

reflect differences in the structure of business power at the national level, or does it reflect a new strategy to reward a core political constituency of his Bharatiya Janata Party? At a time when the Modi government continues to provide economic benefits to select businesses, such as the Reliance and Adani groups, is Modi's promotion of Hindu nationalism a way to maintain popular support for an exclusive developmental model, or is Modi cultivating support from these businesses to advance the cause of Hindu nationalism?

The issues of how the composition and organization of capital affect business power and how business power is shaped by the strategies of political leaders are vital for political economy in India and beyond. *Business & Politics in India* provides a valuable service by advancing our understanding of business power and underscoring the importance of these issues.

**Everyday Economic Survival in Myanmar.** By Ardeth Maung Thawngmung. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019. 320p. \$79.95 cloth.  
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In *Everyday Economic Survival in Myanmar*, Ardeth Maung Thawngmung makes an important contribution to studies of poor people's politics in Southeast Asia. Everyday life for Myanmar's citizens is shown to be marked by extreme economic hardship that significantly constrains their ability to engage politically. The coping strategies that the poor use are shaped by the imperative of economic survival, which often leads to a shoring up of prevailing social and political structures, rather than providing an impetus for political change. The study is firmly situated in the literature on everyday politics in Southeast Asia (specifically, the work of James Scott [1987] and Benedict Kerkvliet [2005]), but through its focus on everyday coping strategies and tactics, it illustrates a key limitation of this literature: the tendency to focus on the everyday as a site of resistance and change without acknowledging what writers like Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) call "the violence of everyday life"—the sheer exhaustion, physical and mental depletion, and injustice associated with eking out a living in situations of economic adversity.

The book has several strengths. First, its analysis is rooted in an impressive in-depth body of empirical research undertaken over several years and encompassing numerous interviews and engagements with people experiencing impoverishment. The richness of the case study material at times blends with the author's own experiences of growing up in Myanmar; the preface to the book reaches into the autoethnographic as Thawngmung

recounts her own everyday encounters with poverty and economic survival in Myanmar: "accommodating and adsorbing the bruising impact of a repressive regime while trying to survive on a daily basis" (p. xii). The coping strategies examined in each of the chapters are illustrated with stories, interviews, and reflections that consistently center the voices and experiences of the poor and marginalized. In recounting a key economic survival strategy—"living frugally" (chapter 2)—we are introduced to Maung Soe, a landless laborer and resident of a remote rural village, and Wah Paw, a former shopkeeper who struggled to make ends meet following the birth of her daughter and her husband's death. High levels of indebtedness and the constant efforts involved in securing any kind of income marked their lives, as they battled to provide for themselves and their households. These are just two of the many stories that fill the pages of this book, and it is this huge body of research and interview data that leads Thawngmung to challenge the somewhat romantic assumptions about agency and resistance that can often be found in work on everyday politics.

The book's second strength lies in how it extends understandings of everyday politics to encompass economic "coping strategies." These include the kinds of activities that might be familiar to scholars of international development, such as community-level responses that mobilize bonds of mutuality (sharing, pooling resources), and accessing state or donor assistance. But she also includes in her understanding of coping strategies psychological strategies such as turning to gambling, astrology, or religion, alongside political coping strategies that range from bribery, efforts to avoid the predatory state (for example, through tax avoidance), and more direct challenges to state rule, including forms of violent insurgency or activities such as strikes. These responses to economic adversity are captured within her LPVE framework: loyalty, passive resistance, voice, and exit. "Loyalty" comprises a variety of different "accommodating" behaviors (p. 11), "Exit" is "literal flight from oppressive acts and policies" (p. 11). "Voice" captures conscious political struggle—speaking out, joining collective resistances—activities that by their very nature challenge the system challenging. By contrast, "passive resistance" is "the more subtle, indirect, frequent, and often uncoordinated acts of resistance" (p. 11).

Indeed, a third strength of this book concerns the specific challenge that it raises for studies of everyday politics that center (passive) resistance. Thawngmung asks that we reframe everyday politics away from dominant approaches found in the work of Scott and Kerkvliet that position the everyday as a resistive site, where the often unintentional actions of the powerless coalesce in ways that ultimately challenge authority. The LPVE approach reflects that Thawngmung does *not* see the everyday as a

site within which change is inevitably produced. It is also a site of suffering where everyday actions are frequently characterized as “self-defeating” (p. 47) both in terms of their impacts on individuals (e.g., failing to ensure adequate nutrition) or in terms of how these actions operate to maintain the status quo and deliver profoundly undemocratic outcomes. Economic survival for the poor involves forms of accommodation that buttress the power of the privileged and uphold unjust economic and political and economic systems. Certainly, possibilities for change exist within Thawngmung’s account, but they come with a heavy dose of reality regarding the ongoing reproduction of unequal social relations and exploitive economic practices. Thus the “resilience and resourcefulness” of Myanmar’s citizens “may be undermining the potential to advocate for broader and more comprehensive political reform or preventing the emergence of democratic values that could help sustain Myanmar’s transition to a more open political environment” (p. 17).

In addition to these key contributions this book does much more. The first chapter, for example, will be of interest to anyone seeking to understand how the current political economic structures of life in Myanmar have been shaped through a history of British colonialism, military rule, repression, and conflict, as well as the partial nature of the country’s recent economic and political transition. Throughout the book, attention is placed on the importance of the very different ways in which economic survival is experienced by different groups, with particular attention to gender and ethnicity. The book also challenges its readers to avoid the tendency to celebrate dynamic and “resilient” local communities marked by bonds of trust and mutuality. Although “community” frequently offers the poor social support, it is also a source of wider societal pressures, such as spending vital income on weddings and funerals.

As with any book, there were certain issues that reflect my own academic interests that I would have liked to have seen explored. Specifically, the global political economy is almost entirely absent from the analysis, and yet the everyday economic actions examined in this book are shaped not only by the specifics of economic mismanagement and political repression of the Myanmar state but also by global pressures that create new forms of exploitation and adverse incorporation; for example, workers in global supply chains. Similarly, everyday activities such as microfinance lending and accessing international donor aid connect people into the global economy in new ways. Recent work on everyday political economy and/or ethnographies of neoliberal transformation in Southeast Asia do explore these themes, so perhaps this book could be usefully read alongside such studies (Joseph Nevins and Nancy Lee Peluso 2009; Juanita Elias and Lena Rethel 2013).

The book provides invaluable insight into the political, economic, social, and psychological dynamics at play

within the everyday coping strategies employed by the urban and rural poor in Myanmar. Poverty, rising household debt, authoritarianism, and the predatory state all cast long shadows over everyday life in Myanmar. A focus on the coping strategies that have emerged in response to these pressures provides important insights into a range of behaviors that ultimately support forms of authoritarianism and limit the possibilities for wider political change. In undertaking this important task, Thawngmung has further consolidated her reputation as one of the leading scholars working on the contemporary politics of Myanmar.

**Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya.** By Mai Hassan.

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Rulers are powerless without administrative structures that enable them to effectively project their authority, implement their preferred policies, and deter or punish non-compliance. But reliance on bureaucrats within state administrative structures exposes rulers to the risk of agency loss. In other words, as part of the principal-agent relationships that characterize administrative apparatuses, bureaucrats (agents) may use their power to advance their own interests or undermine the authority of the ruler (principal). This means that, to protect their authority and power, rulers must strategically manage administrative bureaucracies with a view to limiting the risk of agency loss. In *Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya*, Mai Hassan brilliantly explores the strategic choices that rulers make to ensure effective social control through bureaucratic administrative structures. Such control enables rulers to stave off both elite-level and popular threats to regime stability. The book challenges existing accounts of how leaders solve principal-agent problems within state administrative structures and makes important contributions to our understanding of the strategic management of state bureaucratic structures under autocracy and electoral democracy, the drivers of subnational variations in state capacity, and, more generally, the politics of state-building and governance in multiethnic societies.

Hassan observes that rulers are seldom able to solve the problem of agency loss by exclusively relying on the selection of “good type” (i.e., loyal) agents. In most contexts, administrative bureaucracies tend to include individuals whose policy preferences and political loyalties may diverge from the ruler. This is because, in the process of co-opting potential elite challengers, rulers typically incorporate their supporters as well into state