

called *shōguns* contested the power of Japan's imperial court. The work of Edo period (1600–1868 CE) author Ihara Saikaku introduces readers to the subject matter presented in popular literature of the period, which typically satirized and critiqued the militaristic and male-centered culture of the Tokugawa regime's samurai-centered social hierarchy. The section ends with longer prose selections from Higuchi Ichiyo's *Jusan'ya*, *The Thirteenth Night*, Natsume Soseki's *Stories*, and Nakazawa Keiji's *A Sudden Flash of Light*, excerpted from his autobiographical manga text *Hiroshima: The Autobiography of Barefoot Gen*.

The shortest section in this book deals with poetry and prose penned in Korea. In the historical introduction to this section, Childs and Hope indicate that Korea, from antiquity through the early twentieth century, was closely connected culturally, politically, religiously, and linguistically to both China and later Japan. Chinese Confucian ideals provided institutional legitimization, while Buddhism later informed personal religious practice in the country. That said, the editors do provide readers with a small selection of important Korean excerpts that serve to reveal the influence of outside cultures, as well as illuminate the role of indigenous ideals in Korean literary production. The section begins with an excerpt from *Tan'gun*, the Korean myth of the founding of the country. The next excerpt, Ho Kyun's *The Tale of Hong Kiltong*, simultaneously references the Chinese *Outlaws of the Marsh*, while providing a critique of the medieval Chosŏn dynasty's (1392–1910) rigid and exclusionary class hierarchy. The editors next present selections of Chosŏn era Korean *sijo* poetry, followed by the *Song of a Faithful Wife*, *Ch'un-hyang*, an example of a *p'ansori*, or Korean vernacular opera. The chapter concludes with excerpts from the work of modern Korean fiction, produced by authors Hwang Sunwon and O Yongsu.

Voices of East Asia: Essential Readings from Antiquity to the Present is best-suited for use in advanced high school or undergraduate collegiate survey courses on East Asian history. It is particularly suitable for use in those courses that place emphasis on student engagement with and analysis of primary source materials. Religious studies or literature faculty might likewise find some excerpts from the book useful for employment in class. Although comprehensive, the book can be further strengthened with the addition of greater internal historical contextualization of the included excerpt readings. Additionally, the role of regional influence and cultural cross-pollination, while hinted at throughout the book, should be more explicitly explored throughout. That said, *Voices of East Asia* is an impressively organized reader that would enhance student comprehension of the sometimes-complex historical, cultural, and religious ideals that emerged in East Asia and continue to influence the lives of individuals living in the modern nation-states of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. ■

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Asia Pacific in World Politics

Second Edition

BY DEREK MCDUGALL

BOULDER: LYNNE RIENNER, 2016

407 PAGES, ISBN: 978-1626375536, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Mary M. McCarthy



As students walk into Comparative Asian Politics on the first day of class, they see a quote projected on the screen: “East Asia is now widely regarded as the focus of the world’s attention.”¹ It is shortly joined by a second quote, “Learning about contemporary Southeast Asia can be a challenge because the region is no longer a primary focus of international attention.”² Students consider: Do these quotes contradict each other? Are they talking about the same region? What are the bases for such contentions? They must problematize the very concept of Asia (East Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Asia Pacific) and deconstruct these categories, unveiling the great diversity within and fluidity across divisions. They then further delve into how our understanding and knowledge of this region are significantly colored by the news cycle, as well as our own history and culture.

Derek McDougall's book, *Asia Pacific in World Politics*, demands an explicit engagement with these very tasks of conceptualizing the region, its primary actors, and dynamics, as well as conveys to the reader where one should focus one's attention and why. From the title that he chooses to the cases that he targets to the ordering of his chapters, McDougall is making pedagogical, as well as pragmatically and theoretically driven, choices. The strength of the book is that these choices are made consciously and overtly. The weakness, in the eyes of some, may be that the title is misleading and the content disappointingly narrow or insufficiently deep. We as instructors then have to decide if it meets our pedagogical goals in the classroom. For many, the answer will be yes, especially if used as a reference book or as a background text to be supplemented by additional resources that go into more depth on specific issues or case studies.

Asia is an area that is receiving heightened global interest across the political, economic, and security spheres. It is home to the second- and third-largest economies in the world, some of the greatest international security challenges, and the largest Muslim-majority population. It is an ideal region to study everything from economic and human development to democratization to authoritarian resilience to separatist movements. Units on countries or issues within Asia are now commonplace in general survey courses on international politics and world history. Students without much prior experience of Asia increasingly are taking Asian courses, often having been introduced to the region through such units. Thus, a book that covers these themes is needed, and the McDougall volume is an appropriate backgrounder for high school and college instructors who teach units on Asia in general world survey courses, as well as for undergraduate students in Asian international relations courses.

As a text that seeks to engage with such a large area of the world, however, the first question must necessarily ask what this text covers and what it does not cover, accompanied by the related question of what approach it

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takes to shed light on the region of study. These questions are answered, at least in part, by the title *Asia Pacific in World Politics*.

Use of the term “Asia Pacific” suggests that a prime focus is the US, as “Asia Pacific” is a term that conceives of Asia as seen from the Pacific, as the Pacific coastal states look westward toward Asia. It is a term preferred both by the US and by some of its allies, such as Japan and Australia, as an explicit rationale for why the US should remain engaged in the region. McDougall’s use of the term is a justification for his spotlight on the US as the dominant player in the region 1945–1989 and now a dominant player with a challenger in the form of China. Not only is there a chapter devoted entirely to US policy in the Asia Pacific, but it is a major force in many of the chapters throughout the volume.

The countries of focus, after the US, are China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea (North and South), Indonesia, India, Russia, and Australia. There is some brief mention of other cases, including a chapter on all of Southeast Asia, but this is kept to a minimum. This will be a disappointment to some, as the volume does not cover a large number of those countries generally considered part of the Asia Pacific. Still, the breadth of coverage is actually an expansion over the first edition. This second edition introduces separate chapters for Russia and Australia (two countries that had previously shared a single chapter) and a new chapter on India. This may have been in direct response to criticisms of the first edition in book reviews, such as that by Varun Sahni, who saw the combined chapter on Russia and Australia rather unwieldy and the absence of India a serious limitation.³

In addition, there is a coherence to the content chosen, as McDougall acknowledges his qualified treatment of the vast number of countries that generally fall under “Asia Pacific,” while clearly presenting why he made the choices he did. He starts with the US as the core and then adds the other great powers in the region: China and Japan. There is a chapter on each of these states individually and then on each bilateral relationship (US–China, US–Japan, China–Japan). This is followed by chapters on two of the most intractable issues that face all three of these great powers: Taiwan and the Korean peninsula. Two chapters on Southeast Asia (one specifically focused on Indonesia) bring us to an exploration of weak states as opposed to the strong states of China, Japan, and the US that are the main focus of this book, and what role weak states can and do play in world and regional politics. McDougall rounds out his state-focused chapters with the influence of what he designates as a declining, an emerging, and a middle power in the region: Russia, India, and Australia, respectively. And, finally, he examines multilateral cooperation and the influence of supranationalism through a chapter on regional and international institutions, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the United Nations (UN).

This plan connects explicitly to the other part of his book title, *World Politics*, and asserts the state-centered approach of the text. It affirms that this is a text written by a political scientist in the terms of the discipline. This is explained in the introductory chapter, where the study of the region is placed within a framework of international relations theory. In keeping with the dominance of realism in the field, the volume goes on to

emphasize its realist core of great power politics in a modern state system. Still, the volume also engages with liberal institutionalism through its investigation of domestic politics and international institutions, as well as issues of history that could support constructivist positions and the role of individual leaders. This frame will advance the learning of undergraduate students who are transitioning from an introductory world politics course to a course focused on Asia, as well as international politics instructors at the college or high school levels who seek to place Asia in the broader study of world politics for themselves and the benefit of their students. This approach may be of less utility for world history instructors.

In terms of content, the historical overviews in each chapter are informative and concise, while strategic, domestic, and economic dimensions are mentioned for each case. Some chapters will be more useful for instructors and students than others, the chapters on US–China relations and on international organizations being particularly strong, although one’s position on the utility of select chapters will be influenced by the pedagogical approach and specific interests of particular instructors. Since instructors can read or assign individual chapters of interest without needing to read or assign the entire book, as each chapter can stand on its own, the varying strengths and usefulness of the chapters are not an insurmountable weakness of the book.

It is true that some Asian specialists may take issue with the way their area of expertise is represented in the text due to a lack of nuance or context for particular issues, as is the case with any volume that seeks to cover such an expansive amount of material. Similarly, in some places, analysis can seem insufficient, such as why we should care about the laundry list of ministries and agencies involved with foreign policymaking in Japan. And a tendency toward repetitiveness can contribute to the overarching textbook or reference book tone of the volume. Still, McDougall’s *Asia Pacific in World Politics* is readable, informative, and relatively broad in scope. It is a useful reference or background text for high school and college instructors who seek to include Asia in world survey courses. The book as a whole or its individual chapters can be appropriate reading assignments for undergraduates in world survey or Asian courses, especially when supplemented by additional articles or book chapters that delve more deeply into specific issues or case studies of interest. ■

NOTES

1. Men Honghua, “East Asian Order Formation and Sino-Japanese Relations,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 17, no. 1 (2010): 47.
2. Robert Dayley, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, 7th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2017), 1.
3. Varun Sahni, “Review of *Asia Pacific in World Politics* by Derek McDougall,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 29, no. 1 (2007): 214–218.

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