The Journal of Asian Studies Vol. 75, No. 4 (November) 2016: 973–974.
© The Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 2016 doi:10.1017/S0021911816001686

Introduction

JENNIFER H. MUNGER

As we have been doing for several years, the editorial office hosted a roundtable at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) meetings in the spring of 2016 in Seattle. Long before then, as we contemplated issues of relevance throughout Asia, our thoughts turned to global conflicts and the ways in which everything—from policy, to diurnal habits, to performance aesthetics—is molded and refracted by tectonic shifts in political power. When we were planning for that March 2016 roundtable, many parts of the world were commemorating the end of World War II, a transition that we discussed in these pages (*JAS* 74(3) and 74(4)) via commentaries that highlighted the degree to which different parts of Asia experienced a singular commemorative event in varied ways. That confluence prompted us to think about how the end of World War II ushered in a new era of global politics and local realities falling under the rubric of "the Cold War," and the extent to which that too had disparate meanings in specific locales. We concluded that a multi-voiced examination of how the political shifts of that era were expressed, experienced, and given meaning across Asia would be an ideal next project for our *JAS* at AAS series. It seemed clear that fallout from the Cold War era continues to this day, but in the end, as the panel was assembled and the thoughts of our panelists unfolded, we realized that our own rubric of an examination of the Cold War in Asia needed to be modified.

We do not have the space to be comprehensive, but since one of our goals with these types of projects is to bring into our pages parts of Asia that have been underrepresented in the *JAS*, we brought our initial questions—"In what ways was the Cold War a distinctive period in Asia?" and "In what ways do those distinctions continue to shape politics and life in Asia?"—to a prominent scholar of the Philippines. Alfred McCoy, who is known for his expertise in social and political history in the Philippines and US foreign policy, along with his broader knowledge of Southeast Asia and conflict from the colonial period to the present, answered our call with an insightful article that pushes the boundaries of our original project by simultaneously placing the Philippines at the geographical center of a look at Asia and treating the decades most frequently associated with the Cold War, such as the 1950s through the 1970s, as a middle period in a longer chronological arc of American military engagements with countries across the Pacific that began as the nineteenth century ended and continues into our own times.

McCoy identifies of a key combination of elements defining the Cold War in Asia, as he conceived of it: "nationalism heightened by World War II, the communism synonymous with the Cold War, and … the decolonization that marked the end of European

Jennifer H. Munger (jas@journalofasianstudies.org) is Managing Editor of the *Journal of Asian Studies*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816001686 Published online by Cambridge University Press

empires." He also argues—and it is here that the importance of a widened temporal scope comes in—that viewing specific conflicts, such as World War II and the Cold War, as distinct entities leads us to miss some of the significance of underlying drivers and continuities across periods in geopolitical power shifts. He sees decolonization and military bases "as both means and metric for major shifts in geopolitical power." Thought of this way, the Cold War proper in Asia can be viewed "as a forty-year transition from imperial subjugation to economic dynamism."

We invited several scholars, from different disciplines and focusing on different parts of Asia, to build on and respond to McCoy's ideas. Shampa Biswas, a specialist in international political economy, postcoloniality, and South Asian politics, provides commentary from an international relations standpoint, arguing that McCoy's article reads as though it is "US hegemonic ambitions rather than decolonization that drives the historical trajectory of Asia." This leads her to speculate on an important distinction: were US-Philippine relations part of a larger plan for global domination by the United States, or was global domination a result of cumulative US foreign policy practices?

Through the lens of his specialization in theater and drama as it engages with social conditions in Indonesia during the Cold War period, Michael H. Bodden shifts our focus to how citizens grappled with larger political and military processes by engaging "a more Gramscian notion of hegemony: that is, rule by gaining the consent of the governed." He posits that the US expansion of military power only became popularly supported through the renewed promise of capitalist modernity as "a way to build strength, to become equals of the Western powers, to avoid or throw off colonial domination." He argues that modernity was an important avenue for social criticism. Local dynamics made a socialist versus capitalist struggle over modernity rather complex, and became a proving ground for which path toward modernity is best to pursue.

We round out the panel with Michael Szonyi, who brings his expertise of China and the Ming military to his examination of the impact of the Cold War on the daily lives of the people on the island of Jinmen (Quemoy), located between Taiwan and mainland China. Szonyi employs the notion of geopoliticization, the ways in which "regional and global tension affected different aspects of human experience and social relations," to focus on the people who were literally between the two sides of the civil war between the Republic of China (ROC) led by Chiang Kai-shek (Kuomintang Party; Republic of China Armed Forces) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) led by Mao Zedong (Communist Party of China; Chinese People's Liberation Army). After retreating to Taiwan, the ROC had control of Jinmen Island and used it as a staging ground, not only to project strength to the PRC and the United States but also to convince civilians of its legitimacy.

As a coda to this entire project, we include a final comment from McCoy, commissioned as the issue was going into production, which addresses recent statements and actions by the president of the Philippines. Through this panel, our contemplations of the Cold War push its boundaries back, or perhaps cause them to fade; refocus our lens from broad political projects to personal struggles; and engage with tensions arising in the present that need to be understood in light of how they continue or break from patterns of the past.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816001686 Published online by Cambridge University Press