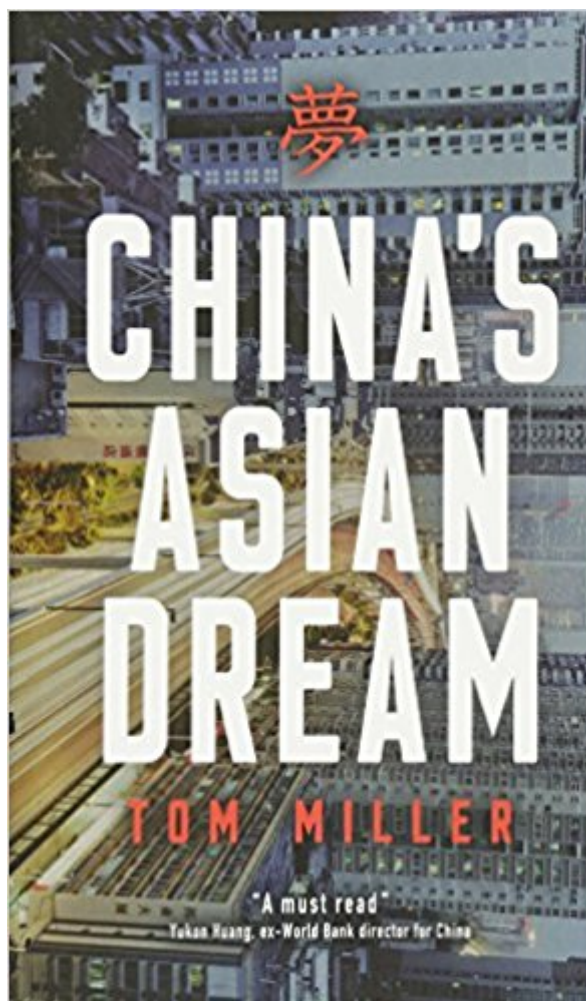


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China's Asian Dream: Empire Building Along The New Silk Road



Synopsis

“China, Napoleon once remarked, “is a sleeping lion. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will shake the world.” In 2014, President Xi Jinping triumphantly declared that the lion had awoken. Under Xi, China is pursuing an increasingly ambitious foreign policy with the aim of restoring its historical status as the dominant power in Asia. From the Mekong Basin to the Central Asian steppe, the country is wooing its neighbors with promises of new roads, railways, dams, and power grids. Chinese trade and investment presents huge opportunities for China’s neighbors, and its ability to build much-needed infrastructure could assist in the development of some of the world’s poorest countries. Yet China’s rise also threatens to reduce its neighbours to the status of exploited vassals. In Vietnam and Myanmar, resentment of Chinese encroachment has already incited anti-Chinese protests, and many countries in the region are seeking to counterbalance its influence by turning to the US and Japan. Combining a concise overview of the situation with on-the-ground reportage from over seven countries, *China’s Asian Dream* offers a fresh perspective on one of the most important questions of our time: what does China’s rise mean for the future of Asia and of the world?

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Customer Reviews

“A crisp, well-researched and well-written account. Miller has travelled extensively throughout Asia and across China’s maritime periphery. His is a uniquely well-informed view of the opportunities, and the huge risks, of China’s bold ambitions in the

region. (Kerry Brown, author of *China and the New Maoists*) “An indispensable guide to the vision, personalities, institutions, and methods that underpin the emergence of the next superpower. Brimming with telling insights and arresting stories, *China’s Asian Dream* really hits the ball out of the park.” (James Kynge *Financial Times*) “Chinese people are proud of their country’s economic renaissance but baffled by its dearth of friends. . . . Under President Xi Jinping, the People’s Republic is moving to right that imbalance, using a mix of economic blandishments and shows of military strength. In *China’s Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road* Miller lays out how the enterprise is supposed to work—and why it might not.” (Reuters) “This is a book about power, money, and sought-after love. A must-read for those interested in whether President Xi reincarnated the silk road will succeed in restoring the grandeur of the middle kingdom.” (Yukon Huang, former World Bank director for China) “In this vividly observed account from the front lines, Miller charts the reality of China’s growing power through the eyes of its neighbors. One of the best accounts we have of what China’s rise really means for the world.” (Hugh White, author of *The China Choice*) “Superbly organized. . . . Miller deftly combines the plethora of data points and statistics with vivid local color.” (South China Morning Post) “Miller tackles the central question of our time: whether China can translate its economic power into geopolitical clout, and execute its breathtaking plan to dominate its Asian neighbours. For Xi Jinping, this is nothing less than a return to the natural order which prevailed until the nineteenth century. For the rest of us, it threatens to turn the old world dominated by the West upside down.” (Richard McGregor, author of *The Party: The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers*) “As a snapshot of China’s relations with its neighbors . . . this book is highly recommended.” (Business Tianjin) “Understanding the philosophy behind China’s national aspirations will be a defining task of a twenty-first-century diplomacy. In that vein, *China’s Asian Dream* will prove essential reading.” (Wall Street Journal) “With a deft turn of phrase, Miller turns what could be a dry topic into a great read.” (Splash 24/7) “A terrific combination of data and pavement-pounding local investigation, with discussions between academics, market traders and officials from Laos to India.” (Hong Kong Review of Books) “Excellent. . . . Miller has voyaged around China’s periphery [and] his long experience of analysing the Chinese economy enables him to puncture a few over-inflated myths.” (Bill Hayton, associate fellow at Chatham House and author of *South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*) “China’s Asian Dream offers an engaging and

up-to-date analysis of China's regional strategy. . . . Miller's analysis is balanced, and he succeeds in steering clear of the anti-China bias so prevalent among many Western analysts. . . . The book is useful not only to Asia watchers, but also to scholars and policy makers in Africa and Latin America. (Oliver Stuenkel, author of *Post Western World*) "An essential resource to understanding the thinking behind the Belt and Road Initiative." (SupChina)

Tom Miller is a senior analyst at Gavekal Research, a global economic research service, and editor-at-large of *China Economic Quarterly*, published by its sister service Gavekal Dragonomics.

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satisfied, received on time, worth reading book

Tom Miller is an English journalist who learned the language and spent the time to try and answer the question "Where is China headed with its expansive quest of great power status, and how likely will it be in winning support along the New Silk Road it desires to create." To answer that inquiry Miller marches that route and observes just what has happened in each setting and tries to gauge what are the likely consequences, both economically and politically. As colonial Europeans retreated China advanced, especially in Africa, but then onto to Latin America and now under One Belt One Road into all parts of Asia, the former Soviet States of Central Asia and up into Russia planning rapid transit systems to rush products to Europe. But wait America there is talk of a submerged tunnel under the Bering Straits into Alaska, Canada and as far south as Vancouver. This is the content of his book, well presented with detail and some humor, an enormous undertaking, but he also leaves us with his conclusion as to the impact of that effort on the relations between the two great powers China and the United States of America. There are no givens here: China has achieved much recognition as both a beneficial and a troubling neighbor and each of its many neighbors have to learn how to achieve self interest without becoming a satellite entity. The rewards are rapid economic development often trading resources for infrastructure investment. The likely outcome for many is to try to utilize the desires of the giants as a balancing act without losing political and economic sovereignty. This is a

story that has been told historically before, some times with tragic results. Miller's take is comforting as he does not see War as an outcomes (the Thucydides trap), but there is an implied assumption that the U.S. will accept some sharing of the status of Great Power and recognize China's new role in world affairs as a large but not impossible assumption. Who would enjoy this work? I certainly did as it answered many questions with regard to what has happened and what is planned and why along Xi Jinping's so-called "One Belt, One Road." The chapter on the South China Sea is excellent as are many others. A very informative and balanced report.

Tom Miller's outstanding new book talks of the Chinese "empire". Indeed, but what an empire - forged not in battle or by colonial penetration (or even finance, branding and other forms of soft power), but with China's state-owned heavy engineering, concrete and rail companies in the vanguard. Very Maoist in a sense, and as one of the interviewees says, reminiscent of the 1957 Great Leap Forward, when all efforts were focussed on increasing steel production. Of course, that ended in massive waste. I found this a vivid and informative work. As in his first book "China's Urban Billions", Mr Miller shows authentic familiarity with Chinese strategy, and interacts easily with scholars, soldiers, tarts and merchants. Like a latter-day Francis Younghusband or 19th century Colonial Office Principal, he travels 1000s of km up and down the Mekong and deep into Central Asia, describing the impressive reach of China's efforts to bind these vast tracts of land closer, through infrastructure and trade. It is a stirring and even noble vision. People will surely think of the US Marshall Plan. China is not deploying army bases or nuclear weapons but civil engineers, labourers and intrepid traders. Yet China's assertiveness in the South China Seas is too blatant and risky in the eyes of status quo nations of SE Asia and risks pushing the region towards the US. China's strategy also seems in some ways to be a subsidy for the existing politico-economic structure, offering subsidies for struggling state-owned industrial companies in new markets. But a serious problem remains - China does not have the soft power to exploit its often beneficial projects. Nationalistic Asian countries (of which Mr Miller offers wonderful vignettes) such as Vietnam and Burma loathe Chinese penetration, despite their dependence. Soft power is a murky term, but China is poor at creating the love and admiration that the US evokes in many quarters, however unjustifiably. If you are interested in a book combining academic erudition with a correspondent's eye for colourful detail, and which focuses on the great story of China's rise, this book is for you.

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