unofficial proposals for new regional arms control measures were on the table. These included, for example, ASEAN proposals for a nuclear-free zone, Gorbachev's proposals for Asia-Pacific dialogue on regional security and arms control, and Australian proposals for regional involvement in conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. The new unilateral moves by the United States to remove all tactical nuclear weapons from its naval and air forces, as well as land-based nuclear munitions in South Korea, will certainly enhance the prospects for arms control and disarmament in the whole Asia-Pacific region.

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Kluge's The Edge of Paradise is a reprise of a personal odyssey through American Micronesia that began in 1967. At the age of twenty-five and with a new PhD in hand, Kluge volunteered for the Peace Corps. He was initially dismayed, even disappointed with his assignment to a place so unknown, so unimportant that people had never heard of it—a place "Off the edge of the earth" (16). Like so many before him, however, Kluge was soon captured by the lure of the islands and was changed forever.

Kluge was "a 'high caste' volunteer" (20), not an exile sweating out his time on some isolated atoll in the boon-docks. As editor of the US Trust Territory's quarterly magazine, the Micronesian Reporter, he enjoyed a home base on Saipan, headquarters of the high commissioner, and the freedom to travel the territory at large. Kluge became familiar with Micronesia's elite and a close friend and associate of Lazarus Salii, who would later become the second president of Palau.

At the end of Kluge's stint as a volunteer and before he returned to the United States for a career as a journalist, screen writer, and novelist, Salii, as head of Micronesia's Political Status Commission, called on his talents as gifted writer. Kluge remained involved, returning to Micronesia more than once, including 1975, when he served as director of the Micronesian Constitutional Convention. The two men kept in touch through Salii's trips to Washington and the United Nations and long-distance phone calls in the middle of the night. It ended with Salii's apparent suicide in 1988.

In large part, Kluge's book is an attempt to come to terms with the past. He mourns the loss of his friend, is disappointed and disillusioned over the outcome of America's half century in Micronesia, and reflects upon his own lost youth.

After Salii's death, Kluge made a pilgrimage across Micronesia. There were stops at Majuro, Ponape, Truk, Saipan-Tinian, Yap, and last, Palau; his very spellings (as used here) are those of a former time. There were conversations and reminiscences with old friends. Kluge recalls the idealism of the young Micronesians of three decades earlier. Without undue delay
they would negotiate a new political status with the Americans, and their hopes were high. They would take control over their own destinies, chart a bold new future, and eventually even independence might be possible. The preamble to the Constitution of Micronesia penned by Kluge himself comes back to haunt him: “To make one nation of many islands, we respect the diversity of our cultures. Our differences enrich us. The seas bring us together, they do not divide us” (43). Heady times.

Such optimism and any sense of Micronesian unity were short lived. In Kluge’s account of events, money was the main culprit, and Micronesia became divided between the “haves” and “have nots” (30). The United States had active strategic interests in only some of the islands, and the leaders of the Marshalls, the Northern Marianas, and Palau bet their futures that those interests would give them extra bargaining power in their political status negotiations with the Americans. The three “haves” broke away from the rest of Micronesia, and each went its separate way, attempting to cut the best possible deal with Washington. There were sentiments for further fragmentation, but the “have nots,” Kosrae, Ponape, Truk, and Yap, lacked the leverage to realize such ambitions and had little choice but to remain together as the Federated States of Micronesia.

No one anticipated that the status negotiations would drag on for over two decades. In the interim, and as Kluge outlines, two major trends emerge. First, Washington’s largesse transformed the Trust Territory into a massive welfare state largely dependent on America. Second, Micronesians exhibited the full range of human frailty. While becoming more worldly-wise, some members of the island elite nonetheless remained steadfast to their original visions of what might be. Others were compromised or outright corrupted by outside influences. Perhaps most were simply worn down by the entire process. To Kluge’s anguish, Salii was among the fallen heroes.

Kluge suggests that there were compromises on a larger scale. He is certainly not alone in believing that the compacts of free association with the United States were compromises in which the Islanders relinquished some degree of independence in exchange for the huge financial subsidies required to keep the welfare state alive. The two freely associated states, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, have indeed granted the United States strategic prerogatives that can allow the Americans to intervene in their external and, to a lesser extent, internal affairs. As a new American commonwealth, the Northern Mariana Islands was absorbed by the United States, and thus there are no bothersome questions about sovereignty or independence. Palau has been unwilling to concede to American strategic demands (particularly those relating to its nuclear-free constitution), and it remains in political limbo, the last remnant of the old strategic Trust Territory.

It is difficult to disagree with Kluge’s overall assessment. The end results of the American administration of Micronesia leave much to be desired. At the same time, Kluge does not paint a one-sided picture. Micronesians
themselves have been instrumental in the shaping of the course of events, especially those of the last quarter century, and they too bear a responsibility for the outcomes of those events.

For an understanding of both the past and the present, however, Kluge underplays the significance of an important feature of Micronesia: its cultural and linguistic diversity. Within the former Trust Territory there are about a dozen mutually unintelligible languages, eight or so different cultural traditions, and a variety of colonial experiences. The territory itself was an artefact of a complex colonial history, and with the exception of some relations with outsiders, Micronesians never shared any real sense of unity or common identity. It was unlikely that a single nation state could have emerged from such a patchwork quilt.

Kluge has a good eye and is skilled at his craft. His sketches of individual Micronesians are on the mark. Whether painting a picture of Truk lagoon at night or a Marshallese waitress shuffling across the restaurant floor, Kluge captures the essence of scenes and things. He simply gets it right!

Earlier journalists and professional writers have given us other good books about the American era in Micronesia. Robert Trumbull’s Paradise in Trust and Ely Kahn’s A Reporter in Micronesia particularly come to mind. The Edge of Paradise is a welcome addition to this genre and a pleasure to read. A question raised in the middle of the book (108) might well have come at the end: “You wonder if there’s any way a big place can touch a little one without harming it.”

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