



RISING ASIA
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Stepping into Our Third Year

R*ising Asia Journal* completes two years of publishing with the release of the current issue. In this period, we have carried peer-reviewed articles by scholars, diplomats, historians, economists, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, international relations experts, literary theorists, film critics, and writers of fiction and poetry. One name that looms large is that of Zulfikar Ghose, novelist, poet, essayist, and playwright, who passed in June 2022 in his hometown of Austin, Texas, where he was a professor of creative writing since 1969. In this issue, we present a tribute to the author, and re-publish an article that he wrote for the first issue of this journal in January 2021.

Moving on, the scholar Toh Han Shih reflects about his recent visit to the Hong Kong Palace Museum and to the British Consulate General in that city, discovering the ways in which the people of Hong Kong remember their imperial past. He finds that the reactions of Hong Kongers to a museum exhibit of the Chinese Emperor Qianlong, and the bouquets for Queen Elizabeth II, demonstrate the duality of their psyche.

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The duality, Dr. Toh argues, is seen in the pride of many Hong Kongers in being Chinese yet abiding by the laws and practices which are a holdover from Hong Kong's days as a British colony. Some Hong Kong people told the author in interviews that they believe the British administered Hong Kong efficiently in the latter phase of their colonial rule, and that is the way they remember the British queen.

In a research article, three academics from Sikkim University, Kabindra Sharma, Rajiv Gurung, and Professor Vimal Khawas explore Trans-Himalayan Trade between India and China. They argue for greater India-China cooperation through increased connectivity to tap the trade potential of the strategic location of Nathu-La at the Indo-China border. The article also advocates the resumption of border trade through the Jelep-La route, located sixty-five miles from Kalimpong in West Bengal, as it can act as a confidence-building measure, paving the way for conflict management through economic integration. The low trade volume notwithstanding, border trade can bridge the differences between the two hostile neighbors, and improve their bilateral ties. The authors argue that such trade is essential for India and China, home to the largest number of young people, for whose future security and prosperity the two countries cannot afford to have border disputes.

The scholar, Joanne Lin, who is the lead researcher in Political-Security Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre in the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, posits in her research article that the Indo-Pacific region is becoming more important to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States. This development has been highlighted in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) adopted in 2019, and in the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy released in February 2022. At a time when ASEAN is working towards mainstreaming the AOIP in further substantiating



its outlook, there are a number of areas where ASEAN could align its interest with the United States, especially in the promotion of a rules-based order. Yet, ASEAN's preference for neutrality and its need for consensus-building will make it difficult for ASEAN to take sides in the U.S.-China rivalry or to take substantive positions on key security issues. The author explains that the establishment of U.S.-led mini lateral groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (grouping Australia, India, Japan and the United States) and the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States) may harm the interest of ASEAN and might further widen divisions within ASEAN and challenge its unity.

The scholar Nicole Smith, who has an MA from Bielefeld University in Germany, has conducted a comprehensive study on the integration of refugees in Toronto, often fleeing war and persecution in their home countries, many of whom have become entrepreneurs in the Canadian food industry. The author examines the "ethnic enclaves" such as Chinatown and Koreatown, and other emerging sites of ethnicity. Using a sociological case study of a Syrian restaurant, she explores government initiatives to help refugees establish their businesses. In her investigation, the author studies their portrayal in local newspapers, variously, as successful or as victims of hate crime, pointing out shortfalls in the coverage and the need for greater government support. She finds that many refugees not only want to succeed in their new lives, but to also give back to the new community they belong to. She concludes that simply consuming ethnic food does not guarantee one will not express racism or hatred toward another ethnic group, and voicing support for ethnic businesses is also not sufficient to claim to be "not racist."

In our books' section, Ambassador Gurjit Singh reviews a new volume, *ASEAN and India: The Way Forward*, edited by Professor Tommy Koh, who is a Singapore Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the two scholars Hernaikh Singh and Moe Thuzar, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the dialogue partnership of India and ASEAN, which is a good time to look at the relationship across-the-board. The reviewer finds that the book is dominated by the Singapore point of view since most contributors have a Singapore connection, adding that Singapore, as the current coordinator for India within ASEAN, is among the most efficient, with a clarity of views. The reviewer hopes that each of the other ASEAN countries articulate similar perspectives, and adds that it is time for India and ASEAN to engage institutionally with greater intensity, but with differentiated relationships that India has with each ASEAN member state. The book, the reviewer writes, offers much substantive material to formulate new ideas to move in that direction, particularly with Singapore.

The scholar Vinod Kumar Pillai reviews *Blood and Silk: Power and Conflict in Modern Southeast Asia* by Michael Vatikiotis, a scholar and respected journalist. *Blood and Silk* raises a slate of questions about the nature of the societies of Southeast Asia that the author answers with his eye for detail. The reviewer finds that readers who are interested in looking at only one or more of the countries in the region, may find it frustrating to discover that the material is not organized country-wise but examines all the countries together, along the various dimensions of power play and conflicts affecting the region. Yet, the reviewer explains that if we accept the fact that all the Southeast Asian countries are enmeshed together in a strange way and cannot actually be studied in isolation, the book is a valuable addition that offers comprehensive understanding of the region with rare insight. The reviewer further



believes that the author's focus on just the two sections, "Power" and "Conflict" provides a misleading sketch of the region, which has thrived on a third path, "Consensus". The reviewer recommends that the author would have done well to include a section on Consensus because it is ASEAN's core principle, one that has generated an economic success story.

The scholar Milan Narzary explores Bodo literature through his study of a novel by Manoranjan Lahary. Bodo literature emerged, Milan explains, with a need felt within the Bodo community to establish their history and culture. It soon became a force that created space for intellectual debate within the community. This article discusses a novel, *Daini?* by Manoranjan Lahary, arguing that his work reflects the desire of the early Bodo writers to dwell on their rich past. The title *Daini?*, followed by a question mark, raises questions and concerns about Bodo literature. Milan, therefore, discusses the lapses in writing style that plagued the early Bodo writers, and the discontinuities in the sort of "realism" that they were promoting.

With this issue, *Rising Asia Journal* begins the third year of its journey. The journal welcomes scholars and readers to submit articles in our areas of interest that can be found on our website.