



Kanti Bajpai, Selina Ho, and Manjari Chatterjee Miller, eds., *Routledge Handbook of China-India Relations*

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The *Routledge Handbook of China-India Relations* delivers original contributions from forty-three authors in thirty-five chapters, covering seven themes in the relationship: historical overviews, cultural contacts and strategic thought, bilateral conflicts, military relations, economic relations and connectivity, relations with selected third parties, and Chinese and Indian views on global order.

In the introduction editors Kanti Bajpai, Selina Ho, and Manjari Chatterjee Miller emphasize the “mixed motive” game characterizing China-India relations, and their commitment to scholarship beyond the common focus on China-India competition and relative military, economic, and technological power. The editors argue the book has four distinct features compared to other edited China-India volumes: it includes both assessments of the relationship and comparisons of the two countries; it examines the history of the relationship; it brings greater attention to cultural and social ties between China and India; and it provides a platform for diverse voices with respect to research orientation, regional and cultural background, and gender.

Several chapters stand out as especially useful. Tarun Khanna leads with a highly personal account of his experience in comparing China and India. Khanna’s essay may slightly overplay the utility of comparison in substituting for laboratory experiment and underplay the utility of comparison in identifying meaningful differences in interests, power, or behavior that are crucial for adequate policymaking. However, his defense of research for the purpose of description, his encouragement of collaborative interdisciplinary scholarship, and his support for participation in political and economic activity together form a guide for scholars seeking a rich and satisfying research life that results in genuine understanding (though sadly in the context of social science departments focused on incremental improvements to methodology, perhaps not always tenure).

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The chapter by M. Taylor Fravel on China's approach to border disputes with India explains why the border issue remains unresolved. The more powerful party views the border issue as a secondary concern and seeks border stability rather than a final settlement. It serves as a reminder that notwithstanding increased bilateral cultural, economic and other forms of connectivity and valuable new research on these issues in the constructivist and liberal traditions, the overall relationship between China and India remains best explained by a realist perspective. Lora Saalman's piece on acquisition of artificial intelligence in the military relations section of the book augments the economic relations section by examining technology and innovation capabilities and importantly, potential weaknesses in Chinese and Indian approaches to technology and innovation.

Lydia Powell's contribution on climate negotiations shows how the two countries aligned to oppose western approaches to climate agreements based on risk management. Instead, China and India imposed a new narrative more consistent with their interests based on "growth within limits." Chinese and Indian challenges to existing global institutions, norms, and (claimed) common interests – due to both divergent interests and the association of those institutions with western powers – is an under-explored issue, even in this volume. Huang Yanzhong's chapter on global health governance does not explicitly address the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged as this volume went to press. Yet it provides essential political and institutional context for understanding Indian and Chinese responses to global pandemic engagement and the high but quite different domestic costs both countries have paid.

The strength of the volume is in its diversity and the breadth of subjects covered. There are nevertheless some missed opportunities. The chapters shift between relationship assessment, comparison, and normative prescription without a clear organizing framework. The chapters on security issues and nuclear weapons do not explore security dilemma dynamics, especially the "nested security dilemmas" [1] entangling China and India at both global great power and regional power levels. The economics chapters fail to address a development underway for some years: China's political-economic re-centralization, its inward turn, trade and investment de-coupling, and what this may mean for India and the bilateral relationship. The editors planned on a chapter dealing with Chinese and Indian relations with Europe which did not appear. It could have shed light on the surprising similarities in the Chinese and Indian responses to Russia's war on Ukraine and its threat to Europe. The volume does not explore or compare nationalist and anti-liberal thought and movements present in both countries, nor does it examine the situation of women or minorities in each country – particularly Muslims. Nevertheless, the book provides an accessible single source for a wide range of China-India scholarship, and it will be a valuable resource for both institutions and individuals.

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Declarations

Conflict of Interest I have no financial or employment relationship with the editors, the contributors, or the publisher of the book I have reviewed. I have no financial or employment relationship with the journal that requested me to write this review.

References

1. Gilboy, George J., and Eric Heginbotham. 2012. *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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