

on how the IEF sector operates, but also answers some important questions that sceptics of the sector might have.

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***Higher Education in the Asian Century: The European Legacy and the Future of Transnational Education in the ASEAN Region*, edited by Christopher Hill and Rozilini M. Fernandez-Chung.**  
New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 158.

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional block of ten countries working together to develop a strong economic community. Higher education has been identified as one of the key tools needed to enhance the development of human resources in the region. This has translated into four main priorities that are to be incorporated in the ASEAN higher education system: student mobility; credit transfers; quality assurance; and research clusters. The ultimate goal is to set up a common space of higher education in Southeast Asia that currently includes 6,500 higher education institutions and more than 12 million students across the constituent nations. This book therefore offers timely insights into the understanding of higher education in the region, with a specific focus on the Transnational Education (TNE) network.

The introductory chapter attempts to explain the European-Asian connection of TNE across higher education systems in ASEAN. Here, particular attention is given to the unique colonial experiences of eight member countries. While the chapter has been put together in a comprehensive fashion, it can be further enriched by dwelling into the conceptual discussion of topics like “the Asian century”, the underlying geopolitics and socio-economic considerations, the influence of European or Western characteristics of higher education in the Asian context, as well as the indigenous characteristics of Asian higher education.

Chapter 1 begins with Malaysia, one of the pioneering countries to embark on TNE. Morshidi Sirat explores the issues of politics and policy-making in the context of TNE in Malaysia using a non-linear analytical model that portrays diverse positive and negative situations. Robin Middlehurst then provides a commentary from the United Kingdom’s perspective — as a sending country for TNE — talking about the analytical framework used in relation to the development of higher education in the United Kingdom; the impact of TNE, particularly neo-colonial tendencies in Malaysia; and the nature of TNE as trade in services.

Chapter 2 shifts the focus to Cambodia. Here, Kee-Cheok Cheong and Sam Ghanty illustrate the success and failure of TNE in Cambodia using two contrasting case studies. Understandably, the chapter provides an extensive context of the nation’s historical narrative as well as its education system. The two case studies not only include a rich description of the Cambodian tertiary education system, but also highlight the challenges and barriers pertaining to TNE.

Chapter 3 discusses TNE in Indonesia. The discussion on the changing relationships between Indonesian universities and their European counterparts is particularly interesting here. From the initial relationship enforced by the Dutch colonizers and subsequently replaced by a nationalistic model after independence, globalization has now pushed Indonesian universities to embark on TNE collaborations with English-

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speaking partners, namely Australia and the United Kingdom. An interesting aspect of this chapter is that it draws attention to the role of TNE in upgrading the branding of local universities. Through a unique case study, Agustian Sutrisno provides a narrative of the ways and extent to which TNE has encouraged knowledge transfer between a private Indonesian university and another school in the United Kingdom. However, there appears to be a slight disjoint when Hitendra Pillay writes the commentary from the perspective of Australia as the sending country of TNE, and not the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, the commentary manages to bring out the changing dynamics within Indonesia's highly diverse higher education system.

Rattana Lao and Christopher Hill then shed some light on the foreign influence on Thailand's higher education system. Although Thailand is the only country in ASEAN that did not experience colonization, the country's academic setting has strong foreign connections. While the chapter provides important information on number of international students, collaborations with foreign universities, as well Memorandums of Understanding, further details and the extent of TNE in Thailand are found wanting.

Chapter 5 explores the case of Singapore. Aaron Tan points out that the country has leveraged on its European legacy to improve its interaction with foreign parties in striving to stand among the most technologically advanced economies. TNE has mainly remained with the private higher education sector, while the state has maintained a "deregulated governance" style in dealing with the private sector. The British legacy and influence in Singapore's higher education, even in the post-independence era, is aptly re-emphasized in this chapter. The author mentions that the future focus of Singaporean higher education is much beyond the scope of TNE in terms of programme and students; in fact it is more aligned to becoming a global academic hub.

Christopher Ziguas, Anh Pham and Supanida Chantarin present the case of Vietnam in Chapter 6. Vietnamese higher education has undergone four different phases of foreign influence, beginning with the Chinese, French, Soviet, and now most involved students going to the Anglophone countries — the United States and Australia. Engagement with the latter group has been one of the two strategic initiatives undertaken to develop the nation's higher education through international standardization. The other initiative has been to widen access to higher education, especially for developing new knowledge and skills needed by the economy. TNE in Vietnam, despite the growing popularity of Anglophone countries, continues to have government-supported linkages with other European countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. It is important to note that although TNE is much welcomed in the country, it is mainly seen as a cheaper alternative to overseas programmes, but much more expensive than comparable local programmes, and with no assurance of a better quality. This has widened inequalities between those who can and cannot afford, thereby challenging the sustainability of TNE.

Chapter 7 by William Lawton and Ninia I. Calaca focuses on the Philippines. The chapter, in describing the higher education policies and regulations relating to TNE and internationalization, also points out the country's strong emphasis on regulating outbound TNE. In terms of controlling inbound TNE, while the Philippines has developed a system comparable to Malaysia's, the authors highlight that the regulation is hinged on the notion of national interest. For instance, it is mentioned that instead of encouraging branch campuses with restriction on foreign ownership, the model of inbound TNE so advocated includes partnerships of double or joint programmes and two-way mobility of students.

The final country case presented in Chapter 8 on Myanmar by Rozilini M. Fernandez-Chung and Tim Gore is invaluable as the literature on the development of higher education in this country is scarce, especially following the shift of power from a military regime to a democratic government in 2011. The shift of power has brought about significant political and economic reforms, as well as in education and higher education. However, as the higher education system in the country has been neglected for many years, the authors rightly highlight that the challenge of reforming the system is multifaceted. However, TNE can prove to be very resourceful in Myanmar, they claim.

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This book provides useful insights on the way TNE operates across eight countries in ASEAN. In a rather unique manner, many of the chapters take different perspectives to engage in a discussion, with a critical assessment of TNE or higher education and followed by a commentary from the sender country of TNE. This book is also timely as ASEAN begins on the journey of the ASEAN Community, and the understanding of the legacy and diversity underlying higher education and TNE in these member countries is valuable to inform the way forward.

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***Singapore: Unlikely Power*, by John Curtis Perry.** New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 329.

There is a trend now in British politics where a succession of their politicians seem to proffer the Singapore model — however vaguely it is described and whatever it may be to each one of them — as the all-encompassing alternative to whatever the status quo is. Be it during the referendums determining Scotland's place in the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom's place in the European Union or the recent general elections, the city-state's status as an economic powerhouse in Asia has earned admirers across all political stripes in its former colonial master. In fact, a recent article in Bloomberg News sought to demystify the United Kingdom's "strange Singapore envy".

It is in that spirit perhaps that John Curtis Perry's book *Singapore: Unlikely Power* should be savoured. Professor Perry, an eminent maritime historian of East Asia, who in 2015 retired following a long and distinguished career as professor of East Asian and Maritime Studies at the renowned Fletcher School of Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, has shifted his attention away from his usual intellectual stomping grounds in Northeast Asia to delve deeper into this quintessential definition of a maritime city-state at the heart of Southeast Asia. With the political atmosphere in the West entering a period of chaotic flux, the book serves to show readers, as most books on Singapore, what happens when politics takes a backseat in favour of a ruthless determination to achieve a lasting vision.

Inevitably, any work on Singapore ends up being hagiography or diatribe, which only goes to show how much of a Rorschach test Singapore is. Being a blend of so many things at the same time — Western outlook and East Asian mannerisms, modernity and tradition, the many ethnicities and religions that have come together in the small island — it is no wonder that Singapore can curiously engender, incite even, passions and emotions at both ends of the spectrum. As dispassionately as Perry perhaps tries to discuss Singapore, a title like "Unlikely Power" gives away the author's leanings. Indeed, "punching above its weight" has become a cliché in describing Singapore's involvement in the international arena. Singapore has attended all but one G20 summit since it was first invited in 2010. Much like its strategic location, Singapore has relished the role of being an honest broker in international relations, particularly between the United States and China and also between China and Taiwan — even though China has questioned Singapore's value to them of late.

A strength of Perry's volume lies in presenting a history of Singapore that is not self-referential. For a city that has been at the crossroads of global traffic and trends, this book situates Singapore's history firmly within that of the larger geopolitical and world-historical atmosphere. Perry peppers his own renderings