

conflict, but it does offer a starter. The Buddhist religion itself probably neither causes nor inhibits ethnic violence; but we can perhaps begin to understand how and why Buddhism is employed as a resource by ethnic communities and the state.

DAVID BROWN

*National University of Singapore*

***Political Economy of Non-alignment: Indonesia and Malaysia.* By Kalyani Bandyopadhyaya. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1990. 318 pp.**

This book deals with the history of Malaysian and Indonesian foreign policy. The term “political economy” appears in the title. It is a term which might convey various meanings these days. In the present case, it appears that Bandyopadhyaya blends a consideration of international economic links with the traditional approach of diplomatic history.

The main theme of the book is that for Malaysia and Indonesia non-alignment has been more an item of rhetoric than an accurate guide to foreign policy behaviour. The author argues that the fragile nature of the developmental achievements of these countries and their extensive economic links to Western economies have prevented them from achieving genuine non-alignment. To the author, this is a failing. Malaysia and Indonesia should, she believes, be striving for economic development, but not at the price of dependence on the West. While this may be a sentiment we can readily embrace, how realistic is it, especially when considering the early decades of industrialization? From where is the capital to enable large-scale investment and thus growth to come from if it is not available in sufficient quantities locally? Is it possible to pursue a genuinely independent and non-aligned foreign policy when one’s economy is highly vulnerable to external pressures? This is a sharp dilemma confronting most developing countries. In an increasingly independent global economy it is not just the South which is finding its freedom of foreign policy movement restricted but the countries of the North are also wrestling with the same problem.

More broadly, I was frustrated by the author’s apparent acceptance of non-alignment as an uncontested term. What does non-alignment really mean today? Is it still a useful concept? Even before Mikhail Gorbachev turned the strategic world upside down, the meaning of terms such as

“non-alignment” and “third world” were of declining utility. In the case of the two countries at hand, while it is true that they have been generally closer to the West than the East in their foreign policy orientations, this book does not reveal much about the periodic tensions in relations between Washington and Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. We hear little about American irritation with the fact that Indonesia and Malaysia frequently vote against the United States in the United Nations, or about tensions on issues such as the handling of the Indochinese refugees.

I did not find this an inspiring book. It fails to take us beyond earlier important studies such as that by Franklin Weinstein. While I welcome Bandyopadhyaya’s use of a comparative approach, there is a real problem of lack of “local flavour” with this book. Far too often Bandyopadhyaya relies on unrevealing official statements for evidence, apparently accepting them at face value. Gaining access to material and capturing the essence of local politics is always a major problem for foreign scholars, but one might reasonably expect more than is offered here.

Though it does not really carry us forward in our understanding of the dynamics of foreign policy in Indonesia and Malaysia, this book will be of some interest to other scholars working on the subject.

ANDREW MACINTYRE

*Division of Asian and International Studies  
Griffith University*

***China and South Asia.* By Ramakant.** New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988. 195 pp.

It is usual to think of South Asia and Southeast Asia as two security complexes, a term which Barry Buzan explains as “a relatively self-contained pattern of security relationships among a geographically coherent group of states” (*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 10, Number 1, June 1988). However, the demission of Soviet ideology and the possibility of reduced U.S. involvement in East Asia are likely to cause a certain overlapping of sub-regional security concerns in the years to come. Whether or not local powers dramatically rush in to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawing superpowers, greater interaction between South Asia and Southeast Asia is likely to occur as evolving local — that is, transregional — realities overshadow the historical imperatives which indirectly led to the formation of the two distinct security complexes.