Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia. Bruce A. Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, and Clive Schofield, eds. Armonk, NY and London, England: Routledge, 2013. ISBN: 9780765627643

Over the last several years a slew of books and articles have explored China's seemingly inevitable rise to the status of world hegemon. Much of this work focuses on the impact that increased Chinese economic and cultural (i.e., soft) power in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has had on the United States and the Washington Consensus. This is on top of China's increased soft power in North America itself, which is best epitomized by the rise of Confucius Institutes, of which there are over 90 in the United States and Canada, serving to advance a Chinese-backed cultural agenda (see the AAUP's report: http://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes). Other works have focused on the rise of Chinese military power, the United States' recent pivot toward Asia—which most foreign policy analysts view as an attempt to limit China's dominance in the region through increased emphasis on partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and other countries—and the United States' increased preparation for conflict with China.

Few scholars, however, have focused on the limits to China's power. In a major corrective, Bruce A. Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, and Clive Schofield's edited volume *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia* does exactly that. They, and the volume's contributors, ask whether China can really become the next world hegemon if it has to deal with up to 20 different potential land and sea border disputes. Might not a dispute on one border lead to potential additional disputes on other borders? Would China's adversaries view China's preoccupation with one border dispute as an opportunity to change the facts on the ground along another border? And while the editors do not come down definitively on one side or the other of this dispute, they do note that despite its seeming rarity in the modern world,

international borders do change. They also make a good case that because China has so many borders with so many different nation-states, focusing on China's borders and their possible implications is a strategic necessity. Finally, they correctly argue that the proclamation of China as the next world power is premature. In spite of China's increased economic, political, and military power, it is not yet a hegemon and may never become one.

Beijing's Power is part of a series of edited volumes on Northeast Asia edited by Stephen Kotkin and published by M.E. Sharpe. The volume under consideration consists of a preface by Kotkin, an Introduction and Conclusion by the book's editors, 29 maps, and 20 individual chapters, each of which tackles a separate land/sea border relationship or dispute. The volume is aimed at a scholarly audience—mainly political science, international affairs, and public policy folks. The states included in the volume are: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Taiwan, Tajikistan, and Vietnam.

One of the strengths of the collection is that it gives contested sea borders and island and maritime claims the notice that they deserve. Anyone who has paid the least bit of attention to high politics in Asia knows that there are multiple disputes over territory (and access to natural resources, especially oil and natural gas deposits) in the South China Sea. It is on these grounds that, for example, Indonesia, a country with no land borders with China, is included in the book. Multiple authors address the strategies that China and its adversaries have adopted in staking claims to these maritime territories (there is an excellent map, the best in the book, which shows the competing claims on page 234 of the volume). This strength, however, is at times also a weakness. Because each chapter (other than the introduction and conclusion) addresses China's relationship with one other nation-state, and because so many nation-states have disputes related

to the same maritime claims, multiple chapters go over the same material. This approach works okay if a reader is expected to read only a single chapter, but reading the text straight from beginning to end results in a lot of unnecessary repetition.

Another strength of the volume is that even as it tends to adopt a macro/realist framework, it does take into account the ways in which China's domestic political affairs impact its policies and actions vis-à-vis its land and sea borders. For example, the Chinese fear a flood of North Korean refugees should North Korea collapse, hence explaining China's continued support of North Korea despite the high cost of doing so. When domestic issues are not dominating Chinese policymakers, however, China has been willing to use force to advance its agenda. Yet, the hawkishness of Chinese foreign policy is often overblown. China's move away from an ideologically communist country to one that is nominally communist but has a neoliberal economy has transformed how China interacts with its neighbors. Hence, as of 2012 China had actively negotiated solutions with nine of its neighbors and was in negotiations with many other nation-states. This does not mean, however, that these resolved border disputes may not reemerge in the future. But given that these resolutions have in almost all cases resulted in increased economic ties, reopening the resolutions would be harmful to both partners. In the end, the authors argue that "it will take a delicate balancing act for Beijing to keep all of its neighbors content, particularly as its power and its ability to threaten increase, along with the incentives of its neighbors to seek alliances with outside powers—in particular the United States—and with each other" (324). Also of importance is whether the United States will seek to accommodate or contain China's power. This we should know soon enough.

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