

***Japan's Security Policy and the ASEAN Regional Forum: The Search for Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific.* By Takeshi Yuzawa. Sheffield Centre for Japanese Studies/Routledge Series, 2007. Hardcover: 219pp.**

Perceived anomalies of Japanese foreign policy from the perspective of realists have provided constructivist scholars considerable space for manoeuvre. Loaded with idealist and activist biases, most constructivist works on Japan focused on Japan's "unique" cultural traits and historical backgrounds. Yuzawa rightly challenges this bias in the constructivist scholarship by employing constructivism as one methodological approach to the study of international relations without idealist baggage. A combination of constructivist and utilitarian (materialist) approaches by Yuzawa forms an "eclectic analysis" based on a "historical narrative approach" (p. 12).

Based on numerous government documents, policy papers and interviews, Yuzawa traces changing Japanese perceptions and expectations of regional security multilateralism and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) from its pre-conception period (1989–93) through actual Japanese ARF policy from 1994 to 2005. The shift from the initial optimism to eventual pessimism in just over a decade is comprehensively explained. On the other hand, tracing the origins of the thought turned out to be a harder task than tracing the actual policy and the expressed thoughts of government officials. The choice of 1989 as the starting point of Japan's multilateral thinking is based on an implicit and highly debatable assumption that such thinking had no root in the Cold War period. Yuzawa's focus on the thinking and the role of Yukio Sato, a former Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) official and the current director of the MOFA-affiliated Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) seems to have further narrowed the description of the streams of multilateralist thoughts in Japan, which eventually created an influential lobby at the end of the Cold War. The book's empirical treatment of the Japanese ARF policy between 1994 and 2005 is well done, with an adequate amount of relevant descriptions of the overall regional security environment and Japan's security policy responses.

Yuzawa's work is based on his doctoral thesis. The strength of his work seems to have partly derived from the support he received from scholars with in-depth "policy" expertise, and partly from the well balanced and perhaps more open-minded theoretical training he received in the United Kingdom. It is noteworthy that Yuzawa

is critical of the “American social science positivist approach to IR, which is represented by the privileging of parsimony and the paradigmatic battle, in terms of dealing with the very complicated international phenomenon” (p. 178), despite reaching an assessment of the ARF that is largely consistent with realist predictions. His criticism is valid to the extent that he presented a more comprehensive “history” of the ARF and Japan’s policy towards it, but his stereotyping of American International Relations overlooks the fact that poor historical studies have also been produced by anti-positivist American scholars as well. Nonetheless Yuzawa’s book sheds lights on this very issue of methodological polarization of the International Relations discipline and lack of conversations between the competing approaches except at the epistemological level. This point appears more explicitly in his conclusion, but should have been made explicit in the book’s introduction as well.