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Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison, & Jörn Dosch. The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge. 2012.

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Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison, & Jörn Dosch. *The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge. 2012.

In the second edition of *The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific*, Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison, and Jörn Dosch update and expand their excellent introduction to the Asia-Pacific. The preface promises a “theoretically accessible account” of the region, and the authors deliver exactly that. Each chapter examines a country, region, or issue and draws implications for Asia-Pacific politics. This analysis is supported by a wealth of new data and references multiple theoretical frameworks so that students of international relations (IR) can evaluate competing perspectives. Yet the language is not so technical that Asia watchers and practitioners without any theoretical training will not appreciate the arguments.

The slender size of the volume is deceptive, for it covers much terrain in over 250 pages. One of its many strengths is the sheer number of scholarly sources the authors cite for readers interested in learning more about a particular subject. (I have found many of these citations useful in my own research.) Furthermore, the book includes figures and tables to illustrate key concepts. The major IR theories summarized in the introduction and their corollaries are likewise presented throughout the book to help readers interpret historical and current events.

One of the items that the authors cite as an “improvement” over the previous edition is the new chapter, “Russia and India in the Asia Pacific.” Their analysis of India, however, does not go far enough. Given the significantly changed security and economic circumstances regarding India’s rise in Asia and ties with East Asian states over the past decade, not devoting a discrete chapter to India alone, or, for that matter, mentioning its relevance throughout the book, is an omission. The chapter on Russia and India feels disjointed and is at times confusing to wade through; a case in point is the text box on page 81 listing major events in both countries on a combined basis rather than separately. A more thorough examination of the rise of India, as well as the role of smaller South Asian countries in the much-discussed rivalry between China and India, would have rounded out this book more completely.

The chapter “The United States in the Asia Pacific,” by contrast, is comprehensive and covers developments into the Obama administration’s third year. Its thesis that not much has changed in the US approach to Asia will find much credence among American defense officials who have been working in the region for the past few decades. Despite rhetoric by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton that “the United States is back in Asia,” the chapter does a good job of demonstrating that the US, in fact, never left. Since the book’s publication, Clinton wrote a seminal article for *Foreign Policy* magazine called “America’s Pacific Century,” emphasizing the US commitment to the region. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has likewise pledged that “the United States is going to remain a presence in the Pacific for a long time . . . [W]e are not anticipating any cutbacks in this region. If anything, we’re going to strengthen our

presence in the Pacific.”¹ The basing of US marines in Darwin, Australia demonstrates Washington’s continued interest in East Asia.

The “Rise of China in the Asia Pacific” chapter provides a comprehensive history of China’s international relations from its founding through the Cold War and its integration into the world economy. China analysts will likely quibble with some of the chapter’s many perspectives and data. For instance, the box on page 51 states that China is following a “string of pearls” strategy, which is described as a view espoused by neoconservatives (p. 54). Many observers disagree that this is (or ever was) a strategy devised by Beijing. In fact, the “string of pearls” thesis is usually attributed to American defense analysts who authored a report that added this phrase to the lexicon on the region. This relatively minor objection notwithstanding, the chapter adeptly navigates a wide swath of history and international relationships and situates them in theoretical frameworks for students and analysts to make sense of China’s place in the Asia-Pacific.

The chapter “ASEAN and the Challenge of Regionalism” provides a thorough assessment of the objectives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the limitations of constructivism in interpreting the institution. However, the conclusion drawn within the text appears too ready to negate the importance of disputes in the South China Sea, which are described as “occasional saber rattling” and “provocative acts . . . [that] have been on the decline” (p. 131). Despite this rather understated portrayal of these disputes, at the time of the writing of this review, these disputes were back in full swing and the subject of much commentary and conference discussion. (In fact, prior to the publication of the text being reviewed here, the author of this chapter explicitly pointed to the ongoing salience of conflict in the South China Sea when he wrote about the Spratly Islands in summer 2011.) As such, while it may turn out to be the case that the past few years of conflict simply constitute something of a flare-up (reminiscent of the last major period of antagonism in the South China Sea during the mid-1990s) in an otherwise unremarkable and ongoing dispute, the author of this chapter cannot prematurely dismiss the direction of these clashes when they have resurfaced so prominently in recent years.

The chapter on inter-regionalism in “Europe and the Asia Pacific” is highly informative, with Table 8.2 (p. 145) providing a detailed listing of major ASEAN projects funded by the European Commission. Table 7.1 (p. 135) in the previous chapter about the manifestation of regionalism in ASEAN and the European Community and the European Union is also a concise and helpful summary. The final chapter, “Asian Values Redux?” revisits the discussion that dominated the early and mid-1990s about the existence of “Asian Values” in order to explain the Asia-Pacific’s lack of democratic progress. I was surprised, however, to see that the “Beijing Consensus” is not mentioned until the penultimate paragraph, aside from a brief discussion in the “Rise of China” chapter (pp. 54–55). A more thorough analysis of China’s development model could have shed light on how the “Asian Values” debate has shifted in the 21st century, particularly the implications for the Beijing Consensus following the global economic crisis. Still, this chapter provides an informative discussion of Asia’s democratic polities.

¹ Elisabeth Bumiller, “U.S. Pivots Eastward to Address Uneasy Allies,” *New York Times*, October 24, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/world/asia/united-states-pivots-eastward-to-reassure-allies-on-china.html>.

More chapters are included that are not discussed here, including “Japan: the Power that Dares Not Speak its Name?”; “Australia: between an Ally and a ‘True Friend’”; “Regional Security”; “Globalization v. Regionalism?”; “Political Economy Approach to the ‘Asian Miracle’”; and “Transnational Actors in the Asia Pacific.” The diverse range of topics covered by these chapters illustrates the breadth of the book’s analysis. The latter chapters, in particular, exemplify the “global politics” nature of the Asia-Pacific, as alluded to in the book’s title, rather than the traditional “international relations” applied to the examination of this region.

Since this book is primarily intended for students, the next edition should ideally include a glossary for the IR terms interspersed throughout the chapters. Given that nearly every conceivable term that students of global politics need to master is defined and explained at some point in the book, a glossary would be a useful tool for students to cross-reference terms defined in earlier chapters. *The New Global Politics of the Asia Pacific* (2nd edition) is a highly informative resource for anyone studying or working on the region. The authors provide a comprehensive overview of the issues affecting the Asia-Pacific and introduce readers to a variety of theoretical frameworks for interpreting events in this increasingly complex part of the world.

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