

chapters. The normative environment of world politics clearly has changed over the last few decades, and Southeast Asia's leaders are being forced to confront this, even if it is only to reject it and retreat into costly, self-destructive isolation, as Burma has done.

However, by its own admission this is not a book that is necessarily seeking to transform debates about Southeast Asia, but to introduce students to them, and the factors that have underpinned them in this highly distinctive region. Apart from the usual glaring absence of any substantive discussion of the region's underlying economic structures, circumstances, and prospects — “international relations” scholars still seem to think such issues are peripheral despite events like the Asian financial crisis and its implications for intra- and inter-regional relations — this book provides a sound introduction to the region.

MARK BEESON

*School of Political Science and International Studies
University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia*

***India Briefing: Takeoff at Last?* Edited by Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005. Softcover: 285pp.**

“India Rising” has been the constant refrain in the global academic, policy, and strategic communities. The past decade has been momentous in terms of India's robust economic and industrial growth, its burgeoning knowledge capital and industrial capabilities — a new confidence in its foreign policy and diplomatic initiatives and an assertion of its strategic and military capabilities that had come with the 1998 nuclear tests and an expanding versatile profile of its maritime power.

Globalization has been the pivotal force of India's social and economic transformation that has unshackled its potential. The paradigm shift from its autarkic economic process to a liberalized competitive process has been crucial in the realization of W.W. Rostow's conception of the “takeoff” stage of economic robustness.

India Briefing is a project of the Asia Society, New York. It has been a systematic, coherent, and rigorous commentary on India's promise and performance. Articulated on an annual basis as a review of the country's systemic performance, it comprehensively assesses the rising Asian power's political capacity, social cohesion, economic viability,

strategic autonomy and operations, technological capabilities and its knowledge capital.

The volume entitled *India Briefing: Takeoff at Last?* — the eleventh publication in the series of annual reviews that has been eloquently written with rigour, factual substance, and analysis by several eminent authors brings to focus the vicissitudes of India with its glowing and promising performance of a credible takeoff curve that has been convincing. The editors of this volume, Alyssa Ayres and Philip Oldenburg have structured the thematic organization of this book predicated on the changing contours of Political India and Economic India as the primary pillars of India's transformation.

India Briefing: Takeoff at Last? commences with an Introduction that is a review of India in retrospect. The editors analyse the issues of significance of India that have furnished the rationale to label the subtitle *Takeoff at Last*.

Niraja Gopal Jayal sketches the essay "Politics: The BJP Falls from Power" based on the analysis of the political narratives of democracy and coalition governance in India. It analyses the causal symptoms of the BJP-NDA alliance (Bharatiya Janata Party–National Democratic Alliance) defeat in the 2004 General Election and the nuances of coalition government formation and performance in India. The essay is diachronic in scope in that it analyses the various events of the NDA coalition, its policy profile, its governance styles, and its public image and perception. Jayal analyses the BJP-NDA coalition's poll debacle and follows it with the challenges and issues facing the Congress–United Progressive Alliance and its governance. She analyses the issues of governance in the context of economic and public policy and how the various issues of governance and public policy have been synthesized as a compromise for the sake of coalition government stability.

The Indian economy has been portraying a consistent profile of performance notwithstanding the changes of government and the demands of coalition governance. *Isher Judge Ahluwalia* narrates the promise and performance of structural reforms in the Indian economy in his essay "Indian Economy: New Pathways to Growth and Development". The analysis rigorously examines the pathways of India's experiment and experience of structural reforms in its public sector, and the significant dividends yielded in the rate of growth via consistent strength in the macroeconomic aspects. The essay locates the context and the challenges contended by structural reform in the past decades of the Indian economy. The issues of deregulation, productivity, poverty reduction, and the fiscal management that were prevalent in the 1980s provided the systemic basis of change. The author analyses the historical

dateline of reforms since 1991 — the threshold in economic reforms. Structural reforms with a human face are also examined and the imperatives of the social safety nets in the process are evaluated. The essay assesses the impact of reforms on macroeconomic management, infrastructure development, and integration into the world economy as a consequence of India's tryst with globalization.

India's international relations since 1991 has been a quest to seek autonomy and pro-action in its strategic sphere. Amitabh Mattoo examines the paradigms of neorealism and grand strategy of India in his essay "India's International Relations: The Search for Stability, Space and Strength". The location of India's grand strategic paradigm is in the quest to build its comprehensive national power rooted in a robust economic growth; its resilient technological endeavours; the quest for an assertive foreign and security policy in the concentric circles of India's neighbourhood; diplomatic and economic engagement in its extended neighbourhood of Central Asia, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia (as evidenced by its Look East policy since the 1990s) to seek its rightful place in World Affairs commensurate with its power and profile. The author examines in detail the foreign policy challenges of India in its immediate neighbourhood and the challenges of asymmetric conflict and terrorism that have emanated from Kashmir. The issue of Kashmir is dealt with in length with several crucial policy implications and prognostications.

The transformation in the Indian social and cultural prism is evident in the rise of religion in the public space in India. Hinduism has metamorphosed from being a social and ethical system of individual beliefs and norms into a political religion based on the concept of religious and political majoritarianism. Richard H. Davis analyses "The Cultural Implications of the Hindutva" that has been India's emergent political religion. Hindutva has a radical political agenda that has been resonating in the Indian public space since the late 1980s. Davis examines the epistemological structure of Hindutva vis-à-vis Nehruvian secularism and other public discourses of socialism and liberalism in the Indian context. The analysis traces the roots of the ideological formation in its civilizational and social context of India; the metaphysical and the philosophical roots of Hinduism and its correlation to the praxis of its contemporary manifestation. Having traced the historical and civilizational contexts, the author brings to fore the issues of organizational formation in its political and religious foundations of the Hindutva groups in the political and social mosaic of India. He makes a detailed analysis of the structure and roles of the various groups of the "Saffron Brotherhood". The essay eloquently

locates the issues of myth-making and the myth manipulation employed for political gains by the BJP by appropriating the religious and mythical value of these articulations. The essay succinctly analyses the politics and religion of shrine demolition and shrine construction and the political and electoral spin-offs of this game.

“Work and Wealth” is a thematic construct in this volume that has been succinctly narrated by Renana Jhabvala. This essay attempts a systematic analysis of the emerging templates of the Indian economy and society in the globalization age that has its central emphasis on the creation of assets and affluence in the transforming landscape of India’s economic and social sectors. The author analyses the transformations in agriculture, industry, manufacturing, construction, and the informal economy that has been in evolution over a long period of time. The essay analyses the costs and benefits of the new economy and the patterns of wealth accumulation and the continued bane of poverty that afflicts India even as its population remains vast and expanding. It evaluates the consequences of poverty alleviation, wealth distribution and the human development indices and profile of India. It concludes on the imperatives of growth with a human face.

The role and primacy of entertainment in the celluloid world continues in India as the single robust factor of India. Manjeet Kriplani elucidates the changing contours of India’s film world — Bollywood. The essay analyses the nature and transformation of India’s cinema that is abounding with talent and new ideas. It analyses the consequences of intense commercialization and the trends of professionalization in the cinema industry. The changing contexts of India’s Bollywood are amply reflected in the appeal of mob psychosis and temperament and the emerging aesthetics of the Indian fan.

The digital revolution in India has increased India’s profile and its knowledge capital in manifold dimensions in the globalization era. Mary Rader provides a thematic analysis of India’s knowledge profile in “Downloading India: A Guide to Online Resources”. The cataloguing of the various digital portals in the cyberspace provides substantial evidence of the enormous growth and diversification of the knowledge capital and entrepreneurship in India. The author has provided a systematic and excellent catalogue of the various cyberspace portals and databases on India.

The volume cumulates with a Chronology — a political diary from 2001, 2002, and 2003, and an exhaustive catalogue of abbreviations and glossary. In sum, the authors of *India Briefing: Takeoff at Last?* have provided a polyhedral and holistic assessment of India in all its salience and vicissitudes that constitutes a substantial analysis and balanced

perspective of India — devoid of exaggeration but nourished with substance and blended by the rigours of analysis and sophistication. Indeed, this volume is an excellent rendition of India.

W. LAWRENCE S. PRABHAKAR
Department of Political Science
Madras Christian College
Chennai, India

***The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History.* Edited by Norman G. Owen. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2005. Softcover: 541pp.**

This is the best introductory text on Southeast Asian History that the reviewer had come across in many years. Though there are many compilations reviewing the political and/or economic history of the region that came to be commonly recognized as Southeast Asia in the aftermath of World War II as well as numerous illuminating monographs and books on individual states located within the region, this volume stands out as a balanced and parsimonious account of how Southeast Asia has come to be what it is now. It is quite successful in capturing the essence of the region's trials and tribulations in coping with, first, colonialism and, later, globalization.

It is tempting to compare this product of collective endeavour by a group of Southeast Asianists with *In Search of Southeast Asia*, its distinguished and successful predecessor produced by almost the same group of scholars (with the exception of two new contributors) some 18 years ago. However, as indicated in the Preface, it is “a fresh look at modern Southeast Asian History”, intended as a “shorter more accessible text for the twenty-first century” (p. iv), perhaps cognizant of an audience belonging to a generation overwhelmingly accustomed to short audio-visual inputs — and altogether assumes a separate identity. As such, it will be treated as a different book in its own right and not viewed through lens coloured by the earlier book.

The book, organized into 37 chapters in five parts, manages to trace the “processes of historical transformation” as well as to portray the “chronological narratives of events” unfolding across time and space (p. xi) in a clear and concise narrative. The 13 “general” and 24 “country” chapters complement one another, especially on “developments that do not fit easily into conventional chronology and