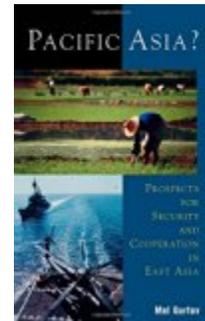


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Mel Gurtov. *Pacific Asia? Prospects for Security and Cooperation in East Asia*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002. x + 257 pp. \$30.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7425-0851-4; \$93.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-0850-7.

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## Asian Studies Within Reason?

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This is an ambitious book. “The chief inspiration for me, is my dissatisfaction with the usual discussions of national and international politics, which are dominated by values and visions associated either with power (Realism) or profit (Globalism). To the extent I can contribute to debate, or to creating debate, it is by writing within a critical paradigm that I have elsewhere identified as global humanism.... [I]t seeks to speak for the global majority, that proportion of the world’s population that experiences acute deprivation on a daily basis. Those billions of people understand far better than we, the privileged of the world, the meaning of insecurity and denial of fundamental human rights.... I do take issue with the pessimism, power-politics orientation, and American centeredness that guide so much analysis of East Asian security” (pp. ix-x). This book is indeed a kind of work long expected by any concerned Asian researcher or global citizen.

The book devotes four chapters (1, 2, 3 and 8) to the general security (insecurity) situation in East Asia, and four other chapters (4-7) specifically to China, Japan, the Korea Peninsula and America’s East Asia policy.

Chapter 4, “China Rising: Threat or Opportunity?” with 50 pages specifically on China, is the book’s central subject. This is understandable and appropriate arrangement because Sino-American relations are the pivot of U.S.-East Asia relations, and America’s China studies and policy are the most controversial issues in the U.S. aca-

ademic field as well as policy-making circles. Here is perhaps the finest analysis of China’s military buildup. The author also objectively introduces America’s Globalist-Realist debate on China. He concludes, “[n]either Neoliberalism nor Neorealism contains appropriate solutions to the problems that beset U.S.-China relations” (p. 115). “[N]either a strong nor a weak China is a matter of American choice. Regional stability is thus best served not by presuming that a strong China will be aggressive, nor by seeking to weaken China through balance-of-power tactics, but rather by helping provide China with the means of securing its people’s livelihoods and protecting its resource base—in a word, helping to refocus its security agenda in ways that also promote regional security.” The author admits that such a common security agenda is not an easy implementation, but if the U.S. chooses not to reappraise its post-Cold War security framework, there is no common security, hence no security at all, for any power in the region. This is a rare voice of reason from an American expert on China. If the author reads more Asian thinkers (such as the Japanese political scientist Maruyama Masao), however, he would find that he is not alone, though.

Chapter 5, “Japan: Dependent Nationalism,” introduces Japan’s foreign policy under restraints from the United States as well as China. The arguments here are rather correct and the author’s expectation of Japan for a role as a global civilian power is good from international society. However, he does not show readers enough knowledge of Japanese politics and economy,

especially its structural changes through the post-Cold War period from June 4, 1989. Without direct access to original Japanese sources, his citations are “well-known” voices in the English world. For example, Asai Moto-fumi, a former China Section Chief in the Foreign Ministry of Japan and an International Relations professor at Meiji Gakuin University, though very famous and popular in Japan for his radical criticism of Japanese foreign policy, is little known to the English world. The author does refer to a few Chinese articles, which represent Beijing’s limited viewpoints, rather than the people’s voice. The Japanese government’s policy reversion to go nuclear would greatly surprise him.[1]

In another chapter (chapter 3), the author writes “in Tokyo, the government’s perception of the public’s tolerance for a negotiated settlement that does not lead to recovery of all four islands” when he refers to the “Northern Islands” disputes (p. 65). This is not accurate. The author should certainly know of the famous Dulles Blackmail: “If Japan recognizes the USSR taking over two of the Northern Islands, the U.S. will not hand over Okinawa to Japan for ever!”[2]

Chapter 6, “The Two Koreas: Uneasy Coexistence,” is a well-balanced review. The author appreciates Kim Dae Jung’s “Sunshine” policy as well as the Clinton Administration’s effort, and regrets the unconsummated deal of a visit by Clinton to Pyongyang “because of his preoccupation with the contested presidential election results in Florida” (p. 187). Unfortunately, “the [William J. Perry] report’s effort to craft a roadmap to normal relations with North Korea is unlikely to be followed in the George W. Bush administration, where the Clinton engagement model represented in the Agreed Framework” (pp. 178-179). The author actually points out an alternative for the Korean and other Northeast Asian people. “Still another option, though highly unlikely at this time, cannot be dismissed: Korean neutrality, with security guaranteed by the major powers” (p. 177). This option is “highly unlikely” mainly because the White House does not wish it. Under current America’s Korea policy (to maintain American forces in the peninsula even after the unification), it is wise for Beijing to refuse to play the role of mediator. Beijing now is simply waiting for an American policy change or another White House administration.

Chapter 7 is a thorough criticism of America’s East Asia hegemony “game,” which has shown little interest in common security, and is not even a “balance of power” policy. The author lists ten American imperial-

ist instances. These range from setting the limits of other countries’ sovereignty, to using sanctions and military force to impose those limits, to dominating international media and all other information outlets, thus essentially defining global “news” and culture (pp. 198-199). This book, by a former Rand analyst and American university political science professor, is highly recommended to Asian people. It would be beneficial if Gurtov added a chapter on America’s Asian studies, particularly in Political Science or International Relations. This short chapter convinces outside observers of the essence of U.S. foreign policy as stated by a U.S. State Department policy planner: “[W]e have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. We should cease to talk about vague and—for the Far East—unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.”[3]

Indeed, “No single country, specifically not the United States, should be regarded as the standard-bearer or standard maker of humane values and politics” (p. ix). Instead, as in all other chapters, the author argues for new efforts at regional dialogue based on multilateral cooperation and sensitivity to Asian nationalism toward common security and a more pacific Asia. The book especially devotes one chapter (chapter 3) to “the Asian way” from the limited successful approaches to security in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and other confidence and security building measures make Southeast Asia safer; meanwhile bilateral security arrangements that the U.S. concluded with Japan, South Korea (and unofficially with Taiwan) make Northeast Asia the only place that great powers may crash against each other. The author also introduces some American NPO, such as the Berkley-based Nautilus Institute, and their efforts for security, energy, environmental protection and sustainable development. These NPOs know that “[n]either strategies based on deterrence and military power, nor economic globalization controlled by a few powerful players, are capable of promoting security where people need it most” (p. 3).

It would make the book a terrific achievement if the author also surveyed some economic data of the Asia-Pacific interaction. For example, take a glance at Japan’s balance of payments in 2001: its investment income surplus is 8,680 billion yen, an increase of 24.4% from 2000, and the investment income surplus exceeds all other surplus of receipts. This provides another illustration that Japan is no longer the manufacture superpower of an

earlier era, and why Tokyo is so urgent to dispatch its Self-Defense Forces abroad as well as to transform Japan to a “normal state” (as “normal” as the U.S.), rather than a “global civilian power.” This is not a criticism of the book; rather, the reviewer expects the author could extend his security analysis in a much broader range of international political economy. Since the author is a China expert, he couldn’t discuss some very important security issues, such as Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) between the United States and Japan or South Korea, in this book.[4]

Despite these weakness, this book is an admirable accomplishment. It challenges the stereotype of skepticism (such as of the reviewer) that an American professor could understand or express the voice of Asian people in (in)security issues. As also shown in the bibliography, it is also a rich survey of Asian sources on current East Asia security studies (mostly in English and Chinese). This book should be widely read in the United States, should be translated into other languages, and should be debated

among concerned people. It will not be missed or ignored by any serious future researches on East Asia security.

#### Notes

[1]. In June 2002, the Japanese government formally admitted that the so-called “three non-nuclear principles” were not “principles” but rather reversible “policy.”

[2]. On this issue in Japanese, refer to Takashima Yoshikazu’s survey published in *Kakehashi Weekly* (June 8, 1998), Tokyo.

[3]. George Kennan, Policy Planning Study 23, U.S. State Department, 1948.

[4]. An excellent survey on this issue in Japanese is Chii Kyotei Kenkyukai, *Nichibei Chii Kyotei Chikujo Hihan (A Thorough Critique of the SOFA)*, 1997, Tokyo: New Japan Press. This book is reviewed in English by the same reviewer and published by H-USA (April, 1998). See <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?~path=16197892747787>.

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