

and acknowledging the multiethnic composition of the country. The chapter by Tatjana Ljubić and Davor Marko provides an excellent illustration of religious communities' interference in both educational and electoral processes and how the 'synergy' between political and religious elites has hampered the democratization of the country. This final contribution is especially relevant taking into account the recent toxic backlash of religious figures against the government efforts to exclude religious teaching grade from students' overall GPA. (April-May 2011)

The overall impression of the book is that it reaches the goal that Sarajlić set initially: relevant issues were discussed, and some of the chapters provided original insights and added dimensions to existing analyses. However, as Sarajlić himself pointed out in the beginning, what is needed to further the discussion on BiH in an effort to break out of the political stalemate is a change of paradigm or a shift in our thinking about the local and international actors and their roles in the challenging BiH transition processes. As long as this conceptual shift is lacking, accounts of BiH and its problems will continue to leave readers frustrated, dissatisfied and wanting more.

Rajah Rasiah and Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt (eds.), *The New Political Economy of Southeast Asia*. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010)

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Southeast Asia has recently been dubbed as one of the world's fastest rising economic hubs. Although it has some countries that offer exemplary stories from the East Asian economic miracle, the region also has its share of middle-income and low-income countries beset with grave problems in their respective political economies such as endemic poverty, environmental challenges and economic governance issues. Notwithstanding that the region is indeed a fascinating focal point for the analysis of emerging political economies, there appears to be a vacuum in Asian studies scholarship on a comprehensively-written volume examining political-economic change of the countries from a distinctive regionalist perspective which justifiably abandons the country-by-country analytic approach. More particularly, this means that it considers the entirety of Southeast Asia as a focal unit of analytic-scholarly endeavor, rather than examining each country in the region – with the latter task usually ending up in a mere stockpiling of case studies.

Filling successfully such a gap, *The New Political Economy of Southeast Asia* aims to provide a compelling scholarly examination of the most crucial contemporary issues in region's political economy. By exhaustively and eloquently highlighting the weaknesses and limitations of previous analytical approaches (neo-classical; state-

capital; classical Marxist; neo-Marxist) in analyzing the rapid socio-economic transformations in the region, the volume advocates and utilizes an “interdisciplinary approach” (see pp. 20-27) that is intended to view regional political economy as a task for various disciplines to offer their own insightful perspectives in tackling exigent regional dilemmas such as “poverty, distribution, the environment and civil society” (p.23). Moreover, in methodological terms, the book’s over-arching proposition is the need to deem Southeast Asia in its holistic entirety through re-conceiving it as an investigative unit of inquiry; consequently considering its constitutive features and interconnectedness with the global political economy. In so doing, it attempts ambitiously to undercover the profundity of effects of the global political-economic variables on the individual Southeast Asian political economies.

Not including the introductory section written by the editors, the volume is composed of seven substantive chapters that include the following: industrialization policies in the second-tier newly-industrializing economies (Rasiah); recovery and reform policies in the post-1997 economic crisis (Dixon); distributional and equity issues of Southeast Asian economic growth (Chowdhury & Islam); the existence of feeble industrial relations and labour market conditions particularly on those national economies that are heavily dependent on transnational companies (Ofreneo & Wad); environmental costs of current urban and industrial development in key Southeast Asian countries (Sonnenfeld & Mol); role and impact of the civil society on conflicts over distributional, equity and resource-related issues (Schmidt); and lastly, an analysis of the creation of free-trade agreements in some key countries in the region (Das & Chongvilaivan).

Notably, this compendium of articles is likely to be of interest for students and scholars alike who are trying to comprehend the recent socio-political and economic changes that have occurred in the region. More particularly, it effectively responds to a critical demand in the Asian studies scholarship for a thorough yet theoretically-grounded primer on the most critical and timely issues of the region’s political economy. To a large extent, it succeeds with much remarkable perspicacity in being able to characterize the political-economic phenomena that spreads much across the region, and, consequently, to highlight the most probable underlying explanatory narratives that account for the region-wide patterns of political-economic change.

In addition, this particular volume’s notable strengths can be outlined as follows. First, it was able to persuasively argue for a need in adhering to a strong sense of interdisciplinarity in examining issues of political economy in the region. Such was the case while being able to point out the inherent analytical-methodological limitations of other approaches that parochially favor either an extremely strong disciplinary bias or a narrowly-defined ideologically-grounded framework of

understanding. The editors' seemingly ambitious goal of being able to offer a comprehensive volume on contemporary Southeast Asian political economy has been thoroughly matched by coming up with this scholarly compendium that is devoid of a parochial disciplinary bias in embarking upon an investigative inquiry of multifaceted issues such as poverty, industrialization, economic crises and environmental problems. Indubitably, these multifaceted problems require the analytic flexibility in that the volume's authors were able to successfully justify that an interdisciplinary approach was best, something that previous scholarly endeavors have failed to vigorously advocate and utilize. It goes without saying that such interdisciplinarity is not only reflected in the analyses unleashed in the volume, but also from the various disciplinary affiliations of the contributors themselves.

Second, the edited volume is also commendable for being able to characterize the underlying patterns and dynamics of political-economic changes with its topical approach, which is, selecting those timely and relevant regional issues such as poverty, industrialization and distributional issues pertaining to economic growth. Nonetheless, it may be keenly suggested that future editions of this volume should indispensably include a special chapter pertaining to China's growth and its profound impact to Southeast Asian political economy, both as a region and within its respective key national economies. Also, it is noted that one of the key notions upheld by the editors was to show the global linkages of the region's political economies, but a deeper and much more extensive discussion of global economic issues (e.g. the financial crisis in the U.S.; increased European integration; among many others) should have been consciously integrated in the analyses undertaken in each of the contributions.

Conclusively, *The New Political Economy of Southeast Asia* is a praiseworthy interdisciplinary scholarly survey of contemporary political economy of one of the most dynamic economic hubs of the world. It is a highly-recommended reading not only for advanced scholars of Asian studies who hope to build upon the theoretically-oriented and empirically-grounded analyses advocated in this volume, but also for students and interested individuals who are deeply interested in Southeast Asia, or more broadly, on the study of regional and national economies vis-à-vis their constitutive property of being globally embedded. Future scholarly endeavors in the social sciences dealing with the study of Southeast Asian political economy are strongly encouraged to build upon the findings uncovered in the volume's interdisciplinary-oriented analyses, as well as to be more conscious of uncovering the multi-dimensional linkages between the global and regional political economies.