The Asian drama retold

Resurgent Asia: Diversity in Development
By Deepak Nayyar
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2019, 295 pp., Rs 895 (HB)

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Nayar analyses Asia’s economic and social transformation and the process of catch-up in Asia at the continent, regional, and country levels. He highlights the diverse paths taken by development in different countries and the very different consequences for their people.

Resurgent Asia is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the economic history of the continent. When the term ‘Asian century’ is used perfunctorily, the book provides an enriching account of what the rise of Asia may imply for countries and people of the continent.

The book goes beyond various competing hypotheses advanced to explain the Asian development. It identifies discernible patterns and substantive policy lessons that emerge from the Asian development experience. Nayyar brings to bear multi-dimensional analytical approaches to unravel shifts in fortunes of the continent. He underscores Myrdal’s approach that “the economic problems cannot be studied in isolation but only in their own demographic, social, and political settings.” (Myrdal, p ix)

Accordingly, his analysis is a unique blend of the economic framework of analysis and historical perspective being corroborated with rich empirical evidence at the continent, regional, and country levels.

The book deals with technical serious limitations.” He explains why Myrdal and many of his contemporaries got their prospects wrong. “Myrdal’s Asian Drama, too, was written from a European perspective.” Also, “he did not show any awareness that latecomers to industrialization, such as Russia and Japan, narrowed the gap in a much shorter period.” Moreover, West-based Asia watchers focused on the under-appreciated strength of political institutions to deal with government failures. Nayyar, in contrast, presents a comparison of the diverse economic approaches at sub-regional levels; namely East, Southeast, South, and West Asia with country-level analysis of 14 economies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka in South Asia; China, Taiwan, and South Korea in East Asia; Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam in Southeast Asia; and Turkey in West Asia. These countries have followed very different trajectories on their path to structural transformation.

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