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Asia the next higher education superpower? Rajit Bhandari and Alessia Lefébure (Eds.). New York, NY: Institute of International Education and American Institute for Foreign Studies Foundation, 2015. 196pp., (paperback), \$39.95, ISBN: 978-0-872-06375-4.

The editors of this timely volume are to be congratulated for the remarkable group of scholars, thought leaders and policy makers they have brought together to address an important and indeed provocative question. Will Asian higher education take on superpower status and influence in the coming years? And what qualities of learning and knowledge can we expect to emerge that might differ from those emanating from American and European universities? The editors of the volume pose the core question in the following way: “How do developing Asian countries respond to global changes and the imperative to be outward facing while also remaining focused on the very real domestic education challenges?” (p. xi).

The first thing to note about the volume is the wide coverage of distinctive higher education systems in both the large civilization states or state nations of India and China and the range from middle powers to small yet dynamic entities such as the city state of Singapore. Some chapters focus on a single country, such as Altbach’s balanced and informative assessment of Indian higher education. Others integrate comparative and regional dimensions, such as Marginson’s overview of higher education in the three broad regions of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, which then moves to his now celebrated post-Confucian model of East Asia systems for a more detailed analysis and some broad comparison in terms of the distinctive philosophical traditions of each region. Other chapters look at interaction within and beyond Asia in interesting ways, such as Aziz and Abdullah’s chapter on higher education in the ASEAN region and the ways in which Malaysian higher education contributes to regional integration. Kamibeppu’s fascinating analysis focuses on how Japan has tried to emulate the Bologna process in Europe both by initiating Campus Asia with South Korea and China and a student mobility frame for ASEAN + 3 (Japan, China, and South Korea) that reaches also to Australia, New Zealand and India.

Ly's chapter on Vietnam depicts a middle power in transition from the trammels of the Soviet planning model to a higher education system that can respond to the economic dynamism of the market and region, with the potential depicted in Marginson's post-Confucian model still to be realized. Moving to the more micro-level, Lee's chapter provides an insightful comparison among three higher education hubs in the region, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, each shaped by very different contextual dynamics and thus embodying distinctive rationales.

Framing these chapters that look at specific countries and sub-regions are chapters that address the pan-Asian scene in terms of the core question of the future superpower status of Asian higher education. Huang's chapter provides a comprehensive overview of internationalization initiatives across the region, including attracting foreign students, English medium teaching, the establishment of international branch campuses and efforts to develop world class research universities. He concludes that Asia has not yet become a major centre of learning, in spite of the significant progress and genuine potential that is evident. Chapters by Mahbubani and Tan, also Lim, look more closely at quantitatively demonstrated dimensions of superpower status and analyse the huge advances that have been made selectively in the international ranking systems, in terms of the status of institutions in nations such as Singapore, China, Japan and South Korea. They nevertheless note the continuing and even widening gaps between the obvious success stories and the national systems that are still struggling to reach modest levels of quality and access.

In a certain sense, the "superpower" concept in the title means Jain's chapter on the knowledge economy and the transformational dynamics of education lies at the heart of this book. It provides a nuanced and sophisticated overview of how the corollaries developed by the World Bank Group for assessing preparedness to compete in a global knowledge regime apply to Asia, also the standing of Asian higher education in the Global Innovation Index. While Jain leaves little doubt that higher education has been an essential dimension in Asia's economic rise, he suggests further inquiry is needed in relation to issues of good governance, transparency and human rights. The final chapter by Jouko Sarvi of the Asian Development Bank addresses practical questions of support for higher education policy formation and the development of appropriate regulatory frameworks, also for improving curricular relevance to changing economic needs

and upgrading faculty and staff qualifications.

What then can we expect in terms of the future influence of Asian higher education? Clearly there are lessons that may be helpful to other world regions in terms of strategy, planning and educational investment, as well as collaboration and cross-border partnerships. The one area that might have deserved a little more attention is that of persisting cultural resources that are rooted in longstanding philosophical and religious traditions of the region, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam, to name a few important ones. Marginson's post-Confucian model highlights ways in which Confucian values have invigorated higher education development in East Asia, but little is said about the revival of Nalanda in India, Buddhist learning patterns in Thailand and Cambodia and moderate Islamic knowledge orientations in Malaysia and Indonesia. The way in which Christian institutions in countries such as the Philippines, South Korea and India, have embodied Asian values and nurtured interfaith understanding is also a neglected question of interest. Beyond the strategic thinking of visionary leaders and the commitment to high levels of educational investment and increasing access, what are the cultural lessons to be learned? Will Asia spawn a new type of university destined to supersede the "global research university" that has arisen from German and American historical roots and come to dominate current ranking systems? What kind of global resonance might it have as we move "beyond the Enlightenment," to use a phrase coined by Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming, and strive to create a more peaceful world, characterized by greater environmental justice, intercultural harmony and economic responsibility?

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