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which Duterte tapped. Curato et al., having written in the moment, provide an early map to understanding a situation in flux. While the two books could not be more different in their approach, they are commonly concerned with the quality of democracy and the resilience of authoritarian rule—making invaluable contributions to the literature.

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Immanuel Wallerstein has argued that the label “Cold War” is largely inappropriate to describe the decades of Asian history after the Second World War. The numerous violent conflicts with their enormous numbers of casualties, including the Korean War, both Indochina Wars, and the clashes between communist and anti-communist groups within Asian societies, can hardly be described as something “cold.” Although Ang Cheng Guan does not question the term “Cold War” per se, his book *Southeast Asia's Cold War* confirms Wallerstein's critique and is a rich and well-documented illustration of the multifaceted and disastrous course the controversies around communism and communist organizations took in Southeast Asia.

The main innovation of this book is neither its methodology nor its theoretical framework. As Ang himself emphasizes (p. 2), the book is largely based on secondary material. A closer look at the footnotes reveals, though, that primary material collected in the US, UK, and Australian national archives and, selectively, some (English) online sources were also integrated in the research. But all in all, the range of primary evidence consulted for this project is not its foremost contribution to Cold War scholarship.

Nor is the theoretical focus particularly strong. The (very readable) first chapter extends the discussion on what we mean by “Cold War” to the interwar period and argues that, in particular for Southeast Asia but, as I would argue, more generally for Asia, the fundamental antagonism between communist and anti-communist forces characterizing the Cold War after 1945 was actually a product of the immediate era after 1918. Several important Asian communist parties were founded during these years, and the Third Communist International held in Moscow in 1919 set the confrontational tone that defined the rest of the century. However, this argument is not particularly new but feeds into a broader (and controversial) debate recently fueled by Arne Westad and others about the beginnings of the Cold War.

Ang's book is an important contribution to Cold War historiography mainly for two other reasons. First, although essentially a classic diplomatic and political history of the Cold War, it provides a rare and detailed account of the region's involvement and agency within the larger geopolitical confrontations during these decades. The conflicts around communist ideas and actors were embedded in Southeast Asia's multilayered processes of decolonization and postcolonial nation-building, which resulted in social transformations and clashes even more complex and contradictory than in other world regions. The book renders a valuable service for the scholarly debate around the Cold War by

providing a detailed and balanced overview of the numerous arenas of confrontation triggered by declining empires and postcolonial change.

The downside of Ang's focus on diplomatic and political history is that the book is less strong in highlighting the interplay between politics and socioeconomic patterns essential to understand what actually defines Southeast Asia as a distinct Cold War region and to explain the strong appeal of communism among the people who lived there. The second chapter, for example, dedicated to the (according to Ang, crucial) interwar period would have been the place to reflect more on the region's colonial socioeconomic relations to explain the evolution of communist movements in the context of extractive colonial economies or migration flows between the Indian subcontinent, China, and Southeast Asia. The Great Depression also had severe consequences for Southeast Asia's political history.

The second reason why this book is an important contribution to Cold War historiography is that it advances the de-Westernization of this research field in some significant ways. This is not an aspect that characterizes one particular chapter in the book's otherwise chronological structure, but rather it concerns the perspectives Ang suggests throughout the text. For example, the Vietnam War, a widely researched subject, is covered in a whole chapter, but Ang's refreshing interest concerns perceptions of the war in other Southeast Asian societies. The result is not another detailed description of the armed conflict but a closer look at how local and national communities in the region interpreted and experienced these decisive years. Another rewarding facet is that little-researched communist parties—such as the ones in Burma, the Philippines, and Thailand—receive more attention. The case of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) is particularly interesting because its history evolved between a communist Thai Autonomous Republic in China's Yunnan Province (p. 93) and the CPT's destruction by the Thai counterinsurgency in the late 1970s (p. 185).

In spite of its conventional political historical approach, *Southeast Asia's Cold War* will be of interest to anybody looking for a de-Westernized Cold War history of Southeast Asia and will no doubt encourage more research on local communism and anti-communism, particularly in the region's own archives.

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Beyond the Asylum: Mental Illness in French Colonial Vietnam. By CLAIRE E. EDINGTON. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019. 312 pp. ISBN: 9781501733932 (cloth).
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During most of the nineteenth century, French physicians working in French Indochina were convinced that mental illness did not constitute a problem requiring an official response. As a disease of civilization, they thought mental illness would not affect the great majority of the indigenous population of Vietnam and adjacent territories. A few hospitals were equipped with cages for the handful of cases that had been sent there by the courts. After the turn of the twentieth century, the growth of the plantation economy and urbanization increasingly affected the everyday life of Vietnamese villagers. Mentally disturbed villagers who had previously been guarded by their families were left