

BOOK REVIEWS

***Major Powers at a Crossroads: Economic Interdependence and an Asia Pacific Security Community.* By Ming Zhang.** Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995. 223 pp.

The book begins with the intention to test the assumption that economic growth will promote Asia-Pacific security. It sets out to examine the development of economic interdependence in the region and to identify the impact upon political and security relations. In this context, the author hopes to identify the prospects for an Asia-Pacific security community. He focuses upon relations between the four major actors of the region — the United States, the Soviet Union/Russia, China and Japan in the period 1979–92. The author has adopted the methodology of the American quantitative schools of international relations. To measure interdependence, he utilizes an index called sensitivity (trade) which includes the direction of trade, mutual trade dependence and symmetry in trade relations over time (p. 10). This is acceptable thus far. It may be conceded that economic interdependence can be measured according to certain accepted variables.

When the author attempts to measure “attitudes” and “behaviour”, however, problems abound. He uses a number of indicators to measure both attitudes and behaviour according to a scale (hostile is -2 on the scale, and co-operative is +2, etc). The author then devises a series of tables (pp. 75–95) which indicate attitudes and behaviour for each relationship over the period in question. For example, from the tables one should be able to tell what the state of the Japan-China relationship was in the year 1986. Graphs tabulate the Japanese attitude towards

conflicts according to similar indicators. The author then matches the two series of indexes so that the reader will know how economic interdependence has influenced attitudes and behaviour. There are two major problems with this book. The first is arbitrary methodology, and what passes as scientific methodology is basically guesswork as complex bilateral relations are reduced to numerical indexes.

Secondly, other factors which impact upon bilateral relations are ignored. During the Cold War, the strategic or security factor was critical for U.S.-China relations despite relatively low levels of economic interdependence. The author says, however, that it was "increasing interdependence" which "kept up the traditional security collaboration ..." (p. 140). This is putting the cart before the horse. A similar chicken and egg situation can be noted in the author's treatment of Japan-Russia relations. The territorial dispute has constrained the development of economic interdependence between Japan and Russia and has prompted leaders on both sides to search for alternatives.

The author notes a correlation between the rising levels of economic interaction of China and the Soviet Union during 1983-88 and claims that as interdependence rose, attitudes began to change (p. 141). There were many significant non-economic factors which motivated the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations during this period which were not taken into account by the author. Until 1989, the security factor and the need to prevent conflict in the relationship was the first priority in Sino-Soviet relations and determined to a large extent the economic relationship. The author's intention to correlate economic interdependence with foreign policy attitudes and behaviour was laudable but there are too many unquantifiable factors for a successful result.

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The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region. Edited by Desmond Ball. London: Frank Cass, 1996. 244 pp.

The end of the Cold War and continued rapid economic development have brought major changes to East and Southeast Asia. These changes