

broaden the book's viewpoint and provide a more global perspective. Such diversity would enrich the discussions within the work, contributing to a more balanced and comprehen-

sive analysis. Including sources beyond English would significantly enhance the book's academic value and global relevance.

---

## Great Power Politics in Greater Eurasia: Regional Alliances, Institutions, Projects, and Conflicts

---

*Edited by* Rahman Dağ *and* Özgür Tüfekçi

Lexington Book, 2023, 240 pages, £35.00, ISBN: 9781666914115

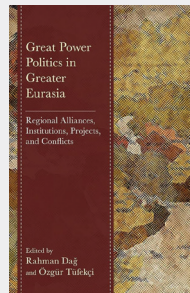
---

*Reviewed by* Samuele C. A. Abrami, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and Sabancı University

---

The expansive region stretching from the Baltic states to Central Asia has become a contested space characterized by competing interests among global actors such as Russia, the European Union, Türkiye, the U.S., Iran, China, and India. As what we call Eurasia has no clear physical borders and comprises multiple complex sociopolitical and economic dynamics, this volatile backdrop underscores the need to revise how we analyze great power politics. Indeed, while the U.S. has been more reluctant to be directly involved in many of the geopolitical competition grounds, vacuums emerged after the Cold War. More recent events like the Arab Uprising have led to a shift in the dynamics of great power politics. This has not only created more space for rising global powers like China to expand their influence but also for rising regional powers like Türkiye, Iran, and Saudi Arabia to play a more significant role in this region.

In this sense, the edited book *Great Power Politics in Greater Eurasia* emerges as a much-needed work to make sense of a new reality in the nexus between global, regional, and na-



tional dynamics. Edited by Rahman Dağ, Associate Professor at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, and Özgür Tüfekçi, Associate Professor of International Relations at Karadeniz Technical University, this collection of chapters offers a comprehensive examination of the issue by looking at three main aspects of the region: conflicts, alliances, and ambitious national or transnational projects.

Before delving into each section, it is important to highlight the main argument that constitutes a solid conceptual basis and a coherent *fil-rouge* connecting all the parts. That is, the absence of an established international order characterized by clear rules and hierarchy significantly shapes the foreign policy preferences of actors at all levels, from global powers to sub-national entities. With the decline of the U.S. dominance, there arises a need for other powers to fill the void in maintaining global order. However, power transition in contemporary world politics is a dynamic process marked by competition among diverse powers and ideologies. As the literature suggests, a more regionalized international order is emerging, where great powers rely

on regional actors to support and facilitate their foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the dynamics of power competition are not solely determined by military capabilities but also by status competition among states with mismatched portfolios of capabilities. In the context of civil wars, opposition groups often rely on support from regional powers to gain political or military advantage. By surveying cases like the Georgia South-Ossetia conflict, the war in Syria, and the intricate dynamics in Libya, the authors underscore the importance of regional powers in shaping the outcomes of conflicts and influencing the behavior of great powers.

The book is structured into three sections, each offering a distinct perspective on the dynamics of great power politics in Greater Eurasia. The first section delves into the complexities of ongoing conflicts in the region. From regional crises to local conflicts, the chapters in this section provide insights into the multifaceted nature of regional tensions. They illuminate the struggles for control and influence among global, regional, and sub-national powers, highlighting the challenges of resolving interconnected interests and competing agendas of the states involved. The opening chapter by Rahman Dağ and Özgür Tüfekçi focuses on the power struggle over the Syrian crisis, showcasing how both regional and international actors compete for dominance and shape a conflict-ridden region, making it difficult to reach consensus or lasting peace in the absence of a clear international order. Javadbay Khalilzada's contribution sheds light on the historical and strategic intricacies of the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict (1989 – present), emphasizing the role of external actors, particularly the EU and Russia, in perpetuating the ongoing tensions. By applying realist principles to the examination of Russo-Chinese interactions at both the bilateral and in-

ternational level, Ioan-David Onel highlights the multifaceted nature of great power competition, which extends beyond military capabilities to encompass spheres of influence and strategic interests that also involve soft power capabilities as in the case of the projects linked to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the field of education, economy, and trade.

Transitioning to the second section, “Great Power Politics via Institutional/Regional Alliances,” the focus shifts to the role of alliances and institutions in shaping regional dynamics. Ana Belén Perianes explores the challenges and prospects of EU relations in Central Asia, with a particular emphasis on Kazakhstan. By examining the EU's efforts to diversify energy supplies and promote regional democratization, Perianes highlights the overlap between economic interests and geopolitical considerations. Ana Isabel Xavier's analysis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union analyses the emergence of new Eurasian alliances and their implications for the regional balance of power. Xavier raises thought-provoking questions about Russia's role in shaping the future of Eurasia and the potential implications for Western hegemony. By positioning Brexit as a quest for renewed great power status, Emrah Atar and Hamdullah Baycar's chapter highlights how institutional changes can impact states' geopolitical ambitions in a “post-EU era.”

The final section, “Great Power Politics via Projects,” covers the ambitious initiatives aimed at reshaping the region's geopolitical milieu by leveraging economic power through different means. Tianyi Liu and Giuseppe Bettoni's analysis of China's Belt and Road Initiative epitomizes how great power competition is heavily linked to economic dimensions by examining the potential benefits and risks associated with China's ambitious infrastructure

projects. Gülsen Aydın's exploration of Türkiye's foreign policy in Central Asia offers a nuanced understanding of Ankara's regional strategic interests. By examining Türkiye's efforts to assert its influence in post-Soviet states, Aydın underscores the complex interplay between historical legacies, geopolitical rivalries, and economic interests, which are the main features of rising regional powers. Mohammad Hashiru and Özgür Tüfekçi's analysis of great power rivalries in the Nile River Basin not only extends the geographic scope of Eurasian geopolitics but also sheds light on the transnational characteristics of conflicts and the impact of resource competition in shaping either conflict or cooperation. By highlighting the competing interests of major powers, including the EU, the U.S., Russia, and China, Adrian Pogacian underscores the complexities of power struggles in post-Soviet states. In contrast with other chapters, his analysis focuses on how geopolitical competition shapes overall political dynamics in Central Asia.

Overall, *Great Power Politics in Greater Eurasia* offers a comprehensive analysis of the region's geopolitical dynamics, providing valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike. By examining conflicts, alliances, and projects through a multidimensional lens, the book offers a nuanced understanding of the forces shaping Eurasian geopolitical competition and cooperation. While it provides valuable insights into the region's geopolitical landscape, it also catalyzes further research and analysis, prompting readers to delve deeper into the complexities of a region that affects –and is simultaneously affected by– both the actions of each powerful actor and ever-changing global dynamics.

The book significantly contributes to the literature on great power politics in several ways. Firstly, it offers a nuanced understanding of

the complex interactions between global, regional, and national actors, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of power dynamics in the region. Moreover, its multidimensional approach, which analyzes conflicts, alliances, and projects, helps to understand all the various dimensions of geopolitical competition and cooperation in Greater Eurasia. This multilevel approach allows for a more nuanced analysis of power struggles, highlighting the interconnectedness of various factors and the role of different actors in shaping geopolitical outcomes. Furthermore, including case studies from diverse regions within Greater Eurasia enhances the richness of the analysis. By examining conflicts, alliances, and projects in different contexts, the book provides valuable insights into the contextual specificities of geopolitical dynamics across the region.

However, one potential limitation is the focus on state-centric perspectives, which may overlook the agency of non-state actors and grassroots movements in shaping geopolitical outcomes. Additionally, the book could benefit from a more in-depth exploration of the role of ideology and identity in shaping great power competition in Greater Eurasia. Issues such as environmental degradation, migration, and cybersecurity, which transcend national boundaries, could warrant further exploration in future research.

Despite these limitations, the book makes a valuable contribution to the literature on great power politics and provides a solid foundation for further research and analysis in the field. Examining conflicts, alliances, and projects through a multidimensional lens, offers valuable insights into the forces shaping the region's geopolitical dynamics and prompts readers to engage critically with the complexities of Greater Eurasia's geopolitical landscape.