

Book Reviews

YOICHI MINE, *Connecting Africa and Asia: Afrasia as a Benign Community*. (New Regionalism Series 6). London / New York: Routledge, 2022. 156 pages, 19 maps, €130.00. ISBN 9-781-0321-3453-6 (hc)

Yoichi Mine's book opens with the surprising demographic that by the year 2100, that is, in less than a century from now, the world's population will reach some 11 billion people, of whom as many as 80 per cent will live in Asia (4.72 billion) and Africa (4.28 billion). This parameter demonstrates how increasingly important Africa and Asia will be in the future. Amid a rapidly changing world involving new alignments and realignments, which might indeed lead to a world order quite different from what we know now, an academic study of these regions, such as this volume, is a vital and timely addition to the literature.

The main theme and message of the book is that Africa and Asia will play important roles in this new, emerging global constellation. As the author states in the introduction: "I believe this kind of work that situates Africa and Asia in a long-term perspective is urgently needed to prepare both – Asia, which is still gaining strength, and Africa, which is catching up with Asia towards the next century – for peaceful and dynamic dialogues with each other and with the rest of the world" (p. 4).

The book is very effectively structured, consisting of three parts of three chapters each. In less than 200 pages, the author provides an overview of topics and regional institutions of importance to Africa and Asia, such as the Bandung Conference of 1955, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union (AU), the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the Global South and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to name a few. Part One, "World Maps in 2100", very much the methodological section of the study, uses numerous graphs, maps, current statistics and projections based on these statistics to calibrate the nature of the world that is evolving in what the author terms the "age of migration" (p. 45).

Part Two, "The Last Shall Be the First", further theorises this emergence of Afrasia by dwelling on topics such as the "orient re-emerging" (p. 64) and the "Asian path to development" (p. 66). The author ends the section with two possible theoretical paths for Afrasia, one being bifurcation, or a split between the two regions (p. 92), and the other being convergence, in which the two continents bring their economic and social structures closer to each other (p. 94). The third part of the book, entitled "The Age of Afrasia", is where the author

begins to speculate on the genesis of a mega-region, which he refers to as “pan-regionalism” (p. 105), and concludes by musing on the benign nature of this proposed Afrasian community.

An important contribution of the author, then, is drawing together socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural matters of topical importance not only to Africa and Asia, but to the wider world. These include such issues as how to give Afrasia its rightful place at the UN, how the West can handle this entity of enormous economic clout and how the rest of the world can manage Afrasian migrations. Of course, an inherent weakness associated with this kind of broad coverage in a book of this size is that there is necessarily a lack of depth on some, though not all, of the key topics involving Africa and Asia. For instance, the massive BRI, which is a topic of intense contemporaneous debate throughout Africa, Asia, and the world as a whole, receives only two pages (pp. 53–54).

A clear strength of the book is the generous quantity of illustrations deployed by the author to develop his arguments. He captures the dynamics of this “macro-region called Afrasia” (p. 141) with some 20 maps and copious amounts of graphs and statistics to show the current status of Afrasia and its predicted development over the next 100 years. The author challenges certain existing notions that are Africa-centric or Asia-centric, and invites Africans and Asians to rethink and reconceptualise notions beyond the borders of the two regions. He claims: “I would like to draw certain conclusions about the rationale for advocating a broader Afrasianism rather than Asianism or Africanism” (p. 6). For instance, it remains to be seen how willing pan-Africanists on the continent and in the African diaspora will be to extend their strong conception of exclusive African or Black identity in order to embrace Yoichi Mine’s concept of Afrasianism, which I propose renaming “pan-Afrasianism”. In a way, though the term may not have been used widely until now, the seeds of pan-Afrasianism were sown at the Asian-African Bandung Conference in 1955. Pan-Afrasianism may be defined as a mega-regional consciousness involving the promotion of a common Afrasian identity, the struggle to free Africa and Asia from imperialism and other kinds of oppression, and the quest for a better Afrasian future.

Yoichi Mine’s book, among others, draws attention to the central role that Africa and Asia are destined to play in the comity of nations and regions of the world, and challenges Africans and Asians to embrace or re-embrace a pan-Afrasian consciousness. It remains to be seen how other parts of the world will react to, or fit in with, this mega-region called Afrasia. How will the Western world, including Europe and North America, react to this emerging giant comprising 80 per cent of the world’s population? How will existing regional conceptualisations such as the Asia-Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand, fit into this Afrasian consciousness? How will Russia, Brazil and other members

of BRICS+ that are not traditionally in the Afrasian space react to this proposed Afrasian realignment? How will the United Nations ensure that this Afrasian behemoth is well-represented in the global body?

Whatever the case, the call for a pan-Afrasian consciousness is one of the most important contributions of this book, which belongs on the shelves of all scholars of the humanities and social sciences.

Adams Bodomo

DEVIN K. JOSHI / CHRISTIAN ECHLE (EDS), *Substantive Representation of Women in Asian Parliaments*. London: Routledge, 2022. 294 pages, \$44.95. ISBN 978-1-0322-3146-4 (pb)

Asia is home to a wide range of political systems; unconsolidated democracies, hybrid governance systems, as well as systems marked by repeated cycles of political transitions shifting from democratic liberalisation to military coups and backsliding to authoritarianism. In this diversity of political contexts across Asia, women hold top political leadership positions as prime ministers or presidents and are active in major political parties or opposition movements. Women politicians thus play a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape of the region. Over the years, many Asian countries have made significant progress in increasing the representation of women in politics, although challenges persist. The share of women in parliament is in a dismal state in Asia, which ranks fifth out of six regions worldwide, having grown only from 13.2 percent in 1995 to 20.7 percent in 2021 amid significant intraregional differences (IPU, 2022). However, scholars have not paid enough attention to the gender disparities in political engagement in Asian countries.

Devin K. Joshi and Christian Echle's edited volume, *Substantive Representation of Women in Asian Parliaments*, is an enlightening and comprehensive book. This is primarily a collection of qualitative research, in which each researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the progress, challenges and prospects for women's substantive representation in the political landscapes of Asian countries. The book provides a broad insight into the experiences of women parliamentarians from ten Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka). By examining case studies from these diverse and contrasting Asian contexts, the authors offer a nuanced analysis of the complex dynamics that shape the substantive representation of women (SRW) in Asian parliaments.

It is noteworthy that all of the authors are female and nine out of the ten are local, experienced researchers with "deep contextual knowledge of the specific