The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been skillful No End in Sight to Party Rule in China

The Dictator’s Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party’s Strategy for Survival

By Bruce J. Dickson

Oxford University Press, 2016, 368 pages, $25.00 (Hardcover)

In a widely cited Wall Street Journal article last year, David Shambaugh, a leading American Sinologist, declared, “The end game of communist rule in China has begun, and Xi Jinping’s ruthless measures are only bringing the country closer to a breaking point.”

In The Dictator’s Dilemma, Bruce J. Dickson persuasively refutes the thesis of a coming collapse of China by arguing that the “Chinese people generally support their political system, at least for the time being.” He offers powerful counterfactual arguments based on two major surveys and in-depth interviews with focus groups: Chinese family incomes have been on the rise, mitigating public discontent. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been skilful in managing the people through a mix of carrots and sticks, and also adaptive to changing environments through selective co-option of individuals and NGOs. He concludes that Chinese people are neither fed up with the CCP nor impatient for political and economic reform. This is so partly because they accept the Chinese style of democracy as a legitimate mode of political governance.

Dickson’s book is theoretically innovative, empirically rigorous and rich in policy implications. His argument is extremely well structured and easy to read. This book presents superb scholarship by combining mainstream theories of comparative politics with lively area expertise. This is a must-read for students of Chinese studies as well as general readers interested in political developments in China.

Reviewed by Chung-in Moon, Editor-in-Chief of Global Asia and distinguished professor emeritus, Yonsei University, Seoul.

Talking With the Enemy’s People

Isolate or Engage: Adversarial States, US Foreign Policy, and Public Diplomacy

Edited by Geoffrey Wiseman

Stanford University Press, 2015, 328 pages, $95.00 (Hardcover)

The last decade has seen public diplomacy tightly integrated into traditional inter-governmental diplomacy. It is no longer considered a supplement but essential for many governments. But what should be public diplomacy’s role towards adversarial states with limited or no formal-diplomatic relations with the US? Seeking answers, the 11 contributors to this volume navigate nine adversarial cases: the USSR/Russia, China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Iran, Libya, Syria and Venezuela.

Two points stand out: First, as public diplomacy is increasingly seen less in monologic, informational terms and more in dialogic, relational terms, US public diplomacy activities directed at these adversarial states are not solely representations of America, but also identity formations of America, in which the very opposition to the “other” has an effect in turn on the “self.” Second, the authors almost uniformly argue that US public diplomacy in its broadest sense is an essential part of confidence-building mechanisms.

The authors see US public diplomacy as essential to confidence-building mechanisms.

Economic slowdown, synchronized across the globe, has already settled into being a “new normal” in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The hype of globalization is yielding to creeping deglobalization, as demonstrated most recently by the UK’s vote to leave the EU. Nations have been turning inward, rebuilding trade barriers and fencing off their neighbors. In this era, what should our expectations be for global economic growth, and how can we predict economic prospects for individual nations?

In response, Ruchir Sharma, an investor at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, presents “ten rules” that foretell the rise or fall of nations in the coming five to 10 years. These rules run from demographics and productivity, geographical location, investment and debt, prices and politics, the role of billionaires, and even media coverage. The author discusses each of these 10 indicators in great detail, with rich empirical evidence throughout.

Sketching in the final chapter how the top emerging and developed nations rank on the 10 rules, Sharma divides his predictions on national performance into four income groups and lists the “good” performers in each: In the high-income group are the US and Germany; in middle-income, Mexico, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania; in low-to-mid income, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Kenya. As the author himself emphasizes, this book is not about the causes of economic performance but is intended for practitioners as “a practical person’s guide for spotting the rise and fall of nations, in real time.”

Reviewed by Taehwan Kim.

The Ten Habits of Successful Countries

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Reviewed by Taehwan Kim.

Knockoffs Give Way to the New

China's Next Strategic Advantage: From Imitation to Innovation

By George S. Yip and Bruce McKern

The MIT Press, 2016, 304 pages, $22.01 (Hardcover)

China has long been known for cheap, low-quality products and knockoffs of luxury goods. No longer. This book traces its evolution from the world’s factory to a world center of innovation. George Yip, professor at the Imperial College Business School in London, and Bruce McKern, visiting research fellow at Oxford University, describe China’s path to global competitiveness in terms of three phases and a “Four Cs framework” — Chinese customers and culture, local companies’ capabilities, and the cash now fueling companies’ global ambitions.

China’s Next Strategic Advantage: From Imitation to Innovation

The authors argue that China’s companies are moving beyond the resource spree.

Against the conventional wisdom that Chinese corporate investment abroad is all about acquiring primary resources in emerging economies, the authors argue that its companies are moving beyond the resource spree to buying market access, brands, technology and human expertise. At least since 2005, this new buying spree by Chinese companies has been pushed by the government’s “go global” policy.

The authors list specific, detailed lessons for multinationals to enhance their innovative strategies not only for Chinese markets but for global markets.

Reviewed by Taehwan Kim.
Do Great Powers Come in Threes?

This Brave New World: India, China, and the United States
By Anja Manuel
Simon & Schuster, 2016, 368 pages, $27 (Hardcover)

China’s Success as a Pushy Neighbor

Evelyn Goh assembles a team of regional experts to assess Beijing’s influence on its poorer cousins, asking how its rising power is actually put to use.

If power is a muscle car, influence is the highway. The book’s overall conclusion is that Beijing is quite effective at nudging neighbors further and faster along the road, but rarely can it force smaller powers to do a U-turn. Myanmar and Vietnam, for example, lever advantage from the Sino-US great power rivalry, increasing economic links to China while improving political ties to the US — reminiscent of how some Asian countries played Moscow off against Beijing in the Cold War era. The former master of that game, North Korea, has no play today with Washington, but James Reilly sees it being subtly nudged by China toward state-led capitalism, another example of less obvious forms of Chinese “influence” on developing Asian nations.

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Global Asia

Rising China’s Influence in Developing Asia
Edited by Evelyn Goh
Oxford University Press, 2016, 304 pages, $95 (Hardcover)

The Questions Asia Can’t Ignore

Fault Lines in a Rising Asia
By Chung Min Lee

Addressing the US Congress in 2013, South Korean President Park Geun-hye coined the term “Asia’s paradox” to describe the contradiction between the region’s hopes and fears. Economically, Asia offers the world a hopeful model of free trade and financial integration. But as a political community, Asia can barely be said to exist.

Lee Chung Min develops this paradox at book length, focusing on the dark underbelly of Asia’s rise. Lee sees Asia’s booming economy trembling under the strain of underlying security risks. The perils derive from long-term structural trends as well as middle-of-the-night contingencies. Can China’s rise be accommodated without resort to arms? What conflicts could erupt if Asia’s economic drive sputters or divest? Can regional actors manage the slow of security dilemmas — maritime disputes, territorial ambitions, sovereignty conflicts? What values hold Asia together, given the splits between democratic, authoritarian and communist political systems? Can Japan, Korea and China reconcile their historical narratives? If not, how can they achieve basic trust?

Lee is deeply pessimistic that positive answers can be found to most such questions, and his pessimism darkens further as he documents the region’s intensifying arms race. Defense budgets suggest that Asia’s militaries are preparing for the worst.

Finally, there are the “failed states” with nuclear arsenals sitting like powder kegs on Asia’s southwest and northeast corners. Lee offers no easy answers, but maps the dangerous terrain policy-makers and diplomats will have to navigate for decades to come.

Global Asia

Post-War US Allies on a Tight Leash

Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia
By Victor D. Cha
Princeton University Press, 2016, 352 pages, $35 (Hardcover)

Victor Cho’s forcefully argued thesis in this study of the origins of US alliances in Asia is what he terms the powerplay. After Japan’s unexpectedly fast surrender in 1945, and with the US foreign-policy establishment mostly focused on Europe, there was no clear vision for Asia’s future under its new hegemonic power. But by the early 1950s, an implicit two-track strategy emerged of using tight, bilateral alliances to reassure but restrain non-Communist Asian countries.

While the public postures (then as now) stressed America’s friendly commitment to defending its loyal ally, the private diplomacy was as much about stopping bellicose nationalist leaders such as Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee from re-igniting the latent civil wars in China and Korea. In Japan’s case, the US created a smothering alliance structure to ensure no slippage back toward nationalist militarism and ward off the lure of Communism. In all three cases, the US exploited these close treaty alliances to keep boots on the ground and boats in the water of the Western Pacific, close to dual threats from Russia and China.

Unlike in Europe, where the US partially ceded unilateral control to a multilateral security mechanism (NATO), in Asia Washington held tight the reins on its three potentially recalcitrant allies, who could be tamed more easily if not given a “collective security” structure of their own.

Reviewed by John Delury.
**In Denial Over Climate Danger**

**The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable**
By Amitav Ghosh

University of Chicago Press, 2016, 176 pages, $22.00 (Hardcover)

Long fascinated by the power of nature, Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh in recent years has grimly watched the world, led by marginally concerned leaders, hurtle towards catastrophe. An invitation in 2014 to give four lectures at the University of Chicago on the anthropocene thus let him turn his gaze fully towards the coming climate disaster. He emerged from months of research with not only dismay, but disbelief at the enormity of the existential crisis, and humanity’s lackadatical response, which can only be explained by what he calls the Great Derangement.

Among the themes on which Ghosh reflects in these essays are why members of his own tribe, fiction writers, have shied away from humanity’s unprecedented threat, and why the wealthy and powerful live by the water, risking monstrous storms that turn the ocean view deadly. He also wonders about imperialism’s unintended positive impact in stopping Asians developing a carbon economy earlier. Not that developing countries escape blame: “Global warming is ultimately the product of the totality of human actions over time;” he writes.

And he is not optimistic. Human propensity for short-term gain and overexploitation of common resources seems to be driving humanity like the hero in Greek tragedy towards inevitable doom. The only sliver of hope is in what he sees as the growing engagement of religious groups and leaders in climate change politics to help reduce emissions “without sacrificing the considerations of equity.”

Reviewed by Nayan Chanda, founding editor of YaleGlobal Online and a Global Asia Editorial Board member.

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**Behind A Billion Screens: What Television Tells Us About Modern India**
By Nalin Mehta

HarperCollins, 2015, 312 pages, $22.45 (Hardcover)

From a sole state broadcaster airing farming news, India’s TV stations blossomed after liberalization like rice after the monsoon. But Nalin Mehta’s well-researched book has news for those who think India’s vibrant democracy is nourished by a lively media.

India boasts 800-plus TV channels, nearly half of them news channels, and a third broadcast 24/7. But only a few actually broadcast “news,” and only 7 percent of TV viewership actually consumes news. Audiences are treated to shouting matches among a dozen talking heads framed in small boxes.

Like India’s democracy, its media freedom too is a work in progress.

**China and Japan, Needling Neighbors**

**Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun: Sino-Japanese Relations, Past and Present**
By June Teufel Dreyer

Oxford University Press, 2016, 472 pages, $22.99 (Hardcover)

As Chinese and Japanese patrol vessels circle each other around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, a military buildup continues apace on both sides to prepare for naval conflict. June Teufel Dreyer’s magisterial history of the two nations’ long rivalry is perfectly timed.

Dreyer has given her career to the long, complex relations between Asia’s two oldest civilizations and has produced an admirable, accessible account of the 1,500 years of interactions. From the origins of the Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun, Dreyer has tracked their rivalry and competition up to 2015. From the 7th century when Japan’s Prince Shotoku incensed the Chinese emperor by calling China the Land of the Setting Sun, to the ups and downs of tributary relations, to warm ties between teacher and disciple to the provocative Japanese visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the book presents a fascinating vista, tinged by a thread running through it all: “the unwillingness of either China or Japan to accept the other as an equal, and the refusal of either to accept a position of inferiority to the other.”

Dreyer takes hope from mutual dependency: The 10 million Chinese employed by 23,000 Japanese firms, China’s economic troubles, Japan’s greying and its dependence on the huge Chinese market all argue for co-operation, not confrontation. China and Japan seem destined to remain rivals forever. But will historical anger and frustration boil over into conflict?

The enormous cost of this should be a restraint, and Dreyer invokes the old Chinese saying, “Stones that cannot escape each other rub each other smooth.”

Arms races, aircraft and missiles are not so smooth.

Reviewed by Nayan Chanda.

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**Nationalism Enshrined**

**Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan’s Unending Postwar**
By Akiko Takenaka

University of Hawaii Press, 2015, 296 pages, $35.00 (Hardcover)

Yasukuni Shrine, the private 19th-century Shinto shrine in Tokyo that is a key commemorative site for Japan’s wartime dead, has long been a source of political controversy, associated with revisionist moves to project an image of Japan in the 1930s as a benign imperial actor, “liberating” Asia from Western colonial exploitation. Linked to this is an image of the Japanese as blameless “victims” who suffered either from the actions of their wartime leaders, or, in the war’s final stages, from the destructive US bombing campaigns.

Akiko Takenaka innovatively shows that Yasukuni is more multidimensional and nuanced than the political issues associated with it. She analyzes the shrine’s physical significance, and how space is used to shape — sometimes manipulatively — present attitudes to the past. She also documents how nationalistic ideas associated with it have evolved separately from the physical site, and how the controversies would not be resolved simply by establishing a new public memorial to Japan’s war dead. Imaginatively combining architectural theory, the discourse of comparative memory, psychological concepts of trauma and extensive source material, Takenaka offers a distinctive, sometimes surprising assessment of the growing importance of memory and identity politics in today’s Japan.

Reviewed by John Nilsson-Wright, Senior Lecturer in Modern Japanese Studies, University of Cambridge, and Head, Asia Programme, Chatham House.
Japan’s Complex Memories of War

The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory and Identity in Japan
Edited by Akiko Hashimoto
Oxford University Press, 2015, 208 pages, $14.39 (Kindle)

Japan’s bitter experience of conflict and war in the 20th century, culminating in nuclear devastation, has long been a source of controversy and interpretative division in Japanese politics. Since 1945, rival conservative and liberal views on Japanese responsibility for the excesses of the 1930s have been so diametrically opposed that meaningful discussion about the past has been closed off. It has thus become common for Western media to argue that Japan has collective amnesia and that its younger generation suffers a complete absence of any awareness or deep understanding of its past.

This elegantly written study provides a timely and persuasive corrective to this view. Hashimoto argues that contemporary Japanese views of the past are far more diverse and that the collective trauma of wartime suffering and defeat have produced multiple historical narratives. These narratives can be grouped into three typologies organized around contrasting accounts of the heroes, victims, and perpetrators of the war. To explore these narratives, Hashimoto analyzes the recollections of former soldiers, media accounts of annual commemorations of the war in Japan, and children’s history comics and social studies textbooks used in Japanese schools. In the process, she also highlights the commonalities between history discourse in Japan and other countries (most notably Germany), while analyzing the political dynamics shaping three competing policy options for the country — whether nationalist, pacifist or reconciliation-based solutions to the problem of contested historical memory.

Reviewed by John Nilsson-Wright.

Easternization: War and Peace in the Asian Century
By Gideon Rachman
London: The Bodley Head, 2016, 320 pages, $25.95 (Hardcover)

Gideon Rachman has penned an elegant account of the forces transforming international power and the contest for influence between the US and China, both globally and within East Asia. As a Financial Times journalist with enviable access to national leaders, Rachman presents a balanced assessment of the long-term forces that have shaped great-power relations and a cautious look at likely shifts in international relations over the next decade or so.

At heart, he is pessimistic, recognizing that the shift of economic gravity to China and East Asia will continue, as will the decline of US relative power. He rejects the liberal internationalist optimism that assumes the US and China will develop a mutually co-operative stance to address common global challenges, such as environmental degradation and cyber security.

Rachman also rejects the realist assumption that fear of conflict will persuade the US to simply accept China’s inevitable dominance in East Asia. Instead, US officials will fight to maintain their primacy and reassure Asian allies of their commitment. He is broadly positive in assessing US foreign policy, while recognizing that fiercely contested security challenges in East Asia, such as maritime territorial claims and the emergence of more assertive leadership — in China, Russia, Japan, India or North Korea — have materially increased the risk of military conflict.

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Is a US-China Clash Inevitable?

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