

and performative' gender roles (p. 277). Russell Skelchy (chap. 13) demonstrates how Javanese *keroncong* singer Waldjinah carefully managed her media image as a traditional Solonese woman, while in practice breaking gendered expectations through her active career and sexualised performances (p. 281). These studies reveal how female artists both worked within and subverted gendered ideologies, leading to new forms of popular music and performance.

Finally, several articles deal incisively with themes of technological mediation, gender construction, and voice studies by exploring 'new kinds of identities ... made audible through new cultural technologies' (p. 23). Yiman Wang (chap. 2) discusses the transition from silent film to 'talkies' and demonstrates how Anna May Wong's performances in German and English challenged Hollywood's stereotypical 'ethnic imaginary of Chineseness' (p. 49). Farzaneh Hemmasi (chap. 11) destabilises Euro-American 'correlations between voice, identity, and politics' by analysing performances of Iranian pop icon Googoosh after the Iranian Revolution (p. 236). Amanda Weidman (chap. 8) discusses the South Indian playback singer L.R. Eswari who shaped a vocal typology in the 1960s while also retaining 'a capacity to exceed the systems of meaning within which she [was] placed' (p. 189). Turning to technologies of the present, Jennifer Milioto Matsue (chap. 15) explores the posthuman voice through an analysis of the vocaloid software personality Hatsune Miku, whose voice can be manipulated in terms of vocal timbre, pitch, and 'gender factor' (p. 321).

Overall, *Vamping the stage* speaks to diverse fields including popular music, gender, and Asian Studies, and is an important contribution to critical scholarship on female pop voices and the cultural work that their lives and work perform. It is particularly insightful for Southeast Asian Studies in its focus on Malaysia and Island Southeast Asia, and signals the need for further research into gender, performance, and popular music formations across the region. As the first book-length study dedicated to female artists in Asian popular music cultures, the work is recuperative in the sense that it highlights women whose performances produced global modernities but who have been marginalised in mainstream accounts of popular music. Thus, *Vamping the stage* may serve as a generative source of further research into claims to modernity, their attendant gender ideologies, and the performers and artists who both create and exceed these meanings and structures.

KATHERINE SCAHILL

University of Pennsylvania

Cold War and decolonisation: Australia's policy towards Britain's end of empire in Southeast Asia

By ANDREA BENVENUTI

Singapore: NUS Press, 2017. Pp. 320. Notes, Bibliography, Index.
US–Singapore relations, 1965–1975: Strategic non-alignment in the Cold War

By DANIEL WEI BOON CHUA

Singapore: NUS Press, 2017. Pp. 304. Notes, Bibliography, Index.

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Various powers took a profound interest in developments in Southeast Asia following the end of the Second World War. Security concerns generated by the Cold War and the European retreat from empire drew great powers such as the United States to intervene in the subregion's affairs. Countries on the periphery of Southeast Asia also crafted policies to deal with the significant changes sweeping across the area. Other states became embroiled in regional matters when Southeast Asian activists and politicians appealed to them for diplomatic support and material assistance to further their anticolonial and nationalist aspirations. The convergence of all of these forces and interventions engendered sociopolitical change, uncertainty, and violence in Southeast Asia. Scholars have examined in notable detail a number of these developments, especially the wars in Indochina. But some remain understudied. The two books being reviewed here scrutinise two comparatively less examined aspects of the post-war international history of Southeast Asia. The authors deserve particular credit for making welcome contributions to scholarship.

Andrea Benvenuti has written a useful volume on Australia's policy toward late-colonial Malaya and Singapore. Departing from conventional interpretations, he argues that Australian security concerns rather than a desire to seek common cause with Britain fundamentally underpinned Canberra's interest in Southeast Asia. The Menzies government was initially not enthused about Britain's decision to retreat from empire, and devolve power to Malaysians and Singaporeans. It feared that communist agents and sympathisers might subvert the Malayan and Singaporean governments. Officials in Canberra could not stomach such outcomes. They did not want a repeat of Australia's wartime experiences: a hostile actor in Southeast Asia threatening their security and well-being.

Despite the initial misgivings, the Australians changed their tune in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Benvenuti writes that Canberra eventually accepted that British officials had undercut the subversive groups. The British had largely quelled the communist insurgency in Malaya. Non-communist political organisations and leaders also helmed the governments in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. The developments assuaged Australian concerns about the likelihood that communists might dominate Southeast Asia and threaten Australia. Canberra accordingly backed London's decision to transfer political power to Malaysians and Singaporeans.

The twists and turns in Australia's attitudes toward British decolonisation policy were accompanied by efforts Canberra undertook to shape the security situation in Southeast Asia. As Benvenuti writes, Australia did not merely stand idly by and criticise British policies from afar. It deployed military aircraft to support the British counterinsurgency campaign against the Malayan Communist Party guerrillas. It also pledged to back the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve with air, sea, and land forces. Planners envisaged the reserve, comprising combat forces from Australia, Britain, and New Zealand, operating from Malaya and Singapore to resist communist expansion into the area. To that end, Canberra indicated it would deploy a number of divisions to the fight if war broke out. For economic and political reasons, though, the forces that Australia ultimately maintained in Southeast Asia were comparatively small. Benvenuti astutely notes that the Menzies government had no wish to give locals the impression that its forces were being deployed to sustain the imperial

order. To that end, Australian officials determined that their troops should also not be used against local political leaders.

The Australians, nevertheless, retained a strong interest in Malayan and Singaporean domestic politics. Devoting several chapters to the subject, Benvenuti recounts the anxieties that Australian officials had about the ideological proclivities of the local politicians and the likelihood that they might work against Australian interests if they were elected into power. With the communists isolated in the jungles, the Australians balked at the activities and intentions of the communalists in Malaya. In Singapore, ostensibly subversive members of the People's Action Party (PAP) came under Australian scrutiny. Australian diplomats such as Thomas Critchley and David McNicol filed reports either hoping the British would promote policies that would bridge communal divisions in Malaya, or expressing the wish that anticommunist groups should cooperate with other like-minded actors to collectively enhance their political fortunes in Singapore.

Benvenuti writes less about whether the Australians made any attempts to directly intervene and thwart the agendas of the groups whom they found objectionable. He, in fact, suggests that the Australians were restrained and deferred to the British on the pace of political change. In the end, the ascendance of the Alliance Party and Lee Kuan Yew's PAP to positions of power in Malaya and Singapore respectively allayed Canberra's concerns. These political organisations championed economic and socio-political agendas that did not undercut Western interests. The Australians also found both governments to be opposed to communism. When the two agreed to create Greater Malaysia in 1963, Canberra backed the initiative. Although Australian policymakers had to thereafter deal with Indonesia's opposition to Malaysia and the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, they ultimately accepted that the end of Britain's empire in Southeast Asia had resulted in outcomes that did not redound to the detriment of Australia's interests and security.

Benvenuti's book will be of interest to scholars who study Australian policy toward Southeast Asia. It challenges the conventional interpretation of the motivations underpinning the Australian actions. It brings out well the shifts in Australian attitudes toward Britain's approach to the decolonisation of the empire. It offers an insightful Australian view of domestic political developments in Malaya and Singapore. Its employment of Australian, British, and US sources to tell a complex story deserves praise. The work is also clearly structured and elegantly crafted.

Despite its many admirable qualities, the book would have benefited from an elaboration of a number of observations. How did Joseph Chifley and Robert Menzies come to their contrasting conclusions about the nature of the communist threat to Malaya (pp. 17–19)? What shaped the perspectives of individuals such as Richard Casey, Thomas Critchley, and Arthur Tange, and affected their interactions with British officials and their assessments of developments in Malaya and Singapore? A sustained discussion of their personalities, prejudices, worldviews, and approaches to foreign policy would have done much to help readers better appreciate the complexities of Australian politics and the country's policymakers.

Also lacking in the study are details of Australian activities undertaken in Malaya and Singapore. Battalions of Australian soldiers mounted counterinsurgency operations in Malaya. A more detailed examination of their interactions with British forces

and Malaysians could furnish additional insight into the Australian views of Malaya. Investigating the Malayan responses to the Australian counterinsurgency efforts could likewise illuminate the impact of Canberra's actions. Further deserving of scrutiny is the Australian Secret Intelligence Service's pursuits. Brian Toohey's and William Pinwill's book (*Oyster*, 1989) suggests that the Australian government deployed covert operatives to undercut communist influence in Southeast Asia. Some discussion of the subject could give added meaning to Australia's response to Britain's retreat from empire.

In sum, for those looking to make sense of the nature and impact of Australia's actions in Malaya and Singapore, Benvenuti's book will be less than satisfying. Where Australian high politics is concerned, though, readers will find the study to be informative and interesting.

While Benvenuti focuses on Australia's concerns regarding Britain's retreat from empire, Daniel Wei Boon Chua appraises Singapore's interactions with the United States between 1965 and 1975. Chua argues that US policies toward Southeast Asia contributed in no small part to Singapore's survival as a sovereign and viable nation-state. The American military intervention in Vietnam contained communist aggression in the region. Monies appropriated for US military spending found their way into the city-state's service industries, stimulating its economy. Washington further helped Singapore to build up a credible defence force. By the time Saigon fell to the communists in 1975, Singapore could boast of an economic and political system characterised by growth and stability. According to Chua, those outcomes were not merely the end products of good Singaporean governance. External actors like the United States also helped the Lee Kuan Yew government build the nation-state.

Chua traces the evolution of the Singapore–US relationship over a decade. He points out that Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew initially harboured grave misgivings about American intentions toward his government. Whether or not Lee was putting on a show to win Afro-Asian support for his administration or burnish his credentials as the nationalist leader of a new independent state, he publicly berated the United States in August 1965. Lee castigated Washington for its ideological rigidity and misguided actions toward developing countries including Singapore. The tensions between the two governments, however, gradually dissipated. Chua describes how officials from the two sides developed their relations. Following Lee's visit to the White House in 1967 and with Britain declaring its intention to withdraw its forces from the island, Singapore–US ties entered a new phase of defence and economic cooperation.

To further its aims in Asia, the Johnson administration cultivated an Asian government willing to voice its support for the American intervention in Vietnam and for a sustained US presence in the region. To enhance the survivability of Singapore as a sovereign state, the Lee government sought and obtained American military hardware and foreign direct investment. Lee also maintained an interest in seeing the US military hold the communists at bay in Indochina. The Singaporean prime minister did not think communists would tolerate his regime if they succeeded in expanding their power across Southeast Asia. According to Lee, the American operation in Vietnam gave newly independent states like Singapore time to develop themselves economically, militarily, and politically.

Despite publicly expressing pro-American views, Lee was quick to identify his government with the nonaligned movement. Singapore purportedly supported no Cold War power. This posture formed the core of what Chua argues was Singapore's policy toward Washington. The two had a close relationship, yet the Southeast Asian state kept its distance from the United States. When the Nixon administration reviewed US commitments in Asia, Singapore even contemplated enhancing its interactions with the Soviet Union. But the city-state did not turn away from Washington to nurture closer ties with Moscow. Chua concludes his study with the observation that the Lee government ultimately remained partial to the United States. It wanted Washington to remain engaged in Asia's affairs.

Chua's study makes for an engrossing read. It is informed by a rich array of American, Australian, and British archival documents as well as Singaporean newspapers and interviews with the city-state's policymakers. It makes an original contribution to the academic literature on the post-war relationship between Southeast Asia and the United States — an area of scholarship long dominated by studies of the Indochina wars. It also locates Singaporean history in an international context, insightfully accentuating the notion that the city-state's development stemmed from local initiatives, and its exploitation of regional and global opportunities.

For all of its virtues, though, the book does provoke a number of questions. First, how much ideological and political distance did the Lee government actually maintain between Singapore and the Democratic (Johnson) and two Republican (Nixon and Ford) administrations? Chua argues otherwise, but the empirical details in the book suggest that the governments shared basically similar worldviews about international politics. They also cooperated rather closely on defence and economic matters. More could be discussed in the study about whether the Lee government seriously meant to maintain its distance from Washington. Second, one wonders to what extent did the Lee government fully embrace the ideas propounded by the non-aligned movement. If Singapore publicly embraced the position for strategic and domestic political reasons, the work could have pushed the point more stridently. Third, the study missed the opportunity to discuss the issues that could have created a chasm between Singapore and Washington: human rights and sociopolitical restrictions in the city-state. Meriting closer analysis was how the two governments dealt with their differences, if any, on matters such as laws governing the detention of peoples without trial and the control of the press in Singapore. This story could have been situated in the broader histories of the period, involving the rise of transnational activists championing human rights and freedom of the press. Answers to the questions would shed light on the complexity of the Singapore–US relationship.

While there is room for Chua to craft a richer narrative, one recognises the chief difficulty scholars confront when they examine independent Singapore's history. Access to government files produced after 1965 on security matters remains largely restricted. The Singapore government has not declassified policy papers and minutes generated by the Prime Minister's Office or the Ministries of (Interior and) Defence and Foreign Affairs. These records would offer the Singaporean leadership's perspective on the issues American, Australian, and British diplomats discussed in their — now declassified — reports. They would also enhance the robustness of Chua's analysis, where Singaporean initiatives and decisions about defence, political,

and security matters could have constituted the mainsprings of American actions. At the very least, the Singaporean records would engender a narrative that features the full interplay of actors interacting to create history. But they remain unavailable.

Until more Southeast Asian documents are made available for research, scholars will continue to exploit the records in countries such as Australia, Britain, and the United States to write the subregion's late-colonial and postcolonial histories. There are, of course, potential pitfalls in employing that approach to uncover Southeast Asia's past. The records generated by governments in Australia, Britain, and the United States invariably reflect Australian, British, and American views of developments in the area. If reproduced uncritically in a historical text, such viewpoints risk caricaturing or distorting local events and intentions. Employed critically, though, they can offer new insights into the history of Southeast Asia. So long as historians appreciate the limits of the sources and the predispositions of the people who generated the records, they should not be discouraged from utilising them to craft their narratives. Yet the need for local perspectives to balance or correct the foreign underscores the point that Southeast Asian records on events that occurred some half a century ago should be made available for public scrutiny. It would be strange indeed to find that the possibility of writing autonomous international histories of Southeast Asia to be no less elusive decades after the European powers had retreated from the subregion.

Notwithstanding the challenges, Benvenuti and Chua have looked at the available sources and respectively produced two laudable studies that deserve praise. Their works should stimulate further research on the postcolonial histories of Malaysia and Singapore. They should also incentivise governments in Malaysia and Singapore to make greater efforts to declassify their records — without, of course, endangering their national interests or the well-being of informants. The growing volume of works produced in the next decade or so will rely heavily on foreign records to shape their interpretations of the international history of Southeast Asia. One assumes that the Malaysian and Singaporean governments will eventually realise that they might want to make their voices heard in those narratives too.

S.R. JOEY LONG

National University of Singapore

Cambodia

Cambodia's second kingdom: Nation, imagination, and democracy

By ASTRID NORÉN-NILSSON

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Plates, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

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Cambodia's second kingdom is a fine piece of research on elite discourses in post-civil war Cambodia. Following the first general elections organised by the