while globalisation presents new challenges, national political responses remain decisive to achieving stability, albeit with varying forms of regional cooperation.

The book’s case studies deal with different national contexts. Hewison provides an outline of the impacts of the economic crisis in Thailand and its connection with the rise of Thaksin and his government’s social reforms. China, according to Zhengyi, has managed its engagement with globalisation through gradual institutional change, establishing a social security system and decentralisation. Wai-Chung Yeung outlines how Singapore’s strong bureaucracy has adapted to the changed international climate since 2000. A less sanguine picture emerges in Indonesia, as Roesand recounts how the crisis displaced attempts by the patrimonial regime towards integration with ASEAN, in favour of subservience to the IMF (at least until 2003). Indonesia still faces problems of governance. Lee’s account of Taiwan focuses on the security implications of China’s economic rise. Finally, Phong’s assessment of Vietnam’s economic reforms provides some insights into the problems that imported liberalisation and the limited capacities of the state have entailed.

The third section considers aspects of regional governance. Higgot’s paper is global in scope and convincingly demonstrates that the key multilateral economic agencies remain hamstrung by the United States’ (renewed) unilateralist ambitions. Beeson, likewise, demonstrates that economic and security issues are strongly interlinked components of what he sees as the increasing degree of United States hegemony in the region since 2001. Morrison and Caballero-Anthony’s chapters each examine different aspects of regional cooperation by track 2 or non-state organisations. While cooperation continues, the extent of these actors’ influence on states and policy-making is marginal.

As a whole, this volume presents the somewhat comprehensive beginnings of a discussion of the issues. A tighter focus on the central themes of the book would have created a stronger overall impact. Whatever the biases of traditional neo-realist discussions of security, it is clear there were strong linkages between the East Asian region’s development performance after 1960 and the emergence of a tier of national security states during the Cold War. Military planners in Korea, for instance, definitely did link economic and strategic concerns in the 1960s. Sadly there is no case study of Korea in the volume, although some of these issues are considered in relation to Taiwan. Too little attention is paid to the core questions of whether or not the economic performance of these national security states can be replicated or continued in the context of changed geopolitical conditions and ‘globalisation’ (floating exchange rates, import and exchange liberalisation and a bias against state intervention). Neither is there enough discussion on how the gains of macroeconomic security can more effectively be translated to the household level. Similarly, most of the discussion and references only cover the period until around 2003. Some of Beeson’s claims about US hegemony, for instance, appear less certain in the wake of looming failure in Iraq. Despite this, a number of valid observations of the varying impacts of the regional crisis on different East Asian states emerge. The overall quality of the presentations and writing is good.

Ben Reid
(University of Bath)


Benjamin Reilly’s book provides an unusually comprehensive picture of institutional change across the Asia Pacific (including rarely studied Pacific nations like Fiji and Papua New Guinea). He demonstrates, persuasively, a pattern of ‘institutional engineering’ in the region’s ethnically diverse democracies. Countries have adopted ‘centripetal’ reforms, designed to consolidate party systems around a few core parties. The aim, Reilly argues, is to force parties to compete on the basis of broadly appealing policy programmes, rather than regional pork-barrel politics or ethnic preference.

Reilly’s writing style is excellent. He cuts through the complexity of electoral engineering (particularly voting systems and PR) in a way that yields insights without assuming much pre-
existing knowledge or getting lost in irrelevant technical details. His data-driven approach allows him to cover a lot of ground in a very wide range of countries: electoral systems, party systems, requirements for cross-regional representation and a wide range of formal and informal executive power-sharing systems. Data are provided in helpful scatter plots and then supplemented with carefully chosen, nuanced case studies.

Reilly has a clear personal preference for the centripetal approach. He is usually too careful an analyst to allow that to skew his findings, readily acknowledging problematic data. However, there is sometimes a slight bias towards accepting institutions as causal variables when other explanations are at least equally plausible. The novelty of the reforms he talks about also means that there are slightly too few observations to underpin robustly some of the causal claims about the success of centripetal engineering.

One might also question the broad methodological approach Reilly adopts (a largely quantitative political science methodology, preferring ‘objective’, measurable data, to the messy, normatively laden activity of politics surrounding institutions). If I were using the book for graduate or high-level undergraduate teaching on democracy and ethnic conflict (and it would be excellent for that), I would want to supplement it with literature with a fuller discussion of the trade-off between centralised effectiveness versus more porous fragmentation. Reilly tends towards a vision of democracy as technical management by a ‘representative’ group of insulated experts but is highly reluctant to talk about accountability. He may be right in a region whose ethnic diversity creates such tendencies towards fragmentation, but his position is bound to be controversial given the legacy of authoritarianism and political exclusion which also shapes Asian politics.

Evaluation, though, may not yet be possible anyway given the novelty of the trends described, and this is not Reilly’s primary goal. Instead, he provides a very rich set of well-handled empirical evidence illustrating a broad regional trend which has gone largely unnoticed in the wider comparative literature on democratic institutions. It is the kind of book that is satisfying in itself but also extremely stimulating in terms of future avenues for research. It helps to highlight the extent to which Asia’s extraordinarily rich institutional variety is currently poorly served and underutilised by the democratisation literature. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the design of democratic institutions.

Ben Thirkell-White
(University of St Andrews)


According to the late political theorist Sir Ernest Barker, one has to put theory together with personal experience in order to derive an excellent book. Susan Shirk’s new book, *China: Fragile Superpower* does provide personal experience. She was the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the US, responsible for the United States’ relations with China. Academically, this book effectively uses lots of original sources, up-to-date information and archives to try to understand the meaning of the rise of China to the United States.

Yet given the academic values of this book, it is still embodied with a strong message in trying to offer some high-level opinion on the right course for US foreign policy towards China. The underlying statement is simple: China has to follow the US and learn how to be a responsible ‘stakeholder’. Shirk contends that ‘The best way for China to rise peacefully is to behave like a responsible power and accommodate to the current superpower, the United States’ (p. 219). This statement, seemingly, summarises all the previous foreign policy objectives of the US towards China and the future policy orientation.

Nonetheless, the book is a good read, full of eloquent discussion and an easy-to-understand narrative, not to mention the personal touch. This book offers personal reflections as well as ways of seeing a rising power. Apart from knowing what has been happening in China, the author actually witnessed the formation of Sino-American relations and, at some point, helped create a certain