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IN THIS ISSUE
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Deepening Our Research of Asian Societies

RISING ASIA JOURNAL continues to deepen research into all aspects of Asian societies: history, diplomacy, literature, health, science, economy, military affairs, and culture. In our fifth issue, we present a series of research articles that explore a raft of themes: the Chinese patriarchy that restrained women, Japan’s urgency to develop its military power in a strategic “greyzone,” the invention of the “enemy” by the United States, the queer diasporas of Hong Kong, and the Asian feminine diaspora in the neo-Liberal Nation State. And in our commentaries section, we offer analyses of the future political alignments in Malaysia, the removal of Tiananmen memorials in Hong

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Kong, Indonesian foreign policy in transition, and war and society in Europe on the edge of a wider war. Our authors are scholars from China, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In an innovative article, Jing Chen, a theater student at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, argues that the legendary Chinese folklore heroine, Hua Mulan, has been reshaped under three political periods: the Republican era (1912–1949), the Socialist era (1949–1978), and the period of “Reform and Opening” (1978–present). The author studies the representation of Mulan in the 1939 film *Maiden in Armour*, the 1964 film *Hua Mulan*, and the 2020 Hollywood blockbuster *Mulan* in order to investigate the struggle for gender equality in China. She explains that scholars have not as yet pursued detailed research into how the story of Mulan has undergone appropriation, modification, and regulation in Chinese patriarchal society from the perspective of cinema studies.

In his research article, Ryan Mitra of the Graduate Institute Geneva develops the argument that Japan currently finds itself in a strategic “Greyzone,” an emerging international relations concept located at the intersection between statecraft and open warfare, and one that has acquired great relevance in East Asia. Turbulence in East Asian geopolitics has tested Japan’s pacifist approach, cemented in its Constitution since the Second World War, and the continuing geopolitical instability has forced a reinterpretation of its pacifist ideals under Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution that had outlawed warfare, other than for self-defence. Using the “greyzone” narrative, the author explains how Japan has modified the meaning of self-defence to accommodate the overwhelming influence of its strongest ally, the

United States, and to address the increasing number of small-scale hostilities by China and North Korea.

Two articles by Ryan Kerr and Marietta Kosma study the Queer in Colonialism, and Cultural Studies. With the “gender turn” in diplomacy, for instance, the journal *Diplomatic History* published a colloquy ambitiously entitled, “Queering America and the World,” in which the scholar Mark Bradley commented, “Queer isn’t a word you see much in the pages of *Diplomatic History* . . . Indeed, a quick lexical check of the articles since the journal began publication in 1977 for “gay,” “homosexual,” “lesbian,” “transgender,” and “queer” brings up absolutely nothing,” not counting the single reference to the *Enola Gay*.¹ Professor Bradley explains that readers “may not be surprised,” but they “should be.” This is because “queer history and queer studies occupy an increasingly central place in many historical subfields and in the work of other disciplines.” And, extraordinarily, adding, “even for the redoubtable guardians of realism among political scientists in international relations, one can detect a queer turn.” The time, he argued, had come to better understand how queering the history of American foreign relations might transform our own scholarly practice and the field itself.

Continuing in this theme, in an excellent article hallmarked by its scholarly originality, Ryan Kerr, a PhD student at the University of Florida, examines Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai’s 1997 romantic drama *Happy Together*, arguing that a reading of the film as a national allegory for Hong Kong’s postcolonial status must include an emphasis on the homophobic and patriarchal forces acting upon the

¹ Laura A. Belmonte, Mark Philip Bradley, Julio Capó, Jr., Paul Farber, Shanon Fitzpatrick, Melani McAlister, David Minto, Michael Sherry, Naoko Shibusawa, and Penny Von Eschen, “Colloquy: Queering America and the World,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 1 (January 2016): 19–80.

queer body. Kerr posits that the standard Marxist conceptions of national allegory essentialize the textual expression of colonized territories as solely defined by colonial inequality. Such interpretations demand a more nuanced understanding of the varied forms of inequality that result from colonial violence. Kerr argues that *Happy Together* demonstrates the same uneven power structure of toxic masculinity and homophobia that oppresses the characters of the film, which, in turn, he connects to the problems of masculinity and alienation experienced by the population of Hong Kong after the territory was given back to China in 1997.

Marietta Kosma, a graduate student at the University of Oxford, demonstrates in her article how author Shailja Patel's protest narrative in her book, *Migritude*, brings to the forefront the histories of the subaltern, otherwise silenced. Marietta re-conceptualizes what is considered to be "home" in the queer imaginary by addressing the discourse of the subaltern, and presents a critique of heteronormativity in order to represent the subaltern, whose concerns are illustrated as the reproduction of systemic violence upon their body. She explores how the unique experiences of belonging of female subjects, place them in a new multi-dimensional locus where a different consciousness of identity arises. The queer female South Asian subject thus becomes the center of attention and the space it occupies becomes a terrain of possibility.

Tian Mashuang, a PhD student at the Department of History, Tsinghua University, Beijing, critiques U.S. armed interventions abroad, from the war in Korea to Iraq. Tian posits that during the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy revived the "amity line" described by the German philosopher and jurist, Carl Schmitt, as the world was divided into the Western cultural-political sphere and the Soviet sphere. During the



wars in Korea and Vietnam, the United States employed narratives of national interest to defend its sphere of influence and its cultural values, while China and North Vietnam viewed the wars as a struggle for national liberation. After the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy fell into an entanglement between national interest and its alleged global responsibilities. In the last century, the Law of War had undergone a significant change from the set of rules that regulate the practices of war, to a more morally bounded prohibition of war. Thus, Tian explains, armed intervention, proxy war, and “the invention of the enemy” became the strategic and moral justification of military action without declaring war.

In our commentaries section, we present four exceptional viewpoints. The independent scholar-analyst, Long Shih Rome, an ethnic Malaysian-Chinese who studied in England and France in the 1970s and 1980s, offers an Asian perspective on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Long argues that the troubled European continent needs to reach deep down into its spiritual roots in order to find its true voice in averting a Third World War between the globalist, liberal agenda of the European Union and the nation-state authoritarian agenda of Russia.

The scholar-analyst, Toh Han Shih, writes about the removal from Hong Kong university campuses of the monuments to the Tiananmen Massacre where they had been installed in solidarity with the Chinese. But, Toh explains that this is unlikely to erase the memory of the terrible event of June 1989 when many Chinese protestors were killed by the People’s Liberation Army in Beijing.

The author-journalist, Romen Bose, explains that the key to political stability and continuity in Malaysia is for the Malays to unite under one party, and the Chinese under another, and for these two dominant parties to contest the general election that may be held

before the year is out. In the larger interest of stability, the two parties should then form a coalition government which, Bose argues, would resolve Malay infighting and bring the Chinese into government, providing the balance needed.

The former International Monetary fund official and author, Vasuki Shastry, traces the slow, deliberate, and calculated transition of Indonesia's foreign policy from caution and uncertainty to a more confident assertion of its regional interests. Vasuki explains that Jakarta's firm stance against the Myanmar military junta indicates that Indonesia has returned to the high-table of regional powers, and that it must be taken seriously both by the United States and China.

This is a time of great global uncertainty marked by worrying events in Europe and Asia. We urge scholars to continue exploring our troubled world with whatever means they can muster: through the archives, interviews, and analysis, so that we can deepen our understanding of our continent.