

## BOOK REVIEWS

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***ASEM: The Asia-Europe Meeting — A Window of Opportunity.* Edited by Wim Stokhof and Paul van der Velde.** London: Kegan Paul International in association with the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden and Amsterdam, 1999. 179pp.

The volume under review is a decidedly “mixed bag” of analysis and commentary on ASEM, its objectives, achievements, problems, and future prospects up to the time of writing (some time in 1998) and publication (1999). The book is divided into several parts, as follows: “The Politicians’ View of ASEM”, “Improving Mutual Contact between Asia and Europe”, “Challenges and Problem Areas”, and “The Future of ASEM”. There are five appendices, namely, the Chairman’s statements of 1996 and 1998, a statement on the financial and economic situation in Asia, written for ASEM 2, and a list of contributors and abbreviations. The various contributions are footnoted, with considerable variation in the detail and quality of the footnoting.

The book deals with a number of well-known issues and controversies, as evident from the listing of the main topics above. Several main themes appear. First of all, the contributors are in agreement that ASEM is an important vehicle for building bridges and creating greater understanding between Asia and Europe. Secondly, there are areas in which greater co-operation can be achieved, for mutual benefit, and with a minimum of controversy, particularly in economic matters. Thirdly, some issues are quite contentious, notably in the field of human and political rights, and caution must be exercised in pursuing such matters, lest disagreements derail or hinder co-operation in less contentious fields (as noted, in economic relations). And, finally, ASEM can eventually

lead to a relationship which would help modify the influence of the United States in both Asia and Europe. Some of the chapters are rather eloquent statements about the political views of a particular country; this is especially the case with the contribution by Zhao Gancheng, whose main point is that no amount of ASEM activity can be successful without taking into account the emergence of China as a world power with great regional impact even at the present time.

The quality of the contributions varies considerably. The section on politicians' views is a mere set of general considerations on the importance of ASEM and carries no real analytical value. In the more conceptual subsections, I found the following contributions to be quite worthwhile: "Getting Serious about Asia-Europe Security Cooperation", by Dong-Ik Shin and Gerald Segal; "Developing the Business Relationship between Asia and Europe: Trends and Challenges", by Tetsundo Iwakuni; and "The Future of the ASEM Process: Who, How, Why, and What", by Jurgen Ruland. Ruland's piece is the best of the lot and offers valid analysis of the question of who should be members of the process, how ASEM should function, and which objectives can reasonably be achieved. The statement on China's view has already been mentioned. There are also useful "how to" chapters on the impact of the global information society and combating corruption.

As indicated, there are some real shortcomings in this volume, but some valuable contributions as well. The book therefore is best suited as a supplement to more detailed and analytical works on this important topic.

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***Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy.*** By Etel Solingen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 334pp.

This highly theoretical work seeks to examine the nature of global politics at the end of the century through an exposition of the nature of domestic and international coalitions. Essentially, Solingen divides the world into two arch-type coalitions: "internationalist" and "statist-