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China and East Asia: After the Wall Street Crisis.
Edited by Lam Peng Er, Qin Yaqing and Yang Mu. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2013.
Pp. 332.

The discourse on the shape and progress of East Asian regionalism, and China's role in it, has gathered momentum in recent years, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC). *China and East Asia: After the Wall Street Crisis* explores this issue from a political economy perspective and examines challenges to greater East Asian cooperation. The first part of this volume comprises seven chapters on East Asia's evolving political and economic architecture and the rise of China; the latter part discusses China's relations with select countries in the region.

Is China's rise catalysing East Asian cooperation or is it perceived as a threat by its smaller neighbours? Is an ASEAN-centred regional architecture the best or the only way forward for East Asia? What is the impact of the U.S. pivot to Asia on the insipient regional architecture? Is the East Asia Summit (EAS) a threat to ASEAN centrality? These are some of the questions discussed in the first part of the volume.

The first chapter traces the historical evolution of regionalism in Asia and argues that East Asian integration has evolved into a multi-layered and pluralistic form of regional governance. It discusses the competition for regional leadership in what the author describes as manoeuvring by major powers, primarily the United States. It also advocates, at various points in the discussion, for ASEAN centrality to drive the regionalism process forward, particularly in the absence of any other credible and acceptable option. Despite the volume's Sino-centric premise, it candidly acknowledges that there is a trust deficit regarding the rise of China both inside and outside the region (p. 9).

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on China's meteoric rise. Its rise is cited as the reason for the most recent wave of robust East Asian growth (the "second inning") since the early 1990s, when growth was mostly on the back of Japanese investments in the

region (p. 25). Whilst discussing the rise of East Asia, the authors stress the importance of trade and investment facilitation to ensure continued growth.

The authors also note that China's political leadership in the region remains a sticking point (p. 33). This is understandable, especially in light of the unresolved South China Sea dispute. However, while there is little doubt that China is a driver of growth in the region, any attempts to use its economic leverage for the pursuit of strategic goals is likely to hurt its economic interests and further dampen its chances of being regarded as the Asian hegemon.

The first half of the volume then goes on to address pertinent questions on how various stakeholders view East Asian regionalism, especially with reference to the U.S. pivot and intensified territorial disputes. It highlights how the focus of East Asian integration shifted from economic to political security, and other strategic matters after the GFC (referred to as the American Financial crisis throughout the volume).

Chapter 6 serves as a useful insight into Chinese impressions on the state of play. The author argues that ASEAN lacks both leadership and cohesiveness (p. 108), and explains why the U.S. pivot, through its security alliances in Asia, is detrimental to the regionalism process. The author further contends that regional institutions and processes such as the Chiang Mai Initiative, ASEAN+3 and the EAS have stagnated due to growing architectural competition. However, this contention is debatable. The author argues that U.S. and Russian presence in the EAS might counteract the ongoing regionalization process and stifle the establishment of an "Asian East Asian Community" (p. 107). However, tardy progress on most of these regional initiatives could be simply a case of limited capacity within ASEAN. As well, global power engagement in the region should be viewed as a testimony to the growing international stature of the region, rather than as a threat to ASEAN centrality.

Chapter 7, which concludes the first part of the volume, discusses major power players and their interests in the regional architecture. It is clear

from the narrative that ASEAN member states do not welcome China in all areas, and believe that the presence of other powers meaningfully engaged in the region stabilizes East Asia. It also traces the origin and motivation behind the East Asian regionalism process, and rightfully notes that an ASEAN-centred regionalism has progressed solely due to multilateral cooperation along parallel tracks, including “second track” regionalism comprising think-tanks, academics and eminent persons. Yet, it is conspicuously silent on territorial disputes in the South China Sea, save for some brief references in the latter part of the volume, particularly since these disputes are the cause of the deficit in Chinese soft power.

The second part of the volume is organized into seven chapters and looks at China’s relations with its neighbours, mostly from an economic lens. The first chapter of this section, covering Sino-Korean relations, persuasively argues that Chinese foreign policy is centred on guarding its economic development, and this is reflected in the normalization of its relations with Seoul. However, the authors’ contention that Chinese support for North Korea prevents regional instability is questionable, especially when we consider North Korea’s numerous security threats including nuclear threats to South Korea and the United States (p. 159).

Interestingly, while the title of the volume indicates that it studies developments following the GFC, the significance of this event becomes evident mostly in Chapter 9, which discusses trends in Chinese investments in the region since the crisis. It observes that the GFC served as an opportunity for China to increase its economic footprint in the region through investments and promoting connectivity projects linking ASEAN with China. The last four chapters (11 to 14) conclude the volume with a discussion on China’s bilateral relations with major countries in the region namely Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Overall, *China and East Asia* is very topical and pertains to an issue that may be analysed from different perspectives. This volume provides the reader with the Chinese perspectives on East Asian regionalism, and is therefore an interesting

read for understanding the country’s foreign and economic policy stances.

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***The Trans-Pacific Partnership, China and India: Economic and Political Implications.* By Amitendu Palit.** New York: Routledge, 2014. Ppp. 172.

Amitendu Palit’s book is a very useful resource that benefits from its timeliness and focus on a specific comparative research topic, China’s and India’s interests in and present positions towards the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations.

The author has done a good job of incorporating the most recent sources, with the latest published in late 2013 and a majority of sources used written in the last two years. Hence, the book is still relevant for a broad range of mostly non-academic readers with a primary interest in the present situation of the TPP, China’s and India’s potential membership in the TPP, or the interaction between the TPP and the smaller, less advanced ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations that include China and India. Palit’s succinctness and clarity of writing enhances the book’s broad appeal and utility.

The book’s focus makes a relevant contribution to a wide range of research areas of current academic, governmental and media interest in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. From the specific to general, these include: Chinese foreign and trade policy in East Asia; Indian foreign and trade policy in East Asia; Chinese views of the United States’ position in East Asia; the political economy of trade in the Asia-Pacific; and the implications