

Introduction

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The growing influence of People's Republic of China is complex and multifaceted. It can be discussed in various contexts, including geopolitics, economics, technology, and culture. For some countries, it poses a threat to the existing world order. For other countries, it provides an alternative solution for their political and economic problems. Three articles in this issue of the Asian Review discusses different contexts of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

Exploring the Expansion of Chinese Students in Thailand: Situations and Motivations by Kulnaree NUKITRANGSAN focuses on the phenomenon of Chinese students increasingly choosing to study in Thailand. Her article tries to understand the demographic makeup of the Chinese student community and their motivations to study in Thailand. With the proximity between Thailand and the southern part of China, it does not come as a surprise to find out that most Chinese students have come from that area. Apart from an affordable tuition fee and a lower cost of living, studying in Thailand also paves ways for their work prospects and for new opportunities to start a business, as well as offering an escape from the social pressure in China.

The expansion of influence of China into Southeast Asian can be seen as a form of neo-colonialism as **Sigit and Elizabeth** indicates in ***The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and China's New Colonialism in Cambodia***. According to the authors, through the mechanism of its foreign policy such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a regional institution like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China has asserted itself as a regional superpower and lured many Southeast Asian countries into its colonialism trap.

One of these examples is Cambodia, whose economy heavily relies on Chinese contribution to avoid a bankruptcy. Using an argument that it will help to increase the volume of trade and investment between the two countries, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) endorsed the internationalization of the Chinese Renminbi (RMB) by encouraging its use by businesses and individuals within the country. The paper suggests that such a decision is a double-edged sword for the country. Although the use of RMB can bring some advantages to Cambodia's economy, it can also pose hidden threats to its sovereignty.

Although migration is usually perceived as a threat, it can also contribute to the socio-economic development of a city. In *Chinese Diaspora and Cultural Heritage in Mueang Ubon, 1780 to 1918*, Sutida TONLERD, Nattapat TAECHARUNGPAISAN, and Praphaphon SASIPRAPHA trace the history of Chinese diaspora in Ubon Ratchathani province (Mueang Ubon) in the northeastern region of Thailand. The paper emphasizes the importance of Chinese diaspora in the development of Mueang Ubon. The community of Chinese diaspora does not only play an important role in the city's economy, but it also leaves a cultural legacy in its cultural life and public sphere.

Lastly, Geoffrey C. GUNN invites us to revisit a publication published by the Institute of Asian Studies thirty years ago. *Cambodia Watching Down Under: A Thirty-Year Retrospective* looks back at the reception and impact of *Cambodia Watching Down Under*, a book by Dr. Khien Theeravit at a time when the push for conflict resolution to the “Cambodia problem” reached a critical mass. This article arrives at the right time when the culture of academic publishing is being questioned of its relevance, and at the time when the Institute of Asian Studies will be celebrating its 39th anniversary. Its conclusion gives some hope to us that academic publication can influence policy, and perhaps that it can also provide some truth to the world, flooded by ideological polarization and disinformation.