



HERITAGE OF WAR AND PEACE

A Roundtable Discussion of the Possibilities and Problems of a New Form of Asian Diplomacy

 Wed, 6 Sep

 4 – 6.00pm

 AS8 Level 4, ARI Seminar Room



Prof Rana Mitter
University of Oxford, UK

How China's Wartime Past is Changing its Future

Beijing's policies continue to dominate the news in the Asia-Pacific region. Will China and Japan clash in the seas of East Asia? Will China be able to implement social welfare policies that will calm dissent and social unrest? Why did it take so long for China to become such a major power? One unexpected but crucial story that helps illuminate these different questions is the wrenching history of China's experience during World War II, in the epic war against Japan from 1937 to 1945. Millions of Chinese died and tens of millions became refugees during those years. This lecture will explore how the battered China of wartime became today's superpower in the making – and why. The presentation explores the often-forgotten history of China's wartime experience and shows how memory of the war has been used to change domestic and international politics in the present day. It shows that local identity, international relations and China's sense of nationalism are all deeply affected by changing ways of thinking about the wartime past, and that the changing memory of war continues to constitute a central part of China's engagement with Asia and the world.



Prof Edward Vickers
Kyushu University, Japan

The Politics of War Commemoration in Peripheral 'Greater China'

Much discussion of Chinese commemoration of war – notably of the 1931-45 conflict with Japan – understandably concentrates on the mainland PRC. However, the very prominence of (Anti-Japan) war memory in contemporary mainland discourse on national identity renders this a litmus test for patriotic loyalty - with particular implications for those regions most insecure in their 'Chineseness'. In my opening remarks for this round table, I will reflect on the recent treatment of war-related heritage in Hong Kong and Taiwan – with reference especially to contentious issues such as wartime collaboration – and discuss the insights this offers into relations today between these societies, the Chinese mainland and Japan.



Prof David Lowe
Deakin University, Australia

Recalling Regionalism in War and Postwar Recovery: Diplomatic Possibilities and Challenges in Three Cases

The Second World War saw an enforced form of regionalism unfold in Asia in the form of the Japanese Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This sphere also fostered a new regional consciousness and mobility among those from other countries who joined to fight alongside the Japanese against colonial rule in Asia. In the transition from war to peace, and the start of postwar recovery, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, while now unpalatable as a model, left its mark. This paper explores its legacies and considers which echoes of war-inspired regionalism have found their way into modern remembering and diplomacy through three different case studies: the Colombo Plan for Economic Co-operation in South and South East Asia; the rehabilitation of Subhas Chandra Bose in India; and the UN's Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.



Prof Tim Winter
Deakin University, Australia

War, Heritage and Diplomacy in Asia

There is strong evidence to suggest that tensions over war remembrance in Asia are escalating at a time of increasing state militarisation and rising nationalism. What is less well understood however, is how the push to commemorate and remember is creating unexpected forms of diplomatic alignment and cooperation. Anniversaries, museums, heritage sites and memory narratives now both reflect and give form to international diplomatic relations across the region in a rapidly shifting geopolitical environment. In addressing such themes, this presentation explores past wars as emergent spaces of heritage and memorial diplomacy.

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