



RISING ASIA
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RISING ASIA
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IN THIS ISSUE
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The Coming of the “Second” Issue

We were still celebrating the release of our first issue in January this year, with its cache of world-class writers and innovative ideas, when the second one came due for publication. Here it is. It has generated considerable excitement among students, professors, think-tanks and the general reader across the region at a time of global turmoil. The second issue takes me to a few lines that have lived with me since my university days:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

The universality of these lines from William Butler Yeats’ “The Second Coming” brushes up against the reality of everyday life in the eastern world that our commentators explore in fine detail in the second issue.

The School of Oriental and African Studies scholar, Toh Han Shih, who has a doctorate in physics, writes about the continuing erosion of democracy in Hong Kong at a time when pro-China entities are exerting increasing pressure on the Hong Kong judicial system. Toh remembers a judge who lived about a thousand years ago during the period of the Northern Song dynasty. Known for his honesty, Justice Bao Zheng has an important message for present-day China: that the judicial independence of Hong Kong would benefit China.

Ryan Mitra, a master’s student at The Graduate Institute Geneva, turns his attention to the coup in Myanmar, arguing that ASEAN’s consensus-oriented modus operandi as a Formal Intergovernmental Organization (FIGO) has already nullified the efficacy of the organization in recurring crises in Myanmar, pushing the FIGO towards a political crossroads. Its handling of Myanmar could yield a new shape of the informal grouping that may evolve in reaction to the geopolitics of Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Associate Professor Tuan Hoang of Pepperdine University in California explores the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States, and the shifting representation of the Vietnamese American experience. He explains that the appearance of the South Vietnamese flag in



Washington, DC on January 6, 2021 generated a great deal of commentary. The author argues that these commentaries have neglected its multiple symbolisms to Vietnamese Americans who had come to the United States as refugees or immigrants. The underlying meaning of the flag has changed over time to reflect the experience of Vietnamese after the Fall of Saigon, not before, but its visual symbolism remains tied to the history of the former Republic of Vietnam.

In a commentary remembering the exceptional historian, Michael H. Hunt, I reconstruct my semester as his graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in January 1995. Reading the literature of the Vietnam War with Professor Hunt was an intellectual surf-ride over choppy political waters that few had undertaken at the time because he had assembled the latest historical studies on the topic and encouraged us, his graduate students, to view the war from the perspectives of all the actors involved. The passing of Professor Hunt does not leave an empty space; he leaves us a rich trove of his books and thoughts.

We present three innovative research articles that span China, India and the World, and the Northeast. Jing Chen, a graduate of Nanjing Foreign Language School and student of theater at Wake Forest University, writes that the cultural representation of Empress Wu Zetian—enthroned in 690 CE as the ruler of the Tang Dynasty for over forty-six years—has undergone a series of rewrites and reimagination in Chinese cinema and theater over the last seventy years. The reshaping occurred under the influence of contemporary discourses of gender, sexuality and nationalism. As the only female ruler in Chinese history, Empress Wu is often represented in the popular imagination as either an enforcer of the patriarchal order or a rebellious heroine

against it. Yet, there has not been much scholarly discussion about her cultural and political significance from the perspective of cinema studies. Jing Chen presents a novel approach through her study of the discursive relationship between Chinese popular culture and the historical development of state politics, and an exploration of the ways in which the empress was employed by twentieth- and twenty-first century Chinese political movements and ideologies.

Vinay Kaura, an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Affairs and Security Studies at Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, argues that a distinguishing characteristic of the Indian ‘Third Republic,’ a label used for the Narendra Modi government, is seen in India’s calibrated effort to reshape its strategic culture as it aspires to emerge as a global power. Demonstrating the changing notions of ‘strategic autonomy’ (which inform India’s strategic culture), the author argues that the reshaping of India’s strategic culture is underway because China’s aggressive behavior has caused much concern, both in India and among American policymakers, who have reacted by promoting the Indo-Pacific concept. The author contends that since the structural realities of the international order do not allow the Biden administration to radically change America’s policy towards China, India would overcome its hesitation for strategic alignment by integrating the Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral into its foreign policy thinking, a development that would change the country’s strategic culture.

Ingudam Yaipharemba Singh, an Assistant Professor in the Department of National Security Studies at Manipur University, Imphal, recommends the adoption of a new security doctrine to resolve long-running conflicts in Northeast India, which must be analyzed afresh both from traditional and non-traditional approaches because



the region's socio-political culture and geopolitics are infused with the challenges of insurgency and economic underdevelopment. The author proposes that a paradigm shift away from national or international security to human security would have far-reaching implications for actors and institutions. He also recommends the incorporation of a gender-sensitive perspective for conflict resolution to replace the gender-blind approach taken by policymakers and researchers.

We are delighted to present an excerpt from a new book by Professor Ang Cheng Guan of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. In *Southeast Asia After the Cold War: A Contemporary History*, Ang argues that as the Cold War fades further into the past, the old security order dominated by the United States and the regional structure created by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is increasingly under siege, as a global strategic rebalancing is taking place. These changes will force the Southeast Asian region to prepare for the emergence of new risks, new rivalries, and new conflicts. The author offers an analytically informed contemporary history covering the entire region's geography, tracking developments from 1990 till around 2018–2019, and highlighting change, continuity, and the larger context in which decision-making happened.

Rising Asia Journal encourages scholars to submit their articles for publication. I would suggest that they begin by exploring the journal's website at www.rajraf.org, and familiarizing themselves with the kinds of articles that we publish.

I wish you happy reading this summer.