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The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Regional Order in the Indo-Pacific

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Kristin Waage and Petter Y. Lindgren

Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), Kjeller, Norway

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The rise of China is, perhaps, the single most significant development in world politics the past few decades. Its vast population, large economy, technological prowess, and military might make China only second to the United States. China's growing position changes the distribution of power in the international system, and therefore, the relatively stable and peaceful regional order in the Indo-Pacific is under serious strains. The old order was characterized by military dominance of the United States, a silent acceptance among all Indo-Pacific countries about this reality, and the symbiosis between security and economics. The enormous growth in China's economic, financial, and military capacities upsets this order.

China uses its fresh economic and financial muscles to increase its influence in the region and globally. One of the most notable manifestations of China's interest in shaping the Indo-Pacific region is the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – Xi Jinping's signature policy program. The BRI is predominantly a collection of infrastructure projects that radically expands China's connections westward to Central Asia on land and Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East along the sea. In fact, the BRI may end up being the largest attempt of connecting people, goods, services, and capital in human history, strengthening China's commercial and physical presence in continental and maritime Asia and reducing its maritime vulnerability. This massive infrastructure project spurs the questions of how neighbors and other countries present in the region will respond to China's investment activities and what the future of the regional order ultimately will look like.

In the anthology *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Regional Order in the Indo-Pacific*, editors Michael Clarke, Matthew Sussex, and Nick Bisley with co-authors attempt to answer these questions. In a comprehensive and timely assessment of the BRI, the various positions and responses by the regional neighbors to the ambitious Chinese initiative, and its broader implications for the

regional order in the Indo-Pacific are studied. Taken together, the book's chapters present and analyze an extensive amount of empirical sources and take on an impressive number of countries and regions, including Russia, India, Pakistan, the ASEAN countries, Egypt, Oman, and Australia. With a few exceptions, the anthology provides less food for thought for the theoretically inclined reader. This is, of course, perfectly fine for a contribution aimed at being "insightful and policy-relevant" (p. vii) as much as for fellow academics.

The book is structured with eleven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. The other nine chapters are split equally into three sections on (i) geopolitics, alliances, and security, (ii) the political economy of the BRI, and (iii) the BRI and the Indo-Pacific strategic actors. Despite the inherent difficulty in organizing an anthology with this many contributors (fifteen authors) and such a far-reaching subject as this book, the editors' efforts to streamline the final product have paid off. The different chapters play well into the overall purpose of the book. We were positively surprised by the amount of historical developments, analyses of the contemporary situation, and, perhaps particularly, the geographical scope covered in this book.

The book starts out with an introduction by Nick Bisley on how the BRI will influence Asia's emerging international order. Bisley discusses the uncertainty in the prospects of the BRI, and presents future scenarios ranging from a maximally successful implementation of the BRI to a more limited, uneven, and unsuccessful rollout of the initiative. The conclusion is that the BRI – while increasing China's strategic advantage – is unlikely to give the PRC a decisive edge in creating Chinese primacy in the region.

Then follows a range of interesting and thought-provoking analyses and conclusions, of which we have space only to touch upon briefly. The book zooms particularly in on the strategic responses of India, Russia, Australia, and the group of ASEAN countries. Both Lai-Ha Chan and Ian Hall highlight how India pursues opportunities in collaboration with other powers (e.g., "the Quad") to offset China's regional influence – potentially affecting China's success in shaping the regional order – while Clarke and Sussex assess Russia's accommodation to China's BRI agenda, risking the undesirable outcome of sliding into entrapment. Hence, managing its relations with India appears to pose a greater challenge to the effectiveness of China's ambitious policy program than managing its relations with the large neighbor in the north.

Australia has traditionally employed a hedging strategy vis-à-vis China, attempting "to compartmentalize its highly successful economic relationship with China from fallout in the edgier political and strategic domains" (pp. 214–15). Andrew O'Neil points out that its policy approach to the BRI will indicate whether Australia really can continue this compartmentalization in the future. Regarding the ASEAN countries, Mark Beeson discusses how China has succeeded in dividing the group and how many political elites in Southeast Asia now "appear to be jumping on the Chinese bandwagon" (p. 195) instead of pursuing hedging strategies. From a political economy perspective, Jane Golley and Michael Wesley observe how regional alliances such as ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) likely are accepting of China's economic model, rather than upholding the "centuries old objective of liberal internationalism" (p. 108). Hence, the impacts of the BRI on existing power relations both point in the direction of increased Chinese power and influence, and a deepening of existing territorial disputes, potentially resulting in coalition forming among other states in the region.

China also faces other challenges – and opportunities – that can affect the role of President Xi's main legacy initiative on Asia's international order. Brooke Wilmsen *et al.* focus on the environmental and social consequences of BRI projects, observing how China's opponents use negative environmental and social impacts to undermine the initiative. At the same time, China has created room to maneuver, allowing it to incorporate geopolitical considerations when tailoring its approaches on a project-by-project basis. Stefanie Kam Li Yee discusses how Chinese security diplomacy in combatting the "three evils" (terrorism, separatism, and extremism) along the BRI may contribute, on their side, to strengthening China's power and influence in key regions along the BRI. Finally, Mordechai Chaziza studies the implementation of the maritime component of BRI in the Middle East. Both Egypt and

Oman have a considerable geostrategic importance in the implementation of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). Chaziza raises the question of whether China may succeed in promoting the MSRI without provoking the region's dominating power – the United States – to undermine or obstruct it. The answer to this question will have geoeconomic implications also for the broader Asia region.

Much of the literature on geoeconomics on the one hand and the rise of China on the other hand is written from a U.S.-centered perspective – due of course to the American dominance in academic treatment of international relations generally, and security studies and economic statecraft more specifically. This anthology provides a refreshing contribution as it puts the responses, strategies, and dilemmas faced by regional actors – both small, middle and great powers – in the spotlight. The coverage of a wide range of issues raises the reader's awareness. Some issues are analyzed in several chapters, giving the reader different points of view and additional insights. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the responses of different actors in the region, as well as forming a strong basis for identifying relevant areas for further research – and their potential interconnectedness. We are presented both with arguments for why more competition might be expected in the region, and why, on the other hand, more peaceful coexistence could take place.

As military and security economists at a defense research institute in Norway – exactly opposite to the location of China on the Eurasian continent – we found this anthology's many investigations and analyses helpful to understand the impact of the rise of China and its BRI projects. The rise of China is on everyone's lips, finally some would add, not the least in a country like Norway which has felt the wrath of Chinese anger diplomacy in the wake of the Nobel prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. In this sense, despite the geographical distance, we share with the Australian authors much of the interest and curiosity to understand this rising hegemon's preferences and tools for foreign policy-making, including negative sanctions to punish and pressure, even bully, countries in its neighborhood and beyond. China's rise and its appetite for shaping preferences across the world is not a scholastic exercise but very real for Norway and Australia.

The lessons from studying Chinese behavior and engagement with neighbors in the Indo-Pacific should interest other European countries as well as Latin American, African, and other Asian countries. As Beeson points out, “[m]any in the West may not like China's geoeconomic practices, but they may have to get used to them. They are already doing so in Southeast Asia” (p. 195). How – and with what levels of success – Southeast Asian countries approach the (significant) strategic dilemma of economic growth and prosperity on the one hand and asymmetric dependence on the other, can inform policy-making in countries beyond the Indo-Pacific region.

Finally, we have three areas we had hoped the book dealt more in-depth with; see these less as critique of a sufficiently ambitious anthology, but perhaps more as areas the authors could focus on in the next anthology project. As we also work closer to politics and bureaucracy than the average academic, we enjoyed the purpose of the book, namely to be a resource for policy-makers and other stakeholders in national strategies toward the rising hegemon in the East. We wish, however, that the book had gone even farther down this road. It is not clear who the target audience is. Is it for Australians? U.S. Americans? Russians, Indians, or perhaps Chinese? Moreover, is it for the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or perhaps the Ministry of Trade and Business? Undoubtedly, policy implications will vary depending on the country or actor within these countries. The book nails the overall discussion of trade-offs between economics and national security that country after country find themselves in when dealing more and more economically with China, but how exactly should policy-makers, bureaucrats and other actors weigh the benefits and costs to economic activities against the gains and losses of national security, sovereignty, and freedom when engaging with China?

Second, although the strength of the book is to present analyses for a whole range of countries partaking in the BRI, we miss a more complete treatment of how all great powers in the region react and adapt to the Chinese investment project. The Indo-Pacific is surely not only China's playground. Although it is refreshing with a non-U.S. perspective, the United States still plays a major role in the Indo-Pacific and deserves more attention. Furthermore, while Japan is mentioned rudimentary

throughout several chapters, a thorough treatment of this significant rival to Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific would add to the contributions of the book. To what extent, how, and where may the United States or Japan potentially challenge China's ambitious infrastructure project?

Third, we believe the insight from the book could be strengthened further by a more detailed treatment of the implications for the host countries' national security of massive Chinese investments. Surely, investment flows are positive sanctions that can be flipped around to negative ones if the Chinese leadership finds it necessary. Moreover, controlling nodes in infrastructure networks provide several opportunities for coercion through choking (although such actions may have undesirable long-term consequences for Chinese influence). At the same time, investments in infrastructure, resources, and corporations in the host countries also boost the potency of other types of tools of influence and (covert) coercion, such as cyber, information, espionage, and intelligence operations. This becomes particularly timely when analyzed in light of new technologies, e.g., 5G, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things; cutting-edge technologies in which China aims to push the frontiers in the years to come. What additional implications – if any – do such considerations have for the trade-offs between economic prosperity and national security that the BRI brings with it, the willingness to accept a Sino-centric *economic* order, and the ability to separate the economic and the security realms more broadly?

To conclude, we think that the *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Regional Order in the Indo-Pacific* should interest academics and policymakers inside and outside the region. The book offers insightful up-to-date analyses and perspectives for understanding the BRI's implications (and challenges) in the years to come, and it zeroes in on important questions that remain unanswered. Although we recommend reading all the contributions, each chapter can be digested individually as well. But, make sure to read the introduction and the conclusion.

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Imperial Romance: Fictions of Colonial Intimacy in Korea, 1905–1945

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Jina E. Kim

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA

Author for correspondence: Jina E. Kim, E-mail: jinak@uoregon.edu

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The celebrated Korean Fauvist painter of the early twentieth century Lee Jung Seop (Yi Chungsoöp) met Yamamoto Masako, a fellow art student at Bunka Gakuin, during their studies in Tokyo. In 1945 Yamamoto journeyed to Korea where the two married and lived until the Korean War broke out, forcing Yamamoto to take their two sons to Japan in 1952 for safety. Four years later Lee died alone in Korea unable to be reunited with his wife and children in Japan. Su Yun Kim's *Imperial Romance: Fictions of Colonial Intimacy in Korea, 1905–1945* opens with this brief biography of Lee's life to powerfully illustrate how Lee's art has been recently celebrated and commemorated in Korea but aspects of his family life, especially the romantic and intimate aspects of his relationships with his