

## BOOK REVIEW

**David Shambaugh, *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, 352 pp.**

A geostrategically important part of the world, Southeast Asia became the place where the rivalry between two major powers, China and the United States, is reflected. Even if after the Cold War it seemed like Southeast Asia was going to remain a stable region with important economic and security ties to the United States, the rise of China as a great power questioned the geopolitical future of the region and raised the issue of power competition.

David Shambaugh, an award-winning author on contemporary China and the international relations of Asia and professor of Asian Studies, Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, explains in his book, *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia*, how the competition between China and the United States is focused on the countries that encompass Southeast Asia. Saying that „the region is a microcosm of many of the features of US-China great power rivalry that is taking place worldwide”,<sup>1</sup> Shambaugh suggested that the outcome of this competition will determine whether Asia leaves the American orbit after seven decades and falls into a new sphere of Chinese influence.

Divided into four parts, the book is a complete analysis of both historical and current relations of the United States and China with the states of the

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<sup>1</sup> David Shambaugh, *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 11.

Southeast Asia region. Beginning with the legacies that both states have in the region, the author presents how the past has shaped the present situation that characterized the dynamic of Southeast Asia. Possessing and deploying an array of instruments in a range of sectors, from the diplomatic, commercial, cultural, military to technological spheres, China and the United States have a significant role in the ten different member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Shambaugh examines these instruments, how each traditional power interacts with the region, and the way Southeast Asia nations navigate between China and the US.

Southeast Asia has become the fastest-growing region in the world since the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and one of the most heavily and densely populated regions. At the same time, the ASEAN economies collectively constitute the sixth-largest economy in the world, which makes this area to be considered a real competitor on the global stage. Because it owns significant strategic attributes and opportunities desired by major powers, Southeast Asia is now the spot where the US and China are trying to achieve more influence.

In his study, Shambaugh pointed out that it is not a new issue for Southeast Asia to face external influences. From the nineteenth century, the American flag followed traders and missionaries into Southeast Asia, making the region one of the first theaters to test the new American imperial ascendancy. Seen as a benevolent partner, the US changed its role during the Cold War when some of the Southeastern Asian states became part of the ideological conflict between capitalism and socialism. In the present, when the states from the region have, in the vast majority, a democratic political system, the United States continues to be an important guarantor of regional security and stability.

Before the sixteenth century, China, to the same extent, was trying to enforce its influence and has loomed large geographically, culturally, militarily, and economically over Southeast Asia. At the turn of the twenty-first century,

China's relations with Southeast Asian countries have grown dramatically. ASEAN is now China's main trading partner and, besides that, China's „Belt and Road Initiative“ is the sign of the new activeness of China on its Asian periphery.

Although many observers see US power and influence to be diminishing in the region because of the rising Chinese power, the author argues that this may be a misperception. In his opinion, China is an overestimated power, while the United States is an underappreciated one. China is strong economically, but it is weak in some areas like soft-power, diplomacy, and security assistance. Even if the narrative in the region is strong about China, the American footprint across the region is there and will remain in the long term. The cultural, diplomatic, economic, and security influence of the US in Southern Asia remains unprecedented and, in most dimensions, it is, in fact, greater than China's.

What made some consider that US influence is decreasing in Southeast Asia is the US shift from engagement to competition in the region and the tougher and more competitive strategy towards China, a behaviour that seems to be similar to that of the Cold War directed against the Soviet Union. The new great power rivalry bears some similarities with what happened during the Cold War but, in the author's view, it also has significant dissimilarities. For Shambaugh, the current great power rivalry has not yet become an action-reaction, zero-sum type of geostrategic contest. It is rather a soft rivalry in which the two states operate and influence for the most part in parallel with each other, not always in direct competition or in reaction to the movements of the other. Besides that, Southeast Asia is not like Europe and other regions during the Cold War where each super-power had its own sphere of influence and client states. In his author's point of view, Beijing is taking minimal actions to counter the US power in Southeast Asia. What China does is taking action to strengthen its own position in the Far East rather than to counter and undermine the influence that the US already has there.

The author stressed, also, in his scholarly paper, how the power competition is ameliorated by the ASEAN countries. Because of its colonial history, Southeast Asia has a tendency to protect its independence and stay away from strong external interference. Moreover, the region has a predisposition towards neutralism and non-alignment policy, determining ten Southeast Asian countries, like Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, etc, to oscillate between China and the US. Although ASEAN states are tilting more towards China due to economic reasons, Shambaugh thinks that the region will not become overly dependent on Beijing and will maintain the traditional „hedging“ strategies to keep both powers at bay.

Being the product of more than six months of travel and dialogue through the region combined with analysis of statistics, polls, and other academic sources, *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia* is a comprehensive research that analyzes the Sino-American competition, using the Southeast Asia region as a case study. A topic that grows in importance nowadays, the rivalry between China and the United States became the major defining feature of international relations.

Trying to show the important historical context that shapes contemporary relations, David Shambaugh creates a comprehensive study that highlights how two great powers behave on the global stage. Reaching the conclusion that the new great power rivalry is, so far, different than the US-Soviet Union competition during the Cold War, but still risky for the relevant regions from the world, with stakes for both powers, Shambaugh evaluates the importance of Southeast Asia for China and the US from past centuries till present. A book that provides readers with some basic information about the complexity of Southeast Asia geopolitics, *Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia* is a thoughtful and experienced study for those who want to understand the

dynamics of international relations and the competition for supremacy playing out in ASEAN member states.

**Ştefania Cocor**

**Paul Addison, *No Turning Back: The Peacetime Revolutions of Post-War Britain*, Oxford University Press, pp. 464.**

The present work aims to understand and explain the fundamental aspects of British society in the post-war period, elements emphasized concisely by Paul Addison in *No Turning Back: The Peacetime Revolutions of Post-War Britain*. Published by the Oxford University Press, in 2010, this book has a total number of 464 pages.

Paul Addison was a remarkable British historian, author of numerous books, articles, and reviews, with the reference theme of Great Britain's political history during World War II and the post-war period. He consolidated his reputation with a series of works about modern British history, appreciated on a large scale for their perspicacity and eloquence. Moreover, his writings were recognized for their special ability to influence how people relate to the past and the present.

Still from the introduction, the author announces that his objective was to provide a complex study concerning the evolution of Great Britain between the end of World War II and the beginning of the 21st century. These aspects are highlighted through the prism of the development of Great Britain, being in a permanent change and adaptation, the author making available to the readers the essential elements to understand and interpret the matters related to these issues. The evolution of the political and social life in Great Britain in the post-war period was, over the years, a widely debated and analyzed topic from multiple perspectives.

Taking into account these considerations, the author chose to approach the subject from an individualized perspective, giving it a special touch. In this respect, he developed this work by investigating two distinct areas, specifically the aspects of British society, on the one hand, and the whole elements of the English political life on the other hand. Therefore, Addison managed to carry out a work that brings to the foreground both social and political history. The social changes and the introduction of some revolutionary projects were eloquently presented, on the basis of complex documentation.

The work subject to the analysis has a carefully carried out structure, intended for guiding the reader in scrolling easily through its pages. Thus, the framework underlying the arrangement of the information is based on the correlation of two approaches: chronological, respectively thematic. Containing 3 complex chapters, the book provides a particular perspective on the covered topics. Moreover, for a comprehensive overview of the analyzed topics, graphs, maps, and illustrations were inserted in the incipit of the work. They have the clear objective of supporting the relevant aspects regarding the social and political changes from the United Kingdom during the analyzed period.

The author's style is organized and meticulous. Thus, each chapter begins with the presentation of the issues to be analyzed. Moreover, the chapters are divided into small subthemes with suggestive titles, intended for giving the readers clues about the approached topics. In order to ensure that his work will have a significant impact, the author gave the work a form accessible to any reader interested in this field.

Reading this work introduces the reader to a real raid throughout history. In the analyzed time frame, 1945-1997, a series of peaceful revolutions determined a profound transformation of Great Britain. Thus, the central theme of the work is represented by the debate concerning the revolutionary phenomenon, the author presenting a series of revolutions in peacetime, events

that determined the evolution of the country in the post-war period. Against this background, the determining features of the United Kingdom in this time frame were: the development of a society more permissive, the change of the legal and social status of women, the ethnic, social, and economic changes.

Paul Addison divided the mentioned subject from the thematic and chronological point of view as follows: the repercussions of the war (1945-1957), the search for modernity (1957-1974), and the changes of Great Britain (1974-1997). From this perspective, the aspects related to the change of the role of the state in economic and social affairs, the living standards, the social classes, and the national identity are to be mentioned. The consequences were visible: a nation that has become multiethnic, an economy transformed into a system of the free market, and a society that has evolved from the prevalence of the working class to that of the middle class. Moreover, the fragility of the country, as a result of the rise of nationalism in Wales and Scotland, became evident.

The first chapter, entitled "The Aftermath of War 1945-1957", intended to illustrate the general framework of the evolution of the UK in the early years of the post-war period. Addison initiated the analysis by presenting and comparing the main decision-makers in the early years after the end of WWII. Among them, Clement Attlee, a personality with a significant influence on the transformations of the British state came to the fore. Moreover, the author highlighted the impact of the Conservative and Labour governments which succeeded each other to power.

In the late 1950s, an acute sense of concern emerged in British society, generated by the decline that Great Britain was experiencing. In this context, the governments focused their attention on finding solutions to modernize the economy. Consequently, in this chapter, the author presents a first typology of the revolutions, namely the economic one. The post-war consensus was based on three particular premises, respectively: the prevalence of the state property over

the key industries; the government's assumption of the responsibilities for the efficient management of the economic field; the improvement of the social services. Despite these evolutions, the country continued to possess a number of conventional elements.

The second chapter, entitled "The Quest for Modernity 1957-1974", brought to the attention the social-liberal revolution, initiated in the mid-1960s. Therefore, the austerity in the early years of the post-war period was replaced by permissiveness and liberalization. Thus, the collapse of the old taboos was to occur, and a new society with greater freedom in matters of divorce, abortion, or homosexuality appeared.

In line with these new ideas, the aspect of the entire society has undergone a profound transformation, important steps towards modernity being carried out. Thus, the new personal values and attitudes have been partially transposed into legislation. At the same time, in the 1960s, multiculturalism has become one of the dominant notions of the British national identity.

In the long run, the multiracial nature of British society, and the presence of ethnic minorities have come to be considered elements of normality. At the same time, the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism has revealed a new facet of British society, while the United Kingdom's membership of the European community has further "eroded" the matter of British sovereignty.

The third chapter, "Transformations 1974-1997", approached the issue of the civic nationalism of the Scots and Welsh. The economic crises of the 1970s created a favorable framework for Margaret Thatcher's accumulation of power and for the revolutionary reforms that she initiated. At the same time, the economic crises of the 1970s seemed to illustrate the shortcomings of the Keynesian economic theory, which no longer corresponded to the new social-economic realities. Thus, the year 1974 marked the collapse of the Keynesian consensus, replaced by a neoliberal alternative. The power of the trade

unions decreased, the taxes were reduced, and a deregulation approach was chosen. However, the result of these initiatives also had a number of negative repercussions: the inequalities extended as a result of the economic gap between the urban and the rural environment, and with the decline of the traditional factories, the number of unemployed started to increase. However, at the end of the 20th century, the UK was characterized by elements distinct from the previous periods: considerable freedom at the individual level, an open economy, and a sustainable welfare society spread at the national level.

At the end of the work, the author performed a synthesis of the consequences of the analyzed events, balancing the related gains and losses. The main issues approached by the author, namely the triumph of the neoliberalism theory, the complex nature of the British national identity in a multicultural society, the rise of the middle class, at the same time with the decline of the traditional working class, and finally, a society more permissive, were analyzed and detailed in a meticulous manner.

From my point of view, Paul Addison's work brought an important contribution to the field of the political and social history of Great Britain, outlining a complete framework of the events in the analyzed time frame. Also, the author brought in the foreground certain political decision-makers who influenced the evolution of British society, outlining eloquent portraits of them. Moreover, the book offers a multitude of sources regarding the approached topics, as well as the possibility of observing some instruments specific to the analytical levels with which a historian can operate.

By exposing and arguing concretely the ideas, the author proposed a series of reflections on the elements that influenced the way of Great Britain after the conclusion of the second world conflagration. In this context, the way that the author exposes and argues his ideas is interesting, being the result of his own participation in the events which contributed to the radical transformation of

Great Britain. Consequently, the historian Paul Addison is part of the row of researchers who dedicated to the study of these issues, adding to the already known information a number of significant and unedited details.

Therefore, *No Turning Back: The Peacetime Revolutions of Post-War Britain* remains a valuable book, which facilitates the understanding of the major problems with regard to the evolution of the United Kingdom in the post-war period. The work outlines a unitary picture of the British political and social framework, highlighting the essential aspects of each studied level.

**Georgiana-Veronica Maxim**

**Giulia Albanese, *La Marcia su Roma*, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2014, 304 pp.**

*The March on Rome*, the event that led to Mussolini's seizure of power, represents a central episode, both in Italian political history and the history of Fascist propaganda. Herefore, this scholarly topic might seem an issue that historical researchers have amply examined, but Albanese's research makes it possible a new reflection on the March on Rome, considering the role of the blackshirts and their violence as a crucial moment in the construction of the Fascist regime. The study emphasizes the continuity of the subversive actions of the nationalist groups, from the era of Fiume until the March on Rome, also evaluating its consequences, including in 1924.

The book was originally published in the Italian language in 2014, but last year, the Routledge Press decided to complete the English bibliography on this topic, permitting critical discussions with new arguments in various academic debates.

In this well-researched and carefully argued book, Giulia Albanese highlights the importance of the March on Rome for Mussolini's rise to power and especially for the consolidation of the regime during the 1920s. The author redefines the image of the March by setting aside the well-known representations that classical historiography offered to the event (such as a "comedy" or "a victorious march of no political significance"), and presents it as one of the most fundamental moments in Italy's fascist history.

In many scholarly articles, the March on Rome was and it's still considered a symbol, created by the Fascist propaganda. At the same time, the event was recognized as a moment of institutional crisis and frustrating negotiations between political leaders which finally brought Mussolini to power. It seemed that neither violence nor the desire for revolution played any role. In

disagreement with most historians, who interpret the advent of fascism to power as institutional continuity rather than a political fracture, Giulia Albanese openly takes up the original thesis of Adrian Lyttelton (*The conquest of power. Fascism from 1919 to 1929*, Rome-Bari, 1982), for which the originality of the conquest techniques implemented with the March on Rome has determined the true beginning of the fascist dictatorship.

The book, divided into six chapters, proceeds by arranging the history of the March on Rome in three phases. The first phase provides the premises and starts immediately after the war, when nationalist and military groups, spread in all of Central and Western Europe, began to hypothesize the coup projects to destroy the parliamentary system and to block the vast democratization process after World War I. Based on an authoritarian culture, partly shared not only by the ruling class but also by the moderate public opinion, the fascist strategy, using violence, found a way to take root, to grow, and to be substantially accepted in Italian society.

The second phase is limited to the days of the March, to the fascist mobilization which began on October 27, 1922, and ended on November 7, well beyond Mussolini's investiture, with a crescendo rate of violence. Through a meticulous reconstruction of the events, not only the entry of the squadristi into Rome, Giulia Albanese described also the invasion of all Italian cities and, in the end, the transformation of the local balance of power.

The third phase concerns the first year of the Mussolini government when the construction of a "revolutionary" discourse on the march represented an ambiguous instrument of legitimation of the fascist power.

Moreover, contesting the thesis that the March on Rome was presented as "bluff", Giulia Albanese argued that although there was no formal break of political legitimacy in October 1922, the fascist government put to an end the liberal state already in the course of the first year of the regime, despite the fact that the government coalition was still in power. In this sense, the first anniversary of the March was a particularly significant moment since it "inaugurated the ritualization of a new era and institutionalized a break of

considerable importance", defining "the formation of a new political framework" (p. 174).

An institutional system can be transformed without that action being clearly understood by those who witness the transformations, but in this case, argued Albanese, the violence was the key to the radical transformation of the political regime.

The violence of the squadristi during the days of the March has been neglected by contemporaries and historians alike. At the time, the March on Rome appeared for most people like one of those sudden events that made a lot of noise but were incapable of transforming the essence of political institutions and power relations. Even those who understood the subversive potential of this event believed that nothing new could have happened, that the March on Rome and its outcome were in fact an extension of the institutions and liberal politics, or a necessary matter which would have avoided that the worst thing to happen.

Albanese's research has made possible a new approach of the March on Rome, regarding the role of the blackshirts and their violence as a crucial moment in the construction of the Fascist regime. It was the violence of the early movement, as well as that of the days of the March that created the preconditions for the radical institutional change realized by the Fascists. It was violence that demoralized and divided further both the opposition and the pre-Fascist ruling class, or at least their most active and conscious sections. It was Fascist violence that destroyed the last shreds of legitimacy vested in Italian political institutions and sanctioned the temporary rupture in the State's monopoly of violence

The author invalidates the still commonly accepted image of a "farce March", showing that the extent of the peripheral action violence was designed as an integral part of the threatening pressure on the liberal government, determining "a geography and an impact of the March itself, very different from those we are used to imagining." It also shows that the misunderstanding of the real nature of the March distorts the perspective from which one looks at the fascist movement and the beginning of the regime alike.

During the first year, the march on Rome had played an important role in the propaganda of the Duce. The effects had been twofold. On the one hand, as

we have seen, it had served to curb the protests of the most radical of the fascists who feared an excessive institutionalization of fascism. On the other hand, it had been an element of strength and blackmail against the ruling class and public opinion, with which Mussolini re-legitimized and increased his power as prime minister. In short, the proposed image of the March remained for a while in the balance between continuity and rupture.

The rejection of the rules of the democratic game, the delegitimization of political opponents, the tolerance of violence, the restriction by the law of the freedoms of opponents were the next stages imposed by the new regime.

**Mihaela Mustătea**

**Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, California, Stanford University Press, 2020, 286 pp.**

Larry Wolff is the Julius Silver Professor of European History at NYU, the executive director of the NYU Remarque Institute, and the co-director of NYU Florence at Villa La Pietra. Professor Wolff's research interests include European history, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the political regimes. He is also interested in the problems that arise between East and West. Also, he is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

His books include *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994), *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (2001), *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford 2010), and *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage* (2016).

In 2020, Larry Wolff returns with new research, entitled *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*. The book does provide another example of Professor Wolff's excellent writing style, and there are some really excellently phrased analytical passages. Larry Wolff examines the creation and evolution of US president Woodrow Wilson's 'mental map' of Eastern Europe adjustment which produced an even more radical geopolitical transformation of the former imperial realms, thus the old political system being replaced by a set of interlocking national states.

This book traces the minorities and political issues created by the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where the victorious Allied powers met to re-envision the map

of Europe in the aftermath of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson's influence on the remapping of borders was profound.

But the impact of Woodrow Wilson's vision on the modern political structuring of Eastern Europe would be perhaps his most enduring international legacy: neither Czechoslovakia nor Yugoslavia would not have existed today, thus their geopolitical presence persisted across the twentieth century from the end of World War I to the end of the Cold War. These modern national states were created in large part thanks to Wilson's advocacy, and in particular, his *Fourteen Points* speech of January 1918, which hinged in large part on the concept of national self-determination.

In his introduction, Larry Wolff outlines the concepts behind Wilson's foreign policy, mentioning among others the significance of *mental mapping*: '*Mental maps – not just the graphic and material maps on the wall but also the imagistic, impressionistic, idiosyncratic maps in the human mind – shaped the perspectives of the peacemakers*'.<sup>2</sup>

*Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* provides a detailed analysis of Woodrow Wilson's role in creating the post-1918 map of Eastern Europe. Along with an analysis of the European post-Ottoman region, the book's main focus is on the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and Eastern Germany, with a detailed examination of Poland than any other single country case.

The Wilsonian notion of national self-determination was challenged by the reality of regions with ethnically mixed populations. Pre and post-World War I borders did not always correspond with ethnic divisions, which led to the imposition of rules by the western powers for the protection of minorities in the Successor States of Eastern Europe after 1918.

These issues would arise again in 1938 with the Sudeten German minority providing a pretext for Nazi Germany's seizure of Czechoslovakia and the brutal

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<sup>2</sup> Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, California, Stanford University Press, 2020, p. 5.

expulsions of Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles throughout North-Eastern Europe after the fall of Nazi Germany.

Lloyd Ambrosius, the author of *Woodrow Wilson and American Internationalism*, describes Larry Wolff's book as 'a significant contribution to the historical scholarship on Woodrow Wilson and his role in peacemaking after World War I. Larry Wolff recognizes both the confusion and the clarity in Wilson's endeavor to implement the principle of national self-determination.'<sup>3</sup>

This book, published to mark the solemn occasion of the Centenary of the Paris Peace Conference, traces President Woodrow Wilson's evolving thinking about the principle of national self-determination by closely examining his approach to the remapping of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War I.

The dynamics of Wilsonian mental mapping emphasizes Larry Wolff in *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* exposes Wilson's eastern question and the end of the Ottoman Empire as a "war of emancipation".

Wolff's enthralling account traces the way that U.S. President Woodrow Wilson embarked on a major campaign, inspired by the ideals of the Progressive era, to bring national self-determination to eastern Europe. But the president's principles clashed with the messy reality of historical frontiers and political rivalries in the region. Wilson's belief in the right of all peoples to decide their own futures collided with his involvement in what he described as 'carving a piece of Poland out of Germany's side' and 'rearranging the territorial divisions of the Balkan states.'

But in the process, as Wolff describes, Wilson discovered that his dream of justice and self-determination was a barely sustainable fantasy. The president belatedly grew aware of the problem of 'national minorities', seeing that their aspirations were impossible to reconcile with those of majority communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Lloyd Ambrosius, 'Woodrow Wilson', in *Woodrow Wilson Studies*, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, 2021

The book is more designed for those who already have some knowledge of the region's history looking for more details of this formative period in the modern history of Eastern Europe.

**Ana Uță**

**Jongsoo James Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History*" Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, 220 pp.**

Jongsoo James Lee, the author who had written *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History* and other published works, has held research appointments at Harvard's Korea Institute and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. Being a finance professional and business consultant, Lee is also a scholar and expert in national security, foreign policy, and Indo-Pacific, Eurasian and global affairs. He is fluent in Korean and English and proficient in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and French, languages that helped him a lot while searching in archives for writing down in his books and articles. James has studied at famous universities, like Harvard, Beijing, and Moscow and he is well known for his writings that have been published by *Financial Times*, *The Korea Herald*, or *Newsweek*.

Probably the best of Lee's works is *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History*, a book that comprehends the *Korean postwar era* and explains how the Allied gave a new sense to a traditional world. Published by Palgrave Macmillan in English, the Korean peninsula seems to become an attraction for the outside, and the old traditional world was, by now, lost and forever changed by the atrocities and the influences that eventually separated it into two different states, the *Republic of Korea* and the *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*.

Print in 2006, it has plenty of Korean and Russian sources that have been studied by the author and then clarified for the comprehension of the reader. The author writes down in a facile manner and because of its structure, two parts explaining two different perspectives, he helps the reader in understanding the

influence and the decisions of the Great Powers in a country. With professionalism, Lee did his best in translating the Russian and Korean sources and used the citations in order to outline the damaged history of the Korean peninsula and the irreversible changes that took place in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Using the correspondence and the treaties between the greatest countries of the century and the Korean peninsula, Lee tries to explain the hardest years in Korean history, three years that have cost more than the thirty years under Japanese rule. In the period between 1945 and 1948, the world has been changed forever for the Koreans because of the decisions of Russia and the United States. At the end of The Second World War, the division of Korea took place after the discussions between the USSR and the U.S. according to that the peninsula is split into two halves along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the north zone under Soviet administration and the other one, the South zone, under Americans. The repeated failures regarding the unification of the peninsula are just another mistake of the United States in its agreements with the Kremlin. The author also explains how Stalin, *the big brother*, affected the course of events in North Korea, which became soon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

In just 220 pages, Lee's work focus on two dimensions, the first part under the name '*U.S. and Soviet Policies toward Korea, 1945-1948*' synthesized in three chapters, one explaining the situation in Korea before August 1945, the second one summarizing the political events between August and December 1945 and the last one portraying the situation after 1945 and until 1948.

The first part is full of extracts from letters, Treaties, and conversations between the U.S. and USSR, but none of them express the real wish of the Koreans: independence. Even if Japan gave up on Korea after the Second World War, the peninsula did not receive the independence status because the United States applied the same policy in Korea as it did in the Philippines.

By now, Korea entered under two different administrations because it 'wasn't ready for being an independent and self-sufficient state' and it needed another force to prepare it for the world, a policy that was a success in the Philippines but a mistake in the Korean peninsula because its consequences were irremediable and irreparable. By mutual agreement, U.S. and USSR divided the peninsula into two different countries, with two governments and ideologies. The Soviets 'entered northern Korea with the goal of destroying the Japanese plunderers and did not follow the goal of introducing a soviet political order in Korea or of acquiring Korean territory'<sup>4</sup> and the Americans wanted to set free the Korean population. But for Koreans, what seemed to be freedom was in fact another form of obedience under foreign suzerainty.

The second part, entitled '*U.S. and Soviet occupation policies in Korea and the Korean responses, 1945-1948*', was representative of the interpretation of Korean history because it explains the reaction of the Korean population at the obligation of being again under foreign administration. In just one chapter, the author explains the relationship between the Koreans, the USSR, and the United States and the changes that took place after another occupation. The Korean response at the end of '40 and the beginning of '50 was strong enough to assure independence and in shaping a new ideology and even a new own religion (*cheondoism*). It's worth mentioning that Kim Il Sung, the first leader of North Korea, was being given special attention by the Soviet leaders and, judging by Kim's autobiography, he formed a strong friendship with Zhdanov and Shtykov. He also mentions that Stalin was interested in him ('Zhdanov told me he would report to Stalin the results of our meeting. Afterward, I met with Zhdanov several times and formed a deep friendship with him. It seems Meretskov also told Stalin

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<sup>4</sup> Jongsoo James Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, p. 133.

a lot about me...'<sup>5</sup>) and probably this is why Kim was chosen as a leader in North Korea while in the South there was an American military governor, John R.Hodge.

To conclude his work, Lee explains the factors of the Korean division and how it affected the Korean people. The division of Korea was, in fact, a product of both international and domestic factors while pointing out the importance of the trusteeship decision and the contingent nature of the division.<sup>6</sup> There was no evidence that Stalin, in the fall of 1945, wanted to soviet northern Korea or creating a separate North Korean state, and the problem was in fact how the Americans treated the Korean situation. The author agrees that 'Stalin took the trusteeship more seriously than did the United States,' even if the U.S. came with the idea of using the same policy as in the Philippines. Also, Lee suggested that if 'the United States had taken the trusteeship equally seriously and the Korean Right also supported it' then 'U.S.-Soviet and Right-Left cooperation in Korea could have succeeded and the trusteeship itself could have succeeded as a result of which Korea would have emerged as a united independent nation.'<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the failure in having a single independent Korea can be found in history and, for this, is necessary a closer look at the territorial discussions between the two world powers, United States and the Soviet Union. The author noted that the two Koreas would not be divided today if the two world powers would take the problem equally seriously, mentioning that Russia took Korea 'more seriously than did the United States.'

Nowadays, the two countries have diplomatic relations thanks to Moon Jae In, the actual president of the Republic of Korea, elected in 2017, but the tensions between Seoul and Phenian, caused by the two different political,

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<sup>5</sup> Jongsoo James Lee, *The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

economic, and ideological systems, represent the biggest challenge that decreases the chance of a unified Korean peninsula and a single nation to restore.

**Maria Magdalena Viorean**