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Hang Thuy Thi Nguyen

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- 1 Robert G. Sutter's *The United States and Asia: Regional Dynamics and Twenty-First-Century Relations* is essential reading for anyone interested in U.S. relations to Asia. With a realist perspective, Sutter aims to assess the uncertainty and practice of US-Asian relations since the Cold War. He also seeks to analyze the regional multilateral groups, the security, economic, and political issues that determine the dynamics of U.S.-Asian relations. His overall adjustments on U.S. role in promoting stability, economic development, and advance liberal values in Asia are critically vital to understanding contemporary Asian dynamics and relations with the United States.
- 2 Before focusing on the developments of U.S. relations with Asia after the Cold War, Sutter gives a concise introduction to the evolution of U.S. relations with the Asia-Pacific from the late eighteenth century up to the end of the Cold War. This historical excursion shows that current U.S. foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific "represents the culmination of a long-standing pursuit of three sets of objectives" towards the region (23). Firstly, the United States has sought to maintain a balance of power in Asia in favor of U.S. interests and oppose any efforts by hostile powers to dominate this region. Secondly, U.S. economic interest in the Asia-Pacific has grown through U.S. expansion of trade

and investment in the region. Last, it is the U.S. culture and values that prompt efforts to promote democracy and human rights in the region and in the wider world. It is noted that the priority to each set of objectives has changed over time and U.S. leaders' ability to set priorities and organize U.S. foreign policy goals to the Asia-Pacific is varied.

- 3 Sutter examines the post-Cold War dynamics in Asia including the evolving post-Cold War security, economic and political developments and how U.S. presidential administrations from Bush to Obama have responded to those new developments. This thorough examination shows that "Americans were deeply divided over foreign policy, and contending policy perspectives were not easily bridged to develop coherent policy toward the Asia-Pacific" (45). Especially, Sutter points out that nongovernmental or lobby groups have an increasingly important role to play in shaping U.S. policy in the region. As U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy to the region, Sutter gives a very thorough analysis of the Obama administration's rebalancing policy and regional reactions. He demonstrates that this rebalancing is not a matter of U.S. disengagement and then reengagement in Asia, it is in fact a story of emphasis and priority: "The Obama administration has built on an elaborate foundation of US-Asia relations that was already in place" (74).
- 4 Sutter goes on to explore U.S. relations with the important nations and subregions in Asia. The very first nation that he touches on in his examination of the United States and Asia is necessarily China. According to Sutter, the first twenty-five years of the post-Cold War period saw China's tougher approach to secure its interests in the Asia-Pacific which has been manifested in Chinese assertiveness and expansion over maritime territorial and other disputes involving the United States' Asian allies. Apart from illustrating the economic, political and strategic drivers of the United States undertaking leadership responsibility in the Asia-Pacific, Sutter points out three set of strong restraints on China's tough measures in foreign affairs related to the United States: Domestic preoccupations, strong interdependence, and China's insecure position in the Asia-Pacific. This means that China is strongly constrained in the region, and not in a position to seriously confront and challenge the United States.
- 5 U.S. relations with the Koreas and Japan are also examined. South Korea and Japan are America's important allies in

East Asia. Both have periodical frictions with the United States as there is divergence in their priorities and U.S. ones. It is undeniable that U.S. relations with South Korea and Japan have remained of central significance in U.S. policy to Asia in the post-Cold War period and they have been a crucial element in U.S. rebalancing policy to the region. Regarding U.S.-North Korean relations, Sutter underlines that the threat from North Korea has remained America's serious concern on the Korean Peninsula. The Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations have accused North Korea of developing a highly enriched uranium nuclear weapons program and taken different approaches to engage with North Korea but there has been no improvement in the relations.

- 6 When it comes to relations with Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Sutter investigates the developments in America's bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and America's relations with Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. The post-Cold War period witnessed growing American interest and activism in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Sutter's deep analysis of U.S. policy choices and recent actions shows that the United States will continue to reinforce its strong attention to the region. It is noted that American power and influence is unsurpassed and continues to be significant to the stability and prosperity of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.
- 7 In South Asia, Sutter focuses on examining U.S. relations with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan and in Central Asia he focuses on looking at U.S. relations with Mongolia and Russia in Asia. The author observes that the International Relations theory of realism appears to explain best America's approaches to those nations.
- 8 Looking ahead, Sutter stresses that "a serious problem for effective US policy and relations in the Asia-Pacific involves American sustainability and will" (297). It is in American interest to develop closer relations with this ever more important part of the world. Chinese assertiveness in the region is a problem for the United States but does not (at least not yet) fundamentally challenge and confront continued American leadership in this region. Sutter points out that: "Beijing's obnoxious and coercive behaviour has the effect of opening even wider the doors of opportunity for American advancement in relations with most regional governments" (315) and suggests that U.S. policy makers should pursue the wide range of U.S. interests in the region within the framework of the Obama administration's

rebalance policy and ideally they should quietly demonstrate U.S. willingness and ability to pursue those interests to avoid serious confrontations with China.

- 9 *The United States and Asia: Regional Dynamics and Twenty First Century Relations* demonstrates that U.S. relations with Asia are much more than American relations with China, however, it is apparent that U.S.-China relations have been so far America's most significant preoccupation in Asia as well as in the modern world. As his research demonstrates, the rise of China will pose challenges to U.S. interests and this will continue to preoccupy the U.S. and its relations in Asia in many years to come. Sutter asserts that U.S. leadership in Asia in the twenty-first century is characterized by uncertainty due to the underlying dynamics across Asia and the changes in U.S. foreign policy agenda. He concedes that Washington must pursue its continued interests in Asia but to make this pursuit perceived by Beijing as a containment of China would be a colossal mistake.
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AUTHOR

**HANG THUY THI NGUYEN**

School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University)