

BOOK REVIEWS

POWER TRANSITION IN ASIA. *Rethinking Asia and International Relations.* Edited by David Walton and Emilian Kavalski. London; New York: Routledge, 2017. xii, 225 pp. (Tables, graphs.) US\$149.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-472-44946-7.

According to many scholars, the structure of power in Asia has undergone important changes in the last two decades, with the rise of China and its challenge to American hegemony. This book highlights indigenous scholars from the United States, China, Taiwan, Japan, Australia, Russia, and Vietnam, profiling their views towards the growing power of China and its impact on the region. The book's most relevant contribution is to question assumptions regarding the Power Transition Theory (PTT) in Asia, especially on the issue of US-China rivalry and the birth of a new regional order.

This book starts from the idea that the rise of China is not going to significantly reduce American power in East Asia. Beijing is not interested in a direct and hard clash with Washington. Moreover, Southeast Asian countries, India, and Australia have developed a network of multiple interdependencies to promote a balance of power in the region, which has resulted in political and economic stability in this part of the world. In chapter 1, Michael Cox shows that we still cannot speak of an Asian century, and that the West, notably the US, remains the major economic superpower. In chapter 2, Tung-Chieh Tsai and Tony Tai-Ting Liu explain the hegemonic changes in East Asia since the nineteenth century and the different powers that have dominated the region over this period. Ren Xiao and Hung-Jen Wang, in chapters 3 and 4 respectively, examine the different views held by scholars in China of China's rise (some of which differ from the official government view). These scholars share an optimistic view of the future power of China, although this enthusiasm is sometimes tempered by caution.

In chapters 5 to 12, the authors focus on how regional actors face the PTT. Chapter 5, by Steven Jackson, examines Sino-Japanese relations and how important the US-Japan alliance is for confronting China's political and economic growth. The role of Australia in the Asia-Pacific region is analyzed in chapter 6. Here, author Malcolm Cook argues that Canberra's intentions to play a major regional role have been unsuccessful due to East Asian resistance. Indeed, Canberra's position has been negatively affected by its fixation on China over the last four decades, which has damaged relations with other East Asian nations. Chapters 7 and 8, by Steven Drakeley and Go Ito, offer interesting overviews of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea (affecting China's relations with some of the ASEAN countries)

and the East China Sea (with Japan), and show that Chinese claims are far from being proved. In chapter 9, Harsh V. Pant focuses on the complicated relationship between India and China and how it has been affected by the divergent positions and interests of both these Asian giants over the last decades. The author explains how regional states consider New Delhi as a counterbalance to a rising China.

Yitan Li and Enyu Zhang raise some interesting issues in chapter 10, as they scrutinize the complex relationship between China and Taiwan. The authors focus on how Beijing's rise affects Taipei's position towards the mainland, and assess the different views that political elites and the Taiwanese population have regarding China's rise. The Taiwanese people have been increasingly concerned about their country's growing economic dependence on China in recent decades, a concern which has served to simultaneously create a distinct identity among the island's inhabitants. In this sense, the Taiwanese public's general sentiment is a strong desire for independence and a staunch opposition to reunification. This rejection by the general population to a growing cross-strait relationship contrasts with the local elites' much more accommodating strategy towards China. The author concludes that Beijing will have to be very careful in dealing with this situation in the future. In chapter 11, Artyom Lukin analyzes the Russian response to the rise of China and how an alliance between both countries would alter the balance of power in the region. The author states that both countries have different spheres of influence in Asia and the world and may support each other's position in the case of conflict with other nations. The final chapter, by Do Thanh Hai and Kim Huynh, is centred on Chinese-Vietnamese relations and how complicated they have been historically.

This book offers a very interesting and original vision of the PTT. As the book's contributors have shown, the idea that China's rise will not have any real effect on US power in the region is really appealing. However, the volume is lacking in one regard: an analysis of the Korean Peninsula is missing. The rise of China has strong implications for its Korean neighbours and at the same time the conflict in Korea contributes to the major role the US plays in Asia. Looking ahead, the PTT is likely to remain complex and Korea may play a major role in it.

This book is a valuable contribution to the subject of the PTT. How China's rise will affect Beijing-Washington relations is a fundamental issue to be confronted in the future. The book illuminates the complicated responses of the different nations of the Asia-Pacific region to this event.

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