

The authors emphasize the lack of cohesion, finances, and political will that hinder international organizations from functioning effectively. Agreement among international organizations on how to resolve poverty is difficult because of their number. Problem solving is obstructed by lack of funds. Implementation is encumbered by politicking and bureaucracy. Unilateralism and hegemony, especially those brought about by the US, take the upper hand in the playing field. These are the concerns in the international setting, and much political will and collective action are necessary to resolve them. In sum, the book is appropriate to a wide range of readers, most especially those belonging to the realms of the social sciences and social work, due to its wealth of information and explanations concerning poverty. Those looking for a single, intensive, and straight-to-the-point solution to poverty and its related problems might be disappointed, since this book, as pointed out earlier, does not focus too long on any particular issue but gleans over many examples. Nevertheless, it is still quite useful and a well-written book in its own right.—MIGUEL AFABLE, VOLUNTEER-INTERN, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.

* * * * *

Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds, and Hans van de Veen, eds. 2004. *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 848 pp.

Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific is a testament to the relentless effort to secure peace in the Asia Pacific. The book redefines the concept of security, reemphasizes the role of both state and nonstate actors in peacebuilding, and rewrites the accounts of wars and conflicts to capture the lived experiences of the affected societies. The book is a product of the efforts of various peoples who are experts in their fields and are directly involved in making peace work within a diverse region comprised of the Northeast, Southeast and Pacific Asia. By linking theory and praxis of conflict prevention, management, and resolution, it aims to provide essential information about different actors in conflict prevention and transformation in the Asia Pacific region, provide insights into various approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and provide space for the voices of local civil-society

organizations. The overarching goal is to learn from the experiences of both successful and failed attempts in peacebuilding while reflecting on the different implications of the changes and processes occurring in multiple layers of institutional structures.

Critical reflections of “specialists” engaged in the peace process comprise the first part of the book. Two themes resonate in various articles, which is the impact of globalization and democratization to peacebuilding activities. Global processes and structures affect the way people build social relations. There is an increased role that international actors play in managing and enhancing conflicts, such that humanitarian NGOs now tend to replace the state in extending services to conflict-stricken areas or the UN has been pivotal in establishing peace through its facilitation of political succession in the region (e.g. Cambodia and East Timor). While these are positive trends toward enhancing *peace*, Bello’s article cautions the readers to broaden their views and understand the role of United States in enhancing *conflict*. Combined with the article on “East Asia and the War on Terror,” the book demonstrates how democratic values are compromised due to the strategic and/or security interests that states need to preserve. What this suggests is for policy-makers to redefine security from the traditional “security as military power” to a multi-dimensional concept of security covering “human security” (freedom from fear and want), “environmental security,” and “comprehensive security.” Democratization is linked with the former because these social agents are also democratizing forces in conflict management. There can be no genuine peace in conflict zones if the ways of settling disputes are disenfranchising the community and the organizations working for peace, hence, a call for empowerment from below or grassroots democratization. Prerequisites for sustainable peace include strong and responsive political institutions, “open” political space for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local communities, and media as checks and balances against imposition from above, and a regional/global framework integrating security and development issues to lessen the duplication of functions and complement the efforts of different groups.

The book’s second part is a comprehensive survey of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in Asia Pacific. Looking at various dimensions of security and conflict, the book puts peacebuilding into the sociopolitical and economic context by which tensions lead to conflicts and full scale civil wars. Here the book probes into both traditional and comprehensive definitions of security to develop the

argument that Asia-Pacific has been able to create a security framework that established peace in the region. Less the minor tensions and military interventions, there has been relative peace especially in Northeast and Southeast Asia. This is due to a combination of factors: the United States's role in the security alliances, effective regional mechanisms in controlling tensions to deteriorate into full-scale wars (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]) is the case and point of this argument), and emphasis on interdependence to increase the costs of war in the region.

Part III is essentially for NGOs, peoples' organizations and social movements who will continue the efforts toward peacebuilding. It is composed of a directory of institutions across and outside the region directly engaged in the discourse of security and development. The list identifies the institutions' advocacy goals and activities, contact information, and a short profile. This makes the section necessary for pragmatic purposes because most NGOs working on conflict zones need direct collaboration with research institutes and think tanks to further their credibility as theoretical work and experience are merged to empower the people within these conflict zones.

The strength of the book is its ability to discuss security issues without losing sight of its goal, which is to combine the theoretical framework in explaining the presence or absence of peace and the experiences of the peoples in the conflict zones. It is an exposition of the processes being undertaken to prevent conflicts from exploding and turning into full-scale wars. By looking at the dynamics of tracks I, II, and III, *Searching for Peace* enabled the readers to have a grasp of what *really* is happening on the ground: the processes, the debates, and the normative principles that guide the participants to further pursue non-violent means of settling disputes. This is further complemented by the broad scope and comprehensive survey of the Asian experiences of conflicts covering inter-state (territorial) conflicts in South China Sea, intra-state wars in Mindanao, Maluku, and Aceh, and various interventions such as New Zealand in Bougainville and Australia in East Timor. It has successfully illustrated the need to understand the context of emerging conflicts and how the proposed solutions will likely impact on social relations of these peoples.

The various authors accede to the premise that the world today is more porous than ever. The geopolitical landscape affects the peace process. For instance, the permeability of borders in Asia makes transfer of small arms and light weapons quite easy; this is complemented by the fact that the export of arms is an industry in itself in the First

World (except Japan which has not developed a military complex due to the post-World War II constraints). This accessibility to arms is backed up by political ideologies supporting insurgencies and secessionism. Thus, while globalization provides opportunities for collective action, the process is intrinsically destructive as violence becomes globalized and localized at the same time. Equally fearsome is the waning support for multilateral security frameworks. This is due to the ineffective handling of conflicts because political interests get on the way of delivering services to the people. The clearest example is how the ASEAN Regional Forum backed up by United States allowed China and other Asian countries to justify curtailment of civil liberties and state-sponsored attacks against opposition groups for the sake of getting support for the War on Terror campaign. Generally, Asia Pacific tends to have a preference toward an authoritarian state that maintains political order within society at the expense of the growth of democratizing institutions (e.g. media, civil society and political parties). The book confronts scholars to look for ways to address these challenges. It advocates for a participatory framework in development and peacebuilding using multitrack, multi-actor approaches, preventing violence through security sector reform, promoting disarmament and demobilization through civil society and intergovernmental institutions, enhancing reconciliation efforts by creating truth commissions and bringing back indigenous practices of peacemaking.

Overall, its contribution to the literature of security and peace is its brave attempt to move beyond the restrictions of frameworks. When security is defined traditionally, i.e. security in terms of military power and sheer balance of power politics, analysis on civil wars and conflicts is severely limited to rational calculations of state actors with little room for NGOs and the local communities themselves to speak of the process of peacebuilding. Although it uses the lens of realism in understanding state interaction, it was not constrained by this limitation because it moves beyond the traditional definition to encompass *human security*—security that emphasizes the freedom of the individual from fear and repression and the need to open space for participation and for “voices from below” to be heard. What the book asks is for activists, scholars, and policy practitioners to democratize peacebuilding precisely because this is the only way that peace can be genuine and sustainable.—**JEWELLORD T. NEM SINGH**, MASTER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.