

BOOK REVIEW

India and Nuclear Asia: Forces, Doctrine, and Dangers, by Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell. Georgetown University Press, 2019.

The China India Rivalry in the Globalization Era, ed. T.V. Paul. Georgetown University Press, 2018.

With a burgeoning economy and one-sixth of the global population, India's nuclear policy will be increasingly significant to its regional and global role. More specifically, India must navigate the strategic complexities of defense policy with two strategic competitors: China and Pakistan. India, which has been fighting Pakistan off and on since 1947, acts as the more sophisticated conventional force. However, Pakistan enjoys the backing of the much larger, much more powerful China. The second nuclear age is Asian-centric, and these three nuclear powers form the core of the debate.

Joshi and O'Donnell argue that growing regional force structures, technological sophistication, ambiguous nuclear policy, and potentially low escalation thresholds set the stage for deadly misperception between India, China, and Pakistan. This misperception could lead to inadvertent regional escalation through a naval domain that lacks multilateral regulation, dual-use platforms that shade strategic intent and mission, and conventional targeting seeking to seize operational advantages. Beyond the military operational environment, political leadership runs the risk of accidental escalation due to a lack of understanding of the potential nuclear consequences of their actions. These risks are prominent among India and its nuclear neighbors due to a lack of clear policy and a void of trilateral relations.

The book goes on to describe in detail the rapidly advancing nuclear forces of India and China and the growing force of Pakistan. It offers insights into the decision making of the three states with respect to one another and the composition and disposition of their strategic forces. The authors suggest that a murky Indian policy may be allowing its long-standing no-first-use and minimum deterrence policies to give way in practice to nuclear war-planning; including extremely punitive response measures and a Herman Kahn-esque flexible response option. Regional nuclear stability, as much as India can uniquely contribute to it, requires two things. First, India must execute a service-wide nuclear posture review to synchronize and stabilize its nuclear policy amid rapidly advancing technology and adversarial activity. Once internally sorted, India should push for meaningful trilateral dialogue between itself, China, and Pakistan to remove a degree of potentially costly strategic ambiguity from the political arena.

The authors ground their analysis on the concepts developed by Posen, Kahn, Schelling, Stoessinger, and the so-called "Third Wave" practitioners of nuclear deterrence theory. They have done a superb job developing the implications of various nuclear policies and postures, and they present careful discussions of policy challenges related to doctrine, force structure, technology, and leadership-driven dynamics. However, suggesting an entirely public defense review is probably unrealistic in such a contentious security environment. Additionally, there is a contradiction when the authors assert that a sea leg could help minimize forces while claiming this somehow conflicts with designs for a minimal deterrence posture. I believe they more accurately are suggesting the increasing complexity from a nuclear monad to a nuclear dyad breaks with traditional concepts of force expansion. The authors base much of their argument on the idea that excessive strategic ambiguity and mirror imaging national components of rationality will not add stability to the situation. They derive this argument from discussing the misperception inherent in the lack of declaratory policy between India and China and the assumed responses to conventional strikes or development meant to create parity. I tend to agree, yet these assertions could benefit from discussing or referencing a wealth of post-Cold War literature and documentation that supports such a claim. This includes but is not limited to Keith Payne's *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, in which the author demonstrates a fundamental US misperception of Cuban resolve to die for their cause in 1962—or the since declassified Soviet doctrine that incorporated nuclear weapons into warfare in Europe, very contrary to the US perception.

Ultimately, the dialogue stimulated in this book is informative, chilling, and logical. India's nuclear future has global implications for deterrence theory and stability. As the authors depict, the United States has had a significant degree of involvement in helping shape India's nuclear policy. I would look forward to seeing the trilateral discussions forwarded in this book expanded to include the United States. Other nuclear powers, particularly the United States, could help counterbalance a united Pakistan and China, should India find itself at a negotiating disadvantage—ideally leading to a more impartial and stable nuclear peace.

Moving beyond nuclear force structures and strategic escalation alone, T.V. Paul et al. seek to characterize the nature of the relationship between two rising Asian great powers, India and China. *The China India Rivalry in the Globalization Era* seeks to explain why, in some sense, these two Asian giants seem to be experiencing a degree of economic and political rapprochement; yet, maritime disputes, disagreements over international status, and a near territorial military conflict in 2017, according to Paul, suggest an “enduring managed rivalry.”

The book introduces the paradox of Chinese and Indian territorial conflict across the so-called McMahon Line. Currently, stability supports Chinese and Indian prosperity and development, yet each must remain uncompromising on settlement demands to placate political interests. The compilation offers a nuanced discussion of status, conceptualizations of international order, strategic culture, and strategy to shed theoretical light on the various fissures and bridges between the two nations. The discussion of resource scarcity and its effects on competitive policies provide reasons for hope in future renewable energy pursuits. Yet there is a grave potential for future contention over freshwater shortages. The work suggests macroeconomic interactions are becoming increasingly asymmetric (a destabilizing trend) as India is about eight times more reliant on Chinese imports than China is on Indian imports, and so forth. Moreover, certain Chinese investment practices and Chinese investment into Pakistan prove problematic for the hopes of a stabilizing economic interdependence between India and China. The paradoxical nature of this rivalry extends into global governance, where both nations seek greater institutional membership and eventually more influence in a reorganized system. However, instead of facilitating, they work to block the interest realization of the other in these institutions. Ultimately, this compilation of papers asserts that there exists a managed rivalry where status and influence are as much a source of disagreement as are substantive concerns. In fact, because the material and conceptual are bound together in this rivalry, the authors suggest that the asymmetry of Chinese and Indian power prevents large-scale traditional conflict while also enabling the persistence of general competition.

I am not sure if the ultimate assertion that each paper displaying a complex paradoxical relationship is always enough to draw the papers coherently together as a single narrative or common operating picture. The global contextualization of the theme of this book was a strength and something these authors had over O'Donnell and Joshi. O'Donnell and Joshi's in-depth engagement of Pakistan provides very useful context to a number of Paul's various sections. O'Donnell and Joshi's in-depth description of Pakistan's nuclear posture and doctrine drives home the operational complexities for India's posture and force development discussed in Paul's book. I would perhaps like to see both texts discuss Russian strategic interests, even if just to explain away their relevance if that is their reason for exclusion.

The China India Rivalry suggests that India does not, in the foreseeable future, pose a strategic threat to China. However, *India and the Nuclear Asia* makes a compelling case as to why Indian force structure is already problematic for China and provides evidence that Chinese policy has begun to recognize this. O'Donnell and Joshi emphasize the trilateral nature of regional nuclear dynamics, deftly displaying the interdependent policy and threat dynamics. In Paul's compilation, Narang mentions the nuclear relationship between India and China as almost negligible compared to Pakistan for India and the United States for China. While it is important to understand national priorities and a broader strategic scope, Narang seems to overlook the interdependent

security dynamic of Pakistan, India, and China that requires India to plan strategic contingencies for Chinese involvement in a conflict with Pakistan. This strategic planning drives force structure, weapon development, and operational plans that ultimately take a bilateral issue and turn it into a regional or global powder keg. Narang also suggests an utter acceptance of Schelling's principals for nuclear deterrence between China and India. However, O'Donnell and Joshi portray a much more ambiguous and contentious nuclear relationship, with potential brinkmanship tailored by something akin to escalation rungs. What Paul so critically adds is the asymmetric status dynamic between India and China that drives Indian ambitions for recognition, as well as the hard-balancing of the other leading to the internalization of a bilateral enmity identity. The perceptive American reader should see a direct correlation between the dynamics and potential perils of China ignoring Indian status contextualized through a reading of both books and the same factors that shape the status dynamics between China and the United States. Additionally, Paul's sections help the reader zoom out from the all-consuming nuclear dynamics of O'Donnell and Joshi and witness the broader implications and flashpoints for conflict, as well as an overall stability driven by very complex and intertwined interests.

Taken together, these works provide an excellent context for the Asian-centric future of global politics and the competition therein.

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