

less attuned to the policymaker's need to balance off a sixth tension, namely security goals versus domestic costs. Thus, containment of communism in Vietnam necessitated a major roll back in Lyndon Johnson's expansive social programs. Furthermore, the seven-year extension and geographical expansion of that war by Nixon and Kissinger *may* have bolstered American credibility with shaky Asian allies. Yet that claim is far from universally accepted while there is no doubt that it continued a spiraling increase in the death toll, spawned the genocidal Cambodian regime of Pol Pot, and shredded governmental trust among the American public in ways that continue today. Many would have preferred an alternative prioritization.

The Asia-Pacific has long loomed large in American strategic thinking and today its centrality is unparalleled. *By More than Providence* provides a sweep, power, and coherence that anchors that centrality historically. Tragically, its lessons about the value of a grand strategy based on comprehensive engagement with the Asia-Pacific face a wall of deafness in the current administration with its chaotic nationalism, bilateral transactionalism, and undisguised disdain for the type of historical and policy expertise demonstrated in this book.

Asia and the Great War. By XU GUOQI. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 275 pp. \$50.00 (cloth)

REVIEWED BY EVELYN CH'ÏEN, *Marie Curie Research Fellow* (the researcher has received funding from the People Programme [Marie Curie Actions] of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7-2007-2013 under REA grant agreement n° 624320). Institut d'Études Transculturelles et Transculturelles, Jean Moulin Université Lyon III, Lyon, France
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Xu Guoqi has written several books about Asian presence in the Great War, including *China and the Great War* and *Strangers on the Western Front*. The distinguishing feature of his latest exploration, *Asia and the Great War*, is its sweeping breadth and scope: it covers Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean involvement in the Great War. The book illuminates the dynamics that took place during negotiations during and after World War I, which provide disturbing justifications for present dynamics between Asia and the West, giving stark testimony to the ways historical events do indeed shape the future.

Principally focusing on the five Asian countries mentioned earlier, Xu details critical moments in history where Asian participation in world politics was undercut by definitive actions by Europe and America. While Woodrow Wilson inspired Asian countries with his 14 points—as Xu writes, “All five countries were enthusiastic about the new world order laid out in Woodrow Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’ speech” (p. 7)—ultimately America did not extend its ideological generosity to Asian countries that counted on it. While much of Asia longed for its own independence, evidenced by nationalist movements all over Asia, they were not allowed to express or obtain diplomatic audiences in an appropriate way. At key peace conferences, America and Europe refused to give Korea and China an audience where they could articulate their aspirations; meanwhile the Western countries surreptitiously conducted secret deals with Japan, allowing the country to continue its colonialist path in China and Korea. In a specific example, Wilson, even amidst protests from his colleagues and other American diplomats, decided to favor Japan over China regarding the ownership of Shandong province, a decision that has haunted the historical relationship between Asia and the West until the present time. Meanwhile, though Japan emerged with a more promising situation than its Asian neighbors, they still suffered from the refusal by the League of Nations to provide them with a racial equality clause. They continued to feel injured by racial discrimination in wartime negotiations with the west (p. 191).

The desperation of diplomats to get their voice heard led to tragic results. Aside from the shift toward communism and totalitarianism in countries that had failed to develop self-determination as a result of lack of support, there was a stinging loss of dignity for Asian countries that would continue to haunt them:

In 1907, as the Second International Peace Conference was convening at the Hague (the first conference had occurred in 1899), the Korean Emperor Kojong secretly sent envoys to ask for the restoration of Korean independence. The envoys were admitted to the conference through the good offices of the Russian representative, who, naturally enough, was more than happy to use them to embarrass Japan in an international forum. The envoys claimed that the Japanese–Korean Protectorate Treaty of 1905 was void since Korea had signed it under duress and asked that the Powers intervene to restore Korean sovereignty. The Korean representatives failed to sway the diplomats at the Hague meeting, and they were quickly ejected from the conference under Japanese pressure. The chief Korean envoy, devastated by this failure, committed ritual suicide. (p. 123)

While on the diplomatic level things were fraught with anxiety, entire populations sent to aid the Allies from India, Vietnam, and China were being systematically abused in some countries, while alternately welcomed in others. The suffering of these populations is noted in archival documents—principally correspondence by the transplanted soldiers, doctors, and other officials. About Britain, for example, we learn that, “Indians suffered badly from both racism and mistreatment under the British officers at the front. The soldiers were teased about not eating beef and other customs” (p. 64) and “Some British officers considered the Indians like sheep without a shepherd” (p. 79); Lloyd George is cited as saying that brown-skinned people were “inferior” (p. 73). France was more welcoming, and Xu quotes a Sikh veteran: “The French had a great respect for us and kept us happy” (p. 69), which contrasted with French attitudes about the South Asians—Frenchmen apparently believed that the Vietnamese were not strong enough to work a full day (p. 105). Nevertheless, the Vietnamese managed to earn enough to support their families and settle in France. Xu cites 250 legal marriages (intermarriage with French nationals) and 1,363 couples who lived together (p. 107). The Vietnamese learned French while serving in the military and became ideologically oriented, and Xu writes more extensively about one Vietnamese immigrant, in particular, who became a strong political activist while selling Vietnamese food and Chinese calligraphy to pay his bills in Paris: Ho Chi Minh.

The Great War was an opportunity for countries around the world to express themselves within the sphere of power play. Readers seeking statistical information and stories about troop experiences would do better to consult Xu’s earlier works. But readers wanting an overview of the complexity of dynamics the Great War provoked in Asia and the West will be impressed by the copious research and persuasive logic of this book. Xu brings the reader from the front lines of war to the diplomatic table—literally, in one instance, when the Japanese are fighting for racial equality:

At the conference, the Japanese were seated at the far end of the table ... But it was not merely the physical distance from where the Great Powers huddled that prompted Clemenceau to complain of not being unable to hear Makino—and the terrible fate of being trapped with ‘ugly’ Japanese in a city full of attractive blonde women. Clemenceau was not alone. The Australian Prime Minister Hughes hated interviews with Makino and Chinda, whom he referred to as ‘two little fat Japanese noblemen.’ He did not seem to remember that it was the Japanese fleet that protected the troopship conveying the Australian and New Zealand armies to the Middle East. (p. 197)

Xu reminds readers that Asian activism and nationalism were not isolated reactions to the war but had a great role in its outcome. The terrible fate of people who died in the war—mostly

unrecognized and in the thousands—because of diplomatic machinations is the biggest tragedy of the Great War. And later, the lack of success of these nations to form a real and human organization of mutual respect, led to disparate kinds of government—the lack of support for China, for example, made it ripe for communism. This notable example shows the impact of diplomatic actions.

A Financial Centre for Two Empires: Hong Kong's Corporate, Securities and Tax Laws in its Transition from Britain to China. By DAVID C. DONALD, with contributions by JIANGYU WANG and JEFFERSON P. VANDERWOLK. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 279 pp. \$137 (cloth)

REVIEWED BY YU-WAI VIC LI, Department of Social Sciences, The Education University of Hong Kong

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Written by legal experts and practitioners, this book might be expected to be a formal and technical exploration of specialized domains written in inaccessible legalese. Instead, the work deftly illuminates the larger political and economic dynamics that underlay Hong Kong's adaptation and transformation under two political masters and in two drastically different historical epochs. Central to the volume is the examination of how the institutional framework of Hong Kong, a relatively small and open economy, evolved after the colonial era, and how the territory tried, with mixed success, to strike a delicate balance between international economic competitiveness and the welfare, cohesion, and equality of the local population. Such a theme makes the book valuable to Asia specialists who might be looking for a systematic review of the city's development challenges, and to students of political economy who might be interested in understanding the challenges a high-income economy like Hong Kong faced during its transition.

These issues are inseparable from the historical context dissected in Chapter 1 of the book. To their credit, instead of restating clichéd wisdom about the virtues of the rule of law, the authors trace the territory's dependence on the hybrid system devised in Britain but implemented in a Chinese setting. Although this system advanced the British commercial interests of the time, the colonial governance toolkit became an outmoded template that was detached from the needs of the mass public. Caretaker-style governance was staunchly defended by the elites, but was far from sufficient to meet the expectations of a society demanding that the government address pressing challenges like rising inequality and a lack of inclusive participation in political affairs. Time-honored non-interventionist principles veiled inconvenient realities of an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. Newspaper headlines of socio-economic problems and the inertia of the authorities ran alongside those trumpeting the city's tenuous success.

Chapter 2 navigates Hong Kong's economic structure and focuses on the mode of corporate control. In-depth examinations of the flagships of key economic sectors reveal the preponderance of substantial shareholders who owned a small set of corporate groups that dominated the local economy. The chapter goes on to discuss how this risked internal governance problems like power abuses at the expense of minority investors. The ascent of mainland Chinese enterprises as major market players and the diverse places of incorporation among publicly traded companies are also discussed, and it is shown that this added to the complexity of effectively regulating the capital market and ensuring a level playing field for stakeholders.