on the place of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese history/historiography is outstanding. Similarly, Lisa Yoneyama’s examination of the Smithsonian debacle over the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki deepens the debate over producing a nation’s public history. And, in his essay entitled “Go For Broke,” Tak Fujitani does just that with a bold and thoughtful interrogation of the re-racialization of Japanese Americans in post-1945 U.S. society. In one of the book’s most important insights, Fujitani notes that “the primary impetus for . . . inclusion (of minoritized soldiers during moments of national crisis) is that in modern nation-states and especially conditions of total war, national security depends not simply on more soldiers but on the loyalty and active participation of all the people, civilian and military” (p. 244). Fujitani is one of the few active historians who can simultaneously analyze this problem in both the United States and Japan, and I hope he does so in future work.

Taken together, Perilous Memories is invaluable for undergraduates in U.S. and Asian history and cultural studies courses as well as for graduate students exploring possible areas of dissertation research and beyond. In short, the book demonstrates that there are myriad histories “out there” for the critical retelling and ones that, as La Capra has urged, “elicit evaluative and emotional interest.” The hefty volume is divided into three parts, and if there is a shortcoming with the book, it lies in the not always clear rationale for assigning certain essays to particular sections. It requires extra effort, for example, to draw connections between Diaz’s excellent piece on Guam and Marita Sturken’s compelling essay on Japanese internment (in different sections) in which both authors notice the problem of people having memories of, as Diaz writes, “a war that took place before I was born” (p. 155). This weakness may, however, point to a larger hurdle involved in relying on memory as a category for organizational purposes. Adding nostalgia and longing to the mix might usefully expand this predicament.

The core effort of this volume comes through clearly, however, and is most urgently posed by Utsumi Aiko in her piece on Korean soldiers in the Japanese Army. In keeping with her larger body of work, Utsumi asks here the simple question of “Why didn’t I learn this in school?” Or, in her own more subtle expression: “In exchange for not having to learn military patriotism, I also never learned about the history of Japan’s war of invasion” (p. 200). In different places and different fashions, the authors of Perilous Memories each examine shared problems of national identity formation structured around collective and individual memory and education of the Asia-Pacific War(s).

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Writing with admirable clarity, insight, and passion, Jian Chen offers students of Sino-U.S. relations and the Cold War a bold interpretation of how Mao Zedong’s revolutionary ideology shaped the Asian political landscape in the
three decades following World War II. About half of the chapters have previously appeared as journal articles, but Chen has expanded and contextualized them as well as broadened his research. This alone warrants their publication. The author also includes a very useful bibliographic essay focused on Chinese and Western language sources.

In short, Chen argues that the Cold War was far more centered on American rivalry with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) over influence in Asia than most historians have recognized. The root cause of this friction was less U.S. provocation than Mao’s purposeful and provocative challenge to what the Chinese leader perceived as an illegitimate U.S.-dominated world system. Mao and his fellow leaders hoped to create a powerful China not only to right the wrongs of a century of dishonor, but even more to rollback American hegemony. For Mao, even cooperation with the Soviet Union from the 1940s until around 1960 was a means to this end. When the “Great Helmsman” perceived Moscow slacking in revolutionary fervor or “going soft” on capitalism, he had few qualms about breaking the Sino-Soviet alliance. For twenty years, Chen argues, Mao rarely deviated from his drive to inspire and aid Asian revolution. Only the combined frustrations of domestic weakness (economic and political)—brought on by the Cultural Revolution, and the Soviet threat (exemplified by the border clashes of 1969), forced Mao to chart a new course.

Marshalling much new Chinese documentation, Chen maintains that from the end of World War II until 1971, Mao’s deeply held revolutionary ideology motivated his domestic and foreign initiatives, explaining nearly all his interaction with Moscow and Washington. As Chen tells it, Mao’s revolutionary drive prompted the newly created PRC to reject peaceful coexistence with the United States in 1949, to intervene in Korea in 1950, to push forward the Vietnamese revolution in the 1950 and 1960s, and to seek confrontations with the United States in the Taiwan Strait during the 1950s. Rejecting the notion that American policies of containment and nonrecognition provoked China, the author insists that Washington policymakers could do virtually nothing to placate Mao or integrate China into a world system that the PRC hoped to wreck.

According to Chen, Mao imposed his single-minded determination on all aspects of China’s domestic and foreign policy. He believed that revolution must first transform China, and then kindle change throughout Asia. First the United States, later the Soviet Union, stood in Mao’s way. But the Chinese leader made a virtue out of great power opposition to his goals by using it as a tool to mobilize the masses and infuse China’s population with a verve for both protecting the motherland and spreading revolution. The notion was circular. China must become great and powerful to reclaim its rightful place in Asia. To do so, it must transform itself and neighboring states through revolutionary means. Since the United States (later the USSR) stood in the way of revolution, it was an enemy—not to mention a useful scapegoat and a catalyst for mobilizing Chinese patriots. Also, revolutionary confrontations abroad—such as those in Korea and Vietnam—were used by Mao to pave the way for domestic revolutionary goals by isolating and crushing internal opponents.