

earlier centralizing developments shaped the later processes of selective engagement. Instead, one is left with more of a descriptive rather than an explanatory conclusion that conservative political officials prefer to collaborate with moderate factions of workers over radical factions—a process that no doubt happens in politics.

Nevertheless, Toloudis's main argument that state efforts to "secure central control over primary schooling . . . triggered the contentious activism and subsequent political struggles that yielded teacher unions" (p. 159) is a laudably precise formulation. Of course, just how far the thesis would extend to other cases requires further investigation, and it is likely that scholars pursuing similar inquiries would find causal paths other than the one Toloudis has traced in this book. For example, one might find in some cases that decentralization, rather than centralization, mobilizes teachers. Alternatively, in other cases, one might find that teachers' associations are the primary force behind centralization, playing an active rather than a reactive role in the process. This alternative path is certainly plausible in the United States writ large, where the largest teachers' organization, the National Education Association, has tended

to seek out an increased role of political officials located higher up in the legislative and executive branches of the state and national governments. To return to a general hypothesis, it may be that contentious teacher activism is greater in nation-states with fewer political venues for teachers to make claims upon "the state," and lesser in nation-states where multiple venues are open, at various levels of government, for teachers to press their claims.

Ultimately, this book is a valuable contribution to comparative studies of political development, and its focus on a policy field that has been insufficiently researched in political science makes it worthwhile read. The book calls for more treatments of public education as a major component of nation-state formation, and such studies would certainly reward scholars who are generally interested in the centralization of state power; in the formation of collective consciousness among public sector workers; and, in policy feedback, through which state policies may generate new political identities that, in turn, lead to new public claims being made upon the state in ways that officials earlier had not anticipated.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Making of Southeast Asia: International Relations of a Region. By Amitav Acharya. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013. \$25.95.

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— Mark Beeson, *Murdoch University*

Amitav Acharya is one of the most knowledgeable and influential observers of the region, and this book illustrates why this reputation is deserved. *The Making of Southeast Asia* provides an introduction to an increasingly important part of the world and the way it has come to be thought of, and to act as, a region. Not only does it provide a useful and readable primer on the region's distinctive development, but it also offers a sophisticated, theoretically informed reading of Southeast Asia's evolution in the process.

As one might expect from the title, these pages contain a good deal of history. Although some of this discussion necessarily covers well-worn ground, it is admirably done nevertheless. What sets Acharya's work apart, of course, is that he places this historical narrative in a distinctive conceptual framework that allows us to see how this region has been actively constructed by successive generations of regional policymakers. In addition, the framework helps to explain why the region has consequently assumed a more prominent position in debates about comparative international relations and development than we might otherwise have expected.

Many readers will probably come to this book with some idea of what to expect in this context since Acharya's "constructivist" interpretation of Southeast Asia's development has been very influential. One of the principal attractions of this second edition of the book in this regard is the inclusion of a new chapter on "imagined communities and socially constructed regions," which sets out his ideas about the conceptual significance of the region in more detail.

One of the more important contributions of this book in particular and Acharya's work more generally is that the author highlights how parts of the world that have often been dismissed as "peripheral" by realist scholars are at times capable of exercising a surprising amount of policy autonomy and influence. While there will always be a debate about just how extensive such influence is, the discussion of events such as the Cambodian crisis, which the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) played a prominent role in resolving, are quite persuasive examples of the region's politics "punching above their weight."

The idea that regions anywhere can be brought into being by the social practices of their members—or by the actions of elite policymakers, at least—is an important one and central to Acharya's explanation of Southeast Asian development. Indeed, the "quest for identity" is, he argues, one of the key drivers of the region's distinctive international and intraregional relations. As he observes, "Just as the nation-state cannot be viable without a sense of nationalism, regions cannot be regions without a sense of regionalism" (p. 26).

Even if we accept this basic claim, it is debatable just how well developed such sentiments actually are, even among the region's leaders, let alone the more general public. Although Acharya distinguishes between a "region-in-making" and a "region-in-being," it is hard to know how seriously to take these claims about the significance or even the existence of regional identity. True, public opinion surveys indicate an increasing awareness of "Southeast Asia" as some sort of overarching entity in which individual states are embedded. But are such sentiments enough to change the behavior of regional elites, much less the great mass of population across the region?

One issue that might have been given greater attention in this regard is the role of civil society in the region generally, and the links between ASEAN and various regional publics in particular. ASEAN has frequently been accused of being an unrepresentative grouping primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo, rather than empowering civil society or promoting democracy. Indeed, scholars such as Acharya who take a broadly sympathetic view of regional development have even been accused of giving tacit support to the region's undemocratic regimes (see David Jones and Michael Smith, "Constructing Communities: The Curious Case of East Asian Regionalism," *Review of International Studies* 33 [no. 1, 2007]: 165–86).

While I find such claims implausible and without foundation, there is, nevertheless, a danger of overstating the potential significance of a region that has been profoundly shaped by events over which it has had limited control. Elsewhere, Acharya (*Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism*, 2009) has given much more extensive theoretical consideration to such issues, and interested readers would do well to consult what is arguably a more important book. What could have been more extensively considered in the present work is Southeast Asia's collective capacity to withstand the many real challenges that continue to constrain its development prospects. Southeast Asia's growing environmental problems, for example, get fairly limited treatment despite the quite literally poisonous impact they are having on intra-regional relations.

Equally challenging as far as Southeast Asia is concerned is the emergence of a growing number of potentially competing institutions. The final chapter takes up the implications of such developments and the more generalized challenge of so-called globalization. Whether ASEAN will be able to remain in the driver's seat of institutionalized regional development remains to be seen. If it is, Acharya argues that it will be because "it is the only politically acceptable entity to anchor regional cooperation in the absence of credible alternatives" (p. 278).

Given the notorious diversity of the region, observers can find evidence to support any theory, intuition or even prejudice. This is why the debate among international

relations theorists about the significance of Southeast Asia's development and politics often assume such intensity. This book will not bring a definitive end to such debates, nor was that its principal purpose. On the contrary, this is an exemplary introduction to the historical development of a region about which Acharya is an expert. As such, *The Making of Southeast Asia* can be confidently recommended to student and scholar alike as the benchmark for the foreseeable future.

Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945–1958. By Ted Hopf. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 320p. \$39.95.

International Practices. Edited by Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 386p. \$107.00 cloth, \$36.99 paper.
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— Brent J. Steele, *University of Utah*

These two impressive works confront different topics, but they are both united in their examination (in various times and places) of daily practices and routines that lead to impressive outcomes and processes in global politics. They are also united in their refreshing *ambition*. Ted Hopf's interest in *Reconstructing the Cold War* began as a chapter for an edited volume, but then developed into an interest in explaining the "entire Cold War" via a book-length project. Thus *Reconstructing the Cold War* focuses on the "early years" of 1945–1958, with two more volumes on the remaining years of the Cold War to follow (p. vii). Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot's ambition for their volume on *International Practices* is of a different kind. For Adler and Pouliot, a focus on a practice-oriented approach provides limitless possibilities. For starters, it has the potential to "accommodate a variety of theories and paradigms," including realism, the English School, constructivism, and poststructuralism (p. 19). Further, practice can be used to understand different functions of language (p. 14), provide a more useful way to understand the agent-structure "debate" (p. 15), and further to understand "*continuity and change*" (p. 16, emphasis original). The question is, with such ambitious purposes, do these books deliver the goods?

In so many ways, the answer is "yes," Adler and Pouliot set out a very sophisticated introductory chapter that provides an understanding of practices as "competent performances," that are considered "socially meaningful patterns of action which . . . simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world" (p. 6). This understanding proves incredibly versatile and flexible for the contributions, and the contributors, that follow. It is also intentional—the editors aim for "dialogue"—so the contributors were "not encouraged to butt into a specific