

background as a political scientist and public law scholar specialized in the former Soviet Union, his interdisciplinary perspective on the topic of borders and orders in Central Asia and the incorporation of Afghanistan into the analysis makes this work an innovative and interesting read.

*Katja Mielke*

ARNDT MICHAEL, *India's Foreign Policy and Regional Multilateralism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 225 pages, £60.00. ISBN 978-1-13-726311-7

Regional multilateralism has played an increasingly important role in India's foreign policy since the 1990s, as reflected in the Look East Policy since 1994 and the Gujral Doctrine, with its emphasis on non-reciprocity vis-à-vis India's neighbors in South Asia, which was developed in the mid-1990s.

Arndt Michael's study on India's foreign policy and regional multilateralism compares several regional multilateral initiatives in which India has participated since the 1990s. Michael approaches the phenomenon from the theoretical perspective of norm diffusion. In five chapters he deals with the concept of norm localization and diffusion as well as the evolution of India's foreign policy. His empirical sections focus on the different regional organizations of which India is a member, for instance the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and the BCIM Regional Cooperation Forum.

Michael's work provides a valuable empirical study of India's engagement in the different regional multilateral settings. His main focus is on the development and evolution of regional multilateralism in South Asia, on which he elaborates extensively in Chapter 3 (pp. 48–112). Moreover, Michael also deserves credit for dealing with a variety of other multilateral initiatives in which India has actively engaged.

Less convincing is the theoretical framework of norm localization. Starting from Acharaya's work on ASEAN, Michael develops the concept of "norm sublimation", which "denotes the immediate phase transition that takes place if external norms are subject to an instant transformation and alteration in the process of (pre-)localization, without undergoing an intermediate phase of comprehensive norm negotiations, due to the impact of a political hegemon" (p. 16).

The relevance of the concept of norm sublimation in this context, however, is unclear. Assuming "norm sublimation", who in the context of India and China should be regarded as the hegemon (p. 16)? It is also questionable whether the impact of European experience was already strong enough in the early 1950s for regional multilateralism to be regarded as the global norm at that

time. Nor is it clear why the author speaks of "competing regionalism" (p. 19). Is regionalism a zero-sum game? Membership of more than one regional organization tends to be the rule rather than the exception. Moreover, regional organizations in Asia, and especially the examples that Michael chooses, are generally regarded as weak; consequently, competition for "political and economic resources" (p. 19) appears not to be very strong. In his empirical section, the author highlights the early discourse on regional cooperation in India (pp. 28ff). Therefore, there is no obvious reason why India should dominate regional multilateralism in the process of "norm sublimation".

According to Michael, "this process of norm sublimation is a very specific type of regional multilateralism: *Panchsheel* multilateralism, with reference to the India contract (sic!) with China in 1954" (p. 17). One of Michael's main arguments is "that India's participation in 'regional multilateralism' contradicts India's two central foreign policy paradigms of 'independence' and 'bilateralism'" (p. 18). If so, it is not obvious why the "paradigm of bilateralism is a direct consequence of the *Panchsheel* and the policy of non-alignment" (p. 36).

Unfortunately, the concluding remarks fail to clarify the arguments. According to Michael, "India especially weakens the organizations by alienating those countries that she successfully keeps out of the other organizations (e.g. Pakistan)" (p. 185). This conclusion is difficult to reconcile with the author's point that the SAARC is unsuccessful due to the rivalry between India and Pakistan.

Michael's argument that "regional multilateralism [...] will never follow the same paths as the European model" (p. 187) is certainly right, and has been stated by various authors before him. Given this, it is, however, not clear why Michael refers to the European model several times (for instance, pp. 17 and 186). Moreover, it is also unclear how and why a "supra-national" (p. 191) approach should be implemented in the SAARC framework.

Michael's main contribution is his detailed tracking of the influence of regional multilateralism on India's foreign policy. His work offers a wealth of information for scholars who seek greater insight into the role of regional organization in India's foreign policy. However, this study would have benefitted from a more appropriate theoretical approach focused on foreign policy decision making in India.

*Christian Wagner*