

this broader narrative nicely. Yet, although the TPP is identified as an issue that “politicized and polarized” the Japanese public (123), the contributions in the volume rarely reflect this contestation, which is probably most obvious in the depiction of the TPP (and free trade in general) as the panacea for Japan’s crisis-ridden farm sector.

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JAPAN: The Precarious Future. *Possible Futures Series. Edited by Frank Baldwin and Anne Allison.* New York: New York University Press; Brooklyn: Social Science Research Council, 2015. viii, 352 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$35.00, paper. ISBN 978-1-4798-5145-4.

Japan: The Precarious Future explores the gloomier sides of contemporary Japan. It is part of a recent boom on precarity in Japan, a result of the almost complete omission, previously, of the topics of inequality, poverty, and diversity in discussions on Japan. In thirteen chapters, sociologists, political scientists, and economists discuss the state of Japanese society after Fukushima. Each chapter ends with a future outlook. This constitutes a unique and welcome addition to the existing literature on post-Fukushima Japan. The chapters discuss issues seen to constitute problems and focus on the difficulties of solving them. From the outset the book takes a skeptical perspective on Japan based on the fact that Japan is experiencing a demographic crisis coupled with a long period of economic stagnation. Population decline, social ageing, economic stagnation, and institutional gridlock have become the norm for Heisei-period Japan. This may have been overlooked in some quarters due to talk of a “lost decade” or a widespread nostalgia for the Japan of the past, manifest in views such as “Japan is back” or “resurrect Japan.” This book addresses the need to move beyond such rhetoric and nostalgia.

The volume starts with a brief introduction which declares the objective of the book to be that of exploring “an array of systematic and structural issues that determine a country’s well-being” (2). The first chapter discusses the demographic crisis and its consequences on social attitudes, norms, behaviours, and public policies. An immigration policy would be important to mitigate the crisis, but many believe that Japanese society would not accept more immigration. The following chapter explores precarity and hope, discussing the many socio-economic consequences of the burst bubble of the 1990s. Supporting those who are part of the precariat requires not only incomes which allow for a sustainable life but also new norms on what counts as a normal life in Japan today. The third chapter discusses the consequences of deregulating the labour market in the second half of the 1990s. Reform of the labour market is widely seen to be the main trigger for the growth of social disparities in Japan. The chapter discusses the many consequences this

move has had, with a welcome focus on women and youth. The following chapter focuses on gender policies and their effects. This chapter stands out from other contributions in that concrete proposals are made for future gender policy. It stresses that gender policies have to be accompanied by a more general shift of resources from the elderly to the young (100). The next chapter discusses Japanese nuclear policy and convincingly delineates how veto players have been stalling the emergence of a new energy policy in Japan, a situation which remained unchanged after the dramatic events in Fukushima. The following chapter reports positive developments, such as in crisis management, which has seen much improvement since the Kobe earthquake of 1995. A particularly gloomy chapter follows, which analyzes Japan's fiscal situation and public debt. The author underlines that the fiscal problems will require thorough reforms in a not too distant future. Chapter 8 discusses manufacturing in Japan, in particular the opinion that manufacturing cannot survive in Japan, a view that the chapter authors do not share and see as unnecessarily weakening the Japanese economy. This is followed by a discussion on research and technology in Japan. Japan is in decline here, too. Neither outstanding Japanese nor foreign researchers consider Japan an attractive country for conducting research. The remainder of the book shifts to a political science perspective, discussing Japan's security policy (chapter 10), strategic leadership in Asia (chapter 11), Japan's political leadership (chapter 12), and an analysis of recent debates and proposals about constitutional reform (chapter 13).

The book has two major strengths. To start with, it discusses the future of Japan by including perspectives usually not prominently considered (such as manufacturing, research, and crisis management), and, second, all chapters have been written by leading scholars in these fields. The volume allows for studying contemporary Japan from a number of perspectives, and it does so with detailed knowledge and with much authority. The complex crisis of the Japanese state, civil society, and economy that the Fukushima crisis so unsparingly exposed requires substantial institutional reform. This is not happening, though. All authors project that Japan will continue to muddle through for some more years until real institutional reforms will become inevitable.

Reading through the entire book feels like reading through a newspaper from the first to the last page. It creates the idea of a nation living through a shared present. Stressing the simultaneity of "systematic and structural issues that determine a country's well-being" (2) assumes that the people populating Japan are all equally affected. The first four chapters aside, it gives rise to a sense that these issues characterize all lives, attitudes, and behaviours, and determine what is typical and what is to be expected in Japan henceforth. This stance does not necessarily facilitate the imagination of a future Japan. Predictions could have been facilitated by taking the diversity of opinions, values, practices, and institutional change from the grassroots level

purposefully into consideration. Urban and rural differences in perspective are absent, so is that of Okinawa, from new media, etc. The point of view presented is largely that of powerful political, economic, and cultural elites, who rather unsurprisingly are not major change agents.

Japan: The Precarious Future is a strong multi-perspective snapshot of Japan four years after Fukushima. It is the best book available on this topic for readers not specialized in the study of Japan. Specialists of Japanese studies will find individual chapters a very welcome and useful sources of information for extending their own knowledge and for taking a more comprehensive view on where Japan stands today, and how it will fare in the near future.

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MAKING WE THE PEOPLE: Democratic Constitutional Founding in Postwar Japan and South Korea. *Comparative Constitutional Law and Policy.* By *Chaihark Hahm and Sung Ho Kim.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xii, 316 pp. US\$110.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-107-01882-2.

To what extent do an identifiable and sovereign People “establish and ordain” democratic constitutions? In *Making We the People*, Hahm and Kim debunk three common assumptions about popular sovereignty through a comparison of constitutional founding in Japan and South Korea. They advocate jettisoning the ideal of “an all-powerful and ever-living people” (58) who craft a constitution without being influenced by external forces or the past. Instead, they argue that the very identity of “We the People” is formed by constitution making, which is always a process situated in a particular time and place.

Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) are apt cases with which to develop this theory. Both countries’ constitutional founding in the 1940s involved external influences, fraught histories and institutions, and significant transformations of the people’s relationship to the state. Despite the well-known parallels and interconnections between these processes in Japan and Korea, they have not been subject to as systematic a comparison as this book offers. Herein lies the primary merit of this book. Things taken for granted in one context come into sharper relief through comparison. Although *Making We the People* recaps an article—which is not cited in the book—that Hahm and Kim published in the *International Journal of Constitutional Law* in 2010 (“To Make ‘We the People’: Constitutional Founding in Postwar Japan and South Korea,” 8, no. 4: 800–848), their extensive analysis is better suited to book-length treatment.

The book is logically structured and eloquent. In chapter 1, Hahm and Kim weave together prior scholars’ critiques of the ideal of popular sovereignty to elaborate a theory about the mutually constitutive relationship between