

have essentially remained unchanged. Kapur argues that September 11 “did not alter the constant elements in Asian international relations but it defined clearly the nature of the problem and the nature of the policies of the main powers” (p. 169). The central contention is said to be between the doctrines of “just war” and “holy war” — the former located within the nation-state system while the latter occurs between believers and non-believers.

The very ambitious nature of the book and the broad geographical area it covers mean that some claims tend to be too diffused and not sufficiently applied to the different sub-regions. South Asia is very well covered while much less attention is given to the international relations of Southeast Asia. Kapur refers for instance to Vietnam and Indonesia as sub-regional hegemony without telling us more about why they hold these positions and how they exercise power. It also begs the question whether the three sub-regions might be too distinct as regional security complexes to make general arguments on Asian security.

Nonetheless, the book makes an important contribution to the scholarship on Asian international relations by challenging standard beliefs on the explanatory factors of the Cold War and bipolarity and focusing instead on several other useful concepts. Its discussions on multipolarity as well as regional hegemonies are particularly relevant to understanding the security structures and geo-politics of the region both during and since the end of the Cold War. They are also a clear demonstration of the realist arguments developed in the book.

RALF EMMERS

*Institute of Strategic and Defence Studies
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore*

***The Political Economy of Cambodia's Transition, 1991–2001.* By Caroline Hughes, London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 260pp.**

For a small country, Cambodia has attracted considerable scholarly and political attention internationally. Hughes' book is another addition to the growing literature on post-Cold War Cambodia on a theme that has drawn little attention prior to the 1990s: democratization and civil society. The book focuses on the political and economic transformations in Cambodia from 1991–2001 and how they impact upon the emergence and development of substantive democracy in the country. Specifically,

the book seeks to demonstrate how the transition from a central, command economy to a market economy shaped the trajectory of politics in Cambodia and the role of international intervention in putting pressure on the Cambodian state to democratize.

The beginning of the 1990s was significant for Cambodia in many respects. It marked the beginning of the end of an era of political turbulence in the country, paving the way for the political, economic and social reconstruction of Cambodia. According to Hughes, there are three strands of transition that took place in Cambodia during the period under study. The first was the transition from command economy to free market economy, the second being the transition from war to peace and finally the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Hughes contends that the most important strand was the economic transition as this influenced the other two strands. The background and the context of the economic reforms of the 1980s which propelled the rapid process of political change are discussed in Chapter 2. Changes in the command economy took place in the mid-1980s as a response to the "failures of collectivization" (p. 28), and as a result of concurrent changes throughout the Soviet bloc resulting from Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR. More important perhaps for the developments in Cambodia were the reforms taking place in Vietnam, which eased the pressure on Cambodia of having to be accountable to Vietnam. The implementation of economic reform policies of 1989 prompted a dramatic increase in economic activities in the state. It is argued that the economic liberalization helped consolidate the state-making process, although at the same time it led to unequal distribution of resources and abuse of power.

The impact of the economic reforms of the 1990s on the nature of state and its relations with society is discussed in Chapter 3. It is argued that while economic reforms contributed to consolidating the position of the state, this has also led to increasingly exploitative relations between state and society at large. Hughes argues that it has undermined the capacity of society to resist intensified state exploitation. The availability of resources to the central government from international organizations and foreign investments and its control of these resources gave the government the economic leverage to secure the loyalty of officers both at central and local government levels. The opportunities for economic gain through association with the state led to increasing integration of state employees more closely into the state structure and created a strong dependency on the state. The state's economic power, Hughes argues, undermines the capacity of society to resist intensified state exploitation, thus making it difficult for the expansion of civil society in Cambodia.

However, Hughes concedes that there are limits to the central government's use of economic resources for its own benefit. As the dividends of this transition are not evenly distributed, it creates dissatisfaction among those who are excluded and those who do not stand to gain from the economic reforms. These groups include those in urban centres and rural villages. State control also diminishes in the periphery due to the lack of resources to be distributed (as part of the regime's efforts to secure loyalty). This problem is exacerbated by the control of available resources by local governments in rural areas where the central government or international agencies find it difficult to penetrate.

The consolidation of the state through regime maintenance is further discussed in Chapter 4. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP), which presided over the state reforms, has attempted to preserve its dominance in Cambodian national politics through various means. It reinvented itself by abandoning the "justificatory framework of socialist ideology" and "distancing itself from the rhetoric of socialist fraternity with Vietnam that has been the characteristic since the 1980s (p. 58) — a sentiment appealing to Cambodians. This was a dilemma for Cambodia, although the book does not elaborate on how this was finally resolved. Obviously socialist ideology and socialist fraternity with Vietnam are intertwined elements which have not been popular in Cambodia. Abandoning them was more than just a government's effort to "win electoral legitimacy for economic reforms". A more profound analysis of the reasons and the consequences of the abandonment of these elements would have shed light on the dilemma faced by a regime whose predecessors were propelled to power under socialism. Winning electoral legitimacy is only a part of the picture. Conforming to both internal and international realities and pressures is the larger picture. For Cambodia, abandoning socialism was a necessitated choice with happy results for the regime and the country at large. The people had had enough of socialism; they were prepared to abandon it even without the obvious and immediate economic benefits. The economic reforms and its consequences rendered irrelevant socialism's *raison d'être* in Cambodia.

Pertinent to the discussion of state-society relations is the argument that the reforms produced a "modified" version of the existing patron-client relationship between state and society. The author identifies groups based in the military and state bureaucracy as those who form part of this modified patron-clientism (p. 61), and whose loyalties and support are obtained through the offer of resources including "access to posts, perquisites, [and] opportunities for rent-seeking" which differs from the welfare subsidies given in earlier years. This method

strengthened the party although it led to vote-buying, surveillance, corruption, and nepotism. Hughes also argues that, for the government, securing dominance is easier in rural Cambodia than among the urban élite. In pursuing this line of argument, she puts forward a seemingly contradictory proposition that while the rural villages do not gain most from economic reforms, the government has more extensive control over these groups than they do over the urban groups.

Having thus established its dominance in its relations with society through economic and political means, the state can now respond to the external pressures for democratization. The role played by the international community in the three strands of transition is significant in many respects. Hughes identifies two strands as underlying international interventionary policies: human rights and economics, both having profound implications for the nature of Cambodian politics in the 1990s. International intervention is seen as contributing to the creation of “new arenas of political struggle both within and without Cambodia (p. 86). The new Cambodia has become the “testing ground for interventionary policies of multilateral conflict management, peace-building, democratic enlargement, good governance and poverty alleviation” (p. 87). This might be stretching the limits, but the consolation is that for the first time in its recent history, international intervention has brought some positive impact to Cambodia.

However, Hughes cautions that there are limitations to the role of international intervention in promoting democracy in Cambodia. The impact of international interventionary policies is mostly felt in the urban centre — Phnom Penh — and hardly in rural villages where the government and local authorities still have the monopoly of resources for distribution to obtain loyalty and support. She argues that the “internationally promoted and supported spheres of Cambodian political and civil society have expanded at the expense of the state-dominated sphere only in the urban areas” (p. 141). Yet, the author maintains that for all their limitations, the international society and NGOs, together with the multi-party sphere, represent the “best opportunity for revitalizing Cambodia’s democratic aspiration” (p. 141).

The weakness of Cambodian political structures and the slow development of civil society in Cambodia are further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The two are interrelated. The weakness of Cambodian politics can be largely traced to the reconsolidation of the CPP through monopolizing economic resources and excluding its opponents from executive power and rural political arena. According to Hughes, all other political groups, including FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia) have

declined in power and popularity as none of them can compete or challenge the dominance of the CPP. Hughes argues that the lack of economic resources to secure loyalties does not help to create a “resource-rich terrain that can sustain a democratizing civil society in the short term” (p. 141). However, all is not lost. The prospect for the future of democracy in Cambodia lies in the ability of the urban centre (Phnom Penh) to develop and expand the emerging urban protest movement of the late 1990s into a wider national movement which could domestically pressure the state to democratize. If they can manipulate and co-opt both local and international resources, urban groups will be able to resist the state’s attempts to monopolize the country’s political spheres.

Throughout her book, Hughes emphasizes that economic reform has been the most influential factor shaping Cambodian politics since the 1990s. It is also the most important element shaping the development of civil society in Cambodia. The powers of the state and its relations with society are closely linked and framed by the economic transition, itself a product of international and domestic changes. What is interesting is the importance of, and the hope placed on international intervention as providing the best possible conditions for sustaining civil society in Cambodia — a theme that is the author’s preoccupation. Given the current global interest in democratization and the expansion of civil society (and especially how it can develop in adverse conditions), this study is timely. It relies on an impressive range of sources, both primary and secondary. The book is a valuable contribution to the study of the “new Cambodia”, in its hopes, fears, and dilemmas as it emerges cautiously from the ashes of its turbulent past.

RUHANAS HARUN

*Department of International and Strategic Studies
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia*

***Burma’s Armed Forces: Power without Glory.* By Andrew Selth.**
Norwalk: Conn.: EastBridge, 2002. 371 pp.

If Selth wrote this book in the mid-1970s when he was posted to the Australian Embassy in Rangoon (now Yangon) the sub-title might have been “Power with Glory”. Much earlier, in the early 1950s, during the first few years of Myanmar’s independence, when the armed forces of the newly minted state fought successfully to turn the tide of the civil