

Book Reviews

Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison, and Jörn Dosch. *The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific*. (Second edition). London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2012. 274 pages. Price not given.

The updated edition of *The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific* provides a framework for understanding the complexities of global politics in this region. The book focuses on crucial aspects such as realism, liberalism, and critical theoretical views. It sheds light on refined interpretations and covers current important issues, including security, terrorism, and the role of transnational actors. The edition is a good collection of constructive and thought-provoking papers by three authors, and serves as a useful tool for graduate students, researchers, and policymakers with which to understand political policy debates.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, each containing a different insightful paper. The chapters cover various important aspects of the Asia Pacific region's geostrategic location against the backdrop of the Cold War. The region was divided between American allies (ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) and the communist bloc (the former Soviet Union, China, North Korea, and Vietnam). The authors focus on the role of the US, China, Japan, Russia, India, Australia, and ASEAN, but also address the European Union's relations with the Asia-Pacific, before shifting the debate to regional security, globalisation, and regionalism. They discuss the political economy of two economic crises: the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the global financial crisis of 2008-09. Transnational actors and Asian values are also brought up.

Chapter 1 ("Introduction: The Asia Pacific Century?") is about developments in the Asia Pacific during the Cold War, and discusses the location of the region in a Cold War scenario, and regional security. Approaches to international relations realism, liberalism, neo-Marxism, and constructivism are focused on for their importance in economic analysis and policymaking. Chapter 2 ("The United States in the Asia Pacific: Still the Hegemon?") explains that, in spite of the emerging security after the Cold War, US policies concerning East Asia remained consistent with before.

Chapter 3 ("The Rise of China in the Asia Pacific") focuses on the emergence of the People's Republic of China and its relations with other countries. Evaluating its global integration and policies, the authors point out that China has wide-ranging economic linkages with its neighbours and, despite being a great power, it has played a peaceful role in contrast to other superpowers. China's foreign policy has a profound and growing influence over the region.

Chapter 4 ("Japan: The Power that Dare Not Speak its Name?") presents a snapshot of Japan's role during the Cold War. A brief history of Japan is accompanied by a discussion on the motives and ideology of Japanese imperialism, including events prior to the Second World War. Japan has progressively improved its relations with China and

East Asia, and over time has sought an active role in the region. It is also a major contributor to global governance and cooperation with the United Nations.

Chapter 5 (“Russia and India in the Asia Pacific”) discusses key events in Russia and India from 1991 onwards, and shows the collaboration between the two countries as they emerged as strategic partners after resolving certain issues. Russia, India, and China formed a new Asian strategic triangle in view of their common interest in ensuring Asian energy security. Chapter 6 (“Australia: Between an Ally and a True Friend”) discusses Australia’s foreign policy, its commitment to the US alliance for security needs and its relationship with China, Japan, and ASEAN for economic interests. The discussion on Australia’s role in the Asia Pacific region offers readers enriching insights into the region’s politics.

Chapter 7 (“Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Challenge of Regionalism in the Asia Pacific”) concerns the development and achievements of ASEAN since its establishment. Its achievements are based on four arguments for ASEAN being a collective actor on the international stage: its role as conflict mediator, ensuring the security of its community, building an interpersonal network, and developing a framework for economic development. The chapter debates the strengths and weaknesses of neo-realism, liberalism, and social constructivism.

Chapter 8 (“Europe and the Asia Pacific: Achievements of Inter-Regionalism”) follows with a discussion on the inter-regionalism discourse and the relations between the EU and ASEAN. The authors’ perspective on inter-regionalism interestingly captures a neo-realist perspective, an institutionalist perspective, and a social constructivist perspective. The discussion shows that the cooperation mechanisms of Europe and Asia have sound standing in the international system.

Chapter 9 (“Regional Security: Legacies and New Challenges”) discusses changing concepts of security and explains how political issues transform into security issues. Chapter 10 (“Globalisation versus Regionalism in the Asia Pacific?”) compares globalisation and regionalism, and argues that accelerating globalisation has brought about increased regionalisation. It also raises inter-regional and intraregional issues that states have been unable to solve.

Chapter 11 (“Political Economy Approaches to the Rise, Fall and Return of the ‘Asian Miracle’”) raises some important issues. The Asian economic crisis began in 1997 and the “Asian miracle” explained here refers to the rapid and equitable growth that certain East and Southeast Asian countries achieved. There are three important approaches discussed here that explain the growth: the liberal approach, realist approach, and radical approach.

Chapter 12 (“Actors Beyond Borders? Transnational Actors in the Asia Pacific”) explains why transnational actors play an important role in international relations since they are more influential than others and have links with particular geographical parts of the world. The chapter evaluates their impact on states’ national policy decisions. The last chapter (“Asian Values Redux? The International Politics of Rights, Democracy and Culture”) sheds light on Asian values in the domestic and international scenario. Glimpses into Asian values enrich the book’s conclusion.

Throughout the book, the authors have wisely focused on culture, nationalism, and identity to help readers understand recent developments in the Asia Pacific region. The

role, accomplishments, and potential of the Asia Pacific economies are examined in a global context. A good insight into liberal, realist, and radical perspectives of growth helps familiarise the reader with approaches to political economy. The authors have analysed numerous political and strategic issues. The new edition includes more refined connections than the previous one. Each chapter focuses on a detailed issue but the book needs a concluding note so that some of the important points about the politics of the Asia Pacific could have been summarised at the end.

The book is very insightful and provides an opportunity for readers to grasp the global politics of the Asia Pacific region. It is also useful for undergraduate students of Asian studies and international politics, and for researchers and scholars interested in the regional setup.

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