

Clements, Kevin P. (Hrsg.): *Identity, Trust, and Reconciliation in East Asia. Dealing with Painful History to Create a Peaceful Present*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2017. ISBN: 978-3-319-54896-8; XV, 302 S.

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This book provides fascinating insights into one of the key paradoxes of Asia, the relationships between the three key countries in Northeast Asia: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK respectively South Korea). While the outside world is tempted to primarily see the close socio-cultural and religious proximity of these countries and is impressed by the dynamic socio-economic development over the last four decades, the people in the region emphasize much more their different identities, their mistrust and the painful history of colonization, wars, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The editor of the book and the initiator of three workshops held between 2013 and 2015, which were closely linked to the book project, is Keven P. Clements, Foundation Professor and Director of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand. He belongs to a leading group of „scholar-practitioners“ in the field who have worked hard to put their knowledge to practical use. In this case he uses the concept of „problem-solving workshops“, a social-psychological method developed in the 1970s to analyze the background of protracted conflicts and to explore ways of how to transform them in a peaceful manner.

This aspect is important to mention because the majority of the authors of the twelve articles are interested not only in providing an academic analysis of their respective topics, but also in generating recommendations on how to respond to the challenges of the violent past and the difficult and complex relationships between the three key countries.

A common denominator in nearly all articles from Chinese, Japanese and Korean authors is the engagement with the deep mistrust between the people in the region. Just to illustrate this with survey data quoted by two Japanese security experts: According to a sur-

vey from 2014, 86.8 percent of the Chinese and 93 percent of the Japanese said that they have either an „unfavorable“ or „relatively unfavorable“ impression of the other side (p. 235). With respect to the relationship between the South Koreans and Japanese, the figures are 70.9 percent from the perspective of the South Koreans and 54.4 from those of the Japanese (p. 234).

A second issue which the editor and some other authors raise relates to the paradox that East and Southeast Asia had experienced serious economic hardships and the worldwide highest level of political violence between the end of World War II and the 1970s. But during the last four decades all three Northeast Asian countries went through dynamic phases of economic development, which transformed the region into a powerhouse. So far, all three countries have managed to secure „negative peace“ in the region, but with respect to „positive peace“ the survey data indicate a fragile state of affairs. Another indicator for this deficit is that they have managed to create various networks with different third parties, but no institutionalized cooperation like what the Southeast Asian countries have established with the ASEAN Community. Even earlier than in the transatlantic region in 2015/16, the political landscape in Northeast Asia experienced a wave of nationalist and authoritarian sentiments.

The majority of the articles focus on one or two guiding points: How to deal with concrete examples of one-sided painful historical experiences and how to engage with stereotypes and prejudices in general? Some of them also develop proposals for de-escalation. Most of the contributions address the interactions on the official state-to-state level and the contributions from political actors and are written by academics. Interesting are a couple of pragmatic proposals from two Japanese military and academic experts, Yamaguchi Noboru and Sano Shutaro, who argue for the need of „empathy“ in the Northeast security landscape.

A key focus in several contributions are developments within the Japanese political system under Prime Minister Abe Shinzo who wants to get rid of the „pacifist“ constitution, particularly under Article 9 and would like

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to transform Japan into a „normal nation“. This aspect is very well elaborated in articles written by Stein Tonnesson and Masaru Tamamota.

Closely connected to this issue are the discussions on official Japanese apologies for war crimes and their receptions on the side of the Chinese and Koreans. Ria Shibata's Analysis puts these apologies into a broader context and compares them with respect to sincerity and representation.

The volume is an excellent starting point to understand the difficulties of reconciliation and closer collaboration in the region. With its well-rounded choice of authors and their empathetic efforts, combined with the very thoughtful and balanced summary by the editor, the book provides a valuable contribution not only to political and sociological practice, but to academic research as well. Subsequent research could, for example, tap into the experiences of various civil society actors living in the three focal countries engaged in reconciliation efforts.

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