

***Governance and Regionalism in Asia.* Edited by Nicholas Thomas.
Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2009. Hardcover: 342pp.**

The linked concepts of regionalism and regionalization are now becoming well recognized as a flourishing fact of global international relations. This is as true in Asia as it has been in Europe for many years now, although the depth and breadth of practice and analysis in Asia has some way to go to match Europe's experience. Nonetheless, this volume continues the examination of the processes in play and provides us additional understanding of the range of experiences and possibilities for the region.

The book itself is a collection of papers designed to support the concept of "East Asia" (rather than "Asia" as the book's title would have it) and to explore important questions about the concept of the region, what its membership is and should be, how it should be governed, and what values should be held by the region's membership, both collectively and individually. In part the future possibilities component of the book succeeds because of gaps in the analysis rather than because of its quality. As a guide to the normative questions raised, the book is less successful as the writers tend to concentrate on description, explanation and to a lesser extent prediction rather than on prescription.

The book is deliberately intended to mimic "the structure of the East Asian Summit" (p. xv). It has an overview dealing with the concept and history of regionalization, chapters describing a range of national perspectives on regional processes (China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India and — though not a member of East Asia Summit — the US; but none, however, from a Southeast Asian perspective), chapters on a range of key issues such as the role of law and its relationship to regional governance, regional governance and disaster response and financial integration, and two final chapters comparing the European experience with Asia's and which discuss new modes of regional governance in Asia.

Overall, the book is described by Kanishka Jayasuriya (p. 330) as a "first cut at a new and innovative agenda on regional governance", but that description perhaps says more about the relatively late arrival of scholarly analysis of the region than of the events themselves. Regional governance has been developing at a functional level for many decades. At different levels of Asia Pacific, Asia, East Asia and other such regional conceptions, governance, in the sense of the development of multilateral rules, norms and understandings to manage

international problems, has been a fact of Asia's regional life since the 1940s when the UN Food and Agriculture Organization established among other agencies the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, or the 1960s with the formation of the Asian and Pacific Council with a mandate to act as a forum for a regional security dialogue. Perhaps what makes current efforts at regional governance noteworthy is the inclusive nature of the concept of regionalization (although even that is thrown into doubt when we understand that the Asian Pacific Postal Union, established in 1961, has all the membership of the current East Asian Summit partners and more) and the thought that issues of high politics should eventually be brought into the purview of governance processes at a level higher than that of merely "discussion".

There is considerable diversity within the book and considerable overlap between the contributions. The diversity comes about as the authors address their different but related topics according to their own perspectives as to what is important. There are, for example, slightly different understandings of the concepts of "regionalism", "regionalization" and "governance" within the chapters. This is not an issue because these differences are a fact of everyday discussion and it is useful for the reader to come to an understanding of the range of the topic. The overlap occurs as the writers address the history of regionalism, or at least the history they see as important. For most, that history starts with the ASEAN-led process that began following the end of the Cold War and the Asian monetary crisis of 1997; a fairly narrow definition of history.

It probably does not matter that this understanding of history is so narrow. The focus of the book is on today and tomorrow rather than yesterday and, especially on "tomorrow", there is some broad agreement. The future is about a "community" (which might be based on ASEAN, ASEAN Plus Three or the East Asian Summit) and it is about the development of ever more detailed rules and norms to regulate the ways the states of the community will deal with each other. Nonetheless, most of the contributors to this volume point out that the development of an integrated East Asia, similar perhaps to Europe, is not likely to occur in the short or even the medium term. Regional solutions have not been found to a number of pressing issues and, so long as the concepts of sovereignty and non-intervention remain dominant, are not likely to be.

This is a useful book for the student of East Asian regionalism. It is not comprehensive, it is limited in its outlook and is certainly not the last word on the subject. It is, however, a very good

starting point for considering current preoccupations and relatively conventional thinking on future possibilities. If there is to be truly joined-up and substantive governance in East Asia there will, however, have to be some thinking beyond the conventional. It is not clear to this reviewer that there is any real will for more than the relatively *ad hoc* (but very useful) processes presently undertaken within the region, or for more than rhetoric rather than substance in the hard issues of day-to-day regional governance. On the positive side of the ledger, substantive peace has been kept in East Asia for considerably longer than many would have allowed for at the end of the Cold War, and that is a consequence of the development of forms of regionalism appropriate to this region.