

BOOK REVIEWS

***Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia.* By Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995. 200 pp.**

This is one of a number of new books dealing with the post-Cold War transition to democracy in developing states and the tensions and problems which surround this phenomenon. There is a real shortage of comparative and thematic textbooks on Southeast Asian politics in general, so at first sight this book represents a welcome addition to the dearth of cross-national material. The general themes deal with the political and economic transformation in the region and assessing the prospects for democratization. In the opening chapter, for instance, the discussion centres on the broad waves of democratization since the mid-1970s (identified by Samuel Huntington) that have had a significant effect on a global scale. Thereafter, democracy is defined for simplicity in terms of three aspects: citizen participation in choosing élites, competition between candidates for elective office and recognition by the government of citizens' civil and political liberties. The basic features of Western-style liberal democracy is contrasted with "Asian"-style democracy in an effort to illustrate whether or not and to what extent these societies are adopting such features. The latter style includes such features as Confucianism, patron-client communitarianism, personalism, authority, dominant political party, and strong state. The links between democracy and development have often been stressed by theorists in questions such as "does democracy promote or stimulate economic growth or vice-versa?" This, as we have seen, has

had more than merely academic implications in the post-Cold War context of Southeast Asia in terms of policies.

Overall, the book is a useful, well-written guide for the beginner to some of the differences and similarities between states in the region. The two opening theoretical chapters are followed by country studies. However, there are certain problems which the reader should be aware of. One of the difficulties is the level of superficiality of the book, both in content and in analysing alternative theories which postulate links between these categories. Some of the chapters are too short. The authors devote one and four pages to Brunei and Laos respectively and yet in their conclusion tell us that Brunei is "integral to any analysis of democratization and development in Southeast Asia" (p. 189). Surely, Brunei and Laos warrant slightly more attention. There are four sources noted at the end of the chapter on Thailand, a country the authors argue is "more difficult to categorize than any other in Southeast Asia" (p. 29). In the introductory chapter, the authors tell us that they will "pay special attention to the results of pressure from the United States ... in the matter of human rights" (p. 9). And yet this is generally dealt with in less than half a page of text for each country. Moreover, there is little discussion of the international context outside the United States, which clearly reflects the authors' bias. What about the role of the European Community and disputes over labour rights? What about criticism from around the world over the East Timor issue and the difficulties that Britain had with Malaysia over the Pergau dam project. The impact of the leadership in many of these societies is also glossed over and this could have been dealt with more explicitly. These and a whole range of issues might have been explored to illuminate the international context of what some have seen as a "clash of values".

Another difficulty one has with the volume is the lack of other theoretical and substantive attempts to explain the tensions between democracy and development. The assumption appears to be that these states will inevitably be caught up in the waves of democratization at some stage or other and it assumes a fairly linear view of history akin to the partially discredited modernization theory. The reader should be directed to two other recent works which have produced different types of analysis. These are *Southeast Asia in the 1990's*, edited by Hewison et al., which analyses democracy and authoritarianism in the light of capitalism; and *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, by Bell et al., which is an interesting effort to reconceptualize the processes of democratization and its various problems in this part of the world while eschewing conventional Western political notions. The

view that economic development necessarily prompts the middle classes to seek more democratic freedoms from authoritarian rulers has in effect been challenged by the latter volume.

Overall, there appears to be no direct correlation either way. Some countries that are regarded as high in terms of human development indices (HDI) are regarded as semi-authoritarian and authoritarian (Singapore and Brunei respectively), while others that are medium in terms of HDI (Indonesia and Malaysia) are regarded as semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic respectively. One finds it difficult to simply attach the label semi-authoritarian to Singapore and Indonesia in the same breath. Surely, there is a qualitative difference between a nation that has managed to provide for most of its citizens (Singapore) and one that has denied fundamental rights (the right of self-determination to East Timor), and labour rights in a society where wealth is skewed so dramatically.

Notwithstanding some of these difficulties and problems, the book is an informative one that should be read by undergraduates and those who want to gain an introduction to one of the world's most dynamic regions.

KENNETH CHRISTIE
Department of Politics
University of Natal, South Africa

***Secret Army, Secret War.* By Sedgwick Tourison.** Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995. 313 pp.

Written by a former intelligence officer in the U.S. Army, and a staff member of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, *Secret Army, Secret War* recounts what must rank as one of the most shameful episodes in America's involvement in Indochina. Between 1960 and 1968, the United States directed a series of covert military operations inside the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), during which 456 South Vietnamese "agents" were either captured or killed. The astounding incompetence displayed by the co-ordinators of this programme, and their subsequent betrayal of those imprisoned, almost defies belief. The first part of the book details the numerous attempts made to infiltrate teams of agents into the DRV, practically all of which