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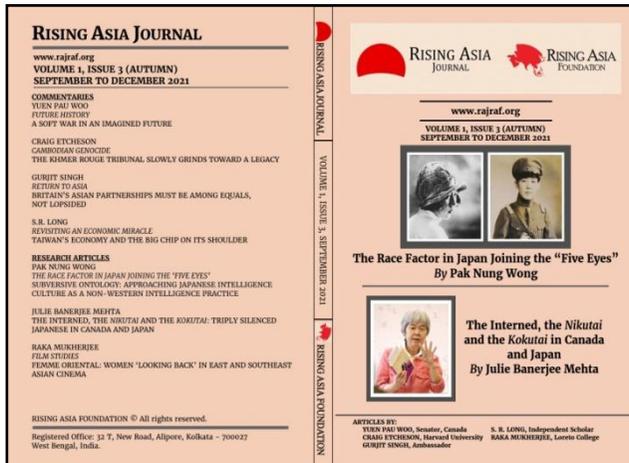
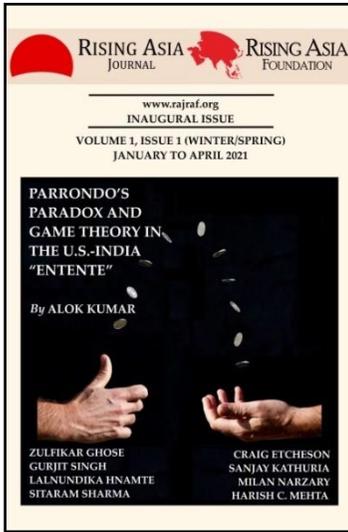
**IN THIS ISSUE**  
**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**HARISH C. MEHTA**

## **A New Year, A New Innings**

**O**ne year ago, we launched *Rising Asia Journal* at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a time fraught with risks that posed greater challenges than usual, but we stayed the course. We have published three issues so far. This is the fourth. The journal has received excellent reviews from both scholars and the general reader for concentrating on its niche area of the eastern world, and its microscopic focus on the humanities and social sciences. To put our niche area into perspective, *Rising Asia* is the only journal in India, and possibly in Asia, exclusively devoted to the study of India's Northeast, Southeast Asia and East Asia.

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This is a good time to reflect on our journey. We have published scholarly articles by academics from top global universities with demonstrated expertise in Asia, as well as commentaries by diplomats and economists. We will continue to be extremely selective in our choice of articles through the peer review process to ensure that only the best work gets published.



In this issue we cover a wide swath of Asia: reflections on the thirtieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements that ended the civil war in Cambodia, the war in Vietnam from the perspective of a leading Western peace activist, the significance of Mizoram in Indian foreign policy, ghostly themes in Chinese television series from imperial to millennial China, history lessons the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization might offer, and the current foreign policy vogue of “minilateralism” in the Indo-Pacific.

To commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements on Cambodia, Ieng Mouly, a signatory to the Agreements, reflects on his personal participation in the peace negotiations among the warring factions of Cambodia that eventually ended the fighting. In tracing the insurmountable obstacles to peace, Mouly, a senior minister in the Royal Government of Cambodia, identifies new challenges to political stability, both foreign and domestic, and recommends that Cambodians should end the politics of divisiveness and work toward national unity.

In a tribute to Prince Norodom Ranariddh of Cambodia who passed in November 2021, Harish C. Mehta writes about the personal and political life of the prince, arguably the most accomplished among the children of King Norodom Sihanouk. Mehta draws upon his authorized biography of Ranariddh, *Warrior Prince*, to reflect on the life of a prince who skimmed the heights of political power, went into premature decline, and staged a remarkable resurrection.

In a comprehensive research article, the scholar Luke Stewart, who is currently editing a book on the American peace activist and scholar, Staughton Lynd, explores an opportunity for peace that U.S. President Lyndon Johnson missed. Stewart argues that most diplomatic historians believe that the failure of the Johnson administration’s

second bombing pause over North Vietnam and first major peace offensive from December 25, 1965 to January 31, 1966 was a *fait accompli*, and that the resumption of bombing was ordered without major debate within the national security state. Stewart challenges this interpretation by exploring the aftermath of Lynd's ten-day fact-finding trip to North Vietnam and his discussions with representatives of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. Lynd's experiences and his conversations with the Vietnamese revolutionaries during the peace offensive convinced him that alternatives to escalation existed in January 1966. Lynd, however, did not know that these alternatives were thoroughly discussed in high-level deliberations and decision-making in the White House. Stewart explains that this was perhaps the last best chance to avoid even greater U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War.

Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, Professor of Political Science at Mizoram University, explores India's Look East Policy and its successor, the Act East Policy, that aims to improve diplomatic and commercial ties with Southeast Asia. The author argues that the targeted goal may not be achieved without the involvement and participation of the Northeastern states on account of their geographical contiguity with Southeast Asian countries. He points out that two Act East policy projects, the Kolodyne Hydro-Electric Project II and the Kolodyne Multi Modal Transit Transport Project Road, have been undertaken in the state of Mizoram, and a Land Customs Station has opened at Zokhawthar. The author analyzes the significance of Mizoram in the ongoing Act East Policy and assesses whether the change of the nomenclature from "look" to "act" has really activated the project at the ground level.



In his research article, Sheng-mei Ma, Professor of English at Michigan State University, explores *Guimi*, which is one of millennial China's favorite lexicons for boudoir confidantes, a coterie of usually three female friends that form a support network in their struggle for prosperity. Although the history of *Guimi* goes back in time to female bonding in imperial China, in millennial China they are most visible as young female protagonists in three popular 2020 TV series. The author shows that females remain handmaidens to mammon in corporations headed by male CEOs, sinking under the weight of liquid assets plied by men. The author explains that there is another tradition on whose shoulders *guimi* also stand: the tradition of imperial female ghosts. They are the imperial "well-being/s," beings born out of "killing wells" of suicides and femicides.

In his analysis of the diplomatic history of the Cold War-era Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, Ang Cheng Guan, Professor and Associate Dean at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, writes that there are compelling reasons to revisit the two decades-long diplomatic experience of the SEATO from the 1950s to the 1970s. Drawing upon his latest book, *The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation* (London: Routledge, 2021), the author shows that the revival of interest in SEATO is seen in new literatures that explore its workings, such as its operational-level contingency plans and counter-insurgency policies. The author reconstructs a lifecycle of SEATO using materials which were unavailable to scholars studying the organization from the 1950s through the 1980s and presents a nuanced assessment of the grouping.

Finally, Saranya Antony, a PhD student at Jawaharlal Nehru University, explains that there has been a shift from the paradigm of multilateral and bilateral arrangements to the idea of minilateralism in

the Indo-Pacific because of unresolved geopolitical circumstances, changing national interests, the great game of the United States in the Indo-Pacific, national existential crises, and unsatisfactory traditional international alliances. In her review of *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN*, edited by Bhubhinder Singh and Sarah Teo, Ms. Antony concludes that the strength of the book is its exploration of the understudied concept of minilateralism by its critique of U.S.-centric bilateralism and Asean-centric multilateral arrangements in the Indo-Pacific. The reviewer finds that most of the references chosen in this edited volume are non-western which provides an alternative approach to the study of international relations, and an avenue to understand diplomatic relations beyond the multilateral and bilateral alliances in the Indo-Pacific security architecture.

**W**e wish our readers a happy and productive 2022, and a long and engaging relationship with *Rising Asia Journal*.