

BOOK REVIEWS

The Social Sciences in the Asian Century.

Edited by Carol Johnson, Vera Mackie and Tessa Morris-Suzuki. Acton: Australian National University Press, 2015. Pp. i–xi + 213. ISBN 10: 1925022587; ISBN 13: 9781925022582; Ebook 9781925022599.

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doi:10.1017/S1479591417000079

This is a collection of eleven essays by leading social scientists from the Asia Pacific region. They represent voices in economics, education, gender studies, history, political science, psychology, sociology and urban planning writing about the state of higher education, with its expressed purpose of grooming Australians to be “Asia literate” and “Asia-capable” (p. 1). A globalized study of Asia in the twenty-first century is critical. This is a pursuit that is increasingly being given serious attention by many institutions of higher learning worldwide. Australia’s unique geographical location makes this endeavor even more of paramount importance. This is thus an exciting time for social scientists in Australia to reflect on the country’s changing relationships with its neighbors. There can be no further delay in mapping out the new geopolitics of knowledge for engagement in the new realities of Asia.

Although united by a common theme, each of the chapters in the volume is a self-contained essay. Simultaneously, the chapters intertwine with one another as well. Each is informative, easy to read, and thought-provoking. Chapter 1 provides a detailed background for the discussion. It traces the history of the modes of engagement that have guided generations of Australians’ engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. History reveals these modes of engagement to have been deeply embedded in a Euro-American and Anglophone intellectual framework. Recognizing that this is now a world of global inter-connectedness that supersedes national boundaries, how can Australian social scientists address transnational issues, ranging from climate change to asylum-seekers, that are pandemic across the globe? There is no doubt that diverse forms of social science knowledge coming from intellectual traditions beyond the Euro-American centers are necessary to address these issues effectively.

In Part I of the volume, Raewyn Connell launches the discussion by highlighting the dismal lack of attention to social science traditions from Africa, South America and Asia. Embracing these intellectual traditions would only serve to broaden the global economy of knowledge substantially. Sujata Patel in the following chapter shows how social sciences inspired by a colonial form of knowledge have become handicapped by a hierarchical binary division: knowledge from the West being regarded as modern and universally relevant versus knowledge from the East as being traditional and localized. In order to move forward, such methodological nationalism must be dismantled.

Part II of the volume comprises four chapters that address the topic of “Regional Issues in the Social Sciences”. Beginning with a chapter from Beng Huat Chua, a sociologist from Singapore, the discussion focuses on the uncritical and oftentimes disastrous application of Euro-American concepts by scholars in their study of Asia. A passionate plea is made for the need to engage in inter-Asian referencing, that is to say, the need to tap into the substantial local knowledge that Asian scholars have generated to attain deeper insights to the complexities of Asia. In chapter 5, Kanishka Jayasuriya, a specialist in International Politics and Indo-Pacific Governance, argues for the need to incorporate the study of Asia into all levels of analysis, including the social, political and institutional. Echoing Chua,

Jayasuriya directs our attention to the wealth of important work produced in Asian universities. Writing, in chapter 6, from the perspective of women and development studies is the voice of Sylvia Estrada-Claudio from the Philippines. She brings to the fore how reproductive health issues in the Philippines involve a process of negotiating the viewpoints and claims of the national government, the church, medical professionals, non-governmental organization activists, multilateral aid agencies and individuals. Her chapter elicits reflection on the role of academics in fostering social change. Not to be underestimated also is the importance of cooperation between academics and activists as well as transnational solidarity in local social movements. In chapter 7, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, a historian of East Asia, boldly questions “Which face of ‘Asia’ do we recognize? With which dimension of Asia will we interact, and how?” The emphasis on the rise of Asia as an economic powerhouse has obscured other pertinent issues such as East Asia’s impending refugee crisis. Huge movements of people within and across the boundaries of the rapidly changing nations of Asia pose serious questions about human security that more often than not have been overlooked. In the final chapter of Part II, Leong Liew presents a business-school viewpoint. The focus here is an analysis of economic thought in China. In showing differing approaches in Western versus Chinese economics on the nature and role of the state in regard to markets, he calls for the need to rethink key concepts in contemporary Western economic thought.

Part III of the volume is a collection of three essays under the rubric of “Australian Social Sciences in the Asian Century and Beyond”. In the opening chapter, Ken Henry, who served as special adviser to Australia’s prime minister in 2011 and 2012, and who led the development of the White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century*, writes about policy development. He provides an analysis of the background of the White Paper and charts the social, political and economic challenges facing Australia in the twenty-first century. He makes the case for Australians to be better equipped in the knowledge of the cultures, languages and mindsets other than that of their own in order to assume responsibility for the nation’s future in the Asian Century. In the chapter following this, Ariel Heryanto, an Indonesian based in Australia, takes issue with what is meant by the concept of “Asia literacy”. He accentuates the rich oral tradition that prevails in Asia and questions if the concept of “Asia literacy” has not paid heed to valuable information that can be garnered by understanding not only text-based information but, more importantly, messages that are conveyed via face-to-face communication and body language. For Australia to succeed in acquiring a knowledge of Asia, there is the need to master the ways of hearing and seeing. The volume concludes with a chapter by Simon Marginson, a specialist on international higher education. Mapping the changing geopolitics of higher education in view of the rise of Asian and Southeast Asian universities, as well as carrying out a comparative survey of the higher education systems in the United States, Asia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, Marginson delineates the challenges for Australian higher education in the Asian century. In looking at the differences in the role and nature of the state, educational cultures, financing of higher education and politico-economic dynamics of research, he illuminates the implications for the Australian social sciences and for Australian education policy. He closes the volume by stressing that central to Australian strategy in the region is the need to develop an Asian-area research zone to maximize a partnership-based research program. The idea is for each participating country to contribute to a share of the total funding premised on size and capacity to pay. Grants should be peer-reviewed and awarded only to cross-country partners and teams. Cooperation through partnerships of genuine equality in research is the key for the inclusion of Australian researchers to transcend neo-colonial relations.

This volume clearly demonstrates the earnestness of Australian academics to engage intellectually with the diverse forms of social science knowledge that are produced in the Asia-Pacific region and to venture beyond the conventional Euro-American centers. There is substantial variation throughout the volume in the approaches adopted with regard to the disciplinary perspectives and diverse

backgrounds of the contributors. Yet, the editors must be congratulated for weaving a seamless transformation of the different contributions into well-connected chapters that offer informative as well as fruitful intra-regional comparisons. This has been a satisfying read. It is also an encouraging signal from social scientists in Australia that they are committed to making important methodological and theoretical inroads in the social sciences in the Asian century.

Debating Brain Drain. May Governments Restrict Emigration?

By Gillian Brock and Michael Blake. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. vi + 304.

ISBN 10: 0199315639; ISBN 13: 978-0-19-931562-8.

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doi:10.1017/S1479591417000146

In *Debating Brain Drain. May Governments Restrict Emigration?* Gillian Brock and Michael Blake engage in a discussion over what they identify as one of the core issues of global injustice, namely the movement of highly skilled professionals from poorer to richer countries. They take particular issue with the international movement of health-care professionals such as medical doctors, nurses and caregivers. Both authors are political philosophers, and apart from occasionally interspersed figures, readers will not find any empirical data in this book. What the book does, however, introduce to its readers is a thoughtful debate on “whether or not a state may [...] condition or prevent exit from its borders” (p. 4). Gillian Brock argues that states may very well do so, on the precondition of their compliance with liberal morality in their policies. Michael Blake’s stance is that states may not interfere with citizens’ choices of movement, neither within nor beyond state borders. Resembling the character of an actual debate, the book consists of three main parts, with Part 1 being written by Brock and Part 2 by Blake. In Part 3, both authors respond to each other’s arguments.

Brock organizes Part 1 of the book along a set of seven research questions, which correspond to three main areas of the debate. While she uses the first two questions to establish the starting point of her argumentation, namely that states indeed face damages due to the emigration of highly skilled professionals, questions three to five address policies that might be put in place in order to avoid or compensate for these damages. The remaining questions, six and seven, ask whether these kinds of policy measures are in fact “fair” (p. 14). Blake, on the other hand, composed Part 2 of this book in three subsections, each one entitled “The Right to Leave: [...]” with additional and varying subtitles, namely “Looking Back”, “Looking Forward”, and “What Remains” (p. vi). While Brock’s line of argumentation is clearly structured and conceptual, Blake’s writing is free-style and colorful, and a little more daring – despite him starting off with a disclaimer saying that “[I]t is rarely enjoyable to argue in favor of the status quo” (p. 111). In fact, he states, “The institutions we have – here and now – are more or less the institutions we *ought* to have” (p. 111, italics in original).

Let me address the three areas of debate as Brock defines them, and Blake counters them. Firstly, on the point of establishing damages, Brock points to two particular realms. She argues that states, which have invested some of their scarce financial and logistical resources to train personnel, suffer economic loss when these workers emigrate. She points out that the bare economic loss in some sectors, such as health care, is accompanied by more severe effects such as a low quality of life and even a low level of life expectancy of citizens in the state undergoing emigration, whereas the already well-off, receiving states of migrants will profit from a higher density of health-care personnel. This is the classical brain drain argument, which for some decades now has been vividly debated in migration