importance of strategic clarity in achieving one's aims; and the numerous shades of diplomacy ranging from alliances to neutrality. Analysing the episodes in the *Mahabharata*, the author draws parallels between the multipolar world of those times and the one that accrues today. Of the many lessons that the *Mahabharata* holds for us today, the one that is emphasised by the author is the need to have strategic clarity about one's aims. To occupy a moral high ground while building a narrative based on ethics and the right conduct is also necessary. The author points out that while power is essential, it has to be used ethically and with restraint. He writes, "As Indians prepare for greater contribution, they must rely on their own traditions to equip themselves in facing the tumultuous world" (page 67).

The main message of the book is in chapter 4 which is titled "The Dogmas of Delhi". The author emphasises that India must overcome the 'hesitations of history', and liberate itself from past dogmas to deal with the new realities. This will require a clear understanding of emerging trends, an appetite for risk-taking, and self-belief. These were some of the attributes that were missing in the past. The Indo-US nuclear deal of 2005 was a turning point in India's foreign policy as it raised India's global stature, and opened up many opportunities. Since 2014, Indian foreign policy has become more realistic and pragmatic, and has also developed a willingness to take decisive action as was reflected in the surgical strikes after Uri and Balakot. The confidence so gained will stand India in good stead. According to the author, what India needs is greater realism, more economic capabilities, multiple engagements, risk taking, and reading global trends right (page 97–101).

In Chapter 5, "Of Mandarin and Masses", the author discusses the growing impact of public opinion on foreign policy. Foreign policy is no longer a game which only the elites play. The critical point made in this chapter is about the rise of nationalism across the world, be it 'America First' or 'China Dream'. India is no exception. Bharat, and not India, is now asserting itself in the foreign policy domain. This is a fundamental shift that needs to be understood. The author points out that India's nationalism has historically been inclusive. "Not driven by victimhood, Indian nationalism has the potential to serve as a bridge between the established and emerging orders" writes the author (page 114). Indian officials rarely talk of Indian nationalism in the context of foreign policy. However, the fact is that nationalism gives self-confidence which is

essential for engagement with the rest of the world. The author refers to the Indian tradition of treating the wider world as a family – *Vasudhaiava Kutumbakam* – an attribute of India’s nationalistic outlook. This is often ignored or dismissed by the realists.

In Chapter 6, the author discusses what is arguably the most important challenge before India’s foreign policy: namely, managing the rise of China. It offers an overview of India-China relations, and the adverse consequences of China’s rise for India. The author points out that both countries are civilizational powers. They have been interacting with each other for a long time. They have viewed each other in a positive light for most of history. However, in the 1950s, nationalistic China brought into play the territorial dispute and the boundary question which has remained unresolved to this day, and is a source of many troubles. China’s growing footprint in India’s neighbourhood and its nexus with Pakistan are serious security issues for India.

Will Sino-Indian relations improve? The author recognises the inherent constraints in bilateral relations. Both are rising nations. Their footprints overlap. Competition and rivalry are evident, and cannot be wished away. The author is concerned about the power asymmetry between India and China. China has had a head start over India in building its comprehensive national power, while India has yet to do. He writes, “There are gaps in their comprehensive national power. We have yet to build some deep capabilities, achieve human development indices or create the growth conditions that China did for the last four decades. On the contrary, we have made this transition harder until recently” (page 151).

In chapter 7, the author examines in detail the salience of a strategic partnership between India and Japan in the emerging Asian balance. The two countries have had a cordial relationship for much of history; but this has not resulted in a strategic partnership. Japan was a staunch critic of India’s 1998 nuclear tests. The situation began to turn in 2000, with Japanese Prime Minister Mori’s visit to India. While the economic partnership has grown, political warmth has been missing. Both countries stand to gain from a mutual partnership in the emerging Asian balance of power. Japan is not only a technological storehouse but also potentially an important political power. India must, however, realise that Japan has a different culture and a different mindset. A lot of patience will be needed to develop the ties further.

The author also discusses the importance of ASEAN in India’s foreign policy. Look East and Act East policies have filled a major gap in India’s foreign policy. ASEAN has helped India to rediscover its past historical

connections with Asia. Developing strategic ties with ASEAN is one of the greatest achievements of Indian foreign policy in recent years. India is conscious of ASEAN's centrality in the Indo-Pacific.

In chapter 8, the author gives a nuanced analysis of the concept of the Indo-Pacific which is now an important pillar of India's foreign policy. India has also come out with a visionary Indian Ocean policy and a comprehensive maritime strategy. The author writes,

A comprehensive maritime strategy has a set of priorities, best depicted in terms of concentric circles. The first is a maritime infrastructure for the homeland... The next (is) ... the maritime space beyond India's borders and its immediate island neighbours... The third (is) the revival of the Indian Ocean as a community that builds on its historical and cultural foundations... The outermost circle...takes India into the Pacific..." (page 187).

In the Epilogue, the author presents an analysis of how the Corona virus pandemic has impacted Indian foreign policy. The pandemic is one of the most important developments since 1945. The pandemic has triggered vigorous conversations about the trends and changes in the post-1945 world order. It has also brought into sharp relief the deficits in multilateralism. India was one of the few countries which came forward to help the other countries by sending medicines and other medical equipment - a lot of it on a grant basis - thus refurbishing its image as a 'generous' country. As a champion of reformed multilateralism, India now has a chance to carry forward the dialogue further. The author is confident that India will contribute toward rebalancing and shaping multipolarity, political and economic. Its strong bonding with the global South is critical to ensuring that developmental priorities and natural justices are not disregarded (page 207).

The author lists many new attributes, approaches, and strategies in India's foreign policy which are preparing the country for the new realities. What are these? In summary, these would be: the rapid enhancement in India's global engagements following the Indo-US nuclear deal; realism and the willingness to take risks; and the articulation of new constructs like the inclusive Indo-Pacific and Security and Growth for All (SAGAR). A whole range of new initiatives has been unfolding - like the Quad; the maritime policy; the Indian Ocean strategy; various connectivity initiatives; defence cooperation agreements, etc. On the geopolitical front, India has deeply engaged with formations on both sides of the ideological divide - for example, the QUAD on the one side and RIC on the other. This is an example of India's multiple engagement policy.

The Indo-Pacific construct has been complemented with a wide-ranging Indian Ocean strategy which aims at building a community of Indian Ocean littorals. The author lists a variety of maritime instruments ranging from building maritime infrastructure; humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation; a blue economy; white shipping arrangements; the revival of coastal shipping, etc. Attention is being paid to the development of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Connectivity is now a fundamental principle of India's foreign policy.

The book is a comprehensive account of how India's foreign policy is evolving, and being enriched with new initiatives. Yet, a vision without implementation is a mere slogan. Implementation has been a weakness in India's foreign policy. This issue is being addressed to some extent, but there are still many problems. The author must be fully aware that many countries who look towards India are disappointed with India's implementation record. There is often a complaint from many countries that India seems to over-promise. Quite often, India's record of implementation is compared with that of China, mostly unfavourably. It would have been useful if the author had dwelt upon the constraints faced by Indian diplomacy in translating its vision into concrete reality.

The author says that India did not read China well in the 1950s. However, are we reading China correctly today? On the one hand, we have had deep engagements with China; on the other we have had to reckon with repeated military face-offs, including the most recent one in 2020 on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. The book does not mention the Doklam crisis of 2017, which showed the ugly face of China. How do we deal with China? Can China be trusted? This requires an elaborate answer. China's actions have blatantly violated India's sovereignty. Should one continue to follow the one China policy in the face of China's repeated infringements of Indian sovereignty? Yet, there seems to be a reticence in official circles to call a spade a spade, and see China as a major security threat. It would have been interesting to see the author examining the nature of the China threat, and how India is preparing to deal with it.

India's policy towards Pakistan must evolve beyond surgical strikes. Pakistan is increasingly becoming a client state of China. China has joined Pakistan in criticising India's decision to abrogate Article 370 relating to Kashmir, and has tried to raise the Kashmir issue in the UN Security Council. Pakistan's Prime Minister openly issues nuclear threats to India at the UN in the context of Kashmir. It would have been useful to know of the author's thinking on how to deal with Pakistan, and the China-Pakistan nexus.

It is interesting to learn from the book that Indian foreign policy is becoming more purposeful. However, the long-lasting habit of hedging has still not gone away. For instance, on the Rohingyas issue: India is very careful not to offend either Bangladesh or Myanmar. Similarly, India is ambivalent about the Quad. Will India encourage the Quad emerging as a military alliance? Are not multiple engagements (that is, simultaneous engagement with the Quad and the RIC) not a sophisticated way of hedging?

The author gives credit to Indian diplomacy for having brought in the industrial development of India in the 1950s and 1960s. There is an intimate connection between foreign policy and technology. Although India is part of many international scientific projects, that does not necessarily translate into higher technological capacity. How does India become a technological power? India's expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP is inadequate. Unfortunately, we are still dependent on the import of high-tech equipment for our defence forces and industry. This debilitates our foreign policy.

Surprisingly, the book does not discuss India's nuclear doctrine, and whether it requires a change as the nuclear environment in the world changes rapidly. Likewise, India needs doctrines for space and cyber domains. These issues have not been covered in the book.

How does foreign policy relate to the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat? This is an important issue. The author emphasises that a self-reliant India would encourage greater innovation and creativity. He writes "It is only when its own production flourishes at home that India can make an economic difference abroad" (page 210). This is an important assertion because there are apprehensions in the mind of India's partners about India turning inwards by pursuing the path of self-reliance. This doubt needs to be dispelled forcefully.

The role of culture and heritage in the formulation of foreign policy is not discussed often in this country. It is heartening to see the author emphasising the civilisational attributes of India, and the strength of its traditions and culture. One would have liked to know how the government of India is promoting India's thought and culture in helping to shape a humane world. The role of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations needs to be changed.

While the author has emphasised that transactional diplomacy will be the order of the day in a multipolar world, the role of values and ethics cannot be denied altogether. In fact, in the conversation about the New World order,

India should emphasise the importance of ethics and values in international relations, which the West has completely overlooked. Indian foreign policy should not shy away from incorporating the wisdom of our ancient thought and the teachings of the greats, like Swami Vivekananda who had unshakeable faith in India's destiny, and who opened up the Western mind to the cosmopolitan nature of Indian philosophy and Hindu religion. India's ancient wisdom and its relevance to the contemporary world should be brought to the attention of the world, including at the UN, in a systematic way. The Ministry of External Affairs has a big role to play in this.

The author has been an important player in the formulation and implementation of India's foreign policy in the last few years. Readers would be interested to know how foreign policy decisions are taken, monitored, and implemented. Why is it that India's External Affairs Ministry has so little in terms of financial and human resources? What are the problems that the Ministry faces in coordinating efforts with other ministries and departments?

What India needs is a foreign-policy concept in which its new approaches are presented formally. Countries like Russia have a formally declared foreign-policy concept. Why not India? The external world has always been curious about India's rise, and what it means for the world. They want to know from the Indians which direction India is heading. The book provides answers to many of the questions in the mind of readers. It will be read with great interest not only because it is written by the External Affairs Minister of India, but also because of the depth of the analysis. This book is not a run-of-the-mill account of Indian foreign policy. The author's vast experience, his scholarly credentials, and his knowledge of international relations are reflected in the slim volume. The book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on rising India.

Dr. Arvind Gupta
Director
Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi
and former Director General
Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

★★★

Vijay Sakhuja and Somen Banerjee, *Sea of Collective Destiny: Bay of Bengal and BIMSTEC*, (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2020), Pages: 192, Price: 795.00, (HB) Rs. 596.00 (SC)

From time immemorial, the Bay of Bengal [BoB] has been a maritime domain for Asian countries for trade and cultural exchanges. Before the Christian era [BCE], ancient Kalinga pioneered maritime exchanges across the BoB to lands east of India. Ports along India's Coromandel Coast and the coast of Odisha and Bengal, were trading across the BoB, with East and South East Asian ports in Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Moluccas (Maluku), and China. During the 8th-10th centuries CE, Arab traders were prominent players in sea-borne trade in the Arabian Sea and the BoB. The rise of the Chola Empire in southern India in the 11th and 12th centuries inherited this strong maritime tradition and legacy. The advent of European colonial powers subverted these ancient ties as they established their political and economic hegemony over Asian countries.

This book is a timely contribution to the literature on regionalism at a time when strategic restructuring is underway in the global order. It covers a wide range of issues, under the broad themes of Security, Economy, Geopolitics, Connectivity, and Regionalism. It examines the potential for knitting together a BoB oriented community of nations, with BIMSTEC as the pivot. Both the authors are former naval officers whose knowledge of strategic maritime affairs is evident in the narrative of the book. Published in the pre-COVID era, the book lacks inputs on the geopolitical and geo-economic impact of COVID. A unique feature of the book is that each chapter can be read as an issue brief. This is helpful for lay readers and scholars. On the negative side are occasional repetitions. End notes are comprehensive, and will be useful for readers who wish to delve further into the subject.

There is a useful discussion on "the dialectic of regionalism and regionalization" which sets the context. The evolution of regionalism through various stages, and why some geographic spaces manage to succeed in regional integration and some fail, are part of this context. By identifying the main criteria for regionalism – security, economy, culture – and how regionalism connects with its periphery as well as globalisation, the narrative focuses on the paradigms of regionalism in IR theory as well as its relationship with globalisation and its role in constraining an emerging hegemon via regional

structures. By adopting regionalism to develop powerful economic blocs, developing countries can create heft in the global economic order, and cope with unilateralism and hegemony.

The overview of the BoB as the highway for regional and international commerce and civilisational discourse during the past millennia is pithy. It links the current geopolitics of the BoB with reference to China's Maritime Silk Road [MSR], India's "Mausam" and Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum [GMF], and notes that there are no major boundary disputes within BIMSTEC, except for Myanmar and Thailand over three small islets. Apart from BIMSTEC, the BoB littorals are members of several regional organisations that promote economic cooperation and connectivity. Such cooperation has moved into the security domain with MILAN, a joint and coordinated naval patrol, information and intelligence sharing, humanitarian aid and disaster management [HADR] as well as Search and Rescue [SAR].

A large part of the book [6 Chapters] has been devoted to Traditional and Non-traditional Security issues, ranging from transnational organised crimes [TOCs], environment, migration, and climate change. It defines the nature of transnational organised crimes, and identifies trafficking in drugs/psychotropic substances as well as humans/wildlife as the main areas of transnational crimes. It recommends mitigation efforts via regional cooperation on the SAARC and BIMSTEC platforms, utilising the Colombo-based South Asian Regional Intelligence and Coordination Centre [SARICC] as the vehicle for cooperation. The remaining 5 Chapters deal with economic integration and connectivity as well as current geopolitical and geo-economic trends and challenges.

On Terrorism and Piracy, the book discusses various initiatives and institutional frameworks for cooperation. It suggests that India as the lead country for Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes [CTCC] – one of the 14 sectors for BIMSTEC cooperation – can develop greater synergy with other institutions like the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia [ReCAPP], the Indian Ocean Rim Association [IORA], and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium [IONS]. Noting that the BIMSTEC CTCC Convention is yet to be ratified and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters [MLACM] is yet to be signed, the lack of urgency in formalising these institutional frameworks remains a serious deficiency in charting BIMSTEC's future trajectory.

Not surprisingly, Climate Change is highlighted as the most pressing issue/concern among non-traditional security challenges. Regional cooperation on issues like the rise in greenhouse gases and its impact on the

BoB and littoral countries, Sea Level Rise [SLR], the impact on crop yields, Ocean Acidification and Oxygen depletion is essential, although Climate Change mitigation demands a global response. It notes that the BoB already has developed “dead zones” that are bereft of marine life, endangering the livelihoods of millions dependent on fisheries. The BoB is already threatened by marine pollution [plastics, litter, industrial and agricultural waste], exacerbated by melting glaciers and drying rivers. Policy measures and cooperation among BIMSTEC members to move to non-renewable energy sources cannot be postponed.

Cyber-attacks and illegal migration are other non-traditional security threats that have grown with increasing incidents of piracy, disrupting commercial shipping and cargo handling at ports. Illegal migration, though not a new phenomenon, has increased in the BoB region. It has been caused by social and physical insecurity, local conflicts, religious persecution, and climate change factors. All these issues demand cooperation among BIMSTEC members and the BoB littoral countries.

Connectivity is an important pillar of building a community and the feeling of togetherness which the authors call “we-ness”. It identifies a successful connectivity ecosystem as having people-to-people contact and the ability to intermingle reasonably freely, transportation links with smooth movement of goods and services, and investment and digital connectivity for facilitating interactions at all levels. It notes that ports in BoB are not very profitable since container ships have to deviate from SLOCs and travel north to ports on India’s eastern seaboard – Chittagong in Bangladesh and Yangon in Myanmar. Smaller container ships have to enter a river to dock. These constraints inhibit large container ships. Port cities connectivity via coastal shipping arrangements will facilitate tourism and cultural contact at the people-to-people level, and lower costs for shipping companies.

India’s “Sagarmala” project seeks to remedy this as well as inland connectivity issues. The Bangladesh-India Coastal Shipping Agreement is a landmark agreement for local shipping in the BoB. Ro-Ro ships are now able to ship vehicles from Chennai to Mongla at a much lower cost. The harmonisation of Cabotage laws in the BoB will add to the greater movement of shipping among BIMSTEC and other BoB littoral countries. The “Sethusamudram” Canal Project [SCP] has the potential to reduce costs for shipping when it is completed, though the impact on fragile marine ecosystems remains a constant red flag for such projects. The Kra Canal, a potential connector between the BoB/Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, has a

similar potential, but has also aroused considerable environmental and political concerns.

Digital and Energy connectivity, tourism, and associated leisure activities have a huge potential for community building. Energy connectivity is in place for the BBIN countries and can be expanded into Myanmar and Thailand. The Tri-lateral highway project, when completed, can also facilitate Energy and Railway connectivity from India's north east to Myanmar, Thailand, and beyond.

The weakness of regionalism among BoB countries lies in its low 4 percent share of global GDP, despite having 23 percent of global population. While success in regionalism has transformed certain South East Asian countries into dynamic economies, India and Bangladesh too have logged impressive rates of growth. In this context, the advantages and challenges to regionalism and the structures of BoB countries individually have been examined.

The lack of economic corridors is a major constraint in growth and integration. An Economic Corridor demands the harmonisation of regulations as per international conventions, connectivity, standardisation, investment in cross-border infrastructure projects, and security coordination. Another factor is gender sensitivity, particularly at Land Customs Stations and Border Haats. Governments should deploy female customs and police officials at these cross-border nodes for encouraging female participation in cross-border trade.

The Blue Economy is a natural domain for BIMSTEC countries, except the two landlocked ones – Bhutan and Nepal. The development of the Blue Economy is closely connected with the 14 sectors identified for cooperation in BIMSTEC. The Blue Economy is also intimately linked with Maritime Security. The National Security Advisers [NSAs] of the BIMSTEC countries met for the first time in 2017, and then again in 2018. There is no agreed framework for cooperation yet. The UN-promoted Sustainable Development Goals [SDG] 2030 are also connected with several sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation; yet there is no progress on Joint Management Plans - not even on the crucial issue of the protection of the Sunderbans, a unique ecosystem that protects the hinterland against annual cyclones in the BoB. While national measures by individual countries to fulfil SDGs 2030 are being implemented, collective strategies are absent as individual countries pursue national strategies in silos.

The geopolitical underpinnings in the BoB, in the absence of a community displaying “we-ness” despite the long civilisational maritime discourse, have been marked by political identities, nationalism, and identity politics fostered

by the nation state system. Yet, there is an underlying spirit of co-existence. The BIMSTEC countries and other littoral countries of the BoB are being buffeted by pulls and pressures generated by China's BRI and MSR. China's investments have, no doubt, built infrastructure that has added to nation building; yet the pitfalls of "debt trap diplomacy" have become quite apparent. The geopolitics of playing the "China card" by smaller countries and reducing India's influence is a natural magnet for India's neighbours and China. The latter is eager to increase its sphere of influence in pursuit of its ambition to be the regional/global hegemon. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are already dependent on Chinese military hardware, and are susceptible to Chinese politico-military pressure.

China has used economic reprisals to warn countries against taking anti-China positions on issues like COVID, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Australia and India are facing China's assault – the former via economic reprisals, and the latter via military intrusions along the LAC. China's COVID-related behaviour may ultimately lead to countervailing balancing, by bolstering the Quad, and should motivate BIMSTEC and the BoB littoral countries to strengthen their bonds, and expedite building a community. The recommendations proposed for a future road map, are worth pursuing.

Ambassador Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty
Former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs;
Former High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh;
Former Ambassador to Thailand;
Visiting Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.



Lakhan Mehrotra. *The Odyssey of a Diplomat: Through the Corridors of Time*, (New Delhi, Heritage Publishers, 2020), Price: Rs. 595.00 (PB) ¹ 695.00 (HB), Pages: 356 (PB) 356 (HB)

Veteran diplomat Shri Lakhan Mehrotra's autobiographical book *The Odyssey of a Diplomat: Through the Corridors of Time* is both a narrative of the rich experience of the author and a reflection on the history and cultures of the various countries where he served. During his illustrious career spanning almost five decades, the author witnessed as well as participated in historic events in places as diverse as Tibet, East Timor, Argentina and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

The author was born in the 'Devbhoomi' of Uttarakhand, and had a childhood steeped in its rich local culture and traditions. He studied Indian history at Allahabad University which, in the 1950s, was one of the foremost centres of learning in literature and philosophy in Northern India.

Shri Mehrotra had the unique opportunity of experiencing the full spectrum of India-China relations. He gives a vivid description of his visit to China in 1955 as a member of a student delegation. Those were the days of "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai", and Premier Zhou Enlai received the delegation at his residence for tea.

Later, from 1973–76, Shri Mehrotra served as Chargé d'affaires in the Indian Embassy in Beijing when the relations were evolving from frozen to a mild thaw, leading to the appointment of Ambassador K. R. Narayanan to China after a gap of 14 years. Before his departure for Beijing, the author called on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who perceptively observed that 'The Chinese [were] very angry about the loss of Bangladesh to Pakistan and our role in bringing that about. She also pointed to the indignant Chinese reaction to changes coming about in Sikkim' (page166)

Shri Mehrotra has given a vivid account of the sensitive negotiations with China after six Indian jawans were ambushed by the PLA in 1975. The author underlines that a diplomat should act with dignity and composure even in the face of grave provocation from the other side. There is also an attention-grabbing account when Chargé d'affaires Mehrotra walked out from a banquet hosted by Deng Xiao Ping in honour of the visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto (page177).

After joining the Indian Foreign Service in 1958, Shri Mehrotra was allotted Tibetan to learn as his compulsory foreign language. In the Chapter 'The Dalai Lama Crosses into India:1959', there are informative details of Prime Minister Nehru's first meeting with the Dalai Lama on 24 April 1959 after he had sought refuge in India. Interestingly, a young Dalai Lama still nursed hopes of some reconciliation with China, and requested Prime Minister Nehru that India should stand in the middle and try to help Tibet with China. Prime Minister Nehru's realistic response was that, at that moment, India's relations with China were quite strained.

Shri Mehrotra's first posting was to Sikkim where he learnt Tibetan and watched developments in Tibet. On return, the author had the privilege of being the Government of India's liaison officer with the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala in 1961–62. In this Chapter, the author gives a lucid summary of Buddhism and its various interpretations, including Tibetan Buddhism. As a

student of India's ancient history and archaeology, the author could dive deep in his philosophical interactions with His Holiness. On political matters, the Dalai Lama shared that his delegation had signed the 1951 Agreement with China under duress, with the Chinese giving no opportunity for any meaningful negotiations. The author points out that the Tibetan Government's attempts to raise the Tibetan issue at the UN asking for UN intervention against Chinese aggression in 1950 failed as the UK 'cast doubts over Tibet's sovereign status' (page 58).

From Dharamsala the author went as Consul to New York. His chapter on his posting in the USA captures well the life of a vibrant country, a rich social life, and interactions with eminent Americans and Indians. He attempted to save the marriage of actors Saeed and Madhur Jaffry, but did not succeed. The author narrates in detail the UNSC deliberations after the liberation of Goa in 1961 when, peeved with India, the US moved a resolution in the Security Council condemning India's action, which was vetoed by the Soviet Union. In this chapter, the author has sensitive comments about the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and the death of Prime Minister Nehru.

After a brief stint in Mexico, the author spent two years in Cuba. The highlight of his chapter on Cuba is the description of his meeting with Fidel Castro. Predictably, 'the 20-minute conversation with Fidel was almost a one-way affair'. This chapter has an excellent short history of Cuba and the revolution.

The author was again in New York in 1965–66, during the period of the India-Pakistan conflict and the death of Prime Minister Shastri. In the midst of the Indo-Pak war, Indira Gandhi visited the USA as Information Minister. The author recalls a significant vignette. Indira Gandhi felt that 'it was important that, apart from officials, the Indian community in USA st[an]d up for India...'. This wish has been fulfilled today.

From New York, Shri Mehrotra went to Moscow - the Cold War rival of USA - as First Secretary (Political) in 1966 for three years. The chapter on his stint in Moscow starts with a crisp narrative of the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev, and the blossoming ties with India. The author narrates the story of the laying of the foundation of India's defence relationship with USSR, the tough negotiations on the terms of credit, and the genesis of the Rupee-Ruble agreement. The author quotes Prime Minister Kosygin telling Ambassador Kewal Singh that the USSR treated India as a major power, but regretted that India had not woken up to its potential fully, and that it had

shirked a substantive major power role on the world stage which it deserved. There are highly readable accounts of visits of numerous personalities to the USSR ranging from Shri Jai Prakash Narayan to the thespian Raj Kapoor.

After Moscow, the author spent four years at HQ in Delhi (1969–73), in the Northern Division of the MEA dealing with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. There are interesting details of China's intrusion into Bhutan on 3 May 1970 (on the birthday of the then Bhutan King), and Foreign Secretary T. N. Kaul's negotiations to raise the diplomatic profile of Bhutan by facilitating its entry into the United Nations. The author observes that, during the 1971 conflict with Pakistan, the Bhutan King was apprehensive that China might try to open a corridor through Bhutan to induct PLA contingents from Tibet into East Bengal as an ally of Pakistan.

In early 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi organised the famous 'in-camera meeting with General Maneckshaw in the office of the Foreign Secretary T. N. Kaul, with P. N. Haksar, Principal Secretary to the PM and myself (the author) present'. The author's account of General Maneckshaw's response to Prime Minister Gandhi's instruction for action to be 'all over by the end of April' is quoted below :

The General then courteously but firmly told the Prime Minister that he would not advise action as early as that... firstly, he would like to choose a time when the possibility of China's military intervention ... would be minimal and that could only be when the winter snows had blocked the passes along the frontier. Secondly, [the] Mukti Bahini... would need time to be trained and equipped.'

The author writes that the 'Prime Minister saw the force of his arguments and nodded her consent' (page 152–153).

In the Northern Division, the author was involved in the events leading to Sikkim's merger with India. His comments on the history of Sikkim, the insidious role of the Chogyal's wife Sarah Lawrence, and the nurturing of Sikkim's democratic forces are quite insightful. The narrative also describes the hands-on role played by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. She discussed all policy options before taking any decision.

From HQ, Shri Mehrotra moved to Beijing as Chargé d'affaires (1973–76), and faced China's criticism of Sikkim's accession to India in May 1976. 'The Chinese Government issued a terse statement terming that action as 'expansionist' ... warning India's neighbours of its 'hegemonic' tendencies' (page 174). However, when the author called on the Deputy Director in the Chinese Foreign Office to convey India's viewpoint, 'the Chinese official

heard [him] patiently, made no further fuss, and assured [him] that the development would not affect the new direction of [their] relations' (page 174–75). The 'new direction' referred to was the impending resumption of representation of both countries at the Ambassador level. The author has described the delicate negotiations that ensued as China insisted that India's Ambassador, Shri K. R. Narayanan, arrive first in Beijing as India had been the first to withdraw its Ambassador in 1962.

Shri Mehrotra was then posted to San Francisco as Consul General (1976–79). He describes his involvement in social events and interactions with important personalities. Surprisingly, the author has avoided the subject of the US perception of the ongoing Emergency in India, how he handled criticism in the media, and how various segments of US policy makers viewed the restoration of democracy in March 1977.

The Author was Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow (1979–82) at the time of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The author describes the dilemma faced by India as 'the turbulent situation in Afghanistan posed very difficult choices for India'. The Soviet Union expected India to endorse its intervention, and the Chief of South Asia Division reminded the author that 'a friend in need was a friend indeed, and that true friendship was tested only in the hour of difficulty.' His remark was clearly prompted by India's adverse vote in the UN General Assembly (page 216). Then, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was re-elected, and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko promptly went to Delhi to meet her. On his return, the author quotes Gromyko as having said that while there were 'differences of perspective, the two countries stood together in search of peace and stability in Afghanistan' (page 219). This chapter describing his posting as Chargé d'affaires in Moscow is replete with perceptive observations on historic events from his perch in Moscow and, at the end, the author pronounces a harsh judgement against the then Soviet system.

From the turbulence of Moscow, the author was posted to seemingly placid Argentina (1982–85). He gives a ringside account of the UK-Argentina clash over Malvinas/Falklands in 1983. What the reader misses here is how India looked at the events. The author's silence is surprising as the Argentinean intervention had echoes of India's action against the Portuguese in Goa in 1961.

Shri Mehrotra then moved to Belgrade (1985–89), and has thoughtful observations on Yugoslavia after Tito and the internal squabbles among the seven Republics which led to its break up soon after. The author started his

stint in the midst of Yugoslav dissatisfaction over India's hesitation in passing on the NAM Chairmanship to Yugoslavia. But the relations between Belgrade and New Delhi thawed gradually, with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's highly successful visit in July 1988.

From Belgrade Shri Mehrotra moved as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (1989–90). This was in the midst of India's stormy relationship with President Premadasa who was viscerally against the IPKF. The author gives an analytical account of President Premadasa's conviction that 'the IPKF had designs other than its stipulated purpose of disarming the LTTE...' (page 298). According to the author, 'President Premadasa also developed a personal animus against Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi' (page 300). Mehrotra narrates the deft handling of the situation after President Premadasa publicly, and without notice asked India (1 June 1989) to withdraw the IPKF by the end of July. After difficult negotiations, the withdrawal date was moved to 31 March 1990, which saved India's face. It is to the credit of his suave personality and diplomatic tact that, throughout this period verging on animosity between the two countries, High Commissioner Mehrotra kept a direct line of communication open with President Premadasa.

The closing chapters include the author's description of his stint as Secretary (East) in MEA (1990–1992) when he was directly involved with Nelson Mandela's historic visit to India in 1990, and with the first steps taken towards formulating a Look East Policy.

The book is packed with information and anecdotes, and is a lucid narration of the vibrant practice of diplomacy. On the whole, the time spent reading the odyssey of this consummate diplomat would be time well spent, both for students and practitioners of international relations as well as a wider readership.

Ambassador Skand Ranjan Tayal
Former Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan;
and to the Republic of Korea.
Former Visiting Professor in the Department of East Asian Studies,
Delhi University.

★ ★ ★

Shakti Sinha (ed.), *One Mountain Two Tigers: India, China and the High Himalayas*, (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2020), Pages: 570 (HB), Price: 614.00, (HB)

This book appropriately analyses contemporary issues with deep historical insights. It looks at history, politics, military, trade, and cultural links to understand the convoluted relationship between the two Asian giants - India and China. The title of the book, *One Mountain Two Tigers: India, China and the High Himalayas*, edited by Shakti Sinha, is particularly interesting as it reminds us of a Chinese saying: 'one mountain cannot contain two tigers'. Figuratively, China is trying to be the sole tiger on a mountain called Asia since 1949. The book addresses the lingering disputes between the two Asian giants, ranging from historical to contemporary times.

The timing of this edited volume is most pressing, with Sino-India border tensions flaring up during the Covid-19 pandemic, amidst signs of a new world order that appears to be taking shape. Media commentaries on the issue continue to be riddled with contradictions and factual inaccuracies, incomplete information, and varying social media 'truths'. In this regard, the collection of topical essays provides a comprehensive understanding by those who have been there on the ground as well as scholars with an analytical bent in connecting the dots on geopolitical developments.

The Communist Party of China has been adept at interpreting history in its own unique way, and justifying its agenda through its own version of historical facts. This 14-essays collection unravels the myths surrounding China's grandiose standing in the ancient world order. The first three articles take a historical perspective on the trade, cultural, and political links between India and China. These show the far-reaching cultural influence of the Indian civilisation over several regions of China. In fact, India was considered the 'Zhongguo', or Middle Kingdom, before the name was appropriated by the Chinese for themselves, and India became 'Tianzhu', or Heavenly India. The first chapter, 'When Xinjiang Was a Part of the Indic World', written by Subhash Kak, draws attention to how the Xinjiang region and Tibet were part of the Indic space with extensive use of Sanskrit, and trade involving Xinjiang, Ladakh, and Tibet, with Leh as a hub. In fact, arrangements were made to ensure the availability of food, shelter, and fodder en route. Indian culture and Indian kings dominated the Xinjiang region in China. Xinjiang was known as 'Uttarakaru'. It was a flourishing part of the Sanskrit world, and its people spoke the Gandhari language. Scholars would travel from Kashmir to Khotan,

and the silk culture is believed to have passed from Khotan to Kashmir, and then into the rest of the Sub-continent. The region has been called Serindia by European scholars, signifying the place where China and India met.

The chapter 'At India-China Relations: Ladakhi and Dogra Claims in China', written by P. Stobdan discusses Ladakhi and Dogra claims in China, emphasising that these can be traced back to 17th century when Sengge Namgyal, King of Ladakh, opposed an expansionist Tibet under the fifth Dalai Lama. While the relations were cemented by trade later, Ladakh and Bhutan retained an enclave in Menser, which consisted of a cluster of villages located 296 kilometres deep inside Chinese territory, at the foot of the holy Mount Kailash on the banks of the Manasarovar Lake. Menser served as a key outpost for Indian and Bhutanese traders for over 300 years before India unilaterally surrendered its sovereign rights over Menser in the 1950s. Interestingly, the fate of these enclaves has not been negotiated or settled legally until now. Thus, China's hardening of its border position should now prompt Indian policymakers to rethink the overlooked issue of restituting Menser. In 'Trans Himalayan Trade of Kashmir and Ladakh with Tibet and Xinjiang, 1846–1947', Professor K. Warikoo explains how Leh was a metropolitan city in terms of its diversity of population that met and traded goods from distant lands. The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir used to ensure that traders were not inconvenienced, and made arrangements for shelter, food, and fodder en route, especially in the non-populated areas.

The next few essays narrate the origins of India-China border disputes, past treaties, and Chinese illegal claims on Indian territory. Over the periods of history, China's anxiety to deal with domestic pressures at home has led to diversionary adventures abroad. Many times, the price of this has been paid by the neighbouring countries, including India. Alok Bansal's 'India- China Border Disputes in Ladakh' throws light on China's dubious claims on Aksai Chin, and its illegal possession of the Shaksgam Valley in the trans Karakoram region, courtesy Pakistan. Ajay Singh's 'Shadows of 1962' traces the origins of the India-China dispute from the early 1950s that ultimately led to the 1962 offensive. Sriparna Pathak's '1962 and Beyond' explains how China's disastrous economic and social policies - like the Great Leap Forward between 1958 and 1962 - led to serious man-made famines in which millions starved to death. This led to the weakening of Mao Zedong's position domestically. He saw India as a soft target to regain control over China by unifying it against an outside enemy. Similarly, a series of 1967 Nathu La and Cho La clashes can be connected with 'regime insecurity' during the Cultural revolution, leading to the use of force against India. The current tensions also point in a similar direction.

Two chapters in particular look at the battlefield, and aim to bring a solution to the issue. 'Geo-Strategic Construct of Eastern Ladakh' by Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Rakesh Sharma is an insightful chapter analysing why Ladakh, a rugged high altitude region, was chosen as a battlefield in the current conflict. Located at the crossroads of important trade routes since ancient times, Ladakh has always enjoyed great geostrategic importance. The Eastern Ladakh-Siachen Glacier is of immense importance as it connects Xinjiang and Tibet, and is central to making the CPEC a successful venture. Any geostrategic collusion between China and Pakistan for a two-front war in Eastern and Western Ladakh will be difficult for India. The author states that India needs to be prepared in border patrol management as well as for conventional war. India needs to strategise modern technological warfare, and ensure that real time intelligence and surveillance equipment is available. Another essay, 'Post Galwan: Deter China's Aggressive Behaviour', is a practitioner's view of learning the right lessons from the conflict. In this chapter, Lt. Gen. Vinod Bhatia states that India needs to build up systems with better logistics, combined with non-traditional concepts like Information Warfare, to deter China. The author underscores that strong relations with Southeast Asian countries are a must in this regard. Another chapter builds upon third party involvement in the relations between the two nations, tracing the role of countries like Pakistan and the USA. It discusses India's anxiety vis-à-vis a two-front war with China and Pakistan as well as the current BRI strategy that aims to understand China's steps regarding geo-economic and geo-strategic gains.

Monish Tourangbam's 'The India-China Quandary: Looking Beyond the Bilateral' traces the bilateral relationship since 1949, and the role of countries like Pakistan and the USA in India-China relations. He forecasts that the increasing power asymmetry will push India-US closer inevitably. Two essays delve into the diplomatic angle of the Modi-Xi dynamics, and the use of sharp power by China to benchmark itself as the sole superpower in Asia. In 'Wuhan Spirit and Modi-Xi Dynamics', Prachi Aggarwal talks about how the informal summit of Wuhan and Mamallapuram created a sense that the two leaders enjoyed bonhomie. However, a lack of consensus on the disputed boundary prevailed. In 'Indo-Pacific: Anxiety or Strategy', Shekhar Sinha looks at how the Indo-Pacific construct has led to a more anxious China. As the unipolar moment unravels to bring in China as a competing power, as well as the rise of other middle powers, the USA's position has weakened. China has moved in to fill the vacuum left by the USA, using economic power and military coercion. Therefore, the Quad and Quad Plus countries in the Indo-Pacific and the coming together of democracies is a defence mechanism against

Chinese economic and military coercion. In 'Soft Power Conundrum and China-India Relations', Hema Narang takes up the Covid-19 pandemic to show how China's reputation has been challenged while that of India has improved.

'Taiwan in the India China dynamics' is an interesting take on the role of an external power like Taiwan. Sana Hashmi states that while India should refrain from playing the 'Taiwan card', engagement with an economically strong and democratic Taiwan will go a long way in establishing a non-China dominated world order. Taiwan's Southbound policy meshes well with the Indo-Pacific, and should be exploited to ensure a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

The book closes with the editor Shakti Sinha's views, expressed in 'China's Anxiety, and Aggression', on how an anxious China has stepped up its aggressive tactics in the Indo-Pacific region. Its aggressiveness emerges from the fact that it wants to alter the world order in its favour, and emerge as the sole superpower. However, the constellation of social, economic, and political factors domestically is making the Communist Party China anxious, especially under prevailing circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. The issues include the need for transitioning from an investment-based export-driven economy to a services-based consumption-driven one. Domestic issues, such as concerns regarding corruption, rising income inequality, changing demography as well as issues regarding the CCP's questionable legitimacy in Tibet and Xinjiang, are cropping up. There is deep-seated anxiety among the top leadership in China which has led to stepping up military coercion along the borders.

The book brings out how China has made it very clear to India about picking sides, and has shown this on issues ranging from Kashmir to Ladakh. The medley of essays brings out how a post-Covid-19 emerging world order requires the countries to speak to China in one voice. China wants to coerce countries bilaterally and therefore, the answer to Chinese policies lies in a multilateral order. India needs to develop issue-based partnerships with like-minded countries to deal with increased Chinese anxiety at home and disruptive military activities in its neighbourhood. The book is a must-read for India and China watchers, and scholars of International Relations.

Dr. Shreya Upadhyay
Assistant Professor
University of Petroleum and Energy Studies
Dehradun, Uttarakhand



Anil Wadhwa, Arvind Gupta (Eds.), ***India's Foreign Policy: Surviving in a Turbulent World***, (New Delhi, Sage / VIF, 2020), Pages: 440
Price: ₹ 598.85 (K), ₹ 1,310.00 (HB) ₹ 1,230.00 (PB)

The decline of the unipolar world led by USA in the 21st Century has seen the rise of a revisionist and revanchist China, challenging the Western postulates of global governance. Under Xi Jinping, China has shed Deng Xiaoping's theory of foreign policy – 'Tao Guang Yang Hui' ('hide your claws and bide your time, and never assume leadership'), and pushed for a greater say for China in global affairs on its own terms. Xi has pushed aggressively for his view of a 'community of shared destiny' under Chinese leadership in the neighbourhood through its Belt and Road Initiative, a strategy that enables it to expand its geo-political and geo-strategic reach through a geo-economic squeeze at the expense of USA and other powers.

With its deep pockets, China has been able to use geo-economics to woo smaller nations in its neighbourhood and beyond - which the West has not been able to match. Its 'Make in China 2025' is seen as a direct challenge to USA's hold on Science and Technology, while the shadow organisations that China had established as a parallel to the Western global institutions, has been seen as a direct challenge to the Western concepts of global order. This has led China to a confrontation with the USA by way of a trade war, and the targeting of the latter's digital technology infrastructure, both with global repercussions. This, coupled with China's aggressiveness in the Indo-Pacific Region that it desires to control, has led to an emerging Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and an Ambiguous (VUCA) world order.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the responses from China and the world has only aggravated the aforementioned trend. In this light, Arvind Gupta, and Anil Wadhwa's book is very timely. It develops the framework and strategies for India's foreign policy which can be adapted to meet emerging challenges and the non-traditional threats in the new VUCA world order.

Written by leading experts in the field of foreign policy, who are both scholars and practitioners, this book predates the rapidly evolving VUCA world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it retains salience as it identifies the drivers and trends in the turbulent period prior to the pandemic, and formulates strategies for Indian foreign policy to meet emerging challenges. These suggestions can easily segue to face new challenges which are similar

in nature but are now more pronounced than ever. Written in a simple and lucid style, the logic and reasoning in the book are easily comprehensible.

The book is spread over 23 Chapters, and divided into two parts. Part A, spread over 11 Chapters, deals with the drivers and trends of India's foreign policy. Apart from dealing with the traditional drivers - such as the emerging multi-polar world, strategising of soft power, multilateralism, science & technology, the Cold War strategies of India, Panchsheel to Détente, the Economy, and Intelligence - this book also looks at the internal dynamics, non-traditional threats, and national security as other key drivers. These aspects sometimes get missed in the current foreign policy debates and discussions.

Based on the assessment of the Drivers and Trends as discussed in Part A, Part B spreads over 13 Chapters. These discuss India's relations with the various regions of the world. This section elaborates the challenges, identifies the convergences, and provides a framework of recommendations to further India's international relations. It deals with India's immediate and extended neighbourhood, the EU, the USA, Russia, Latin America and - the elephant in the room - China. While it also deals with the political economy of India's international relations, the strategising of Soft Power, issues of national security, and the non-traditional threat dynamics of India's relations with its neighbours (both immediate and extended) and leading powers - although these could, perhaps, have been fleshed out a little more. Also, how defence diplomacy is emerging as a major tool could have been elaborated further.

For those interested in international relations, this book provides a good resource for further studies as it examines India's foreign policy, discusses its nuances, and the impact of the drivers and trends on policy formulation by decision makers. It is a good guide and reference book for grasping the manner in which foreign policy evolves based on changing external and internal dynamics, under the overarching umbrella of national security. It identifies and provides a view of the options available, and the manner in which India's core national interests can be protected in the turbulent times of a VUCA world. Extrapolating from this, interested students of international relations can transition to the current trends and options for India in the new world order post the pandemic, which are essentially similar in nature but are now more pronounced.

Overall, this collection of essays draws attention to the complex issues that drive a nation's foreign policy choices, and the options that can be derived from them to further India's core national interests in the turbulent times

ahead. It also emerges that there are no easy answers. However, the volume offers a perspective on the policies that India should adopt in the times to come.

Maj Gen. Rajiv Narayanan (Retd.)
Head Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation
The United Service Institution of India
New Delhi

★ ★ ★