

***Changing Security Dynamics in East Asia: A Post-US Regional Order in the Making?* Edited by Elena Atanassova-Cornelis and Frans-Paul van der Putten. Hampshire, England, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Hardcover: 228pp.**

This engaging volume compiles expert perspectives that focus on how the strategic uncertainty surrounding the future of America's security commitment to East Asia shapes the security dynamics of the region against the backdrop of China's growing influence. This discussion is timely, as the region responds to China's current power projection strategies, including the "One Belt, One Road Initiative". Derived from a panel discussion at a conference, this edited volume provides a theoretically informed debate on how strategic uncertainty informs the behaviour and perceptions of East Asian states and analyses the mechanisms used to respond to it.

Throughout the book, the authors consistently link China's rise to the strategic uncertainty of US security commitments to discuss how this impacts the security behaviour of East Asian countries. The book is divided into three parts. The first part tackles broad theoretical, historical and contemporary approaches to understanding East Asia's security dynamics. This is followed by individual studies on the impact of strategic uncertainty on the security behaviour of states in Northeast and Southeast Asia. The book's real contribution to the literature on East Asian politics and US–China relations can be found in the last section. Here, the authors discuss alternative regional models of order increasingly being used by East Asian countries to jointly manage strategic uncertainty. This forces readers to contemplate the possibility of a post-US regional order in which China is the paramount power.

The book's overview of East Asia's security order skillfully avoids a factual rendition of the region's strategic history and instead analytically exposes the layers of uncertainty and complexity inherent in the region. Nick Bisley scrutinizes the utility of three theoretical frameworks used in conceptualizing East Asia's security order: realism, hegemonic and hierarchical approaches, and liberal and analytical eclecticism perspectives. From this, Bisley uncovers wide theoretical divergences among regional scholars. Although this theoretical diversity may lead "policymakers to feel as if they have little to guide them when trying to understand and respond

to Asia's dynamic security environment" (p. 24), Bisley concludes that an eclectic and non-paradigmatic research framework is most productive for understanding East Asia's strategic order. A more contemporary understanding of the region's security order is offered by Robert Sutter and Shi Yinhong in the following two chapters that investigate US engagement and US–China relations. Although both authors hold slightly opposing views on China's desire to exert regional leadership, they appear in general agreement on how East Asian states respond to Sino–US relations. The two authors conclude that as East Asia relies on the US presence to hedge against the implications of the rise of China, regional leaders have become wary of the possible waning of American influence.

The volume then evolves into a debate on the extent to which strategic uncertainty influences the security behaviour of East Asian states. In Japan's struggle to maintain US engagement in Asia, Kumiko Ashizawa acknowledges the influence of abandonment fears created by strategic uncertainty, but also places equal importance on the role of Japan's identity as both Asian and Western. Conversely, Larry Nicksch accords a lesser role to strategic uncertainty in US–South Korean cooperation, which is shaped by a myriad of factors including China's relations with East Asian states and domestic political splits in both South Korea and the United States. However, on the US–Taiwan partnership, Alexis Littlefield observes that mutual strategic doubt can weaken resolve within both United States and Taiwan. Lastly, Carlyle Thayer attempts the grand task of summarizing the responses of Southeast Asian states and ASEAN to strategic uncertainty as a combination of the strategies of balancing, bandwagoning, hedging and comprehensive engagement. He concludes that regional states pursue varied strategy mixes based on differing regional threat perceptions, whether they are a claimant in the South China Sea, national interests and their bilateral relations with the United States and China.

The final section poses alternative regional orders that could resemble the future of East Asia's security order. In addition to the traditional balance of power principles, these orders incorporate institutionalism and concepts of regional community. Quansheng Zhao optimistically predicts that relations between America and China could resemble a dual-leadership structure. Meanwhile, Jaewoo Choo asserts that East Asia is increasingly resorting to regional institutional building to tackle non-traditional security (NTS) issues due to the lack of US involvement. However, through this argument, Choo also risks overemphasizing the importance of NTS

issues over traditional security concerns. Alice Ba deftly provides a balanced assessment by arguing that the conceptualization of regional community contributes to a more China-inclusive regional order as East Asia transitions from a US-centric regional order. Quite unlike the other authors, Ba accords the presence of strategic uncertainty a positive role as one of the drivers behind the creation of regional institutions. However, with such an interesting observation, readers are left questioning the fate of regional institutions if strategic uncertainty were reduced.

The editors of *Changing Security Dynamics in East Asia* also equip readers with an overview of the volume's contents at the beginning of the book, and a succinct analysis of the authors' arguments at the end. In line with the discussion on alternative regional orders, the editors conclude that if China's economic and military power grows, the United States will play less of a central role in East Asia. However, this does not mean that America will fully withdraw its military and security presence or be excluded from the region either.

Overall, the book provides an intellectual exercise that discerns the role of strategic uncertainty in determining the security dynamics of East Asia. It helps readers to appreciate that in addition to the strategic balance of power, other factors such as domestic politics and intra-regional relations can also influence the security behaviour and perceptions of East Asian states. However, the book's focus on strategic uncertainty as a concept could benefit from the consistent use of a single definition. Moreover, readers would be better able to follow the discussion had there been an earlier chapter dedicated to the theoretical foundations and contemporary political developments that inform the conceptual development of strategic uncertainty in East Asia.

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