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Review: Kang, David C. East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010. 221 pp.

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the least gender-sensitive, the most deprived region in the entire world. Few scholars will take issue with this assertion. The most critical issue is found in Chapter 9, "Conclusion – Toward Balancing Military and Human Security." Human security must be put over state security. As to the possibility of this occurring, this matter rests with each individual reader not the author.

The issue remains: "Where goest India and Pakistan?" This work is useful in helping the interested reader to gain some critical understandings of subcontinent contemporary history, a morbid and distressing chronicle. As found in the *Mahabharata*, maybe the solution rests in the hands of the Gods. One fact of realism is certain. Until India and Pakistan resolve their differences, the region of South Asia rests in uncertain time. As a quick insight into this unfortunate time Datta's book is valuable.

## NOTES

1. My expressions are basic found in two articles published in *Journal of Third World Studies* – "Long Shadows of Development Administration," *A Reactive memoir to a vanishing 'Greatest Generation,'* Fred Riggs, 26, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 51-70 and "Founding Propositions Unto a Nation-State, Contrastings of Indonesia and Pakistan, "A Personal Essay," 28, No. 2 (Fall 2011): 59-86. A detailed account is found in my memoir *Tell It Upon the Tall Mountain, Pakistan* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Family History Press, 2011).

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This book belongs to the International Relations literature concerned



question why there was such a prolonged time of peace with only a couple of short-lived conflicts on the whole. Within this case study, the time Kang looks at ranges from the beginning of the Ming Dynasty in 1368 to the First Opium War in 1841. Since the foreign relations in the East Asian region are the main focus, the book concerns itself with the tribute system and the states in it, China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. As the title of the work illustrates, Kang's work will contribute to anti-Eurocentric literature in IR and offer a non-conventional way of looking at IR on a theoretical level, a distinct East Asian culture being the reason for doing so.

Chapter one introduces the reader to the main research question about the stability in early modern East Asia between the mentioned four states over five centuries. Kang challenges Eurocentric assumptions such as the norms and rules surrounding the Westphalian system in which obviously states and their sovereignty are in basic regarded as equal. He juxtaposes this in a stark contrast to the tribute system in which inequality is a leading principle. To elaborate on this more, Kang neatly defines the concepts of hierarchy, status, and hegemony involved in the tribute system from 1368 to 1841 in chapter two. He makes a compelling case that because of cultural and civilizational achievements, China was accepted by the other units in the tribute system as ranking highest in status within this hierarchy, i. e. being the hegemon. And beyond that Chinese civilization had a lasting impact on its surrounding states.

Chapter three elaborates more on this system and its ranking in which Korea ranked second, Vietnam third, and Japan last. Kang calls this regional international society the Confucian society which was "based on formal recognition and regulated by a set of norms" (p. 53). In chapter four, the diplomacy surrounding the tribute system is examined. Status and hierarchy dominated the diplomatic relations and Kang elaborates on why Korea was ranked higher than Japan, for example. The author makes the case that Japan was a boundary case for the above-described international society. In chapter five, Kang inspects the war aspect of the foreign relations between the units in the international system which was merely confined to two war between them and four other major conflicts with outside actors, like Turkic nomads or Britain. Kang finds the 'Imjin War' between Japan and Korea especially puzzling because balance-of-power theory would have held that instead of the



resolution between the participating states.

In the next chapter about trade between political units in early modern East Asia, Kang implies that the busy economic relations helped prevent conflict between them, too. He exposes some wrong assumptions about the tribute system not having functioned prior to Western arrival and the importance of European trade powers, like the Dutch, arriving in East Asia. Next, Kang dedicates a chapter on the relations of China with neighboring nomads. This is needed because even though the relations with the states in the system were quite peaceful, those with the nomadic peoples were all but peaceful. He argues that there were naturally many conflicts between a state, China, and the adjacent nomads because there was no defined border but rather a 'frontier' which was due to the fact that a border is only present when there are two established nation-states which can respect another. Even though this argument is very persuading, it seems to be contradictory to the previous argument that sovereignty and its establishment by the Westphalian Peace was the reason for much conflict in the world. The book ends with Kang's evaluation of how history can help inform the understanding of today's foreign relations, or what he calls 'history forward,' but also how the present impacts the past, 'history backward,' as for example in the official rewriting of history in textbooks.

All in all, the author presents an original, refreshingly analytically eclectic argument which complements other pieces that have been published on similar topics surrounding East Asian security studies. For the work's anti-Eurocentric nature, it almost exclusively uses Western literature to substantiate its argument and in that regard runs into a dead end in the chapter about nomads. Nevertheless, Kang produced a well-informed work which will be a much cited, great contribution to the discipline.

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Sarngadharan, M and Rajitha Kumar (eds.). *Traditional Industries of India in the Globalised World*. Delhi: New Century Publications, 2007, 276 pp.