

Book Reviews

***China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices.* By Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. ISBN: 978-3-031-15389-1 (e-book)**

The escalating geopolitical competition between China and the United States has profoundly changed the global strategic environment, going beyond the bilateral dynamics of the two superpowers. This competition is reflected in the policies and strategic decisions of small and middle powers, which are in a state of uncertainty. The continuous escalation of United States and China competition has created a challenging international environment for many small and middle powers around the world, forcing the countries to restructure their foreign policies to maximize national interests. As a result, small and middle powers' reactions to United States and China competition have grown in importance yet have received bigger attention.

In *China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices*, Simona A. Grano and David Wei Feng Huang delve deeply into the complex interplay of agency, pressure, and opportunity that defines the foreign policy decisions of these states in a world increasingly polarized by Sino-American tensions. This book discusses the increasingly intense strategic competition between the United States and China and its impact on the strategic choices of states with small and middle powers in Europe and Asia. This book examines how these states navigated the complex relationship between the two hegemonies, balancing their economic interests with security concerns.

In Part I, Grano and Huang provides an overview of the US-China rivalry, highlighting China's rapid rise to power and its ambitions to reshape the international order. This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging, which are used to analyze the strategic choices of smaller and middle powers. Grano and Huang's theoretical framework, the bandwagon continuum, which was adapted from Alan Bloomfield, divides hedging responses into two categories: gain-maximizing strategies like economic pragmatism or limited bandwagon, and risk-contingent strategies which seek to minimize security risks by creating a balance of power. This perspective emphasizes how small and middle powers are faced with a particular conundrum when deciding which hegemon to support, as they run the risk of reprisal if they are unable to successfully maintain the balance.

However, in reaction to the United States and China rivalry, European and Asian countries according to the Part II and Part III of this book are adjusting their foreign policy. Grano and Huang claim that European countries nowadays adopting a more assertive posture toward China in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, seeking to curtail its power through a policy of denial of dominance and a renewed focus on transatlantic ties with the United States. This also holds true in Asian countries like South Korea and Japan that have always welcomed U.S. involvement in Asia for regional security, they have also aimed to preserve profitable economic ties with China. These countries have reevaluated their stances and are now more aligned with the United States since they perceive China's muscular



efforts in the region as a greater security threat.

Furthermore, the book encourages policymakers and scholars to pay attention to the strategic decisions made by these small and middle powers as they struggle to maintain autonomy in a fragmented global context marked by Superpowers. These countries can better manage their relations with the United States and China by implementing proactive policies such as diversification and bargaining tactics that protect their national interests. Overall, the book is a valuable resource for understanding how smaller states can navigate the problems of great power competition, providing useful insights for academics and practitioners in international relations.

However, while the book provides a broad overview of small and middle powers' responses to United States and China competition, it has significant shortcomings that need to be addressed. One major challenge is that the book relies on a small number of case studies, which may not adequately illustrate the range of responses in different regions. For example, while the book effectively demonstrates the experiences of certain European and Asian countries, it would have been better to include broader perspectives from Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East, where geopolitical factors have changed significantly.

Finally, given the current global geopolitical shifts, this book remains relevant today. The insight offers into how small and middle powers manage their foreign policies under such pressures as the rivalry between

the United States and China heats up. The book does an excellent task of highlighting the strategies these states use to manage their relations with the two superpowers and maximize their interests, such as hedging and balancing. Its emphasis on case studies from a range of European and Asian countries offers nuanced perspectives on the various reactions influenced by regional, historical, and domestic circumstances.

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