



Book Review

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Man Mohini Kaul and Vibhanshu Shekhar, eds., *India and New Zealand in a Rising Asia: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2012, pp. 201, US\$27.00, ISBN 9788182746527.

In an ever polarising world, realignments, redefinitions, forging of new relationships and checks and balances in the strategic arena are matter of fact occurrences. Development of enhanced strategic engagement at country-to-country level and in multilateral cooperative forums have to be perceived as a continuum towards economic and geostrategic consolidation. They become a necessity for a resurgent economic power like India to deliver positivity in a new world order. The volume under review, *India and New Zealand in a Rising Asia Issues and Perspectives*, by Man Mohini Kaul and Vibhanshu Shekhar therefore comes as a fresh reminder of distant shores worthy of Indian strategic, social and economic introspection.

Considering that a net trawl on India–New Zealand relations throws up very few options, the book becomes a comment on the paucity of research material on an important country relationship. The other recent noteworthy attempt was in 2010 when IDSA published *India and New Zealand: Emerging Challenges* by Rajaram Panda and Pankaj K. Jha.

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This new attempt, however, analyses the relationship nuances between the two nations through a multilayered prism encompassing multilateralism, global finances, Asia-Pacific security issues and explores emerging synergies. The book is a compilation of 12 relevant essays by young minds of Indian intelligentsia who have persuasively juxtaposed theory and reality. All the writers have supported their points with facts, figures, graphs and tables, painstakingly constructed to give relevance, support and clarity to their arguments. However, the absence of any voice from New Zealand is glaringly felt in the book. The presence of a few essays from prominent New Zealand strategic community members or young minds would have given an international texture and flavour to the book raising it to a higher level.

Hidden in the Antipodes, New Zealand has not figured on the Indian strategic community radar for a long time. This timely book has come as an excellent wake up call to review the necessity of an Indian socio-politico-strategic pivot towards an important player of the South Pacific. An ardent advocate of regional concerns and a country capable of punching above its weight, New Zealand is showcased by the editors and the various essay contributors as a country looking out to become a prominent player in the region.

The book has been structured stylishly with the introductory chapter giving a brief outline of all the essays written in the book. This effectively serves to pique the reader's interest and gives a pleasant sense of anticipation. The logical structure also builds upon a sound foundation provided by Man Mohini Kaul in the opening essay. She talks in depth about the Indian position in New Zealand's foreign policy. She is able to trace out the New Zealand orientation towards the Asian continent in a simple and historical narrative which also touches upon the Sino-Indo rise in the region. Security dimensions in the region are given their due importance and she concludes effectively by commenting on the India–New Zealand Bilateral Relationship. Her explanation of New Zealand's nuclear concerns elegantly brings out the country's softening stance towards the Indian nuclear programme and the desire to forge a strategic partnership with India.

The book thereafter, quite naturally traces out New Zealand's foreign policy with adequate discussion on domestic and international catalysts tracing the contours of the country's ideologies and priorities. New realities and new strategies effectively deal with the Asia-Pacific pivot, multipolarity, economic resurgence, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their adding a new sense of pragmatism into

New Zealand's normative posturing. Vibhanshu Shekhar concludes by stating that for New Zealand the South Pacific remains the focus area while Australia and the United States are her principal strategic partners. India somehow does not figure in the dissertation, which is very surprising. A few comments on how India could have figured in the overall strategic scenario would have helped the reader gain greater understanding of the India– New Zealand bilateral relationship.

The balance of the essays effectively constructs a convincing case for India's engagement with New Zealand. The "Young Turks" effectively cut a wide swathe as they take on issues ranging from economic relations to relationship travails and multiculturalism. The issue of demographic influences through the diaspora prism forms an important part of the entire work and extols the Indian soft power virtuosity. The handling of terrorism and the strengthening of homeland security successfully portrays the country's attempts to keep up with the times.

The relationship with China examines its evolution minutely and supports arguments with data. The rising Chinese imports of dairy products and food items serve as a real eye opener. The contrast with previous years is striking and the author manages to make her point with *élan*. The book argues that the East Asian Summit (EAS) platform accords a good opportunity for the two countries to come close and develop a common understanding over the issue of East Asian community-building. The essays cover the relationship of New Zealand with other countries in Southeast Asia collectively while a full chapter is devoted to the relationship with the United States. An adequate pointer to the actual state of world affairs indeed! The South China Sea too finds a definite mention in the book and forms an important part of the discourse. The strategic maritime link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific is an important hotspot of the world and the essay by Amit Singh effectively traces out the reasons for both nations to address the issue substantially.

Lucidity and a clear line of thought makes this book an honest critique of the relationship between India and New Zealand, their aspirations, capabilities, maritime identity and stake holding plans. However, at the same time it also makes a compelling argument for both the countries to take their relationship further. With these tenets in mind, the book is futuristic and attempts to hold a mirror to the future. This book will be of definite interest to students of sea power, strategic studies, international relations and Asian Studies in general.