



RISING ASIA
JOURNAL



RISING ASIA
FOUNDATION

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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A Journal for a New Asian Order

The Rising Asia Foundation is launching the *Rising Asia Journal* at a historical moment of continental churn in order to cast a scholarly eye on the past and the present of Asia, its societies, its cultures, its convergences and divergences, and to make sense of its civilizational legacies.

Asia is facing an exquisite new dilemma. A New Asian Century appears to be in the making, just two decades after the demise of the older one. The engine driving the original Asian Century—with China carrying a disproportionate burden—sputtered and choked soon after its excessively ballyhooed emergence. Our dilemma will center on gleaning the correct lessons from its failure.

It was a twenty-year period of global turmoil that exposed the fissures running deep within the continent where war, and the threat of war, hung over the region with worrying imminence. A disturbing foreboding of conflict simmers within multiple cauldrons—those of the Himalayas, the South China Sea, Taiwan and the East Sea—whose storied histories of conflict have resurfaced to torpedo prospects of lasting peace and stability.

The formation of a New Asian Order appears to have begun. It may not be led by a single hegemonic power, but by a continental entente of a number

RISING ASIA JOURNAL.

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 (WINTER/SPRING) JANUARY TO APRIL 2021.

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of Asian countries. A new multipolar Asian continent is in the making. But the trouble is that it is a deeply contested order. By definition, a Global/Asian Order implies a political concert in which countries—no longer divided because of their support for either the United States or the Soviet Union, as was the case during the Cold War, or between the United States and China like in present times—agree to work together to solve international and regional problems.

It sounds fanciful, but it is worth striving for because the space for multipolar existence must be created by the regional powers themselves. It is surely worth having *nostos* for *utopos*, hailing from the Greek *nostos* signifying nostalgia or a longing to return home, and *utopos* meaning both a good place and the place that cannot be. Its creation and gestation will, without doubt, fill us all with an exquisite agony.

A New Asian Order is taking shape because Asian states desire a continent where no single hegemonic power gets to determine the land and maritime borders and make expansive and peremptory territorial claims. A New Asian Order and a New Asian Century must be inclusive and must give voice to all states, large or small, fairly and equally.

The RAJ and its parent, the RAF, are a part of the Rising Asia Foundation Trust, a non-profit organization registered in Calcutta, West Bengal in October 2020, with the aim of bringing together scholars, diplomats, multilateral organization experts and businesspersons with a mandate to publish scholarly journals and books, to produce and release documentary films, and be dedicated to the study of Asian societies. The mission of the organization is to promote excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of all aspects of Asia, and to encourage the wide discussion of scholarly questions and the fair treatment of all practitioners of multidisciplinary teaching and research. The RAF is supported through the donations of philanthropists, membership and subscription fees, and revenue from annual conferences.



The RAJ serves as a resource for the study, investigation, and teaching of Asian societies. Each volume of the journal contains interpretive essays on all aspects of Asian history, economy, diplomacy, literature, health, science, military affairs (war, peace and society or WPS) and culture. Its coverage spans the humanities and social sciences, incorporating various thematic approaches—historical, economic, foreign policy, military, literary and theoretical, that explore issues of grand strategy, ideology, ethnicity, race and gender, diasporic and indigenous communities, and colonialism and postcolonialism. The journal also publishes reviews of books, films, television programs, museum exhibits and resource guides, provided all of them are scholarly in nature.

The RAJ and the RAF thank the distinguished entrepreneur, Ashwini Kakkar, for his generous donation which has made it possible to publish. Ashwini is a scholar and thinker with degrees in Mechanical Engineering, MBAs from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta and INSEAD, France, and Law from the Government Law College, Mumbai. He has served as the Executive Vice Chairman of Mercury Travels Ltd, and Chairman of Via.com, and he was knighted by the French government with the Chevalier de l'Ordre Merite in 2007 in recognition of his services.

RAF is led by its Founder President, Sitaram Sharma, who is the Honorary Consul General of Belarus in Calcutta, and former Chairman of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. The RAF itself was created by the Rising Asia Foundation Trust, which is managed by its Founder Chairman, Harish C. Mehta, the Founder Trustee, Bijalpita Julie Mehta, and the Trustees: entrepreneur and theatre actor Sumit Ray, and author and graduate student Raka Mukherjee. We have ensured that age, youth and gender are properly represented on the Trust so that it has continuity, stability and longevity.

The RAF's Board of Advisors is drawn from scholars and businesspersons: Rohinton Babaycon, Darjeeling tea industry senior

executive and consultant; Suchorita Chattopadhyay, Professor, Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University; Ajay Dandekar, Director Humanities & Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University; Amartya Dutta Gupta, Director, Unit Group; Arijit Ghose, Director, Nirvana Resorts, Kurseong; Sanjay Kathuria, Senior Visiting Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, India, and former Lead Economist, World Bank, Washington, D.C.; Rajika Mitra, Country Head & Strategic Partnerships (India, Hong Kong, Philippines) Promax Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore; Raj Sharma, the Singapore-based Technopreneur, Arun Narain Singh, Vice Chairman Goodricke, and Chairman Tea Vision Trust; Shivank Pratap Singh, Lawyer, Supreme Court of India, and Delhi High Court; and Gurjit Singh, former ambassador of India to ASEAN, Germany and the African Union.

We are delighted to present our editorial board of accomplished scholars across the disciplines, from history and economics to conflict studies, diplomacy and literature: Ang Cheng Guan, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore; Suchorita Chattopadhyay, Jadavpur University; Ajay Dandekar, Shiv Nadar University; Jangkhongam Doungel, Mizoram University; Craig Etcheson, Harvard University; Tuan Hoang, Pepperdine University; Sanjay Kathuria, Centre for Policy Research, and formerly with the World Bank; Shubhrajeet Konwer, Gauhati University; Veronica Khangchian, Martin Luther Christian University; Siddharth Mallavarapu, and Medha from Shiv Nadar University; Julie Mehta, Loreto College; Biswajit Mohapatra, North Eastern Hill University; Md Mizanur Rahman, Bowling Green State University; Gurjit Singh, former Indian ambassador; and Vu Duong Luan, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

I also take this opportunity to introduce our energetic assistant editors in the categories of copy editing and publishing, all of whom are currently graduate students at Loreto College, Calcutta: Hussena



Calcuttawala, Raka Mukherjee, Valentina Notts, Mohini Maureen Pradhan, Hemalatha Sridhar, and Roshni Subramani.

In our first issue, we present a series of commentaries, research articles, and a book extract. The former World Bank lead economist, Sanjay Kathuria, recommends that for India's North East Region to fulfil the role of connector, there is a need to accelerate the ongoing work on the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral corridor, as well as the Kaladan corridor (India-Myanmar), and that the corresponding motor vehicles/transport agreements should be negotiated. These corridors, Kathuria explains, will benefit the NER if they are not only connectors, but will also enable the NER to ride on them.

Ambassador Gurjit Singh analyzes the foreign policy of the Indonesian President, Jokowi, who appears to be focusing on a troika of engagements—with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, archipelagic geopolitics including the Indo-Pacific, and the diplomacy with China. The author argues that the Jokowi foreign policy reflects not the view of Indonesia's friendly neighboring countries but its unwillingness to offend China.

The globally acclaimed novelist, poet, and essayist Zulfikar Ghose, who grew up in England in the 1950s and was then invited to a professorship at the University of Texas at Austin, reflects on the social history of the colonial game of cricket. Ghose is himself an accomplished cricketer who captained his school team in London, and then worked as a cricket correspondent for *The Observer* of London. Now, emeritus professor, Ghose explains that on the cricket field, English discrimination was less racism and more an old English obsession with class. Yet, growing up, Ghose would discover that finding employment in England in the mid-twentieth century was fraught with racial prejudice. I must point out that Ghose's illustrious literary career started when he received a special award from the E.C. Gregory Trust that was judged by T.S. Eliot, Henry Moore, Herbert Read

and Bonamy Dobrée in 1963, and he went on to become one of the earliest exponents of the magic realism genre in Latin American literature in the 1960s.

We are happy to present three research articles that exhibit novel and innovative theoretical and analytical approaches to geostrategy, peace processes and indigeneity. Alok Kumar, a lecturer at Rajiv Gandhi University in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, explores the U.S.-India engagement by employing Parrondo's Paradox, a game theory that may be used to study a combination of losing strategies that can be turned into a winning one. If the two countries, for instance, did not deal with strategic issues together then they may have faced serious security threats. India's lone fight against terrorism since the 1980s could not achieve much success, but after the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. homeland, Washington launched a global war on terror, and as a result, terrorist incidents in India began declining. Both countries have benefited by working as global allies in other flashpoints such as the Sino-India War of 1962, the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and in the Galwan Valley conflict.

In his research article, Lalnundika Hnamte, an assistant professor at Government J. Buana College at Lunglei, Mizoram, reflects on thirty-four years of peace in Mizoram after the signing of the Mizo Accord in June 1986 that put an end to the twenty year-long Mizo war of independence spearheaded by the Mizo National Front. The author explains that the Accord was hailed as the most successful agreement of the Indian state with an armed insurgent group and as a model of conflict resolution. This article critiques the Mizo Accord as a model agreement by underlining its defects and non-implementation, and argues that sustainable peace in the state of Mizoram was possible due to the social administrative system and political culture of the Mizos, largely shaped and molded by civil society organizations.

The graduate student of Jadavpur University and Bodo language translator, Milan Narzary, examines the prevailing misinterpretations of Bodos in popular Indian cinema and in historical studies and media. To



correct these distortions, the author provides a Bodo perspective by exploring two Bodo novels, *Mwihur* (To Hunt) and *Bigrai Arw Dwisrai* (Bigrai and Dwisrai). In his reading of *Mwihur*, the author employs Ecocritical theory to excavate the idea of the ‘savage,’ laying bare the biases held towards certain communities, and how the ‘savage’ was conceptualized and understood by Indian leaders that cast doubt on the capability of aboriginal communities to run their autonomous governments. The article argues that *Bigrai Arw Dwisrai*, set during the Bodoland agitation, amplifies the voice of the All Bodo Students' Union, whose emphasis on the Gandhian model of peaceful struggle using constitutional methods helps in reaching a new understanding of the Bodoland Movement that is often represented in the popular discourse as a struggle sustained through military means.

In our Books' section, we are pleased to publish an excerpt from *Extraordinary Justice: Law, Politics, and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals* (Columbia University Press, 2019) by the Harvard University scholar, Craig Etcheson, a leading expert on the Cambodian genocide. Etcheson studies the evolution of war crimes tribunals, their functioning, and their outcome. The author, who has spent several years working on the tribunal in Cambodia, argues that the concepts of legality that animate such tribunals should be understood in terms of their orientation toward politics, both in the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and generally. From his ringside seat, the author observes the inner workings of post-conflict justice in *Extraordinary Justice*, a timely book that challenges our understandings of the relationship between politics and the law, with far-reaching implications for future efforts to seek accountability for crimes against humanity.

Welcome to the RAJ.