

*Japan in Asia: Post-Cold-War Diplomacy.*

By Akihiko Tanaka, translated by Jean Connell Hoff. Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC), 2017. Pp. xv + 440. ISBN 10: 4916055632; ISBN 13: 978-4916055637.

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Akihiko Tanaka offers a detailed and comprehensive review of the trajectory of East Asian international relations in the post-Cold War era, centering on Japan's interactions with major players in the region. This book has eleven chapters, arranged largely in a chronological sequence. It starts with an examination of Asia in the late 1970s, as democratization was about to engulf the region and the Cold War was approaching its dramatic ending. The last chapter examines Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's comeback in 2012 – Abe 2.0, so to speak. Between these two ends on the timeline, Tanaka examines topics as varied as China's failed political reform in the 1980s, the Cambodian Peace process, the rise of inter-governmental organizations to promote regional integration (APEC being the most prominent example), nuclear tests by China and North Korea, the Asian Financial Crisis, the chaotic Koizumi years and the dizzy pace of prime minister changes afterwards. The list identified here is indicative rather than exhaustive.

This ambitious book has a lot to offer. It can provide valuable insights into at least three realms: first, it looks at Asia's transformation in the past four decades with Japan at its center. This empirical emphasis in itself is welcome. Scholarship on Japanese political studies, at least that produced in the English language, has been relatively quiet in recent years. This is in sharp contrast with the vibrant scholarly output centering on China's rise. Yet, Japan is by no means a marginal player in international politics. In fact, while North Korea is the region's biggest security threat in the short term, it is the interactions between China and Japan, the region's two global powerhouses, that will have a tremendous impact on the region's peace and prosperity over the long run. In this regard, Tanaka's book offers a helpful alternative to the increasingly Sino-centric tilt in the study of East Asian international relations. Furthermore, Tanaka examines Japan as a dynamic actor – how the country has facilitated or resisted changes, and how developments in other countries exerted influence back on Japan. The analysis is thus interactive as well as historical.

The quantity of facts cited is mind-boggling. However, one does not feel overwhelmed, for there is a thematic thread that runs throughout the book. This theme is regional integration. Tanaka employs a broader interpretation of the word “regionalism”, as he uses it to describe integration processes in politics, security, as well as the economy. To this reviewer, this broader and more flexible interpretation of regionalism makes good analytical sense. With ever-deepening exchanges among nation states, there is no longer a clear demarcating line separating economic issues from non-economic ones. Diplomacy has increasingly become a practice of building and reinforcing networks among states or, in other words, developing complex interdependence. By tracing events chronologically, Tanaka's book presents a dynamic picture of the rise and fall of actors on the regional stage, and their support or opposition to the concept of Asian regionalism. Though Japan is clearly the focus, the book's analysis also covers other key players like China, South Korea, ASEAN, etc., in a reasonably detailed fashion.

Another merit of this book is the author's ability to skillfully embed analysis of international relations with that of domestic politics – a goal long sought after by International Relations (IR) scholars. Chapter 9 on Koizumi and Chapter 10 on the six prime ministers in six years are good examples in this regard. Jointly they reveal how highly idiosyncratic factors like personalities of leadership or

political immobilism at home blunted Japan's diplomatic momentum. The author's encyclopedic grasp of facts helps him marshal evidence to present dual scenarios: when diplomacy and domestic politics move in tandem, the synergy boosts diplomatic momentum; when they collide, the diplomatic agenda is often sacrificed on the altar of domestic concerns.

The book ends by analyzing Japan's push for the realization of the TPP in 2015. Alas, East Asia has continued to change, and it has changed a lot since then. One point that is missing in the Tanaka book but is now on everyone's mind is America under Trump. Among other things, Trump has pulled the country out of the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership). Though the concept of the TPP is not officially dead, America's departure has created serious doubts about its legitimacy. This case implies that America's shadow always looms large in Asia, even when its leadership is advocating for retreat. What kind of impact will an America in retrenchment bring to Japan, its firmest ally in the region? Will this leadership void create new possibilities for Japan to rekindle its own leadership in the region, or will it accelerate the arrival of the *Pax Sinica*? These are the questions both policymakers and scholars need to grapple with. Tanaka's book, though not covering this moving target, can offer a solid foundation for further inquiries in this direction.