

“Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941” by Anne Foster

A Review

In autumn of 1942, Britain and the United States were discussing each other’s roles in Southeast Asia². These two countries decided to vest their interests mainly to combat the upsurge of power in Japan. The colonial government in Britain began preparing how to combat rhetoric in America, which began to emerge the same year, particularly in India. The book shows the United States played a major role in most countries’ wellbeing efforts, and this explains why Britain first consulted with the Philippines to get an understanding of what America could do when in power⁵. Regarding this, this review of the literature focuses on the United States’ role in the rise and fall of communism in Japan and all of Asia.

Foster’s book is a short episode with a profound theme regarding the role the United States played in encouraging European powers to support its war campaigns⁵. However, India’s attempt to show the United States acted, for the most part, as a traditional colonial power did not take hold, which explains why India stopped competing for power. It is significant to note that Foster’s perception asserts what roles European and American authorities played in thwarting local communism, sharing information, and the cooperation in favor of Tan Malaka, an Indonesian communist, consequently.

¹Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

²Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

The author's standpoint postulates that the United States welcomed all attempts to suppress future communist activities leading to events such as the Vietnam War and Burma. Regarding this, atavistic efforts on the part of individuals formerly in power to restore Burmese monarchy emerged. Foster based her argument on various British, French, Dutch, and American sources and sought to show America played a pivotal role regarding Colonial Southeast Asia. Consequently, from 1919 to 1941, this mainly equated to imperialism in this region. It is noteworthy to point out that Americans turned down offers concerning this region's future governance in favor of what was an 'open door' approach to commerce and finance initiatives in the region³.

However, the United States always reinstated its niche. This was done by giving repression to countries that might interfere with its future maneuverability. For example, when Japan and Europe failed to come to terms on attempting to expand, it resulted in repression. Consequently, the United States did not intervene, despite the fact that it was the only country powerful enough to suppress Japan's attempts⁴. Britain became majorly concerned with discerning America's priorities and targets, which did not achieve reassuring results, and this was a problem. Another problem was granting Filipinos independence without resolving the power issue, which meant the United States would not be responsible for that part of Asia⁵.

³Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 70.

⁴Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 157.

⁵Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 164.

Despite attempting to bring the complexities of the contradictory actions to the surface, as well as the negative relationships developed by the United States, Foster argues this matter should be further scrutinized. In her conclusion, Foster notes that American's lack of influence on the local people and their policies is of concern. For example, the presence of American's version of Colonial British offices in the region was seriously lacking⁶. It is evident that the fact that Britain failed to be consistent in how it managed to control the region explains why the United States used many officers with diverse backgrounds. Continual friction and ongoing misunderstandings between these two powers occurred daily. However, the presence of people such as Joseph Stilwell always brought them face-to-face. Furthermore, just because questions exist on how profound the book is does not negate Foster's work. Instead, these questions demonstrate how she systematically answered them, while shedding light on the role America played for peace and regulation in Southeast Asia. In conclusion, Foster's book is very informative on this event and should be noted when studying what occurred in this region during the noted years.

⁶Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 164.

References

Foster, Anne. 2010. *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919–1941*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.