

Book Review-I

Satoshi Amako, Shunji Matsuoka and Kenji Horiuchi(eds), *Regional Integration in East Asia: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives* (Tokyo, New York and Paris: United Nations University Press, 2013), xxx + 356 pp, US\$40.00 (Paperback), ISBN 9789280812220

This book, which is produced from the Tokyo-based United Nations University Press as the main publisher and distributed to the Washington-based Brookings Institution Press as a retail outlet, is actually the result of a five-year long research project completed at the Global Institute for Asian Regional Integration (GIARI) under Waseda University's Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (GSAPS) (frankly, from where the reviewer earned his highest degree), and largely financed by the so-called Center of Excellence (COE) Program of the Japanese Government Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The co-editors invincibly presume that their volume is an apex of onerous and rigorous study, which unfurls the boundary of a state-of-the-art research as a significant component in the field of Asian regional integration at a deadlock now despite the past rash of regional integration groupings for various circumstances (including historical, political, strategic, economic, social and cultural) at the beginning of the 21st century. But the reviewer does not think so highly of it in all of their purposes, contexts and approaches.

First of all, though this book, as its main title (*Regional Integration in East Asia*) stands, should have looked at 'East Asia' only, it goes beyond this region. In fact, the captions of all three major parts of the volume adopt the term 'Asia' on the whole. At the same time, while the definition of 'Asia' used in this publication seems vague, the editors' concept about 'Asia-Pacific' for which (but not 'Asia Pacific') they consider Russia as one of the countries is simply wrong. Also, the book, as its sub-title (*Theoretical and Historical Perspectives*) remains, is designed to break down just two parts, comprising the theoretical backgrounds and the historical components of the East Asian integration process. Against this design, the second part consisting of four chapters is distractedly concentrated on the ongoing issues, such as globalization regimen and economic integration, sustainable energy and environmental change, regional multilateralism and security governance aside from the unusual concern of regional integration and cooperation in the higher education framework of Asia.

Besides, while 'regional integration' is applied in the volume's most chapters, this phrase, according to the editors, is the concept combining both aspects: there are cases where the former is called 'regionalization' and later 'regionalism'. But their clarification does not sound completely engrossing, while they merely maintain that the level of integration varies considerably by field, issue, problem and sub-region. In this connection, although 'regional cooperation' is loosely utilized all through the book, no explanation about this term is given. Seemingly, the research covers Asia's only two sub-regions (Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia) out of this world region's six sub-continent. However, the editors believe that South Asia (where India as a key player is located) can be included to some occasions. Further, since all authors (except one who is South Korean) of the book's 13 chapters are Japanese in addition to its three editors all of whom are nationals of Japan, this publication can effortlessly be criticized for its one-sided stance. Very succinctly, the volume that has a misguided and thoughtless a more generic title, which shows a serious lack of interpretive knowledge about Asia as one.

By reading every chapter of this research-based publication, it has become certain that the editors do not pose any core claim with any analytical hypothesis or alternative conceptualization as a support-base for their project. In other words, they provide the readers with a 'general picture', ie, a description of the overruling implication of regional institutions on building the East Asian Community as a complicated architecture with its shared norms, identities, values and hopes, which was by this time thoroughly investigated by many more Asian and non-Asian scholars. Also, it is doubtful whether simply revisiting the traditional international relations (IR) theories (realism, liberalism and constructivism) encompassing regional integration, especially the political economy of multilateral free trade agreements (FTAs), will be reasonable for better understanding the actual conditions of alliance of groups based on interdependent and interconnected relationships with similar goals in this sub-region. Indeed, there is a frequently asked question in IR literature, whether any of the above-mentioned predominant theories can really explain the cases of a fast-changing and ever-challenging (East) Asia today.

This work suggests that the current Japanese diplomacy should possess an imaginative power with a long-term outlook rather than a short-term benefit to recognize the importance of 'Pan Asianism' as the notion of creating a fraternity of Asians. Nonetheless, contrary to the book's focal idea that Japan led the way for Asianism and Asian solidarity before World War II, some skeptics typically dismiss it as a self-serving strategy of Japan

aimed at legitimizing this country's pre-1945 imperialism. In any event, the evolutionary success of economic diplomacy of postwar Japan is uniquely remarkable. However, some scholars might negate that the book incorporates an excessive coverage in a separate chapter on Asianism as the ideology and activism by Asianists of early Asian civilization, even though it is resolved to help free the human race from the tyranny of poverty. Moreover, the last chapter does not most materially defend itself against bone of contention why Tokyo is gradually being ranked behind Beijing in terms of regional diplomacy for multilateral cooperation with a specific target on Asia amid the balance-of-power in knotty global politics.

The editors ordinarily view China's military rise as a 'security threat' to the surrounding region and the international community, but they do not see how China's economic ascendancy can be a 'business opportunity' for Japan in particular and East Asia in general. In fact, they contrarily conjecture that China is becoming the most important factor in the regional order with many-sided structural shifts in Asia today. Additionally, the last sentences of the chapter written by the first editor himself read: "However, the readers can understand the GIARI method as a basic framework. While properly corroborating new trends in Asia, these are organized in the direction of regional integration. This is the most important task for opening up the way for the next generation" (p. 125). He seems to be unjustifiably optimistic in that their temporarily existed GIARI office has already closed its doors in 2012 forever. More critically, the editors in their book's 'Preface' render the following two synchronous statements that go against each other: "The promotion of regional integration is certainly no panacea for international problems" (p. xix), and "Asian regional integration research can provide significant insights when considering the movement and structure of such chaotic world" (p. xxx).

In conclusion, the editors should have explored how 'open regionalism' as a concept of regional economic integration and cooperation without discrimination against the countries of other sub-regions outside a particular sub-region can be taken up as a fundamental principle of the Asian region altogether. It is clearly because open regionalism was never secured in Asia. Anyway, this publication has not ultimately and convincingly come up with new approaches and new mechanisms that, in the opinion of the editors, are needed at a regional or international level for solving dilemmas. It is neither too arguably debated nor so intellectually excited, when it reads hugely informative with more conventionally descriptive contents. Exceedingly, the creators of this big book did not streamline were absent-minded or confused the issues while organizing

its major sections. Since this volume suffers from several loopholes and limitations, it might not approvingly be winsome to those who are eager to know or learn something more advanced and futuristic.

Yet, this publication will be useful for the unfinished discussion of directionality in the East Asian regional integration while strenuously strengthening a cooperative network to help achieve a 'harmonious Asia' in the 'Asian century'. Obviously, there exist an astonishingly and increasingly large number of literatures in the academia on the regionalism paradigm of Asia that is just coming into existence and beginning to display many signs of future potential. But this timely volume, which teems with many references in the Japanese language in each chapter, is undoubtedly incomparable and thus will relevantly contribute to the disciplinary areas of not only international relations discourse and global political economy but also contemporary Asian history and East Asian studies..

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