

Foreword

The rise and rising belligerence of China concerns us all, even as the powers of the West shrink, and the hegemony of the ‘sole superpower’ is successfully challenged by relatively minor entities, including non-state actors (backed by near dysfunctional states). The global power vacuum can only tempt a hubristic leadership, bloated on its economic and technological success and the rampaging growth of its defence establishment. In any event, there is a natural trajectory that any rising power follows, and that is the creation of expanding spheres of economic activity, and a corresponding expansion of defence and coercive capabilities to ‘protect’ interests abroad. ‘Protection’, in the context, translates increasingly into a euphemism for dominance and, eventually, economic colonization of what the Chinese leadership already contemptuously refers to as “small countries” who must know their place and not challenge or question a “big country” like China.¹

Other ‘big countries’ also continue with their mischief around the world, and Ukraine is the unfortunate playground where Russia, the US and the European powers currently are jockeying for their divergent favoured outcomes, much to the alarm and distress of the people and leadership of Ukraine. But this complex

1 Yang Jiechi at the 2010 ASEAN Regional Forum, after China’s South China Sea claims were criticized by the US, declared, “China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that’s just a fact.” Yi Wang, “Yang Jiechi: Xi Jinping’s Top Diplomat Back in His Element,” *China Brief* 17, no. 16, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/yang-jiechi-xis-top-diplomat-back-element/>.

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powerplay has many layers, from geopolitics, through vast criminal oligarchies, down to the ambitions of local criminals and petty political adventurers.

International organisations, the United Nations in particular, as well as NATO as a regional Alliance, was intended to bring stability and peace to the world order. Unfortunately, they appear to be failing repeatedly to fulfil their mandate, and are often seen to be acting in the interest of particular states or alliances.

State adventurism, the failures and biases of international institutions, and vacuums of power in the global order create the environment for the violation of international and humanitarian laws, as well as for the failure to address the excesses of the past. The Armenian Genocide is one among the many unresolved humanitarian tragedies of recent history, with the perpetrator state continuing to deny Turkey's excesses against its Armenian Christian minority.

Religious identity politics and extremism underpin many of the conflicts of history, as of the contemporary world. The extremism of one denomination often feeds a reflexive intemperance among others. Hate speech, extravagant and unfounded allegations and a politics of polarization have, in many theatres, put truth out of the reach not only of the people, but of relatively better-informed security professionals and commentators. Islamist radicalization has been a subject of much inflamed assessment and argumentation across the world, and no less in India. In such a perverse ecosystem, attempts to wade through the noise to arrive at some approximation of the truth are urgently needed.

In an ongoing exploration of global fault lines, the present volume explores some aspects of these various themes.

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