

**THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON JAPAN'S PUBLIC POLICY:
How the Government is Reshaping Japan's Role in the World.** *Edited by
Hiroshi Itoh.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press Limited, 2008. xiii, 232 pp.
(Tables.) US\$109.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-773-45029-5.

With a well-stated research question and rigorous methodology, this edited volume could conceivably be two separate books—one that addresses the focus of the title and the other the focus of the subtitle. Unfortunately, however, it does neither successfully. Written in commemoration of the 2002 retirement of Yasumasa Kuroda, “mentor and researcher on Japan’s politics in America” (sic; iii), most of the work’s “ten essays collected rather at random” (2) consider ways in which globalization has influenced Japan’s public (i.e., domestic) policy. But they are of wide-ranging quality, and only a limited academic audience will find the focus of some of the chapters of any interest or scholarly value.

The selections written by three former government officials at times read like a paean for the Japanese government, if not a testimonial for Japan. A reference to Japan’s “economic miracles” (52) is perhaps nothing more than a nationalistic platitude made in passing. But when readers learn that Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff “undertake their assignments so energetically that MOFA has become among the busiest ministries in Tokyo” (29), or that Japan’s reluctance to cancel the debt of present-day debtor nations is attributable to Japan’s own “self-help” experiences as a debtor immediately after World War II—without mention of geopolitical circumstances of that earlier era (the Cold War and Japan’s role as a US ally, if not the influence of the Korean War and the Vietnam War in spurring the Japanese economy)—only the most accepting reader will forge on. When one former official characterizes Japan’s diplomacy as “reliable, unselfish, nonviolent, and [without] high-handed manners” (33), that lofty pronouncement seems confirmed by another official’s claim that the percentage of asylum seekers granted refugee status in 2005 was greater in Japan than the acceptance rate of other developed countries. Yet one could argue Japan’s acceptance rate could *only* improve, for in a more than twenty-year period prior to 2005, less than 400 people were granted refugee status by the Japanese government. More likely, given this reputation, greater numbers of refugee seekers did not bother to pursue settlement in Japan.

The rationalization that underlies Japan’s aversion to accepting refugees is evident in the nostalgic (if not reactionary) tone of some of the chapters, a longing for an earlier era when Japan could benefit from international circumstances and be exempted from bearing proportional costs. Readers are presented with phrases such as “in an effort to restore Japan as the safest nation in the world” (70); they learn of “public concerns and alarms of growing brutal crimes committed by foreigners in Japan” (73); and they

are told that “local governments with many foreign workers sometimes must deal with problems of delinquent children and youth crimes among foreign workers [sic], or such neighborhood nuisances like foreigners’ improper disposals of their garbage” (66). In the conclusion, the editor opines, “Globalization has rendered Japan’s policy making at the mercy of dynamic changes both inside and outside Japan” (228), the implied results of which he proffers in the introduction: the “breakdown of the family,” “increased divorce,” “unbalanced diet,” the “study of economics through comic books” and the emergence of “porno and annoyance on Internet and telemarketing” (11). “All in all, the industrialized and modern Japan seems to have reached a point of diminishing return” (11).

Arguably the strongest contribution is a chapter by Keiko Hirata that applies international relations theories to the Japanese government’s intransigence to discontinue its support for “scientific research whaling” in the face of overwhelming international opposition. But this effort will not overcome the significant weaknesses of a book replete with inconsistencies, unsubstantiated assertions and numerous editorial lapses that are more than distracting. In the concluding chapter, the editor writes, “Observing the sense of superiority complex among the Japanese toward the Westerners, Yasumasa Kuroda deems it imperative for the Japanese to acquire the universal norm of equality for all, and at least pretend to believe in equality so that they might get used to the norm” (228). It is left to the reader to evaluate the veracity of this curious assessment, and the extent to which it drives Japan’s relations with the world.

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JAPANAMERICA: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the US. By **Roland Kelts.** *New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. xi, 242 pp. (B&W photos, illus.) US\$16.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-403-98476-0.*

With the rising demand of anime-related products on a global scale, including academic books on the topic, there has been an increase of indiscriminate publication under the guise of being “academic.” *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the US*, by Roland Kelts is one of these. This book tries to show how Japanese anime has become deeply entrenched in US culture without really talking much about US consumption. Most of the chapters rely on journalistic interviews with Japanese industry personnel. The explanation of how anime “invaded” the US is reserved for the final chapter with a few episodic anecdotes on anime fans.

First, Kelts attempts to establish a socio-historical connection between the consumption of anime in both Japan and the US through the rhetoric of war; he tries to understand why something as unique as Japanese anime is