

***Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security.* By Denny Roy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. Hardcover: 279pp.**

Denny Roy's comprehensive survey examines the impact of China's growing military and economic power through the lens of a "hegemonic transition" that Roy perceives to be underway in East Asia. This will not necessarily lead to war between the United States and China, but the cost of avoiding it would be "the abdication of America's position as a great power in Asia" to permit "a hegemonic transition without a hegemonic war" (pp. 57, 140). Even if the two powers find a *modus vivendi*, China's growing strength will increase domestic pressure on Beijing to act more assertively abroad (pp. 35, 258), and other nations will have to adjust to the reality of Chinese dominance. In any case, the book concludes, "China's continued growth into a Great Power or a regional hegemon will likely lead to a net reduction in security for most of the world" (p. 262).

Roy begins his analysis with distinctive elements of China's worldview. First among these is lessons from China's past: that China deserves to regain its position as the world's greatest country; that China must not be divided, and therefore must regain lost territory such as Taiwan; and that the world's other Great Powers are ruthless and exploitative and will oppose China's rise (p. 15). Equally important is Chinese exceptionalism, the belief that China as a Great Power will not behave as others have done because it is acutely conscious of having been dented, because it is an inherently defensive country that never makes war unless attacked, never seeks hegemony, etc. (pp. 24–26). Yet despite this self-image, Roy asserts, "Beijing's desire and intention is to make eastern Asia ... a Chinese sphere of influence" to be "the preeminent power and rule maker within the region" (p. 161).

The volume alternates chapters analyzing broader issues — military power, risks of conflict, factors that mitigate such a risk etc. — with chapters examining how that affects China's neighbours and the international system. The explicitly zero-sum analysis assumes that for one Great Power to have more security, the neighbouring Great Power must have less (p. 57). As the balance shifts in China's favour, Vietnam is "acknowledging Chinese hegemony", "bending to Chinese power but not breaking" (p. 117). China and India are locked in a struggle of containment and counter-containment, each seeking to limit the other's influence (pp. 107–08). China's rise is closing the

space for Russia's re-emergence as a Great Power, and may either re-ignite Sino-Russian tensions (p. 103) or force Moscow to accept subordinate status to avoid serious tensions with Beijing (p. 128). Japan is losing badly in the centuries-long competition for regional leadership (p. 89), but Roy does not take sides between those who think Tokyo will turn to appeasement and those who expect full rearmament and a cold war with China, the only two outcomes he considers (p. 102).

These somewhat controversial judgments aside, the author does a good job outlining the issues at play in each relationship and in the overall strategic environment. The brief chapter on military modernization is a good introduction for those who have not considered the issue. The chapter on mitigating factors is a useful counterbalance to the Hobbesian power struggle depicted in other chapters, outlining the many constraints on China's ambition. Among these are China's unwillingness to take on all the responsibilities and burdens of a hegemonic leader (p. 146) and Beijing's recognition that overly aggressive behaviour can be counter-productive, frightening the neighbours and helping the main opponent organize its anti-China containment strategy (pp. 147–56). Despite these mitigating factors, however, there is a persistent risk of conflict, as the author articulates in chapters on Taiwan, North Korea and the South China Sea.

There are a few structural flaws that mar an otherwise excellent work. First is the lack of attribution for several strong statements about the motives of various actors. In a work of such breadth, it is inevitable that an author must rely on assertions without room to lay out the facts and analysis underlying them. But it is incumbent on the author to know which are the most controversial and to provide at least a minimum of evidence and rationale for those. In the present case, they include the assertion that Chinese leaders consciously seek a classical "sphere of influence" in East Asia (p. 161); that Vietnamese leaders acknowledge Chinese hegemony (p. 117); that Chinese leaders give their own interests top priority, at the expense of the nation's other interests (as opposed to believing their interests to be inseparable from those of the nation) (p. 23); that there is agreement within China that the country should be more assertive now that it is stronger (p. 36). A related concern is that when the author does offer support for statements regarding Chinese views and intentions, he almost always relies on secondary rather than primary sources. It is proper to acknowledge the work of other scholars, but these issues call for more direct

evidence. Finally, the author occasionally mixes his own views into the analysis of regional issues. China's claims in the South China Sea are "expansive and unreasonable" (p. 222); China has "bullied" small countries over the Taiwan issue (p. 164); Beijing's pursuit of "its own narrow national interests" in North Korea creates more danger for everyone else (p. 178); China's and Taiwan's security demands "are not equally legitimate" (p. 221).

This volume provides an excellent overview of the regional and global implications of China's growing power. It covers the issues well and is readily accessible for students of international affairs who do not specialize in Asia or for students of China who do not specialize in international security issues. Specialists in Asian security affairs will focus more on Roy's judgments about issues under debate within the China community.

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