

# Book Review

Haddad, Mary Alice. 2021. *Effective Advocacy: Lessons from East Asia's Environmentalists*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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Modern environmentalism originated in the West, beginning when European and North American countries first began to experience the great transformation of industrialization and urbanization. East Asia is an eager learner of the Western modernity; in the last century, the region has mastered the art of manufacturing and emerged as the global export powerhouse. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are vibrant and stable democracies, whereas China engineered a sort of “political miracle” as its Leninist control drew strength from, rather than being subverted by, capitalist development. Following these economic and political achievements, the four above-mentioned countries are making huge strides toward better environmental governance. Even climate denialism, which is prevalent among some of the United States top politicians, only found a weak rejoinder in East Asia.

*Effective Advocacy* offers a long-awaited environmental assessment of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China, with additional glances at Hong Kong and Indonesia. This ground-breaking book is built upon a decade of research across this region, generating valuable data on the activities of environmental NGOs (ENGOS) and making use of interviews with key participants. Given the vast scope of the research topic and its internal heterogeneity, this book is a landmark achievement simply because nothing like it has been published previously. While *Effective Advocacy* appears to have been written primarily for Western readers, it also contributes to mutual dialogue among East Asian policymakers and activists, whose exchanges are at best intermittent and episodic despite their geographical proximity and cultural affinity.

There has been a widespread understanding that a shared Confucian heritage in East Asia bestowed deference toward authorities, thus frustrating the efforts of promoting changes from below. Mary Alice Haddad bursts this myth by demonstrating that advocacy efforts in this region are likely to be successful, even in authoritarian China. At the same time, she finds more environmental actions directed toward pollution, and less toward climate change, compared to other regions.

With in-depth case studies, Haddad seeks to discover the success formula of East Asian environmentalists. *Effective Advocacy* unravels a pragmatic, cooperative, gradualist logic behind these successful actions. Positive results are more likely to come when environmentalists have friends inside the government, build trusting relationships with corporations, and target less ambitious goals,

at least in some localities. As one example, Seoul's Green Citizen Committee shows how a city's participatory governance jumpstarted a nation-wide campaign to put an end to nuclear energy. In other cases, environmentalists were found to be more persuasive when they joined hands with the artistic community; also Hayao Miyazaki's ecologically conscious animation production in Japan and China's film documentary *Under the Dome* (2015) highlighted harmful air pollution from coal burning and were powerful statements precisely because they "blur the distinction between activism and expression." More examples of this approach are fiction by Taiwan's Wu Ming-yi and aerial photography by Chi Po-lin, which are leading the contemporary front of eco-criticism exploring salient conflicts in our Anthropocene era.

On the whole, *Effective Advocacy* offers a dose of moderation, in that East Asian environmentalists succeed when they cooperate with political and business leaders, perhaps suggesting that the results of confrontational tactics are suboptimal. More research about Asian protest activism, which East Asian ENGOs often utilize, is needed for a fuller understanding of regional activism. An obvious example is Japan's Fukushima Incident of 2011, which amounted to a Chernobyl-level disaster in East Asia and rekindled antinuclear mobilization in the four nations that are Haddad's focus. Although their post-Fukushima trajectories diverge, the presence of street protests is sure to affect the calculus of political and commercial elites, which facilitate policy lobbying on the part of more cooperative ENGOs.

Generalizing across a vast terrain is inherently difficult, running the risk of isolating individual case studies from their context. The "being useful" tactic of helping bureaucrats solve burning problems that facilitates the Chinese official acceptance of Chinese ENGOs was only used around the establishment of the country's environmental ministry in 2008. Chinese authorities are willing to lend a listening ear only when civil-society activists obtain new funding; once they are no longer "useful" and/or become a political nuisance, they are likely to be deemed troublemakers by the government. The limited scope of such Asian NGO advocacy is also seen in AIDS prevention, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, and others. Similarly, postwar Japan has long been a state-led country where bureaucrats give administrative guidance to enterprise managers, thus giving rise to the tradition of "amakudari" (descent from Heaven), in which retired officials assume the leadership of private business groups. One should thus not be surprised that former bureaucrats also often take on leadership of government-sponsored environmental NGOs. The question is whether such arrangements result in taming civil society or enabling its reach into the policy-making process.

How do East Asian environmentalists create effective advocacy? This book makes a trailblazing contribution to the existing studies. Follow-up research can better look at the confrontational tactics of ENGOs in this region to complete the picture.