

## Ulasan Buku / *Book Review*

*Akademika 91(1), April 2021: 195-196*

The Geopolitics of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream: Problems and Prospects by David Arase Publisher: Routledge 2016. ISBN: 9789814762748

This book is from ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute book series on Trends in Southeast Asia that was written by David Arase, Professor of International Politics at the Hopkins-Nanjing Centre for Chinese and American Studies at Nanjing University, China as well as a Visiting Senior Fellow at ISEAS. The strength of this book is the author has succeeded in explaining the geopolitics of Xi Jinping's Chinese dream by looking at the problem which hindered China from realizing its dream.

The author started his book by saying that to achieve great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049, Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream needs to accompany with its ambitious geopolitical agenda. Geopolitics refers to three agendas which are to first, gain security against potential enemies; second, increase power and third, influence over others and to assure access to markets and resources. Traditionally, geopolitical strategy of a state is relying upon military power and alliance arrangements thus, making the geopolitics an arena of competition among great powers to dominate. In this sense, the geopolitics which had been dominated by the post cold war unipolar structure has been challenged by China asserting its great power position.

The most interesting part of the book, the author has made the comparison between Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia by looking at the geopolitics factors. Northeast Asia marked by three regional conflict which are: i) the Korean Peninsula, ii) the Taiwan Strait, and iii) militarized confrontation between China and Japan over Senkaku/Diaoyu Island. All these three factors implicate China and the United States on opposite sides. The United States presence in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan is to maintain military balances against China. Despite the hostility and armed tension surrounding the Northeast Asia countries, it is through economic interdependence and military power balances which preserve the stability in the region.

Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries on the other hand, which are modestly armed were not involved in any major unresolved armed conflicts. Governed by the ASEAN Way, ASEAN manage to preserve its stability from other intervention and play a leading role in regionalism. In this sense, economic reason has become the biggest motivation for ASEAN countries to avoid any conflicts and to maintain stability and strive for prosperity in the region. The economic integration together with its abundance resources has made ASEAN as the center of attention among great powers especially China and the United States.

Another part of the book that are worth to read is about the Chinese Dream that is reflected from China's past golden ages which was destroyed during the 'century of humiliation' due to the Opium War. Now, under Xi Jinping, China has the vision to claimed which once belonged to them based on the 'historical right' and this could explain the growing of the maritime disputes in East Asia. The Chinese dream agenda comes with clear message which signify their geopolitical interest such as i) the 'new type of great power relationship' (*xinxing daguo guanxi*); ii) the 'community of common destiny' (*mingyun gongtongti*) and 'One belt, One Road' (*yidai yilu*); iii) 'New Asian security concept' (*xinde yazhou anquanguan*); and iv) 'great power military status and maritime great power' (*Haiyang qiangguo*).

It is no doubt that the United States presence in this region has become China's problem on realizing its geopolitical expansion. This supported with the author stated that China has repeatedly tells the United States not to 'interfere' in China's conflicts with its neighbors. To China, US policy in Asia is prone to 'contain' China. For example, regarding China assertiveness in South China Sea, the US has reacted with strategic rebalancing with two objectives: i) to engage China in strategic partnership to maintains its liberal international order and ii) to preserve US alliances, bases and navigation rights in the region. Therefore, it has triggered Chinese strategy in peninsular and archipelagic of East Asia. For East Asia peninsular strategy, China focus on economic inducements to bring South Korea and Thailand into economic dependence with China. In contrast, Chinese strategy towards Archipelagic states is more on territorial disputes with Japan and the Philippines. China's has exercised its ownership rights in the disputed island. It succeeded in Scarborough Shoal/*Huangyandao* but failed in the Senkaku islands because Japan has guarded the island together with the US pledge to respond if China used military force against Japan.

Significantly, Chinese strategy is targeted to weaken US alliance and gain strategic dominance in East Asia and at the same time avoid the 'Thucydides Trap'. However, China's effort to displace US presence has more setbacks as it creates anti-Chinese coalition and violates the sovereignty of neighboring states. Instead of confrontation, the wisest move for China is to negotiate of rules that provide all states access through the littoral and disputed areas.

The weakness of this book is that it has focus more on the problem and the geostrategy to achieve Chinese Dream but focus less on the prospect part. It would be better if the author can balance both perspectives to provide comprehensive analysis of the way forward for the geopolitics of Chinese Dream in future.

Mohd Ikbal Mohd Huda  
Centre for History, Politics and International Affairs,  
Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities,  
National University of Malaysia,  
43600 Bangi, Selangor  
MALAYSIA  
E-mail: [ibahuda@ukm.edu.my](mailto:ibahuda@ukm.edu.my)

Syarifah Nattassyya Aidid  
Centre for History, Politics and International Affairs,  
Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities,  
National University of Malaysia,  
43600 Bangi, Selangor  
MALAYSIA