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***Asia's New Regionalism.* By Ellen Frost.**
Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008.
Pp. 293.

This book, written by Frost, a former senior U.S. government official, analyses the topic of Asian regionalism, exploring: the main actors pushing for it; the factors shaping it; its future, prospects, and challenges; and the implications for the United States.

The book is organized into four main parts: Part I is comprised of the first two chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and issues. Chapter 2 provides a broader background by defining “What is Asia”, through drawing on geography and history and proposing that we view Asia instead as “Maritime Asia” and “Asia Major”.

Part II looks at regionalization and how private sector factors drive this process. Chapter 3 looks at the historical legacy of Maritime Asia; Chapter 4 examines new technologies that are propelling closer integration; and Chapter 5 analyses the individual actors such as businessmen, migrant labourers, and tourists that, often unwittingly, advance the cause of integration.

Part III zeroes in on government efforts at regionalism. It first looks at catalysts and motivations of national governments in their attempt at integration. Chapter 7 then surveys the regional integration architecture, while Chapters 8 and 9 look at its tools and initiatives such as trade, finance, foreign policy and security.

In the final part of the book, the author assesses the future of Asian regionalism. Chapter 10 looks at the promise of integration and assesses its members’ readiness for it, while Chapter 11 surveys potential threats and obstacles. Finally, Chapter 12 concludes by listing policy implications for governments in the region as well as how the United States should respond.

The book’s main strength is its comprehensive nature in terms of covering the issues that are faced by Asian countries in the integration process. The author successfully provides a good

summary of the arguments for and against integration. Secondly, these issues are discussed using straightforward language despite dealing with issues that are usually rendered inaccessible by international relations jargon.

The book’s central arguments are as follows. The author distinguishes two processes that shape Asian regionalism: regionalization — a process that brings about integration “driven, brokered, and carried out primarily by private individuals acting on their own” (p. 14); and regionalism — “a political movement based on awareness of and loyalty to a region ... driven by government fiat and stems from actions of political authorities” (p. 15).

Frost argues that while regionalization is a simultaneous and somewhat unplanned, regionalism is the result of deliberate action by government officials at various levels of the bureaucracy. Frost contends that three concentric circles form the core of state-level actors that are driving regional integration. She pinpoints the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprised of ten members, as the actor in the driver’s seat of this new regionalism, aiming towards closer integration and “community building”. The second circle advancing the integration agenda is ASEAN+3, or ASEAN with China, Japan and South Korea. Finally, the biggest circle covers the East Asia Summit, which includes the first two groupings as well as India, Australia, and New Zealand.

The author correctly points out that the key strength of ASEAN at the helm of this “new integration” process is its acceptability to all the countries involved who, despite — or because of — their proximity, have historically rooted and deep animosities with each other. However, ASEAN’s lack of institutionalization mechanisms and reliance on the “ASEAN way” of solving critical issues often hampers real consolidated action. Thus, many critics dismiss ASEAN and this “new regionalism” as a talk-shop, while Asian diplomats defend it as real and irreversible.

That said, this work faces the following shortcomings.

First, despite its comprehensive review of literature, the book lacks a theoretical framework. This lack of an overarching structure weakens the analytical and predictive force that this work would otherwise have.

Second, while the author states that the book is for policy-makers, journalists and generalists, the unmistakable tone and underlying bias is on analysing the implications of Asian regionalism for the United States. This accounts for the somewhat stilted treatment of the implications of regionalism, which only becomes clear once one understands Frost's background.

In addition, in some areas the analysis could have been pushed a little further. For example, the book argues that there are "push" and "pull" factors that are shaping integration. The push factor comes from the active integration initiatives coming from various governments in the region in their quest for security, national autonomy and economic interdependence. The pull factor comes from what the author calls "simultaneous integration fueled by market forces, economic opportunity, social and ethnic ties and the ease of communication and travel". While Frost is correct in identifying these two factors, the interaction between these two forces and the resulting effects also merit examination. For instance, there are lobby groups from the private sector of developed countries (most notably from the United States, EU, and Japan) that have supported integration and formulation of policies to foster regional markets. The establishment of the ASEAN Investment Area is a case in point. Or, given her focus on the United States, she could have looked at the success of the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council in including logistics in the list of twelve priority sectors for ASEAN integration. By limiting herself to the initial categorization of pull and push factors, Frost misses out on many of the more complex interactions that shape regional interaction.

Last, while Frost has clearly done her homework on regional integration, the book is a little less authoritative in other areas. For example, her concept of "Maritime Asia" is not really new. Historians such as Anthony Reid and Barbara

Watson Andaya have been writing about this concept for more than three decades, and the book might have benefited from an analysis, or acknowledgement, of this work. Furthermore, how the concept links to ASEAN or Asian leaders' perceptions of an Asian community are not dealt with.

This spills over into other parts of the book. For instance, on p. 5, the author states that Asia is brimming with demands for democracy after four countries previously dominated by military strongmen are now democracies. The evidence lists Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia as examples. While the Philippines was under martial law under Marcos from 1972 to 1986, Marcos was a civilian and not a military strongman in the tradition of the generals that ruled the three other countries. On p. 32, the map of maritime Asia places Bangkok correctly once, and the second time in Northern China.

Despite these limitations, *Asia's New Regionalism* is a useful primer. Its accessible language and review of literature make it a good tool for people wanting to learn more about the subject.

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***Labour Market Regulation and Deregulation in Asia.* Edited by Caroline Brassard and Sarthi Acharya.** New Delhi: Academic Foundation in association with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, 2006. Pp. 229.

The edited volume of three parts comprising nine chapters on the nature of labour market regulation and deregulation process is an augmented outcome of a 2004 National University of Singapore conference. The Asian coverage includes Japan, India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia in general with some comparisons of Taiwan and Australia to