structure and emphasis on policy transformation make the book highly suitable for undergraduate as well as introductory graduate courses on modern Chinese history. While it can be said that there exist numerous introductory texts covering the overall history of the PRC, Benson's work, a volume in the Pearson series Seminar Studies in History, is unique and insightful due to its historical analysis on the evolution of CCP policy since 1949 and the political, economic, social, and environmental outcomes that have accompanied such policy shifts. While my only reservation is that for a book that makes clear the unequal power relations found under a patriarchal society, there is a relative lack of mention of prominent female figures in the work. Still, for students and teachers interested in understanding the important role of CCP elites in shaping political and economic policy into our most recent decade, and how the lives of women and other marginalized groups were influenced by such political and economic transformations, *China Since 1949* offers an informative and enjoyable read.

■ *Bryan Winter*
School of Geosciences
University of South Florida

Political Change in Southeast Asia. By Jacques Bertrand. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 258 pp. $28.99 (paper).

Political Change in Southeast Asia is a book with grand ambitions. It seeks to provide clear and systematic explanations for patterns of political change in a region that has been described by Donald Emmerson in his 1995 article for *Pacific Review*, "Region and Recalcitrance," as "the most recalcitrant" for students of democratization, because its "states are so diverse, despite their proximity, as to make it difficult to generalize across them" (p. 225). The book proves to be thought provoking on multiple levels, not least because it challenges readers to think seriously about the best approaches to conceptualizing areas of similarity and difference across the region. In this sense, it is a valuable addition to the collection of books that provide politically oriented country-by-country overviews of Southeast Asia.

Bertrand's aim is to examine political change—broadly understood as major changes to political institutions and the composition of elites—in Southeast Asia. While Bertrand acknowledges the cen-

tral role that international factors, including pressure from great powers and the global economy, play in catalyzing political change, the clear emphasis of the book is on the role of domestic factors. Three of these provide a comparative structure through which he analyzes the countries of Southeast Asia (though Brunei is excluded): the first is the role of economic development and the growth of the middle class, following the modernization tradition, which posits that these should lead to the development of democratic institutions. The second is the unity of political elites, under the assumption that elite splits frequently precede political change. The third is mass mobilization, which Bertrand argues more often than not functions indirectly by creating widespread pressure for reform.

Relative to Latin America and Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia has seen less steady movement toward democracy over the past several decades, despite the presence of conditions that are ostensibly supportive of democratization. In analyzing political change in the region, Bertrand offers three main reasons for the relatively immutable nature of its regimes. First, he argues that the middle class in Southeast Asia has been more dependent on the state than is the case in other regions. The range of government services provided in Singapore and the great numbers employed in Malaysia's civil service provide two examples of this. Second, states in Southeast Asia tend to be stronger than comparable states in other regions. This holds, Bertrand argues, for high capacity states like those in Singapore and Malaysia, as well as for battle-hardened states like Vietnam and for those like Burma and Indonesia in which the military played a largely unchallenged role. Lastly, as has been argued frequently in the case of Southeast Asia, successful economic development provided illiberal political systems with performance legitimacy. Aside from these systematic factors, Bertrand also points to several idiosyncratic features of the region that likewise hindered more widespread change. These include the deeply traumatic experiences under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the killing of some half million citizens in the putatively anticommunist purges of 1965 Indonesia, and the 1969 ethnic riots in Malaysia that frame much of the country's political narrative; the importance of the monarchy in Thailand and Cambodia, as well as the widespread patterns of patrimonialism and patronage across the region, also enter the equation.

All of these factors constitute an immense amount of ground to be covered. Bertrand attempts to bring order to this task by distinguishing broadly between the Southeast Asian countries that implemented market-based economic systems (Indonesia, Timor-Leste, the

Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand) and those that opted for state-socialist systems (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar). Bertrand makes a strong case for the centrality of this dimension, but as importantly, the distinction challenges readers to think critically about how to make sense of the widely divergent experiences of the region's eleven countries. While this exercise is not a novel one, we are reminded that comparisons and contrasts along key dimensions like state capacity, size and diversity of populations, and colonial conditions (which arguably were instrumental in determining the postindependence economic systems that Bertrand focuses on), can illuminate general trends across this "recalcitrant region" and provide analytic traction on critical questions that help us understand the region in new ways.

Valuable and thought provoking as these comparisons might be, they are unquestionably difficult to execute. This is particularly the case when the focal point is a phenomenon as broad and complex as political change across the entire region of Southeast Asia. If Bertrand's book has a weakness, it is that it tries to deliver just that, and in the process occasionally loses focus and analytic precision. The contrast to William Case's 2002 volume, *Politics in Southeast Asia*, is instructive. While Case's focus on elite unity is perhaps more cohesive than Bertrand's contribution, it comes at the expense of disregarding more than half of the region's countries. Dan Slater's *Ordering Power* (2010) advances an even more analytically tight argument, but in doing so dispenses entirely with the idea of providing comprehensive country-by-country overviews. On the other end of the spectrum, Robert Dayley and Clark Neher set far more modest goals in their 2013 book, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, contenting themselves with largely descriptive country chapters that do not inspire in terms of novel analytic contributions, but do deliver clear and accessible overviews of the region's eleven countries. Seen from this perspective, *Political Change in Southeast Asia* tries to both provide a comprehensive overview of the region and deliver tight, systematic analysis. Its rich detail and thought-provoking structure alone make it a valuable contribution to students of Southeast Asia, even if readers are not left with a radically new understanding of the region.

■ *Kai Ostwald*
Institute of Asian Research and
Department of Political Science
University of British Columbia

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1598240800009395 Published online by Cambridge University Press