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The JFMCs (Joint Forest Management Committees), sometimes called Village Development Committee were designed to address two issues—local people's livelihood concerns and to introduce more sustainable forest use practices. The authors have pointed out a trust deficit, for not having participatory forest management. As in Nepal's case, here also there is lack of respect for customary rules and procedures governing access to forests. Because of this mistrust, customary laws continue to structure local practices, even though this has been declared illegal by the state. But these new measures would not work unless local complexities are taken into account.

Another attempt to study conflict in Assam in the north-east of India has been made by Sanjay Barbor. This chapter gives details of the implementation of the constitutional Sixth Schedule provisions and local conflicts. He also presents the anthropological details of land distribution pattern. Loopholes in the legal provisions are exploited by the bureaucracy and political establishment to favour some group over other and as a tool for political largesse for electoral gains.

Another study on decentralisation has been undertaken by R. Ramakumar and K.N.Nair in Kerala. The authors have studied the competitive interpretations of local representation by state and non-state groups in Kerala. They specifically address the issue of relationships between those elected local bodies and non-state groups that are involved in local development. The authors have undertaken case studies in the hilly regions of Kerala to understand the effectiveness of interventions for the provision of drinking water and related watersheds. Earlier this used to be done by NGOs, but decentralisation has led to implementation of such schemes to elected bodies. The authors conclude in the end that the scheme implementation has become more transparent.

The important merit of the book is that it is reader friendly, giving detailed notes and references at the end of all chapters. More case studies would have further enriched the book. This book will be helpful for all those who are interested in studying decentralisation, natural resource management and intend to gain a comparative experience of decentralisation from empirical work.

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Today, Asia faces various non-traditional and traditional threats, such as transnational crimes, corruption, intra-state conflicts, religious extremism, deforestation, pollution and so on, and realistically, multilateral forums provide opportunities to deal such challenges. The author of the book under review, Ellen L. Frost, expertly

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elaborates on achievements of regionalism in Asia, in particular with an in-depth analysis of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Frost also highlights the fundamental differences between regional organisations or the process of regional integration in Asia and Europe, so as to present a convincing argument that the European Union (EU) model should not be used as an analytical framework to understand regionalism in Asia, because the two regions are worlds apart.

According to Frost, 'regionalism' is a multilateral political movement of governments in a particular region; therefore it differs from 'regionalisation' which has the involvement of non-state actors, primarily private individuals. Furthermore, the author presents a factual analysis to recognise the level of the ongoing regionalism in Asia. This work is significant to understand the future of Asia vis-à-vis regionalism, which is constantly evolving regional integration. The author's intention is to present an Asian understanding of regionalism, rather than how 'others' perceive this process in the Asian context. It is important to identify regionalism in Asia vis-à-vis security and prosperity in the region as well as its implications for rest of the world. While pointing out to external factors, Frost has also debated on the role of the US in Asia, primarily as a balancing power between stronger and weaker countries of the region.

The book moves outside the ASEAN territory by including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand in what Frost identifies as 'Asia Major'. This becomes a complex exercise, to consider if 'Asia Major' is included into the process of understanding regionalism in Asia, as these countries and the ASEAN member states are not alike on the basis of politics, economy and so on. However, Frost has devoted a reasonable space to showcase the dynamics of regional diversity, while peeling off layers of regionalism in Asia. New regionalism in Asia is driven by government officials of the ten ASEAN member states. ASEAN was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to counter communism in the region. Presently, in addition to the original ASEAN 5, the regional bloc is comprised of Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Another circle is ASEAN + 3, including Japan, China and South Korea. In 'Asia Major' the book includes ASEAN +6, that is, ASEAN + 3 along with India, Australia and New Zealand. The architecture of regional integration in Asia or to be more specific, of ASEAN, is meticulously presented in chapter 7, which discusses the intentions of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in relation to regional security. A very relevant Chapter 9 highlights the link between foreign policy and security cooperation in Asia. Therefore, this book is relevant to not only security pundits and policymakers focusing on Asia, but in general also for students researching in the areas of regional and global security.

I agree with Frost that 'oceans divide people, but they also define and unite them' (p.42) and to understand this we need to look into the efficacy of what the author identify as 'Maritime Asia'. Regional integration is not new in Asia but what is new is the presence of political will to enhance regionalism, although

regional integration will remain informal for an indefinite future. Frost says that 'the momentum of Asian regionalism is real and irreversible' (p. 3). This book presents factual information to make readers understand in a clear manner the phenomenon of regionalism in Asia. 'Maritime Asia' is globalised in nature due to its significance in sea transportation and trade. Roughly 90 per cent of world trade moves by ships and via seaports. Those of Singapore and Hong Kong are the world's busiest and around '55,000–60,000 commercial vessels traverse the strategically vital Strait of Malacca each year' (p. 5). The facts show how crucial is 'Maritime Asia' for regionalism and globalism. The book has three chapters devoted to 'Maritime Asia' considering its significance, as 60–70 per cent Asians live in coastal communities (p. 31). While exploring regionalism in Asia, the author emphasises more on 'Maritime Asia', which has kept the region well connected. As Frost writes, 'Nowhere is this regional pulse more palpable than in what I call Maritime Asia, the vast sweep of coastline and water connecting central and southern India, Southeast Asia, China, the Korean Peninsula, Japan, Australia and New Zealand' (p. 1). More than ever before, coastal communities in Asia are multicultural, with workers from across the region. Therefore, multiculturalism in coastal areas is connecting the region for tangible integration, though this is spontaneous in nature. For all this the credit also goes to technological advancement such as cell phones, etc., and also to the English language, which bridges gaps between the people of different languages in Asia. I must commend Frost's way of underscoring all these factors in presenting a comprehensive understanding of regionalism in Asia.

Bilateral and multilateral trade in Asia has been unifying the region since the advent of the Silk Road; however, new technologies have expanded the scope of trade in the region with the dawn of faster communication mechanisms; containers to transport oil and other goods; aviation industry; and better road and rail infrastructures. Tens of thousands of Asians travel by air these days. For example, about 10,000 people travel between China and Japan every day (p.68). Expanding on this form of spontaneous regional integration, which is cemented by individuals in the region, Frost has devoted chapter five to the role of architects and product networks; Japanese pioneer companies; overseas Chinese investors; environmentalists; democracy and human rights activists; and religious and cultural integrators in Asia's regionalism. This chapter adds a whole new dimension to various invisible actors involved in the process of regional integration. These are crucial to be considered in analysis focusing on the future of regionalism in Asia.

It is important to mention that the book is limited to the role of ASEAN with reference to regionalism in Asia, though with a brief mention of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. However Frost has completely ignored the steady process of regionalism in the South Asia, which was initiated in 1985 through the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The SAARC to date has the following member states: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Due to the potential of economic

growth in the region, SAARC has already been a centre of attraction for outsiders, especially the ones who have obtained the Observer status, including Australia, China, Burma, European Union, Iran, Japan, Mauritius, South Korea and the United States. South Asia is also at the centre-stage of global politics vis-à-vis security. There is no doubt that SAARC is immature in comparison to ASEAN, but it still deserves a mention in the book, as the work is about regionalism in Asia.

While assessing regionalism in Asia, Frost implies three basic criteria: good governance, reform and mutual trust. And in this regard the author is of the view that 'not many countries in Asia will qualify for sustainable, legitimate, in-depth integration in the next fifteen to twenty years' (p. 214). Frost has discussed some of the challenges in the way of regionalism in Asia too. There are some countries committed to regionalism in Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. However, on the other hand there are countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and India which are not fully prepared for regionalism. In between, there is ASEAN 5 with countries introducing new dynamics into the process of regional integration and thus acting as the architects of regional cooperation. I think the process of regionalism takes its own time to expand multilateral cooperation towards regionalism. Therefore perhaps a more realistic analysis or evaluation of regionalism in Asia needs more time. Nevertheless, Frost has done justice to the analysis of regionalism in Asia by presenting progress to date, available opportunities, potential challenges and threats, as well as putting forward recommendations to enhance the role of regional blocs in Asia.

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