

***Globalization and Economic Security in East Asia*. Edited by Helen E.S. Nesadurai. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Hardcover: 262pp.**

Economic security is an issue that scholars and policy-makers have been dealing with for centuries. The way both scholars and policy-makers deal with the issue is in turn shaped largely by the way they define it. Using their financial prowess, the American-dominated international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have imposed a definition based mainly on economic growth on the entire world. Helen Nesadurai and her 12 colleagues have challenged this dominant definition and re-conceptualized it on the basis of East Asian experiences. The volume is divided into three parts. The two chapters in Part I argue, after reviewing various definitions of approaches, that economic security should not be operationalized in terms of overall economic growth, as classical liberals do, but both in terms of “sustainable economic growth” and “human security”.

Parts II and III include chapters that analyse East Asian experiences in terms of individual countries and regional cooperation, respectively. The six case studies in Part II illustrate that the globalization process has made East Asian countries take the economic security of the general populace, including poor people, more seriously. Kevin Hewison lucidly suggests that although the Thai government has been captured by business elites, it does not ignore the the economic security of downtrodden people. Both Thai political leaders and economic elites understand that they will not be able to attend to their own interests for a long time if the rural poor people who account for a large majority of the population are not happy with the situation. In other words, the economic security of the entire populace is intertwined with the economic interests of business elites. The volume also shows that there is no correlation between the regime type and the way the regime deals with economic security issues. Although China and Vietnam are communist countries, Wang Zhengyi and Pham Cao Phong argue that the governments in both countries care about both sustainable economic development and human security as much as democratic countries like Thailand do. All case studies also suggest either directly or indirectly that globalization has both enhanced and undermined the state’s ability to work for both economic development and human security. Henry Wai-Chung Yeung and Pham Cao Phong, for instance, highlight how economic globalization has created both opportunities and challenges for Singapore and Vietnam. While the opportunities make positive contributions to economic growth and

human security, the challenges have undermined the state's ability to work for the economic security of its own people, which in turn has a negative impact on the overall economic growth of the country. Many country studies also illustrate the importance of the state's institutional capacity in meeting the challenges of globalization. Kurnya Roesad and Pham Cao Phong, for instance, underscore how weak institutions in Indonesia and Vietnam undermine the ability of the governments of both countries to deal with economic and human security problems engendered by the globalization process.

While conceptualizing a new way of operationalizing economic security, Nesadurai and her colleagues do not dismiss the traditional realist view of economic security. Chyungly Lee shows that due to its standoff with mainland China, Taiwan's economic security is indistinguishable from its national security. The increase in China's economic power can pose a major threat to the national security of Taiwan. All in all, while illustrating the link between sustainable economic growth and human security, the chapters in Part I show that "the diverse responses in East Asia to the problem of economic (in)security under conditions of globalization are mediated by a country's particular stage of development, the nature of domestic state-society relations and the external strategic condition facing the country" (p. 19).

The four chapters in Part III move a step further by examining how multilateral cooperation will or will not help countries in dealing with economic security issues. Richard Higgott convincingly argues that while multilateral institutions are, in one way or another, important for all nation-states, their usefulness depends upon whether they are manipulated by powerful nations. Higgott lucidly shows that when an institution is controlled by a self-interested and bullying country like the United States, it will give priority to the interest of the hegemon than that of weak poor countries. Following Higgott, Mark Beeson also examines how US hegemony has affected regional cooperation in East Asia. Beeson explains that US hegemon is bad for East Asian countries when the interests of the United States do not coincide with those of East Asian countries. His example about the failure of the Japanese government's idea to form the Asian Monetary Fund due to the objection of the United States is, in fact, very telling.

Charles Morrison and Mely Caballero-Anthony discuss how cooperation between East Asian countries might help them solve the problems related to economic security. Morrison shows the importance of track 2 mechanisms involving networks of research institutes, scholars, and retired personnel, for inter-governmental negotiations and

cooperation. In so doing, he highlights how track 2 meetings could help governments find new ideas or new ways of dealing with problems prevalent in the region. Caballero-Anthony, on the other hand, shows how civil society organizations in Southeast Asian countries have come together under the label of the ASEAN People's Assembly (ASA) to deal with economic security issues by adopting a human-centred approach. Many of the civil society organizations Caballero-Anthony cite are also involved in track 2 processes. Caballero-Anthony does not, however, explain clearly how the track 3 mechanism (cooperation between civil society organizations) is different from the track 2 mechanism. Hiro Katsumata's rather interesting chapter discusses the contradictory positions Japan has to take in dealing with economic security issues. On the one hand, Japan belongs to the industrialized world where human rights are a big part of the human security equation. On the other hand, the countries Japan has to deal with in its own region are not very committed to human rights norms and values. Katsumata argues that in dealing with countries in the region, Japan has adopted a more pragmatic approach by placing emphasis on "developmental aspects of human security".

In sum, Nesadurai's volume is not just theoretically innovative; it is also empirically grounded. It has also reversed the long-standing conventional view that East and Southeast Asian Studies only make use of the theoretical tools developed on the basis of Western cases and rarely make substantial contribution to the original theory-building process. There, however, are some shortfalls in the volume. First, the volume does not cover historical developments sufficiently. The fact that governments place emphasis on economic security is not a new trend. Many Asian political leaders have regularly mentioned it both in their speeches and policies since the emergence of the modern nation-state system. The case studies in the volume do not sufficiently discuss the difference in the ways governments in different periods have dealt with economic security issues. To be sure, the chapters on China and Singapore discuss some old policies, but they do not clearly discuss how governments' definition of economic security changed over time. Second, a chapter that compares and contrasts all cases presented will help the readers better understand some of the arguments in the volume. For instance, regardless of many negative criticisms of IMF policies in Indonesia, Roesad argues that the Indonesian government's decision to stop the IMF programme is a mistake. It is evident that Malaysia recovered from the financial crisis without getting help from the IMF. Likewise, the Thai economy recovered more quickly only after it received substantial assistance from Japan.

A comparative study of two or more of the cases covered in the volume should enhance the nuancing of some of the arguments in the volume. For instance, Roesad does not show why the IMF was more important for Indonesia than some other Southeast Asian countries. Third, although many chapters in the volume refer to the term state capacity frequently, none of the chapters clearly specify how state capacity should be operationalized. An explanation of how the state capacity should be measured will help the readers better understand why some states are better than others in dealing with economic security issues. Finally, Nesadurai's volume highlight many of the problems with the ways the state and regional organizations deal with economic security, but it does not sufficiently discuss how those problems should be resolved. Regardless of these minor shortfalls, Nesadurai's volume is an innovative piece of work which many policy makers, scholars and students will find very useful in trying to understand the political and economic problems prevalent in East Asia.