
Jacques Hersh: *The USA and the Rise of East Asia Since 1945: Dilemmas of the Postwar International Political Economy.* New York: St. Martin's, 1993. 174pp.

Throughout my career as a specialist on American-East Asian relations I have struggled with the harsh reality that most Americans are indifferent toward Asia and largely unconcerned with international affairs generally. Although Americans have fought bloody and brutal wars in Asia on three occasions, they remain an Atlantic oriented people when they look abroad - which they do as infrequently as possible. The recent course of American politics, particularly the 1992 presidential election campaign, attests to this disinclination to focus on foreign affairs and embrace Washington's global responsibilities.

But Americans apparently are not alone in narrowness of vision and disinterest in Asia. What other judgment can be reached when a Danish professor publishes a book that purports to discuss the rise of East Asia since 1945 but talks more about Western Europe and the former Soviet Union than any part of Asia, and in East Asia deals almost exclusively with Japan? Given the rapid economic growth of Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China, it is puzzling that they are barely mentioned in this volume. The democratization that has begun in Taiwan and South Korea as well as the burgeoning defense capabilities of all the states in the region are certainly part of any "rise" worth analyzing.

But it may be that the paucity of consideration of the peoples who comprise the East Asian community reflects not just the author's lack of interest but also a lack of expertise. There are repeated errors scattered through the book. For instance, there are few in the U.S. or even Japan who would call Tokyo's responses to U.S. trade demands "pliant" (p. 114). It is not fair to say that Pan-Asianism convinced neither Japanese nor other Asians of higher Japanese purposes prior to World War II.(99) In fact, Pan-Asianism appealed to Chinese revolutionaries eager to end China's semi-colonial status as it did to the Japanese who assisted them (see for example Marius Jansen's *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, 1954) and to Vietnamese anxious to throw the French out. Large-scale Japanese access to Chinese markets did not follow U.S. defeat in Vietnam but

rather Tokyo's decision to open diplomatic relations with China in 1972. Moreover, the U.S. began relaxing barriers against Japan's trade with China as early as the 1950s (p. 31). And Professor Hersh's prediction that with the collapse of the Soviet Union Japan could expect to reclaim the northern territories quickly seems unduly optimistic since, despite the actual unimportance of the islands, Boris Yeltsin and his successors will have trouble being seen to surrender Russia's patrimony at a time of escalating nationalism (p. 126)

The book's real purpose seems not to be analysis of East Asia but a warning of the tremendous problems threatening the international economy brought on largely by American miscalculation and self-indulgence. Washington's poor judgment, moreover, in Hersh's view, endures. He fears current U.S. government leaders, having discovered East Asia, will compound previous misguided policies by turning their attention too fully to Asia. Plaintively he admonishes Americans that, "regardless of the US political establishment's predispositions, ties to Western Europe cannot be reduced to a secondary priority without dire consequences" (p. 104). Of course, he is wrong to believe that there has been an awakening in Washington that will shift American interest fully and permanently away from Europe. If the total apathy and ignorance of the past has been diminished there remains a long way to go before the United States becomes a truly Pacific oriented power.

Beyond these problems of understanding there are also some of form and style. The book is not based on original research, tapping no new documents, revealing no new discoveries. The author has not even utilized many of the exciting scholarly works that have been published in recent years which would have provided a stronger base for his analysis, e.g., on the Marshall Plan Michael Hogan's award winning 1987 study or on U.S.-China relations Harry Harding's important *Fragile Relationship* or among the critics of Japan's policies Clyde Prestowitz's *Trading Places*. Then there are the minor but misleading mistakes, for instance, it ought to be JCS 1067 not JSC (p. 2) and counterpart funds not counterfunds (p. 5). The United States and the rise of East Asia since 1945 is an important topic and there are useful observations in this slim

volume but the issue is broader and more complex than the author suggests and will require more serious analysis from others in the future.

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