

BOOK REVIEW

Timmermann, Martina, and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama (Eds.). *Institutionalising Northeast Asia: Regional Steps towards Global Governance*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2008.

This book describes the current situation of integration and cooperation in Northeast Asia (China, Taiwan, South Korea, the Korean Peninsula and Japan), considered as "the most heavily militarised region in the world" (p.1). With 19 chapters by different authors, it combines several approaches to the attempts to create regional institutions, arguing that this is a process that is still in its early stages. The theoretical part of the book defines institutionalism and regionalism and includes a comparison of institutionalisation in Northeast Asia and within the European Union, showing the importance of identity building and regional leadership. The chapters of Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Richard Higgott and Martina Timmermann, and Baogang He provide a framework for the empirical part of the book, which focus on different case studies and make recommendations related to Northeast Asia. There is a first section on history, ideas and identity, which starts with a question "Northeast Asian regionalism at a crossroads: Is an East Asian Community in sight?" In this chapter, Gilbert Rozman, argues that "a search for 'community' means recognition of the need to seek common values" and that "ignoring values in order to concentrate on economic integration does not offer a way forward. Instead, a joint effort in Northeast Asia should seek consensus on essential values for regionalism" (p. 96). Rozman offers some orientations on how to achieve that, rejecting a purely functionalist approach and favouring the awareness of historical and cultural differences.

Practical implications to overcome the history problem are developed in the following chapter, "Overcoming a difficult past: The history problem and institution building in Northeast Asia," in which Thomas Berger clearly shows why history has achieved such a relevant dimension in Northeast Asia. He argues that "powerful secular trends at the levels of both the international system and domestic political systems of key Asian nations – China, Japan and South Korea – have politicised differences over history to an unusual degree" (p. 99). Thus, while in other regions institutionalisation is perceived as an instrument to accommodate dissension, in Northeast Asia it has been limited to provide (usually economic) short-term solutions to specific problems. Related with values and history is the concept of identity,

which is perceived by Takashi Oshimura as a social construction, i.e., the consciousness of a shared past. In "The function and dysfunction of identity in an institutionalising process: The case of Northeast Asia," Oshimura shows how countries of Northeast Asia, namely China and Japan, forge their own identity on nationalism against the neighbours. Relating the emergence of a common identity with the process of regional institutionalisation, the author gives some suggestions that may help the construction of this regional consciousness in Northeast Asia.

Following this section on history, ideas and identity, the book includes a few essays discussing the impact of security challenges to the institutionalisation of Northeast Asia. The chapter "Do the alliance networks in Northeast Asia contribute to peace and stability? The Japan-US alliance in focus," of Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, provides a very useful insight on the roles of alliance networks in Northeast Asia after the end of the Cold War, focusing especially on the US-Japan alliance. Considering that the states in the region perceive the institutionalisation process as an instrument to increase their power and security, Tsuchiyama argues that they all want to build different kinds of security institutions: "some favour multilateral security institutions, but others prefer bilateral or unilateral approaches" (p. 145). This greatly limits the pace of security institutionalisation in Northeast Asia, which reflects the power, interests, history and culture of its countries. Equally sceptical regarding security cooperation in the region is Shin-wha Lee in "Northeast Asian security community: From concepts to practices". Lee considers that "[d]espite multilateral security cooperation efforts in Northeast Asia over [the] past decade, the level of cooperation in the region remains nascent when compared with other regions in the world". The author points out several reasons for the lack of an institutional framework for intergovernmental cooperation, such as the absence of a regional power playing a leading role in the cooperative process and historical antagonism, political confrontation, military build-up and an economic development gap between Northeast Asian states, namely South Korea, Japan and China. The chapter ends with some recommendations on the tasks needed for institutionalising regional security cooperation and the warning that, although "soft" security issues may not receive the same attention as traditional security issues, the process of institutionalising multilateral cooperation should not be abandoned as: "Once a multilateral cooperation regime is established, regardless of whether or not it succeeds in addressing and resolving particular security issues, the regime itself will have the authority to promote inter-state cooperation efforts" (p. 161).

The fact that different countries want different kinds of security institutions in Northeast Asia is highlighted by Seiichiro Takagi, in his chapter "The Chinese approach to regional security institutionalism." China, having overcome its initial scepticism towards institutionalisation in the security field, is indeed a good example of the use of institutions according to national interests. She holds a very selective approach towards multilateralism, favouring institutions that allow her to take the lead, using them as instruments to pursue its national interests. Regarding the characteristics that security institutionalism should assume in Northeast Asia, the chapter on "The Proliferation Security Initiative from an institutional perspective: An outside-in institution?" by Chiyuki Aoi, suggests that externally driven institutions are less effective than more multilateral and universal ones. According to the author, the Proliferation Security Initiative, a "central pillar of the Bush administration's non-proliferation strategy" (p. 185), "will continue to be of limited effectiveness and even be a potentially destabilising element in the Northeast Asian region" (p. 201).

Another interesting input regarding the effectiveness of security institutionalism in Northeast Asia is given by Tsutomu Kikuchi. In "Institutional linkages and security governance: Security multilateralism in the Korean Peninsula," Kikuchi analyses interplay between institutions on Korean affairs, including the nuclear crisis provoked by North Korea. Due to various reasons, he argues that "linking institutions (whether bilateral, multilateral, regional or global) is critical for developing security multilateralism, rather than establishing a single multilateral institution. Mutually coordinated or interlinked institutions create *de facto* security multilateralism" (p.204). He considers the Six-Party Talks as a good example to show the possibility of establishing a regional multilateral security framework in Northeast Asia, as it may coordinate several other institutions.

The remaining authors of this volume, dealing with areas of economic, financial and energy cooperation, appear much more optimistic than the previous ones. In "Institutionalising trade and investment in East Asia – The FTA and BIT strategies of Northeast Asian powers", Keisuke Iida considers that East Asia is passing through the most intensive period of diplomatic efforts of its history, visible through negotiations on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs). This was possible for political and economic factors: "Among political reasons for FTAs and BITs, the rise of China and acquiescence (at least until recently) by the United States have been important; among economic factors, economic stagnation in Japan and Korea as well as the opportunities and

limitations of ASEAN integration (AFTA) were important motives behind the FTA initiatives among the Northeast Asian powers" (p. 237). The growing institutionalised connections in the region are also noticeable in the area of finance, according to T. J. Pempel. In "Firebreak: East Asia institutionalises its finances," he argues that the steps that have been taken towards a growing financial interdependence in Asia, especially after the economic crisis of 1997–1998, are leading to a more formally institutionalised region.

Regarding trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), in "China and its neighbours: Patterns of trade investment" John Weiss describes the positive and negative effects of China's economic power in East Asia and how it pushes the countries in the region towards cooperation and integration. Another factor that contributes for a more general integration of the region in a cooperative manner is energy, according to Stuart Harris, in "Institutionalising Northeast Asia: The energy market". Although he acknowledges that this cooperation may not provide a sufficient functional basis for establishing a regional community, energy can arguably lead both to an "outside-in" and to an "inside-out" process of Northeast Asian institutionalisation.

The book includes a last section tackling issues of environment, civil society, human rights and human security. In what concerns the problems of the environment and natural resources in Northeast Asia, there are extensive regional cooperative arrangements, some of which have the potential to evolve into a regulatory regime, as Hiroshi Ohta argues in "A small leap forward: Regional cooperation for attacking the problems of the environment and natural resources in Northeast Asia". Regarding the role of civil society in this institutionalisation process, César de Prado in "Multilevel regionalisation through think-tanks, higher education and multimedia" refers to several initiatives, from think-tanks interacting through Track II processes to structural collaboration promoted by higher education institutions. According to Prado, as the Northeast Asian governments allow this kind of initiatives, cultural exchanges are facilitated and may have an important impact on the institutionalisation of the region: "If these exchanges continue to be softly woven into a stable pattern within an open, internet-focused world, it is conceivable that a common, friendly Northeast Asian identity may appear to complement the still-strong national identities" (p. 332).

As for the protection and promotion of the human rights of international migrants in Northeast Asia, Tsuneo Akaha and Brian Etkin, in "International migration and human rights: A case for a regional approach in Northeast Asia", conclude that the most desirable approach is "outside-in

institutionalisation" and "soft" (rather than "hard") institution building as the respect of principles and norms is more important than having the infrastructures of a permanent organisation. Besides, although recognising the role of non-governmental groups, the authors consider that the ultimate responsibility for promoting those rights rests with the national governments. At the regional level, discussions on the subject may contribute to the process of institutionalising Northeast Asia, as they will contribute to develop "a common language for discussion, a common understanding of the issues involved, a shared concern for the human rights and welfare of individual citizens and a sense of common goals in promoting and protecting these rights" (p. 355).

These prospects for multilateral institutionalisation within Northeast Asia also apply to the field of human security, as Brian Job and Paul Evans explain in "Human security and Northeast Asia: Seeds germinating on hard ground". They consider that, with the growing pressure exerted by civil societies on Asian governments resulting from their democratisation processes, the human security agenda is advancing in Northeast Asia and that its imperatives "may provide a logic for multilateral institutionalism that transcends traditional security dilemmas" (p.373).

Martina Timmermann states in the introduction of this volume that it is up to the reader to draw a conclusion on "whether the chances for regionalisation through institutionalization in Northeast Asia exist and whether and how the various steps suggested by the contributors could and should be taken up in the challenging process of achieving lasting order, stability and prosperity in (and beyond) Northeast Asia" (p. 15). Jitsuo Tsuchiyama concludes that "institutions do exist in the region and...play a much larger role than commonly believed" (p. 379). Contributors of the second part of the book tend to be more pessimist or optimist depending on the type of case studies that they analyse: cooperation in Northeast Asia tends to be more visible and effective in issues that do not endanger the state's sovereignty. This sovereignty issue may lead the reader back to the theoretical framework provided in Part I of the book to draw its own conclusions on the differences with the European model and on which level of institutionalisation does Northeast Asia better fits in.

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