

***Regional Integration in East Asia: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives.* Edited by Satoshi Amako, Shunji Matsuoka and Kenji Horiuchi. Tokyo and New York: United Nations University Press, 2013. Hardcover: 356pp.**

The East Asian region is both complex and unique. As has often been pointed out, one of the salient features of the region is the persistent discrepancy between the progress in *de facto* and *de jure* economic integration. Indeed East Asia has long been said to be the champion of loose regional economic integration, with deepening intra-regional trade and investment linkages in the absence of any formal cooperative scheme. At the same time, however, institution-based regional cooperation has been more conspicuous in the security sphere, with the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as early as 1994. In the environmental realm, regional cooperation is both more recent and far less advanced. As a result, East Asian regional integration varies deeply from one area to another and cannot be analysed from a single perspective.

To add to the complexity of the overall picture, there is no obvious leader in East Asia, with China, Japan and ASEAN all claiming to play such a role. Moreover, the two major economic and diplomatic powers, namely China and Japan, are for the first time in recent history engaged in what can be seen as a direct form of competition, which further compounds the leadership issue in the region. Moreover, the bilateral relationship is marked by deep mistrust. This specific situation leads to the persistence of contradictory forces prevailing in the region, with tensions/competition on the one hand and cooperation/integration on the other. Lastly, the influence of the United States can still be felt in the region in a number of fields, spanning from security to economics.

The uniqueness and the complexity of the East Asian region makes a thorough analysis of regional integration a particularly challenging endeavour but also a necessary one, in particular for European analysts who tend to see the European experience, if not as a model to be replicated elsewhere, at least as a point of reference. As a result, there remain substantial doubts in Europe as to East Asian countries' willingness and ability to achieve deeper regional integration. In this context, the publication of this volume is particularly welcome. It is also perfectly timed since ambitious projects of regional integration are currently being discussed in East

Asia (in particular in the form of an East Asian Community or an Asia-Pacific Community).

The volume is organized in three parts: the first provides theoretical perspectives on Asian regional integration, and discusses the effectiveness of alternative approaches to explain the development of the phenomenon in East Asia. The second examines the state of play of regional integration in East Asia in a number of fields, including economics, security, energy, the environment and education. The third broadens the analysis by offering a longer-term perspective. It assesses the evolution of regional integration in East Asia starting in the pre-Second World War period and examines the contribution of each of the three main players in the region, Japan, ASEAN and China.

This volume has four major assets. The first is the deliberate choice of a multidisciplinary approach (theoretical, historical, empirical). The second is the fact that it covers a wide range of issues, encompassing security, economic, cultural, environmental as well as energy issues. The multifaceted nature of the analysis clearly sets the volume apart from many others which tend to focus exclusively on economics or security. Also, in contrast to other publications on the same issue, the objective of this volume is to examine the evolution of the regional integration movement throughout time rather than to focus exclusively on latest developments. The third is its high degree of coherence (reinforced by a well-structured introduction), a characteristic not often found in such edited volumes. The only weakness pertains perhaps to the exclusively Japanese perspective, but the richness of the approach easily makes up for this bias. Lastly, all chapters are written with clarity, making the volume a particularly easy and pleasant read. The comprehensive index also makes it an excellent reference tool for all those interested in the history and progress of regional integration in this part of the world.

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