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Ronald H. Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia*. Pp. xiii, 358. New York: Random House, 2007. ISBN 978-0-375-50915-5.

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In World War II, a coalition of Allied Powers defeated militarist Japan in Asia and the Pacific. U.S. forces drove the Japanese out of the Pacific islands, including the Philippines, while the British drove them from Burma. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito announced his nation's unconditional surrender. The major victorious allies against Japan were the United States, China, Great Britain and the British Empire and Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, and the Netherlands. China, Japan's first victim, had fought since 1937 but had done little in the last phase of the war, though the Chinese theater continued to hold down 1.3 million Japanese troops at its end. After 1940, the French Vichy regime cooperated with the Japanese war effort, allowing Nazi-allied Japan to station troops in Indochina.

World War II had left most of Asia in ruins. The victors now faced an immense task of restoring order, reestablishing old governments or creating new ones, and rebuilding shattered economies. One major problem in dealing with liberated former European colonies was reconciling the divergent expectations of imperial powers, who anticipated a return of the status quo ante, and local peoples who were demanding independence. In China, old hostilities between political rivals, briefly and partially papered over by Japan's invasion, reignited with a vengeance. Additionally, intense rivalry between victorious allies, especially the American and Soviet superpowers, held the interests and expectations of local people hostage.

Ronald Spector's *In the Ruins of Empire* analyzes the events from August 1945 through 1948 that shaped the future of East and Southeast Asia. Spector (Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University) proceeds chronologically and by region: chapters I–II treat each nation/area up through 1946; 12–14 focus on China and Korea through 1948.

Whereas the German armed forces had largely ceased to exist at the end of the war in Europe, Japan's army in its conquered lands (except the Philippines and Burma) remained essentially intact in August 1945. Whether those troops would obey the emperor's surrender order was a serious issue for both the victors and the Japanese authorities. Members of the imperial family went to Japanese-occupied areas of China, Manchuria, and Southeast Asia specifically to ensure compliance. Most officers and men obeyed, a few committed suicide, some attacked local peoples, small numbers deserted to avoid war crime trials at home.

The Soviet Union was the immediate beneficiary at war's end in Asia. In the Yalta Agreement negotiated by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union early in 1945, the latter was allowed to occupy Manchuria until Chinese sovereignty could be rees-

established there and Korea north of the thirty-eighth parallel until the Korean people had a chance to decide their country's future government. These and other concessions had been accorded to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in return for his country's participation in the war against Japan. But Stalin waited until after the United States had dropped its first atomic bomb on Japan before declaring war. Soviet troops, which had massed on the border of Japanese puppet state Manchukuo (Japan's name for the Chinese region called Manchuria), then poured across the border, occupying it, two provinces in northern China, and northern Korea, completely overwhelming the Japanese army. Soviet forces took 1.25 million Japanese prisoners of war, about 300,000 of whom were never accounted for. They systematically dismantled the industrial plants and facilities across the region, confiscating \$3 billion in gold bullion, food reserves, and other resources, then shipped to the Soviet Union as war booty. Captured Japanese arms and munitions were later turned over to the Chinese Communist army for use in its fight against the Nationalist forces in the civil war then raging. Soviet occupation of Korea north of the thirty-eighth parallel resulted in the installation of Korean Communist Kim Il-sung, whose guerrillas had fought the Japanese from Soviet bases, as leader of a Communist regime.

Yalta and other agreements among the Allies had authorized the Chinese government to receive Japan's surrender in China, Taiwan, and northern Indochina, Great Britain to take over Southeast Asia and the southwestern Pacific, and the United States to take over the Japanese home islands and the Philippines. In contrast to the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain faced huge logistical problems in transporting their troops over long distances to take control of liberated territories. Free China's troops were concentrated in its southwestern regions. While Chinese troops quickly crossed the border to secure Japan's surrendered territory in northern Vietnam, they lacked transport to take over lands in northern and coastal China formerly held by Japan. After suffering a brutal Nazi occupation, the Netherlands had no immediate means to resume control of its huge former colony in the East Indies (later Indonesia). As mentioned above, French colonial troops in Indochina had collaborated with Japan; some in the north fled to China towards the end of the war. The post-war French government had no troops to send to Indochina until late 1945 when units of the Foreign Legion, composed mainly of German soldiers from Rommel's Afrika Korps, began to arrive. Until then, British troops took control of southern Vietnam.

The first Allied priority after Japan's surrender was to liberate the Japanese POW camps and bring an end to the terrible suffering of the surviving western military and civilian captives. Prior to surrender, the Japanese had moved many of these captives to three camps in northern China and Manchuria and one in southern Korea, all deep inside Japanese-controlled territories. The largest camp, in Manchuria, held high-ranking Allied prisoners, including U.S. army General Wainwright and the former British governor of Singapore, and was guarded by 30,000 Japanese troops. The first Americans to arrive at some of the camps were parachuted in and initially encountered trouble with the Japanese guards.

Another major task for the Allies was the repatriation of Japanese military and civilian administrators in lands they had conquered, in addition to Japanese settlers (mainly) in Manchuria and Korea. For reasons of manpower, many Japanese troops were ordered to remain in place to keep order until Allied forces arrived in the newly liberated lands. Most

Japanese soldiers and about two million civilian administrators and settlers were repatriated by 1946, chiefly by Allied transport; some civilians fled home on their own to avoid retaliation by former subject peoples. The land Japan had been given in Manchuria and Korea reverted to local peoples.

With the defeat of Japan, China should have become the dominant power in Asia, but it faced massive problems. The exhausted and demoralized Chinese government lacked the means to take over regions conquered by Japan. The United States deployed marines to occupy some cities to prevent the Soviet Union and its Chinese Communist allies from doing so and also provided logistical support and transport to Chinese Nationalist troops trying to establish themselves in lands evacuated by Japan.

Conflicting ambitions on mainland Asia strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The U.S. government wished to prevent renewed civil war between the Chinese Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist challengers led by Mao Tse-tung, but also to avoid involvement in China's domestic squabbles. However, President Truman was bewildered by differing assessments of the situation by State Department officers and Ambassador Patrick Hurley, who resigned, charging lack of support from the U.S. embassy staff. Truman then sent General George Marshall as ambassador to China (late 1945) to persuade the rival Chinese political parties to merge their armies and form a coalition government. Given the ideological differences between the two sides and their decades-long hostilities, the proposed solution was simplistic and impracticable. The Marshall Mission ended in failure after half a year. General Albert Wedemeyer, who had had much longer experience in China, commented in his memoir that Marshall was "physically and mentally too worn out to appraise the situation correctly" (250). The title of Chapter 13, "War Renewed," refers to the failure of the Marshall Mission to forestall the civil war that culminated in Communist victory.

The fate of Korea was another source of contention between the superpowers. Here Spector does not provide the background necessary for an understanding of the Korean problem, which persists to the present. Korea, a Chinese vassal state for many centuries, became a target of both imperialist Japan and Russia at the end of the nineteenth century as Chinese power waned. After defeating China (1895) and Russia (1905), Japan established a brutal control over Korea in 1910. At the Cairo Conference in 1943, China, the United States, and Great Britain pledged to establish an independent and united Korea after defeating Japan. However, at the Yalta Conference, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed to a temporary division of Korea with their countries controlling the southern and northern parts respectively under an ill-defined form of trusteeship, until the Korean people could decide their future. After Japan's surrender, the Soviet Union quickly established a communist government in the north headed by Kim Il-sung under its military protection. On the other hand, the United States had no clear aims in the south apart from letting the democratic process develop. Nor did it have trained personnel or interpreters to assist in the transition. By November 1945, 134 South Korean political parties had registered with the United States military headquarters in Seoul. All were agreed on one thing—immediate independence and no joint U.S.-Soviet trusteeship. When its talks with the USSR on Korean unity broke down in May 1946, the United States referred the matter to the United Nations, which mandated elections in both Koreas but was denied admission to supervise those in

the north. The former exiled nationalist leader Syngman Rhee won elections in South Korea in 1948, after which the United States withdrew its armed forces, leaving behind a 500-man military advisory group. Two years later, a militarily strong North Korea, backed by the Soviet Union and a new Communist government in China, invaded the south, triggering the Korean War (1950–53). China later intervened to save North Korea from collapse and safeguard its own historic position on the Korean peninsula.

British admiral Louis Mountbatten, head of the Southeast Asian Command, took control of Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, and Indochina south of the seventeenth parallel from defeated Japan. This huge area, with its diverse population of 128 million, had belonged to the British, French, and Dutch before the Japanese conquest. Only Burma had been reconquered from Japan before its surrender. (Spector does not include Burma and the Philippines in his account.) In Singapore and Malaya, the local peoples, especially the Chinese minority, warmly welcomed British forces because Japan had ruled them so brutally. Several anti-Japanese guerrilla groups that had emerged during the occupation, based on ethnicity (Malay and Chinese) and ideology (communist and anti-communist), had differing post-war agendas. Although some issues remained unresolved by April 1946, peace and civilian governance had been restored under British supervision.

The very size and complexity of the Dutch East Indies posed a huge problem for the British, since the exhausted Dutch government had no troops to take control immediately after Japan's surrender. Mountbatten's first problem was to rescue Dutch and other western prisoners scattered in many camps. British and Australian troops were concerned as well with keeping order among mutually hostile groups: Muslims, Christians, Chinese, Eurasians, a variety of indigenous peoples, and rival Indonesian political factions. In the last days of their control, the Japanese had sold or given arms and ammunition to several local groups; these were subsequently used in a confusing mix of conflicts. Britain was unwilling to commit the estimated twelve divisions needed to secure Java alone. Mountbatten therefore limited his mission to rescuing western prisoners, repatriating the Japanese, and then handing authority over to the Dutch as soon as their troops arrived. The Dutch offered limited self-government to the East Indies, naïvely predicated on pre-World War II conditions. Britain disliked Dutch recalcitrance and resolved "on no account [to] be drawn into [their] troubles" (167).

Vietnam presented the worst problem for the Allies. During the war, the local communist and anti-French nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh had led the most effective anti-Japanese guerrilla forces, called the Vietminh, in north Vietnam. Because Japan was their mutual enemy, the Chinese Nationalist government had given Ho support and sanctuary across the border in China. On Japan's surrender, the Vietminh took control of much of northern Vietnam and proclaimed its independence from France. The 45,000 French civilians and troops in the north were unpopular among the locals and Vichy French troops were imprisoned. Then Chinese soldiers arrived. China, Britain, and the United States, but not France were represented in the surrender ceremony of Japan in northern Vietnam. With the agreement of the United States and China, Ho was allowed to run a de facto government from Hanoi. France later offered northern Vietnam limited autonomy in a French Union, which was unacceptable to the Vietminh.

British troops occupied southern Vietnam and administered a complex region where the French were unpopular, until French troops arrived in late 1945. The United States played no role in the post-Japanese surrender politics in southern Vietnam; although it did not favor the return of the status quo under French colonial rule, it offered no alternatives. In contrast, Great Britain supported the return of French rule in southern Vietnam, partly due to the situation in Europe, where Britain favored the restoration of France as a great power to counter the Soviet threat. In a repetition of post-Napoleonic restoration in France, when the returning émigrés showed they had “learned nothing and forgotten nothing” during their exile, the French people and Vichy officials in southern Vietnam went on a violent rampage against the Vietnamese in Saigon to avenge their anger and humiliation, presaging troubles to come.

In the book’s last chapter, “The Least Desirable Eventuality,” Spector unrealistically blames U.S. policies for failing to bring solutions, satisfactory to all, that might have prevented future wars. Although for hundreds of millions across the former Japanese-controlled “Greater East Asia” the end of war brought other sufferings and problems, most were undoubtedly grateful for a future free from Japanese subjugation, as the persistence of anti-Japanese feelings up to the present day surely attests. Spector should also have resisted the temptation to compare the situation in Iraq at the time of writing with post-World War II Asia.

Spector uses a wide range of sources, including archival materials from several countries, to construct a riveting and compelling account of events in Asia immediately after Japan’s surrender. He documents the widespread chaos that characterized war-ravaged Asia, the legacy of Japan’s imperialism and vicious treatment of conquered peoples. As in Europe, where the conflicting goals of the superpowers and newly freed peoples took years to play out, across Asia ideological hostilities prolonged old conflicts and spawned new ones that cost millions of lives and continued for many years. Spector also assesses the record of the major world players in managing post-war Asia. Six good maps, detailed footnotes, and a useful bibliography make this work a notable addition to the literature of the aftermath of World War II.

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