

Emilian Kavalski, ed. *China and the Global Politics of Regionalization*

Ashgate, Surrey, England, 2009, 262pp, Hardback, £55.00

June Park

© Journal of Chinese Political Science/Association of Chinese Political Studies 2011

In an era in which China's regionalization greatly impacts not only East Asia and also the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, a closer examination of China's political and economic strategies is necessary. In undertaking this task, Kavalski's edited volume provides various perspectives on China's regionalization, through its past, present, and future in various parts of the globe. The book is informative and insightful but nevertheless contains flaws from a policy perspective that must be carefully reviewed for policy implications.

The book is divided into two parts; Part I, which outlines the historical, analytical, and comparative contexts of the global politics of China's regionalization; and Part II, which focuses on insights from the global politics of China's regionalization. Part I attempts to be a gateway for readers to a broad background of China's current incentives for globalization linked to its traditions. This part of the book is intuitive in that it is seeking to find China's drive for regionalization from historical factors, but it creates difficulty in directly linking China's historical past to its intent behind present-day practices until chapter 7.

The first three chapters following the introductory chapter share the common goal of explicating the linkage between China's historical past to current policy. They are highly informative in historical context, but unfortunately lack in explanations of "how" to go about the task of linking history to current policy-making, as there are hardly any methodologies involved. Chapter 5 attempts to explain how Chinese nationalism impacts the country's region-building strategies, while chapter 6 states that Beijing has chosen an outward-looking vision in the past three decades for regionalization and that it has grown out of its past as an inward-looking and isolated country. The most debatable chapters in the volume, chapter 7, points out that despite the rhetoric and the politicization, the U.S. and Chinese economic regionalization strategies are strikingly similar and that Sino-U.S. rivalry is inevitable in East Asia. While "saying no to institutions" may apply to China, full

J. Park (✉)

Department of Political Science, Boston University, 232 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, USA
e-mail: junepark@bu.edu

utilization of the WTO dispute settlement mechanisms, bilateral FTAs and regional agreements appear to be the dominant current policy direction for both countries at the moment. China intends to economically integrate with neighbors using free trade agreements, such as the FTA in ASEAN (2010). Chapter 8 also compares the regionalization strategies of the EU and China by witnessing a number of important parallels in the ways of engagement in other regions, albeit the distinct differences.

In Part II, the book shifts gears to present regional case studies, and confirms that regionalization is framed not so much by the “environmental fitness” of its institutional arrangements, but by its “meaning investment”. Chapter 9 forecasts the path-dependent nature of East Asia, on the basis that practical trajectories of East Asian regionalism will be increasingly subjected to China’s policy considerations, strategic choices, and willingness to cooperate. Chapter 10 outlines analytical frameworks to explain the intricacies of China’s regionalization of Southeast Asia, and concludes that Southeast Asian countries participate in China’s integration strategies because it also matches their interests. This discussion is expanded in Chapter 11 regarding China engaging Central Asia, in which Beijing’s construction of a formal regional institution, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, not only constructed an environment both open to Chinese participation and conducive to Beijing’s interests, but also set the standard for China’s other regionalization initiatives. Chapter 12 portrays Beijing’s adept positioning in the Middle East, while Chapter 13 states that contrary to the controversy that the China model is causing in the West, it is increasingly starting to be perceived as an appealing alternative in non-Western regions such as Africa. Chapter 14 also depicts the evolving military dynamic of China’s regionalization initiatives in Latin America, and Chapter 15 provides the last case-study chapter centering on China’s nascent activity in the South Pacific.

Overall this volume provides substance to the literature of regionalization and is worth exploring for readers intrigued by China’s rapid development and its impact via regionalization around the globe. The volume does leave much to be desired in the discussions of present-day issues regarding China’s regionalization; had the volume focused on a specific area (i.e., security or political economy) without alluding to discussions of historical linkages, the volume may have had stronger footing in concrete explanations for China’s initiatives of regionalization related to current policy debates.

June Park is a Fulbright Fellow and PhD Candidate (ABD) in International Relations and International Political Economy at the Department of Political Science, Boston University. Her PhD dissertation in progress is titled, ‘*Unraveling the U.S. Trade Deficit Challenge in China, Japan, and Korea: Bilateral Trade Imbalances, Protectionism, and Currency Wars*’. For her dissertation, she has conducted on-site field research as a Visiting Scholar at the Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Finance, Japan and as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Science, the University of Tokyo (2010-2011). She is currently a Senior Visiting Research Student at the School of International Studies, Peking University (2011-2012).