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The End of the Asian Century: War, Stagnation, and the Risks to the World's Most Dynamic Region, by Michael R. Auslin

Charles Edel

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themselves out? Friedman is not sure, but he does give us a disturbing prospect about which we need to think deeply.

SAM J. TANGREDI



The End of the Asian Century: War, Stagnation, and the Risks to the World's Most Dynamic Region, by Michael R. Auslin. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2017. 304 pages. \$30.

The signature foreign policy move, and greatest strategic insight, of Barack Obama's presidency was "the pivot"—later renamed "the rebalance"—to the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama's initiative grew out of his conviction that Asia had become the most important region in terms of economic dynamism, explosive demographic growth, and growing military tensions. And if one broadens the geography and semantics to include India—yielding the "Indo-Pacific"—this makes utter sense, since the region claims 60 percent of the world's population, nearly 40 percent of total global economic output, some of the fastest-growing and most capable militaries, and three nuclear states. No surprise, then, that the Obama White House argued in a November 2015 fact sheet that this region "is increasingly the world's political and economic center of gravity." Or, as top Asia expert and diplomat Kurt M. Campbell astutely wrote in *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia*, "[T]he lion's share of the history of the twenty-first century will be written in Asia" (pp. 1, 344).

While the Obama administration made a compelling case for the logic of pivoting to Asia—that is, elevating the time, attention, and resources

given to the region relative to other parts of the world—the results were uneven. Washington reinvigorated its diplomacy in the region, strengthened commitments with U.S. treaty allies, forged relationships with new partners such as Burma, began shifting military assets to the region, and negotiated a far-reaching trade deal intended to deepen economic integration. But it also failed to ratify that trade deal, suffered significant political setbacks with treaty allies Thailand and the Philippines, was unable to counter Pyongyang's rush toward acquiring nuclear weapons capable of reaching the United States, and did little to restrain Chinese maritime assertiveness and economic and political coercion in the region.

How then should one understand and evaluate the myriad factors contributing to Asia's future? And are the risks to the continued growth and stability of the region now eclipsing the region's promise? These are the questions that Michael Auslin, scholar in residence at the American Enterprise Institute, asks in his judicious, sobering, and compelling new book *The End of the Asian Century*. Auslin argues that Asia's future is significantly less assured than is commonly held. As a longtime scholar of, frequent traveler to, and trenchant observer on the geopolitics of Asia, he is positioned well to make such a case. This book is far from a polemic; in fact, Auslin approaches these questions as a skeptic, describing how he in fact originally held the opposite belief—that the twenty-first century inevitably looked to be an Asian century. Yet through repeated trips to the region and multiple meetings with senior policy makers, businessmen, and military

officers, he became convinced that risk rather than opportunity was the most salient feature of the Asian political, economic, and military landscape. He argues that U.S. policy makers have been overly optimistic about opportunities in the region and insufficiently attentive to risks, thereby warping U.S. perception of regional trends and causing the United States to pursue misguided policies.

This book is Auslin's attempt to introduce a framework to assess risks in Asia properly, across five major categories. These include threats to Asia's growth from the end of its economic miracle and the failure to implement structural macroeconomic reforms; demographic pressures that will place increasing strain on rapidly modernizing and urbanizing political and economic systems; unfinished political revolutions that will address these large-scale economic and social dislocations; long-term historical antagonism among various Asian states, the lack of effective regional political community among them, and the dearth of effective institutions to mitigate crises; and, most alarming, the growth of power politics and the increasing potential for war. The book's organization follows these categories, with chapters mapping risk in each thematic domain. A final chapter both summarizes and concludes with a series of policy recommendations.

Auslin posits that as risk increases, prudent investors take out more insurance. This advice is as relevant to nations as to individual investors, and applies across all the categories of risk contained in the earlier sections of the book. In the security realm, he argues for a concentric triangular approach, with an inner core of states—Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore—working

closely with an outer core of the region's liberal-democratic heavyweights, Australia, India, and Japan, to counter an increasingly aggressive China. Economically, he advocates for structural reforms within Asian nations and trade liberalization among them. To alleviate political instability, he pushes a realistic democracy-promotion program. To avoid isolating China, he promotes an agenda for enhancing contact with ordinary Chinese citizens. Linking all these recommendations is a belief that long-term stability in Asia is most likely to flow from increased liberalization and democratization, and that the United States should have an indispensable role as partner and catalyst in that process. Absent American involvement, investment, and leadership, short- and long-term instability are likely to rise.

Auslin issues the caveat that his book is not intended as a comprehensive guide to all the countries in the region or all the issues affecting them. And yet in just 222 pages his book manages to serve not only as an excellent introduction to the region but as an incisive guide to understanding the contemporary risks roiling the most consequential region of the world. Extremely useful for national security professionals, investors, and interested observers alike, this book moves beyond headline news to analysis and advice in navigating the region's shifting geopolitical, demographic, and economic landscape. Some will find his recommendations too aggressive, although his policy prescriptions explore both costs and benefits. Others perhaps will allege that Auslin is too bearish, too gloomy on what many are expecting to be the dawn of the Asian century. But, given the acceleration of tensions in

Asia, the demise of trade liberalization, the erosion of democracy and advance of autocratic rulers, and the doubts the Trump administration has cast on its commitment to alliances, we may find that he was in fact too sanguine.

CHARLES EDEL



Warring Navies: India-Pakistan; Indian Navy's Role in the Indo-Pak Wars, by Ranji Rai and Joseph Chacko. Dombivli West, India: Frontier India Technology, 2014. 320 pages. \$20.

Ranji Rai and Joseph Chacko's book, *Warring Navies*, is a welcome addition to the scant coverage of the naval history of South Asia. The authors are a retired Indian navy commodore and a defense journalist, respectively, and the book draws heavily on Commodore Rai's experiences in the navy. The book itself crosses the boundaries between memoirs and popular history, covering the history of the Indian navy's operations from independence through the end of the Cold War. It also includes several stand-alone essays on various topics related to maritime and regional security by prominent retired Indian military leaders, such as former army chief Ved P. Malik, former navy chief Vishnu Bhagwat, and Lieutenant General C. Satish Nambiar. One of the major strengths of the book is its coverage of the many lesser-known uses of the Indian navy (e.g., the liberation of Goa in 1961 and the interventions in the Maldives, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka in the 1980s). It is particularly useful for both Indian and non-Indian readers to be aware of these past actions today, as both India and its international

partners debate India's role as a security provider in the Indian Ocean region.

The book is pitched toward a general audience interested in military and naval affairs in South Asia. The prose is engaging and humorous, which makes the book a quick read. For example, the title for the chapter on the 1965 war—in which the Indian navy was not particularly active—is “The Navy Does Sweet Fanny Adams in 1965.” One of the more interesting aspects of this book is its use of various Indian, Pakistani, and American autobiographies and memoirs to interject vignettes from people involved in the conflicts, ranging from Indian naval officers to Pakistani leaders and even to Henry Kissinger. These provide insight into the perspectives of participants in the events. The book's main strength is that it gives an insider's view on the challenges of joint operations for the Indian military. There are some excellent examples, ranging from air force and naval aviation in the 1965 war to amphibious operations in 1971 and smaller operations in the 1980s.

A couple of minor points detract from the book. Given that it is a popular history based on personal observations and the memoirs of participants, some of the general history of the conflicts does reflect older interpretations and narratives that are now debatable. The book is not academically sourced and does not have citations, so the reader is left wondering whether the book would have been improved if the authors had engaged more with the work of recent historians, such as Srinath Raghavan's excellent work on the 1971 war, or even the classic histories of the Indian navy done by Admirals Singh and Hiranandani. Similarly, the book could