

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Luce, Time, and the American Crusade in Asia.

By Robert E. Herzstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 368. ISBN 978-0-521-83577-0.

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In 1967, British political scientist Peter G. Richards complained about the lack of academic research on the various actors involved in the process of foreign policy-making. In his view, the neglect of non-state forces was due to the fact that foreign affairs are generally considered a matter for the executive branch of government. Some four decades on, this assessment still holds true to a large extent. That same year, 1967, was also the year when the media mogul Henry Robinson Luce, the founder and publisher of *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune* and *Sports Illustrated*, died. His story is one of the best examples of why it is too simplistic a view to assume that the conduct of foreign affairs was always, and remains, in the hands of presidents, prime ministers and government departments. The underlying internal processes that influence and drive state behavior often remain in the dark but are certainly worth a closer look. Robert E. Herzstein's fascinating, meticulously researched and superbly documented account of Luce's impact on American foreign policy towards Asia during the hot phase of the Cold War shows how one man driven by ideology and conviction and his media empire were able to manipulate presidents and lawmakers. This fine book should be essential reading for anyone interested in the sources of US Asia policy from the 1940s to the late 1960s and the power of the media in policy-making.

"Harry" Luce (he detested the name Henry) was born in 1898 in China to missionary parents. Herzstein rightly portrays Luce as a kind of lay preacher, who was eager to mould the American mind and advance his ideological program of intervention, capitalism, democracy (when appropriate), and Christian activism. The most celebrated and influential editor of his day – *Time* had the status of required reading for middle-class Americans and politicians were impressed by (and in many cases were dependent on) the magazine's apparent influence – Luce was obsessed with the American mission in the world, and particularly with the US role in China and East Asia. Blinded by a vision of monolithic Communism, he convinced his countrymen that the United States had perversely "lost" China and paved the way for the disastrous Vietnam War. Making use of previously neglected or unknown archival sources and interviews with some of Luce's contemporaries, Herzstein convincingly and comprehensively argues that more than any other American, Luce contributed to forging the heroic wartime image of Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang, and of their fighting China; played a central part in preventing the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China and the PRC's admission into the United Nations in the 1960s; provided a fertile ground for Joe McCarthy's anti-communist witch-hunt (but also administered an early defeat of the senator); engineered Dwight D. Eisenhower's and John F. Kennedy's rise to power; and persuaded both the American public and politicians that communism must be stopped in Korea and Vietnam. While Herzstein presents a balanced picture and explains that Luce did not always get it his way, the author suggests that Washington's Cold War policy towards, and role in, East Asia would have been markedly different without the impact of Time Inc., even to the extent that the Korean and Vietnam Wars might not have happened.

Unknown to the vast majority of a faithful readership, Luce and his like-minded editors achieved their mission of promoting the American crusade in East Asia by manipulating the facts as communicated in the reporters' cables. "If the facts were unpleasant, Luce escaped into a world protected by ideology and bias. Ultimately, he insisted upon filtering the news about Asia through a prism that distorted the truth and turned it into fantasy" (p. 250). At the end of the day the book can be read as a strong word of caution against the fallacies of American interventionism. "In our new millennium, as we contemplate an ever more independent world, Luce's relentless interventionism in cultural alien lands after 1945 serves as a warning" (p. 250). Has the lesson been learnt? It seems that it hasn't. At least it can be concluded that in an age of increasing media pluralism and the internet the chances are that no single publisher will ever be as influential and powerful as Henry Luce.

Lost Modernities, China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Hazards of World History.

By Alexander Woodside. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. Pp. 142. ISBN 0674022173.

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In a series of lectures presented at Harvard University that he might well have entitled "The Mandarinate and Their Discontents: Meanings for the Modern," Alexander Woodside gives us a clarion call not to ignore the developed political wisdom and anxieties of these past East Asian political systems: the meritocratic bureaucracies that took form in China, Korea, and Vietnam. Against the backdrop of European thought of the past few centuries, Woodside, following Harold J. Berman, demonstrates how the incipient appearance of aspects of the modern, as well as problems similar to those of modernity, appeared first in China, then in Korea and Vietnam. He shows us the common features shared by these three polities, with their examination systems and their specialized bureaucratic functions, all against the immediate background of classical Chinese thought, especially that of the "three dynasties" of mythic times. He also delineates differences in development that existed among the three, specifically China with its much larger scale and much longer period of development, Korea with its more rigid *yangban* social structure, and Vietnam with its village orientation, southern expansion, and porous borders.

What had once been "modern" in the rational approach to government of these three systems had then been "lost," seen as outmoded and outdated, yet still continuing to be reflected in the modern East Asian scene. Woodside gives us, not an extended, detailed description, but a highly intriguing and stimulating thought piece on this unexamined topic. He brings to our attention the importance of not being limited by our conceptions of the modern; instead he takes major elements of this modernity and shows them to have existed already in the three mandarinate. He particularly focuses on the concerns and anxieties held by the scholar-officials of the three lands on the hazards and risks they saw in their systems. Pushing back such modern concerns into the earlier centuries, Woodside chides those who restrict themselves to the narrow time and place we normally employ for modernity.

Woodside is a true East Asian comparativist, all against extensive reading on European and contemporary thought. As in his two previous books, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model* (1971, 1988) and *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* (1976), he prefers to deal with East Asian realities, working on contrasts among, and the comparison of thought and institutions in, the lands of this region. His sources here, the result of broad reading, are particularly strong on recent Chinese intellectual discussion and Vietnamese political commentary and show the influence of modernists like