

## BOOK REVIEW

Henry Kissinger, *On China* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Group, 2011), Pages: 586, Price: Rs. 899.00.

Countless write ups, reviews and commentaries of the book *On China*, by Dr Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State under President Nixon have so far appeared in various parts of the world including India. The world-wide attention to the book is natural considering the excellent qualifications which Kissinger possesses for assessing the historical developments concerning the People's Republic of China (PRC). As a diplomat par excellence, he bears responsibility for the historic Nixon-Mao meeting in Beijing in 1972, which resulted in the Sino-US rapprochement and which brought about a fundamental change in the global geo-politics.

When Kissinger clandestinely visited China, the strategic environment favouring such rapprochement was already developing gradually; the leaderships of the two nations had been signalling their keenness to find a policy alternative in response to the cold war between the West on one hand and the Soviet Union and its allies on the other, as well as the Sino-Soviet rift. Kissinger was indeed a catalyst for such trends reaching a logical conclusion.

It is interesting to examine as to how the US and China viewed the rapprochement. Kissinger's perceptions in this regard are revealing, exposing different motivations on the parts of Washington and Beijing. On expected lines is his finding that the rapprochement led to widening of strategic options for the US and the re-entry of China into the global stage. Unique however is his evaluation that the PRC saw in Nixon's presence in its soil "an instance for China utilizing the contradiction, dividing up enemies and enhancing its capabilities" (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Notice on Sino-US Joint Communiqué, 7 March 1972). It may have implications for future China's foreign relations. Only personalities like Kissinger who could visit China over 50 times since 1971 and establish a personal rapport with all the then and present Chinese leaders - Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, can reach such profound conclusions.

Kissinger's ability to explain China's international behaviour in the modern era in terms of the country's past cultural roots is remarkable. For him, China and the West have their own 'exceptionalisms' representing different philosophical and military traditions and the Chinese exceptionalism is 'subtle,

indirect and cultural without a need to spread their traditional values to other countries'. In contrast, Western exceptionalism involves 'decisive clash of forces' and is missionary with an obligation to spread Western values to other parts of the world. Kissinger brings out a significant historic Chinese trait - "China judges all other states at various levels of tributaries, on the basis of approximation to Chinese cultural and political forms" and notes that a modern leader like Mao could 'initiate major political undertakings by invoking strategic principles from millennium old events'. Does the historic past continue to influence the mindsets of China's rulers in the twenty-first century? An answer could be important for the rest of the world which per force is engaging a rapidly rising and asserting China.

The relevance of the Chinese Wei Qi chess ('go' in Japan) to China's strategic thinking is widely known. Noting that Wei Qi is a complicated game based on relative gains to be made for long range encirclement, the winner is not immediately obvious and the Wei Qi player aims to impose no checkmate on the opponent, instead offers a series of stalemates. Dr Kissinger notes that the work *Art of War* written by the Chinese Strategist Sun Zu contains Wei Qi concepts, laying stress on 'indirect attack' and 'psychological combat', based on the premise that "ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting". He assesses that Mao and other leaders in China, with 'prevention of strategic encirclement' as goal, applied Wei Qi concepts in dealing with conflicts with the US and the Soviet Union. The Chinese current fears are on the prospects of US 'encirclement' of their country; to deal with it, a Wei Qi based counter strategy could still be important for them.

Kissinger's book is not without flaws. Importantly, it fails to offer judgment on key contentious issues like Mao's mistakes, China's wars with India and Vietnam, the Tibet issue and Tiananmen student protests. Questionable also is the unmistakable emotional approach of Dr Kissinger in his portrayal of Mao and Zhou. He finds Mao as 'Sardonic' and 'Philosopher King' comparing the late Chairman to Emperor Qin Shihuang, the founder emperor of China. Though he acknowledges that Mao's Cultural Revolution resulted in 'a spectacular human and institutional carnage in China', he balances his remarks by noting that for most Chinese, the Cultural Revolution is a 'necessary evil' and tries to justify Mao's doctrines of 'continuous revolution' and 'On Contradictions', arguing that they were in the service of an ultimate goal drawn from the Confucius concept of 'Da Tong' or the 'Great Harmony'. He adds that as the PRC moves along in the 21st century, many Chinese will continue to hold Mao

with respect for his historical role and that though the ten year 'turmoil' was a failure, it did set the stage for Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the seventies and eighties. He admires Zhou as a 'Confucian sage'.

From the point of view of India, disappointing are Kissinger's views expressed in the book on the causes of 1962 Sino-Indian war. They appear to favour Chinese view points than those of India. He calls the war as a Chinese 'attack', not 'aggression'. In these Chinese actions, he finds practice of *Wei Qi* with attendant 'careful preparation', 'attention to psychological and political factors', 'quest for surprise' and 'rapid conclusion of the action' and that China's intentions were to give a 'shock' that would impel India to begin negotiations with China. He seems to underplay the strength of India's claims over Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai-chin, by saying that they have evolved out of the boundaries drawn by the British. He also suggests that India made some 'miscalculation' by launching a 'forward policy' which triggered the Chinese attack, besides driving home the point that China conquered no territory in the 1962 war south of the McMahon line.

Kissinger also leans towards the Chinese view point while assessing the China-Vietnam war of 1979. He links the Chinese invasion of Vietnam with Beijing's perceived need to preserve 'strategic equilibrium in Asia'. He interestingly perceives a common feature in China's border war with India and territorial conflicts with other countries like Russia and Vietnam - Beijing's strategy to 'give a sudden blow to the opponents, to be followed quickly by a political phase'. This may be of special interest to military strategists of all nations which have unsolved border disputes with China.

We should however not rush to the conclusion that Kissinger has an anti-India bias. To be fair, though he described India as a 'Soviet Stooge' during the 1971 Bangladesh war, he recognized India's security compulsions for conducting the nuclear test in 1998. In 2005, he called India as a strategic partner of the US.

Kissinger says that he was 'shocked' over the way in which the 1989 Tian An Men protests ended, implying his dissatisfaction over suppression of the demonstrators by Deng. He, at the same time, admits that unlike other Americans, he recognizes the 'Herculean task' performed by Deng to remould China for a decade and half after the protests. He gives a slant to the protest by saying that the demonstrators wanted to weaken the Government, tempting it to indulge in rash acts. Over all, Kissinger seems to dwell more on the progress made by China after the protests, rather than on condemning the government's crack-

down on the pro-democracy students.

Striking is the fact that Dr Kissinger avoids any mention of the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the plight of the Dalai Lama and his followers. He only notes the close relationship that existed between the Centre and Tibet since the Mongol conquest of thirteenth century.

On the contemporary scene, Kissinger considers US - China relationship as essential for global stability and peace; and that it should not be a zero sum game and both nations should work for a 'shared' world order as expression of 'parallel national aspirations'. Does this sound like an endorsement of a US-China 'G-2' contemplated to dominate the world? Perhaps not, as he had himself said, in 2009, that the G-2 concept will not be in the interests of China and the United States as well as the world.

Kissinger makes a sagacious remark - the 2008 global meltdown is being seen by the Chinese people as a development which seriously undermined the mystic of Western economic prowess; resulting in the present tide of opinion in China recognizing the ongoing fundamental shift in the structure of the international system. He however, does not comment on how China is behaving when such shift is still in progress. There is no explanation from him about China's territorial assertiveness which is causing serious concerns, particularly in the country's neighbourhood.

Shortcomings notwithstanding, Dr Kissinger's book is an outstanding contribution, helpful to understand the past, present and future China.

D.S. RAJAN  
Secretary and Director  
Chennai Centre for China Studies  
Chennai

K.P. Fabian, *Diplomacy: Indian Style* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2012), Pages 257, Price: Rs. 595.00.

Several retired Indian Ambassadors have written books, usually based on their experiences or involvement in major diplomatic events. This book is far more original: it aims not to recount specific events but to understand and draw significant conclusions about the fundamental character and style of Indian diplomacy as a whole. It focuses on some crucial diplomatic developments affecting the nation, keeping in view Indian strategic thought as evidenced in its history, epics and other books, and national self-image.

The book ranges from references to the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Arthashastra, Tirukural, Jataka tales and Panchatantra to explicate Indian ideals; the notions of right and wrong, good and evil, rights and duties, wisdom and folly; and the perceived role of kings and diplomatic agents, among sundry other elements embedded in the literature. The six-page summary of the Arthashastra is significant in the rather ironic situation that Western political thought is better known and more widely taught in Indian universities than the Indian one. Asoka, Akbar, Siraj-ud Dowlah and Mahatma Gandhi are mentioned in terms of their approaches and actions related to foreign policy. All these varied elements are seen as forming the genesis of foreign policy that took shape in independent India. These are used to counter many myths, such as that of the "eternally weak India" and that India had no culture of strategic thinking. The book lucidly analyses both the positive and negative aspects of Indian diplomacy to arrive at the significant features of the Indian national character responsible for the results.

Sparing the reader the trouble of having to wade through long and detailed accounts, the author provides many insights. For example, in the India-China interactions resulting in the 1962 war, the book highlights how deeply Prime Minister Nehru and the Chinese misunderstood each other; while Nehru expended considerable effort and diplomatic goodwill in 1949 to get the USA and UK to recognize the People's Republic of China, the World Culture from Shanghai, which had earlier called Nehru the "running dog" of British imperialism, dubbed him the "principal slave of US imperialism in the Far East". The cable sent by Nehru to India's Ambassador in China, K.M. Panikkar, on 19 October 1950 in the aftermath of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, clearly shows that the Prime Minister did not seem to be concerned at all about the loss of Tibet's independence and the concomitant adverse impact on Indian security. In-

stead, his concern was about the effect of the invasion on China's position in the United Nations!

Furthermore, the Indian delegate at the UN opposed a discussion on Tibet on 25 November 1950 by conveying the patently false Chinese assurance of not having "... given up the desire for settling the problem peacefully", for by that time, as the author points out, the Chinese troops had already killed thousands of Tibetans. Notwithstanding that India gave away all its accumulated rights and assets in Tibet in return for Chinese adherence to the principles enshrined in the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954, China did not hesitate to "teach a lesson to Nehru" by attacking India in 1962 in complete violation of those principles. In spite of this, and though it is still nowhere near settlement of its borders with China, India sent a former President to Beijing to "celebrate" the Golden Jubilee of the Agreement. Obviously, as the author contends, the non-Chanakyan approach to statecraft is not confined to Nehru.

This textual approach, so clearly evident in India's dealings with the Chinese, in giving undue significance to mere words, in contradistinction to the requisite contextual one of political judgement and action based on past record, reliability, intent, capability, etc. of one's interlocutor, is a recurring element in India's diplomatic negotiations. The "Non-Battle of Plassey", as the author calls it, and the Simla Agreement of 1972, are two such examples. In the first case, Siraj-ud Dowlah, who knew that there were traitors in his camp, asked everyone to take a fresh oath of allegiance, and was satisfied when they did so! History is witness to what happened thereafter. In the second and more recent case, India was seen to have made significant concrete concessions to Pakistan in return for acceptance by the other side of "philosophical platitudes", and thereby losing at the conference table what it had gained on the battlefield.

The book mentions other critical elements of India's national character with critical consequences for its diplomacy. One such is the lack of a systemic approach, reflected in inadequate consultations and coordination at various levels, within and among different agencies and organs of the state, as well as in dismissing dissent. One well-known aspect of this approach is seen at the lowest level in the common practice of not marking copies of important communications to all the relevant officials/agencies. At a higher level, this approach is displayed in Vallabhbhai Patel's prescient advice regarding China in his Note of 7 November 1950 being completely ignored. Again, in regard to India-Pakistan negotiations on the Kashmir issue in the immediate aftermath of India's defeat in the 1962 war, undertaken by India under Western pressure

- applied precisely because India was then particularly vulnerable - the author points out that the Chief of Army Staff was not consulted when the Commonwealth Secretary Gundevia made the proposal to the Pakistani delegation for withdrawal by several miles of respective armed forces from the border.

Similarly, there were no consultations with senior Ministers, including the External Affairs Minister, and the Army Chief, by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi before taking the decision to send Indian troops into Sri Lanka in 1987. Another important conclusion of the book is that often the Indian desire for peace prevailed even over strategic considerations without examining whether this desire was reciprocated by the other side. The book also gives examples of the Indian tendency to take unilateral responsibility for "saving" summits, a fact known to many Indian Ambassadors, the reviewer included, and, perhaps to foreign delegations as well. The recent India-Bangladesh summit may seem like a counter-example, but it was a victim of the other common tendency highlighted in the book of not working together as a team, in this instance involving the central government and a state ruled by a partner of the coalition ruling at the centre.

The book concludes with the likely geopolitical picture of the world in regard to the important players in the next five to ten years. It is noteworthy that the recent announcement of US plans for bases in Australia to restrain China fits in with this picture. The author also provides in the final chapter a thought experiment on what might have been if the Chanakyan style of diplomacy had been adopted and puts forward several non-trivial ideas on what India needs to do in the coming years.

There are a number of typographic errors, which could have been easily avoided. It would have been useful if there was a bibliography as the author has indicated that the work is directed primarily towards the general public. Notwithstanding, the book is a significant addition to the vast literature on diplomacy and would obviously be of interest not only to students of international affairs but also to diplomatic practitioners at all levels.

BALKRISHNA SHETTY  
Former Ambassador of India  
to Senegal, to Bahrain and to Sweden

Vijay Sakhuja (ed.), *Reinvigorating IOR-ARC* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012), Pages: 30+174, Price: Rs. 695.00.

The Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) is a unique exercise in regionalism, bringing countries from three continents within its realm, with a large degree of variation in the levels of economic development among the member states. The agenda of IOR-ARC has been centred on areas like trade and investment, science and technology, education and training, piracy, natural disasters, communicable diseases, etc. But due to institutional and structural limitations, even after fourteen years of existence, IOR-ARC has not been a resounding success.

The book provides useful insights on a range of issues, including the types of regionalism, theory and practice of regionalism, perspectives of countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, South Africa, and island groups in the South West Indian Ocean, besides enunciating the ecological impact due to climate change.

The Indian Ocean region is woven together by trade routes, and controls major sea-lines of communication (SLOCs). It is the lifeline of international trade and economy, carrying half of the world's container ships, one-third of the bulk cargo traffic, and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.

IOR constitutes between a quarter and a third of the world's population, which lends it a massive market appeal. It has abundant agricultural wealth in variety and mass of arable land and has significant human and technological resources. It is rich in strategic and precious minerals, metals and other natural resources, valuable marine resources ranging from food, fisheries, raw materials, to energy for industries. The value of intra-trade among the member states is \$777 billion, which is likely to increase.

IOR-ARC works on the principle of open regionalism, mainly to enhance economic cooperation among member countries. Open regionalism does not bind member countries with any commitments, and decisions are taken by consensus. This approach limits any preference given to the less developed economies of the region, since economies of all sizes are deemed equal partners for voluntary action, given the widespread perception that the economically stronger countries are usually greater beneficiaries in any uniform voluntary action (p. 74). Reciprocity has become a key factor in any international transaction and any unilateral liberalization in a grouping has become unrealistic



from a political economy perspective, irrespective of its theoretical merits (p. 75).

Five IOR states - Bangladesh, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania - are among the poorest in the world. Still, rich member states disburse their overseas development assistance (ODA) to meet geo-political rather than human developmental objectives, which is needed for the region.

IOR-ARC functions on the basis of tripartite dialogue among business groups, academic groups, and senior officials, who provide feedback to the council of ministers for determining IOR-ARC policies. Realizing the diversity of member states in terms of economic development, geographic locations, and their belonging to different regional groupings, it adopted a cluster approach to undertake projects in the form of support of one lead country and other four member states. It was emphasized that IOR-ARC's work programme should not duplicate what was already being done in other regional fora.

Till now, IOR-ARC has not lived up to its potential. The lack of progress in effective cooperation could be due to the complex geo-political and economic circumstances that have prevailed in the member countries.

Shifting priorities of member states have also reduced IOR-ARC's relevance. For instance, Australia's geo-political imperatives have tended to overlook the Indian Ocean Region. It has mutual dependency with Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the US. As a result, it has lesser priority for the Indian Ocean Region. However, recent geo-political developments and renewed interest in Indian Ocean regionalism have led it to reconsider its "Look West" policy. On the other hand, South Africa played a crucial role in the formation of IOR-ARC, but its interest in the association is waning due to the emergence of a number of regional and trans-regional groupings such as African Union, IBSA and BRICS.

Due to the ambiguous political status of some of the South West Indian Ocean islands and their unresolved territorial disputes, some of them are not part of the regional grouping, and some are not even included in its programmes. Nevertheless, they are important stakeholders in maritime affairs and have substantial claim to marine resources in the region. The combined territorial sea and exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Comoros, France, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles account for half of the region's area and, therefore, have vast potential in terms of marine resources (p. 41). It is argued in the book that the physical-geographic distances would collapse in the face of

ecological insecurities in the region occurring due to climate change. Therefore, a new and nuanced social construction of the Indian Ocean space as an "inter regional arena" is needed for realizing ecologically sustainable, socially just and equitable development of the region.

The stated objective of IOR-ARC is economic cooperation. But perhaps there are other objectives which have not been spelled out clearly. For example, security of SLOCs, concerns about climate change and environmental damage among small island countries may be the underlying reasons for the participation of some member states.

The Indian Ocean Region is in need of a regional organization to match its growing influence, as much of the economic and strategic dynamics of the current century will be played out in this area. In the words of Robert Kaplan, "the Greater Indian Ocean ... may comprise a map as iconic to the new century as Europe was to the last one" and the Indian Ocean will "demographically and strategically be a hub of the twenty-first century world" (p. xvi). Therefore, the need to reinvigorate the IOR-ARC has never been more urgent.

To ensure the success of the IOR-ARC, a clear and collective vision, a stronger degree of cooperation, bureaucratic determination, political will and, above all, resources are required. A regional grouping based purely on economic integration without a political agenda or a strong vision is difficult to sustain if there are no results from economic integration (p. 83). IOR-ARC needs to rise to the challenge to keep the region peaceful and to make it more prosperous. A sense of community feeling needs to be fostered in this region by intensifying practical engagement aimed at enhancing prosperity and security of its people.

Based on a long history of economic and cultural ocean-wide relationships, an Indian Ocean identity does exist, on which Indian Ocean regionalism can prosper. This could be enhanced if the regional states can transcend some political issues and show the will to develop and pursue an agenda designed to promote cooperation on regional issues.

Asymmetric security threats coupled with limitations of littoral nations towards enforcing oceanic governance in the region threaten the SLOCs. With the growing need to combat non-traditional security threats in general, and to counter energy security threat in particular, cooperative approaches among the littoral countries are most necessary. IOR-ARC has a wide mandate to promote cooperation within the highly diverse region, and indeed has the potential to make a difference.

Recently, a number of steps have been taken to reform and activate the IOR-ARC. There has been a revision of the charter, Rules of Procedures, Staff Regulations and Financial Regulations. IOR-ARC Special Fund was established for supporting and complementing the funding of projects and programmes adopted by the association, in line with the principles and objectives enshrined in the charter.

India considers IOR-ARC geopolitically important. The grouping enables member countries to understand the geo-political subtleties and complexities and therefore enables close networking among them. It also provides an opportunity to inject economic and cultural context into the relationship. As India and the Indian Ocean are inseparable entities, India's leadership role in unleashing a new vitality into IOR-ARC, and giving it a meaningful direction, is naturally expected by other member states.

While the book does not advance a clear-cut policy framework that can strengthen and assist in reinvigorating the IOR-ARC, and represents the viewpoints of only some of the stakeholders in the region, it provides certain sharp and critical insights for policymakers and scholars who have been striving to make IOR-ARC a regional success.

VIKASH RANJAN  
Research Fellow  
Indian Council of World Affairs  
New Delhi