

# Eurasian Research

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## Journal

### ARTICLES

**Recep Kok, Ramazan Ekinci, Seren Savaci**

The Effect of Gender Differences on  
Education Demand in Turkey:  
Ordered Probit Model

**Ilhan Ege**

Political Stability and Economic Development  
in Turkic Council: A Dynamic Panel Data Analysis

**Nalan Isik**

The Pollution Haven Hypothesis and Foreign Direct  
Investments: Evidence from the Central Asian Turkic Republics

**Dauren Aben**

Regional Security in Central Asia:  
Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges

**Azhar Serikkaliyeva**

The Role of the Central Asian Region in China's New  
Silk Road Economic Belt Project

### BOOK REVIEWS

**Gulnar Nadirova**

Education for Sustainability through  
Internationalisation: Transnational Knowledge  
Exchange and Global Citizenship

**Kanat Makhanov**

Eurasia's Maritime Rise and Global Security  
From the Indian Ocean to Pacific Asia and the Arctic

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## EURASIA'S MARITIME RISE AND GLOBAL SECURITY: FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN TO PACIFIC ASIA AND THE ARCTIC

Kanat MAKHANOV\*

**Geoffrey F. Gresh (Ed.)**, *Eurasia's Maritime Rise and Global Security from the Indian Ocean to Pacific Asia and the Arctic* Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 303 pp.

This book explores growing importance of Eurasian continent and of its maritime geography with a special focus on accelerating climate change. The melting of the Arctic Ocean would bring fundamental changes in the region's economics, politics and security. The book is intended to describe the development of the maritime Eurasia in the context of the opening of the northern sea route and rising Asian economies.

The book is rather extensive and consists of 15 chapters covering various issues around the Maritime Rise of the Eurasian continent starting from security policies of the major powers of the region and ending with the rising environmental concerns and recent changes related to this.

First of all, the authors provide fairly interesting statistical figures about Eurasian maritime trade properly highlighting the scale and relative size of the region in the global context. Such facts as over two thirds of world oil and gas reserves being deposited on the Eurasian continent, 27 of the largest 30 world's container ports being located along the Eurasian coast etc. highlights the importance of the subject of the book attracting the readers' attention.

One of the particularities of the given book is that it focuses very much on China and establishing a strong linkage between recent economic and political developments around the maritime Eurasia and Chinese policies and interests. In particular, the authors focus on China in Chapter 3 discussing the China's Maritime Silk Route agenda and the Regional Security in the context of maritime trade. In Chapter 8, the issue of security is continued to be discussed in the context of recent manifestations of the interests of China in the South China Sea that resulted in tensions with other big regional stakeholders such as Vietnam and the Philippines with a slight future projection. This approach reveals the current timeframe in which the book was written because China really is one of the most significant factors that pushes forward the Eurasian maritime agenda. At the same time, relatively little attention is paid to other less significant "players" of the maritime rise of Eurasia, especially to the role of Southeast Asia.

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Chapters 5 and 7 cover recent involvement and policies of Japan in relation to the Eurasian maritime issues. Special emphasis is made on recent relations and cooperation between Japan and India in developing mutually beneficial economic relations via maritime trade and in counteracting the rising influence and dominance of China. The authors try to present Japan and India as complementary economies due to certain clear facts about demographics, bilateral trade, transfer of technologies etc. However, fear of the two very large Asian economies of the rising Chinese influence in the Eurasian maritime issues is presented as a driving force of the recent intensification of cooperation between Japan and China. At the same time, Chapter 5 clearly reflects the fact that China perceives this cooperation as a threat to its economic and political dominance in the region and, which is more important, provides economic reasoning for this. The Chinese factors appears in many other chapters of the book in various contexts.

In Chapter 7, possible tensions between Japan and South Korea and North Korea are discussed with retrospective references and belligerent relations between the abovementioned countries. North Korea is shown as a source of uncertainty and a factor of cost for maritime trade whereas Japan's recent reforms aimed at reviving and strengthening its armed forces are perceived by the authors as a sign of readiness to reclaim certain maritime areas between the three countries and to withstand against the possible threats of the North Korean regime. In my opinion, this section exaggerates the economic and military potential of North Korea and its economic dependence on China, and countries outside the region is largely ignored.

It is worth mentioning that the book thoroughly discusses the issue of security within the Eurasian maritime framework in all main dimensions. Chapters 4, 6, 8 and 14 tackle the issues of security various points of view except for environment-related security. It is important to point out that the issue of security is well defined and explained based on clear conceptual frameworks throughout the abovementioned chapters. However, in my opinion, the discussion around cybersecurity in Chapter 6 is not highly relevant and is intended mainly to shed light on information technologies rather than cybersecurity.

The book heavily emphasizes the environmental aspect of the Eurasian maritime triumph. Basically, one of the core ideas transmitted by the book is that northern sea route is eminent. Making references on the latest available studies the authors assume that the northern route would be navigable by the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century and partially navigable by 2030. Despite numerous evaluations of the effects of the climate change, the authors of this book tend to support the hypothesis that the navigable Arctic Ocean would produce significantly more positive effects in economic terms than negative. Here it is important to note that the environmental agenda is present throughout the entire book providing a good conceptual background. The environmental agenda is exposed briefly in the first chapter of the book and explained further throughout Chapters 9, 11 and 15. It is rather interesting that the authors tackle directly the maritime Eurasia in the context of environmental issues providing climate and geography related data and studies in a detailed manner, but still in an understandable way for any reader.

In conclusion, the book can be perceived as an attempt to model the development of the maritime trade of the states of the Eurasian continent. The context of climate change is set by the authors as the principal exogenous idea that must be accepted in a way it is described in the book. One of the shortcomings of the book, however, is that it over-focuses on China and

accepts highly optimistic scenarios concerning the main Asian stakeholder. At the same time, too little attention is paid to role of Europe and throughout the book it seems to be presented as a static system in comparison to Asia.