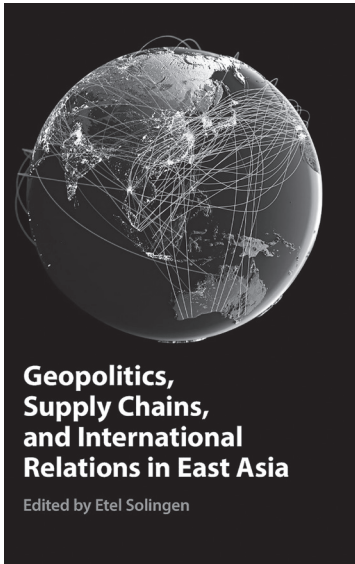


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GEOPOLITICS, SUPPLY CHAINS, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN EAST ASIA

Book Review



During the past couple of years, geopolitics has become a very popular field of research. Certainly, for a good reason. Geopolitics involves a wide variety of fields, from political science through economics to geography, therefore it involves many different researchers as well. It is also a great example of the phenomenon called spillover effect since with the help of geopolitics we can see the development of international relations from different angles and can give explanations to the events happening all around the world. With the title *Geopolitics, Supply Chains, and International Relations in East Asia*, this book gives an insight into the East Asian side of geopolitics and international relations.

This volume was edited by Etel Solingen, a Distinguished Professor, and Thomas T. and Elizabeth C. Tierney Chair in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Department of Political Science, University of California, Irvine. All the previous books she has written, co-authored, or edited revolve around international relations,

focusing on international security and nuclear weapons among others (e.g., *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East; Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*). Many of her works are award-winning books. In the light of her academic achievements, the reader can feel ensured they are reading a book with authentic information from credible resources.

This book is a rather new piece of work since it was published in 2021 by Cambridge University Press and is 320-page-long making it into a convenient read for people interested in the covered topics. By looking at the table of contents, we can see that the book is divided into three parts: *Global supply chains, geopolitics, and trade wars; Domestic political, economic, and social dimensions of global supply chains; Postscript on Covid-19*. We can also see that this book is a collection of studies written by many different authors from different research fields, nonetheless equally important in connection with the main topic, predominantly with supply chains, from various perspectives.

As she mentions right at the beginning (Preface and Acknowledgements) this book examines the global supply chains from a broader point of view, with focus on their role in international relations, while also going beyond economic dimensions, including international

security. It is also worth mentioning that Covid-19 broke out during the making of the given volume, so the authors did their best and tried to incorporate as many implications of the effects of the pandemic as possible. Moreover, the pandemic drew attention to fields that otherwise would not be examined in such details (e.g., medical equipment, pharmaceuticals etc.). During our everyday lives, we might not consider how many countries supply chains go through, connecting the world in many ways, thus creating goods that can be labelled as “Made in the World”. Since the territorial focus in this volume is on East Asia, we can read about the region’s connectivity to the rest of world. This connectivity is based on a complicated network of interdependence caused by global supply chains (GSC).

When researching East Asia, China simply cannot be left out as it is one of the biggest economic influences in the region, however, without its participation in GSC it could never have achieved such results. The given region is also an excellent example to understand the interdependencies in the world. *“The volume thus focuses not only on China as the largest GSC node connecting East Asia with itself, the US, and the rest of the world, but also on other East Asian relationships embedded in GSCs, such as those between Japan and South Korea, Japan and China, Taiwan and China, China and Hong Kong, Taiwan–China–South Korea, and North and Southeast Asian countries”*, claims Solingen. East Asia is not only interesting because of its development in the past couple of decades but because of its present challenges as well. As Solingen states, international relations in East Asia face the most complex geo-political and geo-economic threats, e.g. trade-and-technology wars, sanctions and protectionism, tensions from the Korean peninsula to the South China Sea, the so-called Thucydides trap assumingly fuelling the US-China competition etc.

As mentioned above, this volume consists of three parts. In Part I (Chapters 2–7) the reader can acquire knowledge about the trade war between the US and China via different instances. In these chapters, we can see the role of global supply chains in respect of the trade war. The authors show the effects of the trade war through analysing specific cases, e.g. the case of Huawei, artificial intelligence, and the widely popular Apple’s iPhone. Given its relevance today in our everyday lives, the smartphone industry has its own chapter (Chapter 5). Still discussing the topic of trade war, it is also depicted through a third GSC actor, which is Japan in Chapter 3. In Chapter 6, the hidden costs of geopolitical disputes that are affecting the growth of GSCs in East Asia are explored. While the region has become central to the study of these issues, the literature on international political economy is still lacking in terms of the precise pathways that lead to shifts in GSCs. This chapter aims to provide a framework for analysing the effects of these disputes on the region’s GSCs. The competitive dynamics between China and the US are discussed in Chapter 7 of this volume, which focuses on the role of GSCs in the development of African economies.

The focus of Part II (Chapters 8–12) is on the domestic political, economic, and social factors influencing policy in relation to GSCs in different states. The development of China’s outward-looking political and economic model, which in recent decades has defined the goal and receptivity to GSCs, is examined in Chapter 8. The political environment that underlies the Trump administration’s policy toward GSCs, particularly those that link China and the US, is analysed in Chapter 9. The chapter examines how US businesses responded when the US imposed tariffs on Chinese imports in 2018, and it offers three political models to explain why businesses chose to engage in the trade war with China. The analysis of domestic factors in US politics is continued in Chapter 10 while the political implications of GSCs for labour are given more attention. In a broader context of rising inequality and changing geopolitics, both rhetorical framing and contestation of GSCs in US politics are

analysed. Chapter 11 calls attention to another set of political factors that pose a danger to the GSC infrastructure and political cooperation in East Asia. Nowhere is the issue more urgent than in Northeast Asia, which is home to many GSC members. In Chapter 12, it is argued that the growth of GSCs around the world has made it possible for transnational alliances of unions and workers to exert more influence over wages, working conditions, and labour rights through initiatives that make use of GSC structure and rely on private governance rather than punitive state action.

Part III, which is also the last chapter (Chapter 13) functions as a postscript written in mid-June 2020, when there was a lot of doubt about the future of GSCs in international relations due to the deterioration of US-China ties as well as Covid-19, which intensified threats to GSCs. The chapter starts by summarizing the major ideas from Parts I and II, then it analyses how the GSC reacted to geostrategic and pandemic shocks. Due to the fact that these were fast shifting goals by mid-2020, the chapter can only offer a preliminary assessment.

Global supply chains have emerged as a crucial and contentious aspect of global economic interdependence as discussions about the future of US-China trade ties get more heated. To address global supply chains, Etel Solingen brings together a potent interdisciplinary group of academics. This timely book advances critical discussions concerning geopolitics, economics, and technological innovation. In her reimagining of interdependence and conflict, Solingen sheds light on the complex connections that exist between nations and other players via GSCs. Given the growing economic and political difficulties in that region, the focus on East Asia is particularly pertinent at this time.

Etel Solingen (Editor):

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