

Review - The Long Peace of East Asia

Written by Chih-Mao Tang

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Review - The Long Peace of East Asia

<https://www.e-ir.info/2014/09/26/review-the-long-peace-of-east-asia/>

CHIH-MAO TANG, SEP 26 2014

The Long Peace of East Asia

By Timo Kivimäki

Farnham: Gower Publishing, 2014

The Long Peace of East Asia represents a big effort to uncover causes of lasting peacefulness in East Asia since 1979. The author argues that what he calls the ASEAN/Chinese Way, defined as regional cultures of governance and diplomacy, consisting of developmentalism, non-interference, and face-saving, significantly contributes to East Asian peace and constitutes a regional peace experience different from that of the West. Particularly in Europe, which emphasizes pacifying effects of political and economic integration.

The layout of the book is as follows. In the first four chapters (1 to 4), the author presents the objectives and the theoretical bedrock of the book. First of all, the author explicitly states that his goal is to pragmatically help pinpoint factors sustaining peace and removing causes of war in East Asia. Then, he gives definitions for peace and East Asia as a conceptual foundation to discussions and inferences for the rest of the book. In Chapter 2, the author argues for the use of a constructivist theoretical approach which emphasizes intersubjective aspects of identity, and norm construction processes in observing and interpreting social realities. Then, he contends that East Asian peace after 1979 can be attributed to the ASEAN Way. In Chapter 3, the author empirically demonstrates the general tendency of peace in East Asia from 1946 to 2009 with a series of descriptive statistics of conflict fatality and practical capital punishment. While in Chapter 4 he explains the success of the ASEAN peace by displaying the declining number of interstate conflict and resulting battle deaths within the ASEAN region.

In the next three chapters (5 to 7), the author gives a great deal of argumentation as to how developmentalism, norms of non-interference, and face-saving strategies of negotiation play significant roles in regional peace. In Chapter 5, he argues that developmentalism, which represents a state's identity and aspiration to promote liberal economic development and reduce poverty, may constrain a state from initiating conflict in East Asia. In Chapter 6, the norm of non-interference is regarded as the primary pacifying factor in East Asia in that it prevents regional disputes from escalating into violent conflicts and wars. While in Chapter 7, the author, from the viewpoint of peacebuilding, explains the role and impact of face-saving strategies in processes of negotiation during inter- or intrastate conflict in East Asia.

In Chapter 8, Kivimäki analyses the historical context and the reasons for China adopting developmentalism for domestic reform and non-interference for international affairs, and explains how the ASEAN Way influences the Chinese Way of regional development. In the last two chapters (9 to 10), the author raises two scholarly pragmatic questions as concluding remarks: how can the East Asian peace be extended and sustained? And what can the East Asian experience contribute to the study of international peace and conflict? In Chapter 9, he argues that even though democratization can undermine the mechanism of non-interference because demands for transparency and prosperity may erode the importance of developmentalism in national governance, due to the fall of survival values and the rise of self-expression values. East Asian peace will continue in that democracy will bring about an alternative peace formula as a replacement and economic development has become a standard mission of a government. While in Chapter 10, he draws out the importance of regional context, via the East Asian case, in the search for international peace. And presents theoretical challenges to the existing theories or aspects of peace,

Review - The Long Peace of East Asia

Written by Chih-Mao Tang

conflict, and international relations, while noting areas of further research.

There are several strengths to this book. From the theoretical viewpoint, the author presents a sophisticated effort to engage with regional historical context and the endogenous aspects of analysis to construct a regionalized framework. Depicting how interactions between domestic dynamics and international transformation shape East Asian peace. For example, during the culmination of the Cold War, international intervention undoubtedly caused costly domestic disorders and mass fatalities in Southeast Asian states. Yet those internationally-driven instabilities in turn cultivated environments appropriate for the rise of developmentalism and non-interference which root peace in East Asia. The author also presents an effort to recast the analytical horizon of causal mechanisms about international peace and conflict. For example, non-interference may lead to peace and peace may grow without precise conflict termination. On the empirical side, the author conducts a series comprehensive investigations based on quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to all phases of the conflict process (onset, escalation, and termination) to substantially corroborate the main argument of the book, especially through conflating inter- and intrastate levels of analysis.

There are, however, some weaknesses in this book. First, the impact of changing political and economic interactions between major powers inside and outside East Asia, is not accounted for very well. Examples of this include: the changing regional policy behavior of the U.S. and China, regional conflict and cooperation, economic development, and democratization after 1979. Second, instead of military intervention, the political effect of interference employed in a relatively benign way through economic and societal channels is left out of analysis. For example, international economic exchanges can bear political intention of outside parties to constrain or provoke a regional state's violent domestic or foreign behavior, or even conduct the orientation of regional-wide development. Third, while the author clearly details the relationships between the elements of the ASEAN Way and three levels of conflict processes, more attention could have been devoted to explain interactions between the elements of the ASEAN Way and the impact of those interactions on regional peace. For example, how could the norm of non-interference promote or deter developmentalism and in turn influence the calculation of conflict onset? In the absence of more fully developed theoretical argument and empirical investigation, the current argumentation of the book calls out for more research.

In the end, this is an excellent piece of work that combines theoretical synthesis with great scrutinization of quantitative and qualitative data. This book will be of interest to all those who observe and study the regional development and security of East Asia and there is much to be learned from carefully reading it.

About the author:

Chih-Mao Tang is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Soochow University, Taiwan. His research focuses on international conflict and cooperation, international relations of Asia-Pacific, and international political economy. He currently works on the development of East Asian peace and the reinforcing logic of small state's international political autonomy, military security, and economy development. A recent work of his is: "Southeast Asian Peace Revisited: A Capitalist Trajectory", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 12(3): 389-417.