

**Asia and Europe in the 21st Century:
New Anxieties, New Opportunities**
by Rahul Mishra, Azirah Hashim and Anthony
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*Shayesta Nishat Ahmed**

The contemporary century's principles and values underwent a re-evaluation in the context of the global order. The post-Cold War ideologies have shaped the unipolar international order, which is led by the United States (US). Values like democracy, international law, respect for human rights, and state sovereignty are now up against a revisionist opposition. The anti-liberal international order has replaced it due to the development of populism, trade protectionism and identity politics. This edited book by Rahul Mishra, Azirah Hashim and Anthony Milner focuses on the concerns and objectives that both European and Asian governments have, the connections between the two, and building on the initiatives of the US and China, the two superpowers of the current century.

The book is divided into four segments, with the first section unravelling the constructs of both Western and non-Western knowledge of the subject of international relations (IR). The second section explores the differences

* Dr Shayesta Nishat Ahmed is a Research Analyst at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi.

and similarities between the various security infrastructure of Asia and Europe. The third portion examines how to comprehend Asian multilateral institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The fourth and the last section focuses on the Indo-Pacific developing organisations and related parts. The book includes a total of 15 essays that were presented during the 2019 Asia–Europe Conference in Kuala Lumpur to present a comprehensive picture of the regional cooperation initiatives and interactions between Asia and Europe. The edited volume details the varied exchanges between China and the US that Asia and Europe have with them. The study of multilateral, regional organisations from the viewpoints and understanding of specific academics comes up in this work.

The book's first theme examines the controversy between Western and non-Western conceptions of international relations. The chapter analyses the demise of the liberal world order and the growth of global IR as a link between Western and non-Western concepts, where the former bears racial overtones. Following this discussion, there is more discussion about how the various interpretations of IR affect the laws and procedures of a state's 'approach' and their subsequent responses. In order to create a more inclusive and participatory international order, attempts are to be undertaken to change the Western narratives that predominate in business organisations, colleges and foreign policy activities. In a bid to achieve comprehensive security through solid regional collaboration in the political, economic and socio-cultural domains, Asian states have launched non-Western initiatives like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The means of conflict between Western and non-Western governments, regional organisations and component member states are then covered in this section. As an alternative, states also work together to solve shared issues to advance inclusion. Humanitarian intervention and racial discrimination are two concepts that, while influential in shaping the rules that govern interstate interactions, also run the risk of exceeding state sovereignty.

In the second section, the effects of contemporary globalisation on nations and international organisations are discussed, with particular emphasis on how ASEAN and the European Union (EU) have turned regions that had historically experienced war into places of peace and prosperity. It examines multilateral collaboration between these two regional organisations and explores three crucial areas—cyberspace and financial securities, information technology, and cyberspace and its security in the modern world—that could ensure their success. There are few shared interests between ASEAN and EU

nations, however, as a result of the post-colonial legacies of these nations, as they disagree on crucial immigration, climate change and the unemployment challenges facing the younger population. Given that the ASEAN is a confederation of regional governments and the EU is a legal supra-national community, there is a difference between the two regional organisations. ASEAN is caught between the US and China because of their contrasting trade policies. This is also due to the ASEAN member states' location and geography. The same justification, however, falls short when applied to Russia and the EU. In the years following the Cold War, the perceptions of security in Europe have changed as the priorities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have changed from defending against a post-Soviet Russia to addressing more contemporary security threats, such as those posed by non-state actors and a wide range of problems involving climate change, the global economy, IT, and the potential for pandemics in the future.

The book's third part focuses on responses from Asia and Europe on a regional and international scale to Chinese projects like the BRI and SCO. In terms of foreign policy and economic reliance, Malaysia, under the leadership of Prime Ministers Najib Razak and Mahathir Mohamed, is a shining example of an Asian state's relationship with the BRI, which China backs. Similar to how China and Europe have a close economic relationship, they recognise China as a systemic rival. Regarding their interactions with China and the BRI, which China supports, EU member states don't have a similar opinion. But compared to their bilateral ties with the US, bilateral relations between Europe and China are secondary. A 'community of shared destiny' was the idea behind the BRI, which aims to revitalise China's historical legacy while reshaping the world economy. The Shanghai-Five, backed by China and eventually evolved into the SCO to create a more effective multilateral and non-Western regional organisation, was primarily made by the Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The last section of the book consists of four chapters, which cover the Indo-Pacific concept since the late Shinzo Abe first mentioned it in the Indian Parliament in 2007 to match the changing strategic environment of the regional and global order. In the Indo-Pacific area, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is one such diplomatic structure. The US, India, Japan and Australia have formed the QUAD, a strategic security forum to secure the marine trade supply chain and thwart Chinese escapades in the area. The importance of Indonesia's involvement in the study of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific can be attributed to its independent stance on global issues, which is

unaffected by outside pressure or influence. Given that it has its own Indo-Pacific Treaty with an ASEAN view to defend inclusivity, complementarities, peace and stability by retaining ASEAN centrality, it has been one of the most influential proponents for a broader Indo-Pacific. Thus, Indonesia seeks to cooperate with China and the US through mutual bargaining techniques to preserve the region's balance and stability and prevent any further aggression in the Indo-Pacific theatre. Sharifah Munirah Alatas contrasts S.D. Muni and Rahul Mishra's views that the Indo-Pacific is a natural construct in the book's final chapter. Alatas claims that it is brought on by the Western-focused response to China's superior economic and military capabilities. To create a more diverse society in the Indo-Pacific, it is essential to incorporate the South-East Asian concept of a regional construct. Alatas uses the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process to illustrate regional economic cooperation. The chapter by Paul Gillespie goes into great detail about the role of the EU in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Europe's responses to China's BRI, non-traditional security cooperation between the EU and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific, and the significance of maintaining an open and functional rules-based order in the region to secure the major sea lines of communication to contain China, Europe's systemic rival. Furthermore, because of the former colonial connection, European nations like France and the United Kingdom still have diplomatic ties and littoral areas. This strengthens their resolve to increase regional cooperation and reduce 'great power rivalry' nationally.

The central idea behind the edited volume is to string together the contemporary economic and political international order, particularly in Asia and Europe, and their respective regional organisations such as ASEAN and EU. The book has attempted to draw the link across a vast transnational and transregional spectrum of threats and perspectives, to modify them in to opportunities for a closer cooperative relationship between Asia and Europe. The book's various chapters need to be read together, rather than in isolation, to understand strategic contours in the Indo-Pacific. It presents evidence of the varied knowledge of the Western and non-Western thoughts in the functioning of the international order.

However, this extensive volume is not without its limitations. Since the book's scope is stretched to cover Asia, Europe and the US, there appears to be too many elements that are attempted to be discussed in the subject-matter which risks the duplication of subjects and areas. Secondly, the multiple actors addressed by the authors of this edited volume can also muddle up the perception in the mind of the readers in forming a cohesive opinion.

Furthermore, the book appears to be a pre-Ukraine conflict understanding of Europe and the Indo-Pacific. The international community's attention seems to have shifted towards the Ukraine conflict, which has subsequently given rise to the opinion in diplomatic and academic circles that the emerging Sino-Russia closeness has occupied the attention of the US, Europe and NATO. Similar books of the Indo-Pacific genre are *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities*, which is edited by Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon, *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN*, which Bhubhinder Singh and Sarah Teo have edited.

The current book presents a detailed research work that would benefit scholars and practitioners of diplomacy, security studies and policy-makers. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the understanding of Western and non-Western international and regional order and how they could function complementarily, especially in the case of Asia, Europe and the Indo-Pacific. The book's significance lies in its extensive scope of study.