



**Andy Green and Jan German Janmaat**

**Regimes of Social Cohesion: societies and the crisis of globalization**

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The question of social cohesion is a classic concern. It is by no means a new theme among social scientists and policymakers who try to unravel the causes and consequences of social cohesion on the one hand, and antecedents as well as succedents of social erosion on the other hand. Andy Green's and Jan German Janmaat's *Regimes of Social Cohesion* is another good attempt to comprehend the complexities and ramifications of social cohesion as a concept and its use in policy discourses.

Divided into seven chapters, the book articulates a three-pronged analytical approach with the following objectives: (i) lay down "some necessary conceptual ground-clearing" on social cohesion; (ii) ascertain "how the term 'social cohesion' can be used in a more scientific way that advances theory and provide a basis for empirical analysis;" and (iii) strive to "provide a usable, non-normative and non-exclusive definition of social cohesion that can then be operationalized in research to analyze the different forms of social cohesion which may be identified in actual societies of the non-normative social types" (p.4).

Adopting a mixed-method and interdisciplinary approach, chapter 1 ("Defining Social Cohesion) builds up its arguments by examining the constituents of social cohesion. It defines a non-normative and non-exclusive social cohesion as one that "refers to the property by which whole societies, and the individuals within them, are bound together through the action of specific attitudes, behaviours, rules and institutions which rely on consensus rather than pure coercion" (p. 18). Analyzing Western academic and policy texts, three (3) distinctive types of discourse around which social cohesion emerged are identified: the liberal, republican, and social democratic discourses.

The main historical traditions of Western sociological thought and political philosophy on social cohesion and social order are subsequently revisited in chapter 2 ("Western Intellectual Traditions of Social Cohesion"). The intellectual traditions of liberalism, republicanism, and conservative romanticism, it argues, provide highly elaborated theoretical accounts on the nature of social cohesion.

Using *longue durée* historical evidence and trajectories of a number of countries and employment of "no-absolute" path dependency, chapter 3 ("The Social Origins and Development of Social Cohesion Traditions") establishes the existence of three dominant "regimes of social cohesion" at different points of time in history, namely: liberalism (exemplified by the UK and the US), republicanism and romantic conservatism (France and mainland Europe), and social democracy (Nordic countries). The classification is founded on the configurations of social attitudes and behaviours that contribute to a society-wide social bonding underpinned by institutional arrangements defined by the dominant social and political thought construed to be the "ideal-type" (p. 64).

Drawing from the literature of "varieties of capitalism" and "welfare state regimes," chapter 4 ("Contemporary Regimes of Social Cohesion and Their Institutional Foundations") contends that while some regimes of social cohesion survived, others mutated, and few emerged over the past two centuries. It is theorized that contemporary regimes of social cohesion are the: liberal, social market, social democratic, and East Asian regimes. The theory is close to Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) "welfare regimes" and Michael Walzer's (1997) "regimes of toleration."

From the analysis of the literature, the sources of social cohesion are hypothesized in the following regimes: (1) under the liberal regime (English-speaking countries, primarily the US and the UK) social cohesion is grounded on individual freedom and choice, benefits of



opportunity, and rewards based on merits; (2) in a social market, (North-West continental Europe) they are built on shared values and active participation on national political life, and in reliance on the state; (3) under the regime of social democracy (Nordic countries), they are centered on equality and trust; and (4) in East Asian (Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan), they established on Confucianism (supported by family and state), and shared culture.

These hypotheses are tested statistically in chapter 5 (“Quantitative Analysis of Regimes of Social Cohesion”) by using data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Labour Organisation, World Bank, and the United Nations in examining institutional characteristics, while data from the European Values Study/World Values Survey (EVS/WVS) and International Social Survey Program are availed of in appraising social behaviours and attitudes. In such tests (scatterplots, cluster analyses, indexes, factor analyses), three regimes (liberal, social market, and social democratic) are empirically proven to be valid. Southern European countries on the other hand are marginally related to the social market regime statistically, while East Asian countries in spite of their distinctiveness as a separate regime cannot be confirmed with statistical confidence due to the insufficiency of cases.

Statistical analyses continue in chapter 6 (“Value Diversity and Social Cohesion”) with the extensive use of WVS data in exploring the trends in value diversity across regimes of social cohesion. The chapter discloses that value diversity is a highly dynamic universal process which “responds to changes in contemporary conditions... an unpredictable phenomenon... interacting with local social and institutional configurations” across countries and regions. (p. 163).

Finally, chapter 7 (“Social Cohesion Regimes and the Global Economic Crisis”) comparatively examines the trends in key aspects of social cohesion (trust, tolerance, and perceptions of conflict) along several dimensions, and how regimes have been affected by the global financial crisis of 2008. Findings show that although the trends exhibit considerable divergence between regimes in terms of social cohesion, all face the uncertain future of the new millennium with significant vulnerabilities at their key points. It is assumed further that the state of social cohesion is not determined by the impact of global crisis but resolved by the way national governments respond to it.

The book is indeed a welcome addition in the literature of social cohesion. It demonstrates through a profound theoretical review and robust statistical analyses the modalities of regime of social cohesion, how they are affected by the financial crisis, and institutional and policy options that have been taken to address socio-economic and political conflict under the aegis of globalization.

It is surprising though that the book missed out to examine social cohesion in China, the most significant country not only in Asia but in the world. While the authors used data from EVS/WVS to assess trends in value diversity across regimes, the rich dataset from Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) was not utilized. The ABS gauges public opinion on issues such as political values, democracy, and governance across Asia and covers virtually all major political systems in the region, compiling reliable and comparable micro-level data on the issues of citizens' values and attitudes toward politics, power, reform, and democracy in Asia (13 East Asian states and 5 Southeast Asian countries). Apart from this, ABS is co-hosted by the Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica and the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences of the National Taiwan University.

The argument that the distinctiveness of East Asian countries as a separate regime of social cohesion cannot be determined due to insufficiency of cases, is deemed ungrounded. Moreover, the fact that financial crisis of 2008 has been limited to Western countries rather than a “global” concern, is a clear manifestation that Asia, specifically China has some



significant lessons which Western countries should learn from in terms of sustaining social cohesion in the face of deleterious effects of globalization.

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