

officials are on record as justifying extra-judicial killings in the province and elsewhere, including Soeharto himself (as Robinson reveals from Soeharto's own writings). Robinson was, at the time of writing, hopeful that Indonesia's democratized environment would make a positive change. However, abuses have carried on to this day.

Anderson, as editor, is to be commended for bringing together a series of excellent chapters that expose the violent side of Soeharto's regime. Something which is not mentioned by the editor is that these chapters are mostly drawn from the Cornell University-based journal *Indonesia*. It is probably good practice to acknowledge prior publication. Other small points are that the term "Holland" (a province) should not be mistaken for "the Netherlands", and Xanana's surname is Gusmão — not Gusmaõ. That said, this compilation of exposés on the use of violence is well written and researched, and very salient. It is a timely addition to discussions on Indonesia's political future. The overall impression that one gets from this book is that the stability of the Soeharto years was achieved through some very short-sighted policies and measures which alienated large sections of the population. Unfortunately, Indonesia is attempting to make a difficult democratic transition, whilst reaping the long-term problems that Soeharto sowed. As for Indonesia's future, Robinson says it best: "The evidence also suggests that national disintegration will not be the automatic result of an end to authoritarian rule in Indonesia. In fact, I think it can be argued that, far from jeopardizing the political future of the country, a shift toward a less authoritarian system — and one which is less wedded to the use of terror — may provide the best possible guarantee of its continued unity and viability" (p. 241).

ANTHONY L. SMITH

*Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
Singapore*

***Burma: Political Economy Under Military Rule.* Edited by Robert H. Taylor.** London: Hurst & Co., 2001. 168pp.

In July 1988, one month before Burma descended into anarchy, a group of specialists convened a seminar in Bonn to assess the country's future. One decade later, in a sequel attended by many of the same participants, they asked why the hopes of 1988 had not been realized. From the outset, then, the group *anticipated* and *wished* for certain results, so

that disappointment meant someone or something was to blame. The answers were surprising, and the perspectives and value of each chapter in this volume under review is different.

Robert Taylor, editor of the volume and author of the lead chapter entitled “Stifling Change”, argues that it was the West’s own misreading of the Burmese situation — by comparing it to the South African and Philippine crises and hoping for the same results — that led to the chimerical expectations about Burma, essentially setting itself up for disappointment. The outcomes in these countries were different precisely because their history and indigenous structures were also fundamentally different, which in Burma’s case saw the army remain in command. Taylor cautions against raising further delusional expectations because of the recent Indonesian case.

Certainly the most thoughtful and credible political scientist of Burma today, Taylor exhibits a profound understanding of the country’s politics, which allows him to *explain*, not *apologize for*, the military’s longevity — a “staying power” that has been enhanced even more by the hostile policies of many Western powers whose goals, paradoxically, were just the opposite. Taylor remains pessimistic about the establishment of “democracy” in Burma, given the kinds of external and internal pressures the country faces today. That in part accounts for his conclusion, that the country now remains nearly as isolated as when Ne Win resigned in 1988. This is the only assessment of Taylor’s which this reviewer does not share, having returned to Burma during Ne Win’s regime, and five times during the past four years. Nonetheless, Taylor’s chapter represents the kind of in-depth understanding of modern Burma that is badly needed.

Martin Smith is the only Western journalist specializing on Burma whose work this reviewer finds credible. “Burmese Politics After 1988” is well thought-out structurally and historically, as a detailed account of a tripartite relationship involving the armed forces, the Burma Communist Party, and the ethnic groups that led to the current “Burma problem”. Smith laments that the ethnic groups are either lost in, or left out of, a Burman struggle for power rather than being an integral third party to the present transitional process, privy to all processes, and not just a “peripheral” concern informed of their place only after the fighting is over.

Whereas Robert Taylor once lived, ate, and slept in student hostels in Burma, and Martin Smith personally interviewed some of the major and minor players, David Steinberg’s best work comes from the detached use of official sources such as those produced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Asian

Development Bank. Trained in economic history and a long-time aid officer, Steinberg is well-suited to deal with that kind of information. Entitled "The Burmese Conundrum", his chapter attempts to examine the present in light of the recent past, the relations between politics and economics, and the significance of internal and external issues. Much of his chapter focuses on the economic problems of Burma, whose analysis privileges Western models of development. Although more critical of the government here than one gathers from his previous work, nevertheless, like Smith, Steinberg dares to criticize the NLD (National League for Democracy) for its ineffectiveness in helping to resolve the situation. However, he treats it with "kid gloves" rather than with the same kind of rigour he reserves for the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council). Steinberg also cautions the reader of having delusions about "democracy" and questions the unsuccessful, hardline Burma policy of the United States. His section on the "future" is long and thoughtful, a topic he addressed at length in another publication.

A main reservation one has would be Steinberg's contention regarding Ne Win's importance in the politics of Burma today, and how his passage would be a crucial "conjuncture" in the future of the country. This reviewer has yet to read in any Burmese language newspaper or hear from anyone (even as rumour) during the past several years, in Yangon or up-country, that would suggest that Ne Win still had significant influence on the decisions of the SPDC, and that his departure might produce a major "progressive" change. In 1987, it was Ne Win who admitted the economic failures of the BSPP (Burma Socialist Programme Party) and suggested a referendum be held to decide whether or not to adopt a multi-party system and a more open economy.

Stefan Collignon's chapter, "Human Rights and the Economy in Burma", provides a solid theoretical portion, which is then successfully linked to a subsequent empirical one. He grounds his theory on Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*, demonstrating its applicability to understanding Burmese society, built as it is on hierarchic principles of *status* rather than egalitarian ones of *contract* (a Weberian thesis). His theoretical analysis is right on the mark and essential to understanding the structural agony Burma is going through. The hierarchic principles that organized Burmese society for nearly a thousand years are now colliding with the egalitarian ones that the West is demanding that Burma adopt immediately. Values such as individual property rights are an essential part of a democratic socio-political system, in which is also embedded a market economy, a link Collignon demonstrates in excruciating detail with intimidating charts and graphs. He then ties,

conceptually, the latter values to human rights. (This, of course, raises questions about whether the publicized goals of Western governments are actually humanitarian or economic).

We finally part company when he concludes that these “modern” (really Western) values are *universal*. Rather, one sees it as a case of *parochial universalism*, historically championed by virtually all hegemonic powers — from the Greeks to the Romans, the Chinese, the British, the French, the Japanese, and now, the Americans. Universalism as an ideology has always been in the interest of the strong, a rationalization of hegemony. Cultural relativism, in contrast, has always been an ideology in the interests of those resisting that hegemony. Hence, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s “Asian values” argument is less about values *per se* than about unequal power relations *vis-à-vis* the West. Collignon’s “solutions” to the “Burma problem” is the weakest part of his chapter, based on Western, not Burmese, perceptions of what is valuable. Who are we to say what is best for the Burmese? And whose yardstick shall we use? The answer to Collignon is clear: the West’s.

David Tegenfeldt comes from a family of Baptist missionaries with a long history in Burma. His chapter on “International Non-Governmental Organizations in Burma”, not surprisingly, defends INGOs. Because their functions cover a broad spectrum of activities, they are often viewed with righteous indignation by “out-of-touch advocates” (p. 115), on the one hand, and with suspicion by some government officials, on the other. Tegenfeldt thus feels that painting a “simple black and white picture of the situation” (p. 115) is what really hinders genuine humanitarian work.

He deals largely with the social and humanitarian functions of the INGOs, such as infant mortality, access to clean drinking water, nutrition, and primary education. He also touches upon similar work being done in ethnic minority areas. The Tegenfeldt family of years past worked mainly among the Kachin, and in 1974, Herman Tegenfeldt, David’s father, produced one of the few books published about them. The Baptist missionaries to Burma have come a long way in serving the needs of the Burmese people, from the proselytizing of the late nineteenth century to the social-humanitarian work of today.

Grandiosely titled “Burma and the World”, Josef Silverstein deals with five topics: national sovereignty, bilateral relations, ASEAN, private investment, and narcotics. It is his thesis that the regime has mainly failed on all counts — no surprise here. Thus, Burma’s *successful* bid for membership in ASEAN is interpreted as *failure*, simply the result of “collusion” (p. 130) with other Asian nations. “If Burma is without friends in the West,” he complains, “it seems to have

to have found some in Asia" (p. 128). He also scoffs at the principle of national sovereignty, but only when Burma invokes it. What regime in the world, authoritarian or democratic, would willingly allow interference in its domestic affairs, particularly when it is clearly designed to undermine it? His discussion of "bilateral relations" is equally disingenuous, selecting mainly Western nations with known anti-Burma policies as "proof" that those relations have indeed failed. What about others (like France) whose policies differed from his chosen few? Well, they had ulterior motives. Not only is the chapter flawed with such insensate polemics, but "Orientalist" vocabulary ("barbarous behaviour", p.126), causes him no discomfort. His section on "investment" is uninformed and clearly out-of-date. Stuck in a time warp (not having set foot in the country since 1972), he repeats old, tired statements: "today, the near-empty hotels, department stores and factories mock Burma's efforts to develop tourism and sustain manufacturing" (p. 133), perhaps an apt description of the situation during the BSPP years, but certainly not today. His last section on "narcotics" touts the U.S. party-line on Burma, refusing to acknowledge the documented progress made by the regime.

At best, Silverstein sees Burma "from the deck of a Dutch ship" (to use Van Leur's famous phrase), and the ship is not even docked in Burmese waters but off the coast of New Jersey. This external and isolated view is more than geographic, it is also methodological and conceptual: he uses only English language sources while his interpretation of Burma's foreign policy (and of those Asian nations in "collusion" with it) is tautologically Western-centric, narrowly legalistic, and bitterly polemical. To him, Burma cannot be anything but an issue of good and evil, black and white. (Sartre's "decolonization of the mind" has not occurred obviously, for to Silverstein, his *knowledge* of Burma, *is* Burma.) Silverstein remains the staunchest anti-military advocate among Burma academics.

Jurgen Ruland's similarly Western-centric and Orientalist chapter "Burma Ten Years After the Uprising: The Regional Dimension" focuses on the issue of how to deal with Burma: "engagement" or "confrontation". Although the latter is discussed only briefly at the end, the direction in which he is headed is already clear from the beginning, namely, that virtually every action by the regional powers of Asia with regard to Burma had ulterior motives. Thus, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore were induced by greed, Indonesia by ideological self-aggrandizement, and ASEAN by concerns of its own balance of power. China's motives were strategic and geopolitical as well as economic. South Korea and Hong Kong were also implicated, but no motives were suggested. India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka seek to contain China's

expansion into the Bay of Bengal, both economically and militarily, and so they court Burma. Curiously, he leaves out Japan's motives entirely, now one of the largest contributors of aid to Burma.

Ascribing motivation is already a difficult proposition, and when placed in a good and evil framework of analysis, it becomes self-fulfilling. Thus, instead of considering the whole range of human motivations, he selects only the worst: the most cynical, selfish, sinister, and malevolent. Ruland then suggests that "engagement" will not work as "ASEAN's policy of non-interference is crumbling" (p. 154), citing no source, and forgetting that India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong are not part of ASEAN. Nevertheless, if "engagement" does not work, what might be a better way? The Western method of confrontation remains the only answer. This, like Silverstein's, is advocacy, not scholarship.

Finally, the book ends with the only indigenous voice in the plethora of foreign, even if some are sympathetic voices, totalling 5 of 163 pages of text. Seng Raw's plea entitled "Views From Myanmar: An Ethnic Minority Perspective" reveals that for most ethnic minorities, it has not been a question of high ideals like "democracy", but survival. More frustrating, however, even after ceasefires were established between the central government and the majority of the ethnic minorities, "no major government or international agency...[came] forward to support such an initiative" (p. 161); clearly, a recalcitrant refusal by Western governments and its agencies to admit that *anything* done by this government has been positive. Consequently, the leadership of the ceasefire groups has no delusions about the inability of the NLD and its external supporters to resolve the remaining problems, banking instead on the central government for their future. After all, it was the government that resolved it, and did so *internally* in a very short period of time. The SLORC-SPDC authorities did not create but inherited the problem from previous regimes, which none, including a "democratic" one, succeeded in settling. Seng Raw, like Smith, insists that the ceasefire groups must be part of the transition process as well as the final political agreement, so that "the ethnic problem" is not treated merely as an appendage to an elite Burman struggle. He ends the volume on a fitting note with which no genuine Burma scholar would disagree: "it is for the people of Myanmar to decide their own political destiny" (p. 163).

In sum, three general problems plague most of the chapters. First, nearly all sources cited (over 98 per cent according to this reviewer's estimate) are Western, usually from official government agencies, and/or advocacy group data. What other perspectives can one derive from this? Secondly, the approach used here — an analysis of the "political

economy” — implicitly rejects non-Western (and other) criteria that define value. What, besides a self-fulfilling “consolidated vision” (to use Edward Said’s term) is therefore possible? Finally, the assumption that democracy, individualism, human rights, and the market economy are universal, completes the tautology. What alternative explanations of the cosmos are left?

MICHAEL AUNG-THWIN  
*Asian Studies Program*  
*University of Hawaii*  
*United States*

***Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order.* By Amitav Acharya. London: Routledge, 2001. 256pp.**

Among scholars writing on the interface between international relations theory and Asian security, one of the most prolific is Amitav Acharya whose work on Asian regional security institutions is highly regarded. *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* continues to burnish his reputation for applying theoretical constructs to explain policy outcomes.

In this volume, Acharya examines realist, neo-liberal and constructivist (ideational) perspectives to assess how ASEAN has evolved since its 1967 inception as a device for Southeast Asia to cope with Indochinese, Chinese, and Russian communist challenges and the prospect of American and British withdrawal from the region. Particularly intrigued by constructivist attention to norm creation, Acharya asks whether and how ASEAN has become a “security community”, confident that dialogue can resolve or at least inhibit interstate conflict from escalating to war? He emphasizes, however, that security communities are not alliances, that they do not necessarily co-ordinate foreign and defence policies towards third countries, and that member states may, in fact, be allied with different outsiders. A constructivist approach to ASEAN as a security community de-emphasizes the international system (neo-realist) explanation and looks instead at how ASEAN, the institution, creates an identity for itself and how that collective identity, in turn, affects the identities of its members.

Among the norms Acharya explores is the “ASEAN Way”, one of the Association’s central concepts which provides a method by which