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Marc Gallicchio, *The Scramble for Asia: U.S. Military Power in the Aftermath of the Pacific War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008, £19.90). Pp. xiv + 209. ISBN 978 0 7425 4437 6.

The sudden surrender of Japan in August 1945, though marking the end of one awful phase of conflict in Asia, was in many ways simply a prelude to a further chapter of civil strife, dislocation, and violent change, as European imperial power ebbed, subject peoples rose to express their demands, and Cold War competition began to extend to the region. A triumphant United States entered this maelstrom, propelled by the previous three years of fighting into becoming the most imposing military power the Far East had yet seen, whose fleet units straddled the vast arc from the Indian Ocean to the Sea of Japan, and mighty air force had delivered the atomic bombs that had put an end to Tokyo's own imperial ambitions. In this succinct survey, Marc Gallicchio charts the uncertain course of American policy in the wake of Japan's surrender, as US military units took up new occupation duties in Japan, Korea and the Philippines, and sent marines to China where they held the ring to allow Nationalist armies the chance to return to the crucial coastal cities before the Communists could seize them. Gallicchio's key theme is how early expectations that US military prowess would translate into an ability to mould local political conditions into a shape that suited the preference of Washington policymakers were soon to be disappointed as the intractable and deep-seated political and social cleavages of the region were made manifest. Only in Japan was political stability assured, and this when Douglas MacArthur's occupation authorities chose to work through the existing governing institutions rather than replace them entirely and largely to eschew pursuing the war criminals who still permeated the Japanese polity.

Much of what Gallicchio presents on the general political sphere here will be familiar to anyone with a decent knowledge of the rudiments of American policy in the years immediately following the end of the Pacific War. The extra ingredient that the author offers is the view from the ground up, as the US armed forces took on new duties that many of its members found irksome when they expected a rapid return to civilian life. Indeed, an important issue for Gallicchio is how plans for military demobilization cut across US hopes to use their new position in East Asia to underpin political stability. As experienced personnel were shipped back to the United States, they were replaced by generally unruly draftees, while military discipline and efficiency suffered, and host Asian populations received a poor impression of their bored and indifferent visitors (and in this context, US commanders tended to heap a disproportionate amount of blame for lawlessness and criminality on the African American soldiers under their charge). Gallicchio even uses to very good effect the unpublished letters home written by Waldo Heinrichs, who later carved out a career as another prominent historian of US foreign relations, when he was posted to the Philippines as a young and raw recruit during 1945–46. Such was the level of discontent, both at home and overseas, at the slow pace that soldiers were being returned to the United States, that in January 1946 there were a series of mass demonstrations across American bases in the Pacific, as well as in Europe; in such

circumstances, it is no surprise why US military power waned so quickly (119–21). All this adds unexpected and welcome flavour to what would otherwise be a rather conventional study of the interaction between foreign policy and military planning. In this latter area, however, there is also much revealing detail on the prevalence of wartime rivalries between the US Army and Navy, particularly over operations in China, and the disruptive effects these had on formulating a coherent policy regarding the region.

To some American observers, the destruction of Japanese power in the Far East created opportunities for the United States to discover its destiny on what MacArthur later described as “Western civilization’s last earth frontier,” where American idealism, ingenuity and enterprising spirit could find a ready outlet. In this amalgam of ideas, commercial expansion could work hand-in-glove with the assertion of political control, just as communist influence had to be resisted if the American way was to be embraced by the region’s multitudes. By 1947, however, the sense of a special American mission in Asia was looking increasingly threadbare; as anti-imperialist nationalism took a revolutionary – rather than “responsible” – course, compromises were struck with French colonialism in Indochina, and democratic ideals lay increasingly abandoned in Korea and the Philippines, where in the latter the grant of independence the previous year had been accompanied by the perpetuation of oligarchic rule. Perhaps most vexing of all, China turned its back on its would-be mentor across the Pacific and sank into a renewed civil war from which the Communists would emerge victorious. What Gallicchio has managed to convey, above all, is the profound confusion that beset US policy in the Far East in the two years following the Japanese surrender. Overbearing personalities clashed over priorities, the looming confrontation with the Soviet Union heightened tensions, and the domestic pressures for military retrenchment meant that the resources available to impose American will were never matched to the more grandiose schemes of those who wanted to translate the recent victory over Japan into a dominant position on the East Asian mainland. It would, in fact, take the outbreak of large-scale fighting in Korea three years later before some degree of clarity would begin to return to American policy.

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