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## Book Reviews

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**Sandra Halperin, *War and Social Change in Modern Europe: The Great Transformation Revisited*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xxv + 510 pp. £60.00/\$90.00 hardback, £21.99/\$33.00 paperback.**

**John Keane, *Global Civil Society?* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xiii + 220 pp. £40.00/\$55.00 hardback, £14.99/\$21.99, paperback.**

These two books point out new directions in development studies. We need to reject post-war ideas of gradual evolutionary change and ever widening progress, Sandra Halperin argues. She believes that Europe proves her point. Tremendous growth occurred during the eighteenth century. Based largely on growing domestic demand, it eventually produced an industrial revolution. But domestic based growth posed too many dangers for Europe's aristocrats and landowning elites, already wary of attempts by absolutist monarchs to protect the welfare of ordinary people by among other things regulating markets upon which they depended. The French Revolution provided these elites the opportunity to gain the upper hand politically and economically. In its wake they promoted nation states.

This is the first of many challenges Halperin throws at conventional historical accounts of contemporary development and change. In addition, she argues that contrary to the assertions of many Marxists, the Industrial Revolution failed to fundamentally transform the grip on power held by aristocrats and landowners. A new industrial bourgeoisie did not rule. Even at the start of the twentieth century the old elites still dominated most governments in Europe (p. 11). In fact feudal influences remained pervasive throughout European societies until they were swept away by World War II.

Accordingly, the dominance of industry by these elites produced a very different form of industrialization during the nineteenth century than a reading of eighteenth century transformations might have suggested. Instead of focusing on expanding domestic markets, Europe's ruling classes deliberately restricted the geographical reach and social impact of industrialization. Incomes were kept low and workers were not permitted to consume the products they produced. Instead ruling classes focused on production for export. Contrary to popular perceptions, industrial development in Europe bore strong similarities to Third World development today. In accounting for these similarities, Halperin stresses her disagreement with dependency and World Systems theorists.

Development and underdevelopment are not society wide phenomena. There are many countries that we now regard as belonging to an industrial core that began their transformation as raw material producers. Instead these phenomena should more properly be associated with classes within or across societies (p. 279). Dependency theorists too often just stress the stranglehold of foreign interests. Halperin's argument is that change came mostly from tackling the dominance of domestic elites, distributing the gains of economic activity more widely, and raising overall living standards (pp. 279–80).

European industrialization until 1945 mirrors development in much of the Third World today. Huge disparities existed between the mass of people and their feudal elites, and economic activity focused on production for external markets or on the export of capital for investment externally. Ruling classes rightly feared what empowering their masses might mean for their own privileges and hold on power. The Napoleonic Wars had provided them a salutary lesson. The mobilization of mass armies to defeat Napoleon raised mass expectations of social change and improvement beyond anything ruling classes were prepared to provide. They enfranchised a growing proportion of the new middle classes in order to buy support but never their working classes. Revolutions in 1830 and 1848 were reminders of the dangers they faced, so too the post

World War I revolutions. In every instance, ruling classes prioritized maintenance of the existing social order (p. 231).

Nonetheless, export production as a strategy for development proved unsustainable. The social conflicts it generated became increasingly difficult to contain. Contrary to Karl Polanyi's 1944 assertion that the nineteenth century was a period of unprecedented peace, Halperin ably documents a very different European reality. In fact Europe endured more conflicts than in the preceding century. Export oriented industrialization had severe limitations that became all the more alarming as industrial rivalries intensified and export markets revealed weaknesses as engines for growth. The consequences are well known — world wars, fascism and imperial forms of protectionism. The nexus broke only with the wartime mobilization of Europe's masses for the second occasion within a short space of time. Consequently World War II decisively tipped the balance of power towards the masses in a way never previously experienced (pp. 245–8).

The results, says Halperin, were staggering. Per capita output doubled and the benefits of growth became more widely diffused (p. 237). All of Europe experienced transformation — not just its West — one reason why democratization in much of Eastern Europe required only a 'velvet' revolution (p. 263). It is the world wars that divide Europe from the Third World, not the lack of savings, entrepreneurial skills or skilled labour. War finally made social democracy possible in Europe by shifting the balance of class power (p. 242–8). Job opportunities in service sectors swelled the ranks of the middle class. New technologies and the availability of consumer products decreased differences between classes. Greater access to education similarly opened pathways to middle class status. Health care and social services, narrowing pay differentials, lower house rents and greater employment security transformed working class living standards and national economies, expanded domestic markets, made growth sustainable after initial reconstruction, and stabilized national politics (pp. 252–62).

Halperin does not regard Europe's experience as inevitable. It could so easily have been different. But she does believe there are lessons to be learned. Elites always tend to monopolize gains and protect their privileges. They block the development of human resources, the application of new technologies, and the distribution of resources. The crises their actions generate produce either retrenchment, political reaction and stagnation — as Europe experienced for half of the twentieth century — or the breakdown of traditional structures and widening social access to resources (p. 268). 'Is history now repeating itself?' Halperin asks. Does globalization represent an attempt by a new elite to monopolize the benefits, to once more focus on export activities, and to capture for itself many of the gains social democracy made available to increasingly urbanized mass societies?

Halperin thinks it does, and lays part of the blame on the failure of the US to democratize itself in the same manner as Europe. Its higher wages were paid for by higher prices, a strategy that quickly became unsustainable when global industrial competition returned in the 1970s. Hence the push by US businesses to end restrictions on capital movements, to deregulate industries and markets and to re-emphasize export-oriented growth. If history is repeating itself, then the prognosis is not good. Past class compromises were only reached after mass mobilization for war (pp. 292–4).

John Keane is similarly circumspect in outlining the prospects for a global civil society. He acknowledges that civil societies are unstable and susceptible to hubris, and that there is no natural tendency towards harmony, let alone everlasting human existence (p. 205). Civil societies are a product of the Great Transformation that preoccupies Halperin. 'Societies', Keane notes, 'have now evolved to enable a ground swell of better fed, housed, educated, healthy people able to take the initiative in ways better suited to the large mass urban societies we are fast becoming' (p. 1).

Although we commonly regard civil societies as the product of social movements and non-government organizations (NGOs), Keane refuses to divorce market forces from the equation. Societies, he says, are too complex for central planning, and businesses are just as embedded within civil societies as NGOs. Their interactions are similarly lubricated by norms such as

trust, reliability, honesty, group commitment and non-violence. Markets are necessary to organize durable civil societies (pp. 66–77).

But markets also contribute to social inequalities that can destabilize civil societies. Businesses are often speculative and profit hungry (pp. 89–90). So too are many NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). Global civil society possesses no parliament, army, police or justice system. Its structures are fragmented, often bureaucratic, unrepresentative and unaccountable, wracked by jurisdictional disputes, and — in the case of NGOs and CSOs — understaffed and short of funds (pp. 98–9). These institutional weaknesses are compounded by their own plural freedoms. They can be misused and abused, even by those designated to protect them (pp. 155–6).

Worse, civil societies are unevenly distributed and not generally global. The excluded, Keane reminds us, feel that they live under the shadow of the West; certainly they are uprooted by the dynamism of foreign interventions and victimized by uncivil wars (pp. 138–41). Hence the deficit of legitimacy global civil society faces. With no binding world values, it is threatened by manipulators who take advantage of resentments and freedoms by waving the sword of ideologies above the heads of others (p. 142). Consequently global civil society is a wish that has not yet been granted to the world (p. 145). The institutions of civil societies are difficult to construct or reconstruct. They cannot be planned or legislated from above. They require time, and government services to complement their grassroots activities. Unfortunately, corporations are often reluctant to invest in infrastructure wrecked by war (pp. 160–2).

For all his foreboding, Keane is determined to demonstrate the value of what humans have so far accomplished, even if imperfectly. The globalization of the media, he says, can deepen the feeling of belonging to one world with one fate and the sense of human oneness with nature. It can also help distribute freedoms and civility (p. 163). Like the media, some businesses present themselves as a dictatorship of logos and homogeneity, but they also accentuate global diversity and promote a greater sense of plurality. Globalization blurs boundaries. It makes people aware of other ways of living, of other fates. It shakes parochialism. Above all it gives a sense of urgency to creating a global civil society and ensuring greater democratization, especially as public spaces are often filled by unaccountable organizations that aggravate civil societies by causing environmental damage rather than sustainable social use. Global public spheres, Keane says, help monitor the exercise of power and put matters of representation, accountability and legitimacy on the political agenda (pp. 167–74).

If Halperin has successfully reinterpreted the origins of the Great Transformation, then Keane has ably demonstrated how far that transformation has yet to go in order to be sustainable.

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**Gerd Junne and Willemijn Verkoren (eds), *Postconflict Development: Meeting New Challenges*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005. vii + 370 pp. \$59.95 hardback, \$25.00 paperback.**

Many developing countries have gone through periods of civil war, not only to achieve political independence from the colonial era but also, and perhaps more frequently, in the period thereafter. In post-conflict situations warfare has come to an end, at least temporarily. Unfortunately, in about half the cases countries revert to violence within five to ten years. The time may have passed when post-war development was seen in technocratic terms, as restoring the *status quo ante*, linking post-war reconstruction of destroyed social and economic infrastructure to pre-war social and political structures. In as far as such power structures were highly biased, by sector, region or patronage employment systems, and may have been at the root of the violent conflict, such restoration may merely rebuild the preconditions for the next round of violent conflict. The present book thus seeks to draw a wider perspective of peace building, emergency help and long-term development. Different agencies focus on different

tasks and this implies biases in terms of priorities, capabilities, blind spots and risks (p. 4). In many cases co-operation and co-ordination among donors is made difficult because negative assessments of some dimensions or aspects can be used as arguments for non-involvement of other agencies. In addition, the local counterpart situation in terms of staff and functioning institutions is certain to be relatively weak. However, without longer-term development poverty is likely to increase and this may feed the next round of violent conflict.

The book takes a sector approach to post-conflict development. Invited authors were apparently asked to set the agenda and sketch the components of a more integrated approach to post-war reconstruction and development policy, paying specific attention to social and inequality dimensions of activities in the sectors covered (p. 11). While simultaneity of activities seems desirable some sequencing of priorities is unavoidable. The following fields are covered: security, building state institutions, developing local governance, re-establishing the rule of law, reconstructing infrastructure, the role of the media in war and peace building, reforming education, reviving health care and protecting the environment. Three chapters deal more generally with economic policy for rebuilding peace (Kamphuis), financing reconstruction, and donor assistance. Three chapters are in the nature of (too limited) country case studies on El Salvador, Mozambique and Cambodia. The book concludes with sketching an ambitious action research programme for the future, seeking to draw lessons from experience and best practices. The lengthy list of policy dilemmas ensures that the time needed will be long and the chances of reaching consensus will be slim.

The subject matter in all areas covered has an extended history in development studies and development practice preceding the violent conflict stage, and readers would be better advised to consult relevant sector literature in full. This is not to deny that a number of authors have solid first hand and long-term field experience under trying conditions. The Kamphuis contribution is analytically helpful. She distinguishes four sectors: the international aid community, the formal economy, the informal economy and the criminal economy. This framework is used to analyse patterns of demands and requirements between these sectors and to analyse winners and losers of a range of post-war development activities (pp. 186–7). A general issue is whether during the armed conflict the social structures behind sector policies of the past have materially changed so as to permit changes in entrenched policies. A massive influx of donor influence peddling through conditionality on resources made available may be expected. In as far as the post-conflict development effort is spearheaded by the foreign military ‘peacekeeper’, it could well be that the lessons from forty years of development assistance will not be learned. One of the main lessons is that imposed conditionality rarely worked in countries with a functioning governance structure, however imperfect. What are the chances of it working better where much of civil society has been destroyed during the armed conflict?

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**Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004. ix + 138 pp. £14.99/\$22.95 paperback.**

Adding to the stream of publications over the past decade on civil society, Michael Edwards has written a passionate essay on what he calls the ‘civil society debate’. The aim was to provide more clarity about how the concept has been used and abused, and how it can be used even more productively. For those not familiar with his background, Edwards has worked with various key international donor organizations (including Save the Children, Ford Foundation, and the World Bank) and has played a central role in triggering critical debate about the role and impact of development NGOs (*Making a Difference*, 1992; *Beyond the Magic Bullet*, 1994) and about the future role of the international aid system (*Future Positive*, 1999).

The scholarly and activist 'civil society debate' has probably been going on for an entire generation now, but it seems to have increased in recent years. Embraced by the progressive political parties in Latin America in the early 1980s and later by oppositional groups in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, civil society was the source of hope and liberation. Civil society became synonymous with freedom, democratic politics, social justice, and many other 'good' assets. But civil society was soon also touted by free market advocates who were pleased to drastically reduce the role of the state in the economy: civil society possessed the potential to take over many of its functions. Although much of this euphoria has to be seen in proper proportion, civil society is still a powerful concept to explore and debate.

The central concern of the book is that the term civil society often has been simplified and reduced by equating it to the totality of associational life. At the same time it is considered in many circles as an inspiring idea, even a 'big idea' of our times, which will contribute to a better world. As many good things come in threes, the author disaggregates the concept of civil society by identifying three different theoretical positions that, taken together, have shaped the civil society debate in terms of who the actors are, what they stand for and what they are expected to do. Explaining and exploring these three layers is the centrepiece of the book.

The first model discussed in the book is the neo-Tocquevillian or 'third sector' approach of associational life, in which civil society is formed by voluntary associations. This idea goes back to the writings of Ferguson and is still a very popular approach by which one can look empirically at those 'civic organizations' that interact with the state or with public life in general. Edwards points here in particular to the rise of neoconservative associations in the United States, especially related to the religious pro-life movement in combination with conservative think tanks. Many (critical) references are made to Putnam's approach that voluntary associations generate social capital, which in turn is necessary to build a 'good society'.

This good society is central to Edwards' second layer of civil society theory: the normative approach. What is a 'good society' actually expected to be and which values is it supposed to pursue, protect and also to reject? In this model it is important to be explicit about these norms and to what extent uncivil elements in civil society can be clearly demarcated to prevent all collective action automatically being put under the umbrella of promoting civic values. For example, violent action is often exclusionary, so is a context of inequality or other discriminating actions, which can lead to the undermining of a good or strong civil society.

These two theoretical approaches have been examined and analysed before in more detail by authors such as Cohen and Arato (1992), and more recently by Howell and Pearce (2001). However, less explored in these volumes is the third theoretical model of Edwards' trinity, which deals with civil society as the public sphere of dialogue, civic engagement, policy advocacy, and public debate. This public sphere is essential as it unites civil society and politics, capacities and processes, thereby confronting the ongoing undermining processes of conformism, cynicism and fatalism. Moreover, he warns that this public sphere is under threat, as it has been weakened over the past few years by privatization and the corporate domination of internet and publishing cartels. But despite having been weakened it is still at the heart of a democratic society.

As we know from his previous publications, the author is a born optimist, so it comes as no surprise that he concludes that the combination of the three schools of civil society thinking will eventually all contribute in some way to deal with the main problems of our time and contribute to positive social change. Despite all the confusion generated by the various conceptualizations of civil society, the conclusion is that we should not try to debate endlessly about the real meaning of civil society but accept the confusion, explore the complexity and richness of the concept and turn the lack of consensus into a fruitful debate.

The strong point of the book is its modest length and non-academic style. For those unfamiliar with the recent discussions on civil society, and looking for a light introduction to the topic, this book will offer many useful pointers and indicate the main authors in the debate and how to deal with the complexity of the concept. The book also recommends itself to those

who feel intimidated by the academic civil society debate: the author has collected some nice examples and inspires the reader to think in new directions.

The book does have its downside. The argumentation is inevitably at times superficial and can therefore become a bit annoying. Moreover, students of development studies might be disappointed, as many examples are rather Northern-focused, and then mainly from the North American East Coast, an area also quite well analysed by Robert Putnam (the most frequently criticized author in this book). This Northern bias actually is a bit surprising, given the author's background in the development business. It reduces the potential for applying the 'civil society debate' to many Southern societies that are so much more deeply affected by conflict, competing interests, inequality and a lack of democratic politics.

On balance, this ambitious and compact book provides a very useful summary of the ongoing civil society debate and will appeal to a broad audience motivated to contribute in some way or another to 'positive social change'.

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**Gordon Crawford, *Foreign Aid and Political Reform*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. xi + 293 pp. \$79.95 hardback.**

In this book Gordon Crawford sets out to examine the greatly 'increased linkage of development assistance to the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance' during the 1990s. This certainly is in great contrast with the 1960s, when this reviewer was a British aid official, and in the immediate aftermath of the end of colonial rule, there was a great deal of sensitivity about being too intrusive in political matters. The main political factors influencing aid were the political/strategic considerations of the Cold War, which were as likely to involve supporting non-democratic anti-communist regimes as promoting more democratic ones.

Having surveyed the literature and defined the concepts, the volume moves on to examine the two main aspects of the policy — the pursuit of these objectives through positive programmes ('political aid') in Part II and the use of aid conditionality and sanctions related to political behaviour and governance in Part III.

The study includes a quite thorough analysis, based on a detailed examination of four donors (UK, US, EU and Sweden), a sufficient sample to illustrate the range of donor experience. The detailed empirical evidence covers the period 1992–94.

The study recognizes that democratization must be largely an internal process, and that therefore the impact of aid is likely to be at best modest. However, the study finds that even such modest progress is compromised by a lack of commitment on both sides of the aid relationship. On the donor side, political reform competes with other objectives, both commercial and strategic. Also, the effectiveness of aid as an instrument for reform is constrained by the complexity of reform processes, which are somewhat obscured by the use of ill-defined concepts, such as 'civil society', a term which is widely used but typically imprecisely defined.

In light of his exploration, the author offers a series of fifteen proposals for strengthening the impact of 'political aid' on the promotion of democracy, and six proposals for strengthening conditionality, or sanctions in support of democracy. In other words, despite the weaknesses observed in the actual experience, the author believes that the promotion of democracy through

aid is desirable and could be improved if his suggestions were adopted. However, the author also, modestly, recognizes that his conclusions are necessarily tentative and would benefit from more study, particularly in-depth recipient case studies.

The recommendations regarding the way forward are not entirely persuasive. The problem is that in evaluating aid, as with any other policy instrument, it is necessary to assess whether there is a consistency between the objectives chosen and the strength of the instruments available. All the evidence suggests that aid is not a strong instrument, both because of its minor weight among the factors determining national policy and the well documented evidence (including that presented in this volume) about the difficulty of using such an indirect instrument to influence outcomes.

Aid programmes have taken on an increasing complexity of objectives, including the political goals discussed in this volume, plus the specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty alleviation, national 'ownership' of policy, environmental goals, etc. Donor ambitions are now somewhat analogous to the old five-year development plans — the aspirations are admirable, but the gap between objectives and means results in a utopianism which ultimately discredits the process.

The task is sometimes made to look less daunting by the implicit assumption that these goals are consistent with each other (for example, that the achievement of health and education goals will bring about poverty reduction, or that democratization will further growth and poverty reduction). However, this is not necessarily the case. Some countries which have impressive achievements in term of poverty reduction and the MDGs have performed poorly according the donor criteria of democracy and governance (for example, China and Vietnam) — this does not suggest that Communist political institutions are either necessary or sufficient for poverty reduction, but it does demonstrate that in some instances they go together. And even where it seems likely that there may be a longer term consistency of goals, over the short period that is normally covered by donor programmes, progress in one area may be combined with regression in another.

Moreover, the historical record suggests that the movement towards democracy has often not been linear — periods of radical, but non-democratic change have often been the precursor of the eventual achievement of democratic institutions. It is not only that, as the volume suggests, the tactics of supporting democratization are complex and difficult to programme, but it is doubtful if there is a typically credible strategic vision of how progress is likely to occur in particular countries. Recently, where there have been dramatic shifts towards democracy (as in Ukraine and Georgia), foreign aid has not been a significant factor.

The need for a more modest and cautious, but achievable, vision of the role of aid might be a more appropriate conclusion to be derived from the material presented, rather than a reinforced programme of social and political engineering. Surely donors should not support nasty regimes, particularly where they are also economically dysfunctional. But meddling in local politics is unlikely to be effective and tends to add more confusion to an already overloaded agenda.

The study is well-written, the discussion reasonable and the complexities of the aid relationship well-documented. The book can be recommended to those wishing to deepen their understanding of the relationship of aid to political reform.

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**Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton (eds), *Culture and Public Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004. xv + 441 pp. £14.95 paperback.**

The papers included in this book were first presented at a conference in Washington, DC in 2002. The objective of this conference was to bring together distinguished economists, anthropologists and sociologists to examine why and how culture matters in development, and its implications for public action. The participants included Amartya Sen, A. Appadurai, Mary

Douglas, and Jean-Philippe Platteau, among others. With a few exceptions (notably the contribution of Sen, and the introductory and concluding essays by the editors), there is little evidence of a cross-disciplinary dialogue. This is of course not to suggest that many of the contributions do not add substantially to this debate. They do but largely from each author's own disciplinary perspective.

The introductory essay by the editors, Rao and Walton, 'Culture and Public Action: Relationality, Equality of Agency, and Development', is impressive as a distillation of various contributions in a clearly specified thematic structure. The key questions are: what is valued in terms of well-being, who does the valuing, and why do social and economic factors interact with culture to limit access to a good life. They address these questions with admirable clarity and coherence, drawing upon various contributions to this volume.

Amartya Sen's essay 'How Does Culture Matter?' is scholarly and illuminating. He first draws attention to culture as constitutive of development (enrichment of human lives through literature, music, and fine arts), the links between culture and economic behaviour (work ethics, entrepreneurial initiatives, and attitudes towards risks), the culture of political participation and social solidarity, and cultural influences on values and norms (non-discrimination between boys and girls). He then broadens the discourse by arguing against cultural determinism, since culture is non-homogeneous, non-static, and interactive. He is, for example, emphatic that 'the cultural damning of the prospects of development in Ghana and other countries in Africa is simply overhasty pessimism with little empirical foundation. For one thing, it does not take into account how rapidly many countries — South Korea included — have changed rather than remaining anchored to some fixed cultural parameters' (p. 47). In the context of cultural globalization, he addresses two major concerns. The first is whether market-related culture is vulgar and impoverishing, and the second is whether the asymmetry of power between the West and the rest is likely to result in destruction of local cultures. Recognizing that the forces of market-exchange and division of labour are hard to resist, and the threat to local cultures is real, he argues that the resolution lies not in banning cultural influences from abroad but in participatory decision-making 'on the kind of society people want to live in, based on open discussion, with adequate opportunity for the expression of minority positions' (p. 53). This is an incomplete response as it steers clear of the difficulties of participatory decision-making in a community with a high degree of socio-economic differentiation.

In 'The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition', Appadurai makes a spirited case for strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity among the poor, so that they might find the resources to overcome their poverty. This resonates with Hirschman's (1970) terminology of 'voice', with the assertion that aspiration is essentially a cultural capacity. Appadurai elaborates '... as the poor seek to strengthen their voices as a cultural capacity, they will need to find those levers of metaphor, rhetoric, organization, and public performance that will work well in their cultural worlds' (p. 67). He cites some illustrative evidence of how the terms of recognition of the poor and their capacity to aspire changed through women's savings groups in Mumbai. In discussions about savings, '... local horizons of hope and desire enter a dialogue with other designs for the future and poor persons (often women) crossing massive cultural boundaries are able to discuss their aspirations in the most concrete of forms, in conversations about why some members are unable to save regularly, about why some misuse their access to community funds ... and about how money relates to trust, power, and community' (p. 75). Some evidence from fieldwork in Maharashtra and Haryana, however, points to a different process of empowerment. While culture matters, it is *moderate* but *sustained* economic betterment through self-help groups of women that has a more significant role in transforming their lives (Gaiha et al., 2005).

A third interesting contribution is by Abraham and Platteau: 'Participatory Development: Where Culture Creeps In'. It is a detailed but critical review of participatory approaches to development as a new panacea that donor agencies (such as the World Bank) have endorsed with considerable enthusiasm and resources in recent years. Several striking illustrations are

given of why this is likely to be a dangerous and self-defeating strategy — especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Consider a tribal or lineage-based community, characterized by personalization of relationships, other-regarding norms, strong beliefs in the role of ancestors and supernatural powers, and respect of status and rank differences. Any intervention that has the potential of eroding some of these characteristics (for example, weakening the status and power of traditional elites) would be self-defeating — they may claim priority to new resources by authority, force or guile, or by simply boycotting the intervention. Even in a highly socio-economically differentiated economy in which tribal chieftains are replaced by a new elite of successful entrepreneurs, the outcomes may be similar (akin to an ultimatum game in which the elite divides a pie that would be lost in the event that the rest of the community does not accept the share offered). A case is then made for supporting small artisans or entrepreneurs but without channelling the resources through community-based initiatives, as large-scale funding in a weak or corrupt state is likely to arouse envy and predation. While this is a persuasive argument, I must confess that I do not share the authors' pessimism. Substantial empirical evidence exists to support the view that even moderate institutional reforms have a large economic payoff (Gaiha et al., 2005).

The volume ends with a superb synthesis by Rao and Walton in the Conclusion: 'Implications of a Cultural Lens for Public Policy and Development Thought'. Without overlooking the disagreements of various contributors, a broad synthesis points to two major shifts in development policy. One is a shift from equality of opportunity to 'equality of agency', such as a change of focus from individuals to group-based phenomena that shape individual aspirations, capabilities and the distribution of power and agency. The second is to ensure that the poor and other subordinate groups have voice and access to a good life. The overall conclusion that '... blending an understanding of cultural and social dynamics into the mix of economics and politics that have traditionally dominated development thought can shed a little additional light on how to do it better' (p. 370) is sobering.

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**Henry A. Giroux, *The Abandoned Generation: Democracy beyond the Culture of Fear*. New York, NY, and Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 234 pp. £15.99/\$24.95 hardback.**

In this short, well-researched book, Giroux blisters democracy in the United States with his glaring and powerful gaze. Building upon the theme of his previous work, *Private Spaces/Public Lives: Democracy Beyond 9–11*, the author posits that the suffering of millions of Americans (and in particular children) has become a private affair, largely invisible, and is thus an issue not being publicly discussed or solved. Fear is being used to create a false sense of community and to suppress any critical examination of social responsibility (p. 50).

Giroux's prescription for a vibrant democracy is a well-educated, engaged, skilled citizenry that publicly considers and discusses social problems and their solutions. He laments that the majority of children (in particular children of colour and the poor) are not being educated, but are being trained to be consumers and to work at low-paying jobs, at best. At worst, these children will die, will be jailed or will continue to live in abject poverty.

There are valuable insights in *The Abandoned Generation*. Giroux synthesizes many different facts in making his argument that civil liberties are at risk, that globalization is menacing (because it makes a commodity of virtually everything and cannot be controlled by any one nation), that democracy has become synonymous with market economy and capitalism, that racism and gender bias continue unbridled and that the marginalized poor are being judged and blamed for being weak (instead of being helped) or are being jailed. None of these assertions are new to those who keep abreast of US domestic social policy, foreign affairs and education.

What Giroux has done best in this book is to consolidate writing from various sources, interpreting its relevance for young people and children. One of the valuable aspects of this book is its compilation of sobering statistics. Many states spend more on building jails than on building universities (p. 100). Bill Gates amassed more wealth in 1998 than the combined net worth of the poorest 45 per cent of American households (p. 57). A sixteen year old black man faces a 29 per cent chance of spending time in prison compared to 4 per cent for a white man the same age (p. 135). Despite the characterization of schools as dangerous places, only about ten deaths, out of approximately 2,000 children killed annually, occur at or near a school, whereas more than 300 teenagers are killed by guns elsewhere (p. 95). The typical American works 350 hours (almost nine full weeks) longer than a typical European (p. 109). The conclusions Giroux draws are disturbing and dire ones for the state of American democracy and for its youth. He correctly recognizes that a renewed sense of hope is necessary for those interested in changing the current course of decline (pp. 43, 62). Otherwise, it is too easy to sink into helplessness, despair and cynicism.

But unlike the strong, confident, concrete language used to condemn the extant situation, Giroux reverts to theoretical, academic and idealistic language when proposing solutions. 'A new politics must attempt to publicly confront oppressive relations, explain them, situate them historically, engage how they operate in the intersection between the local and the global, and refuse to accept their inevitability. Pedagogy of persuasion and transformation becomes crucial to any viable politics of democratization' (p. 65). However easily one might agree with the author's call 'for a profoundly committed sense of collective resistance' or however fervently one might believe that 'we must not give up on our imagination' (p. 197), there remains a gnawing unease that this is not enough. Sadly, there is no blueprint suggested for concretely implementing the recommendations proposed by the author.

*The Abandoned Generation* is readily accessible to the non-academic reader, although Giroux could have made it more so by defining the terms *agency* and *agents*, which are used consistently throughout the book. There is only one reference that provides a definition of *agency* and it appears late, on page 142.<sup>1</sup> Yet *agency* as used elsewhere in the book does not always seem consistent with that definition. See, for example, p. 37 where Giroux speaks of '*political agency*', p. 116 '... both Enid and Rebecca seem to define their *sense of agency* exclusively around consuming', and p. 120 where he writes about, '... struggle over identity, *agency*, power relations and the future'.

The *Culture of Fear* is an obvious reference to the fear of terrorism post 9–11. Although it is most likely correct that fear has been a ruse to speed up the current administration's conservative political agenda, the places with American democracy described in *The Abandoned Generation* have been taking place incrementally over many years. Given that democracy as

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1. Agency, as Lawrence Grossberg observes '... involves the possibilities of action as interventions into the process by which reality is continually being transformed and power enacted... [I]n Marx's terms, the problem of agency is the problem of understanding how people make history in conditions not of their own making. Who gets to make history? That is, agency involves relations of participation and access, the possibilities of moving into particular sites of activity and power, and of belonging to them in such a way as to be able to enact their powers' (1996: 99–100).

envisaged by Giroux has been declining for several decades, one might rightly ask whether it is more correct to state that all generations in America have been abandoned.

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**Dennis Dijkzeul and Yves Beigbeder (eds), *Rethinking International Organizations: Pathology and Promise*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003. xiv + 350 pp. £50.00/\$75.00 hardback, £18.50/\$27.50 paperback.**

Many international organizations have a troublesome record of ineffectiveness and/or inefficiency. The functioning of the United Nations (UN) in relation to promoting respect for human rights or advancing development is a case in point. Lack or wastage of financial resources, dependence at times on strongly unwilling member states, anachronistic voting and other procedures, politicization and corruption are among the main causes of the poor record and all too often hamper positive progress.

Dijkzeul and Beigbeder's book takes a 'pathology' approach to international organizations. It scrutinizes cases of 'dysfunctional management (causes of disease)' that result in 'negative outcomes (symptoms of disease)' in order to provide explanations that can inform remedies. Most interesting is that all contributions to the book add management and administration (business and public) perspectives to the international relations angles that more commonly inform or frame analyses of international organizations. Accordingly questions of budget, human resource management, quality of staffing and performance assessment, fraud and corruption, and programme management and implementation are reviewed. However, when suggesting possible avenues towards change, the 'politics' of the matters at stake tend to be neglected at times.

The cases reviewed are fairly random and relate among others to: the role of the US in financing the UN; attempts to transform the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the work of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services in combating fraud and corruption; the record of UN civilian police; non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and human rights organizations. The attempt to present these cases on the basis of what is claimed to be an above average volume of empirical data strongly whets the reader's appetite for a follow-up project that would further expand the ideas underlying the book on the basis of more systematic and complete empirical data.

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**Jane Collins, *Threads, Gender, Labor and Power in the Global Apparel Industry*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003. xiv + 207 pp. \$18.00/£13.00 paperback.**

*Threads* makes a welcome contribution to the literature on the ways that global industries are shaping the lives of workers across the world. It weaves together discussions of firm strategies in producing a global though segmented labour market, with workers' perspectives on working and organizing in the new context. The main question the book raises is how competition in the garment industry has reshaped the ways that firms organize production and marketing activities,

the ways that workers experience these changes in work organization, and the impacts on their opportunities for collective organization. It does so by using a multi-sited research method, with case studies drawn from two firms with very different development strategies — the first with both control and production located in the US, and the second with centralized control through marketing and branding, and totally decentralized production in numerous locations in ‘emerging economies’ in the South. The author carries out a commodity chain analysis, combining it with case studies on worker communities in two locations. This approach allows her to bring out the similarities and contrasts in labour relations, working conditions, and opportunities for organization in locations in Virginia in the US and Aguascalientes in Mexico.

The main analytical contribution of the study, in my opinion, lies in this combined approach. The theoretical framework provides a succinct overview of the various discussions that make up the field of industrial restructuring, pulling together the discussions of local industrial cluster development and international value chains in a useful way for students and young scholars starting work in this field. It not only provides the company or firm perspective, which is quite dominant in research in this field nowadays, but also includes theories of segmented labour markets (particularly gendered) and issues of changing work processes, which tie into earlier discussions on labour processes and technological change, as well as the (limited) opportunities for collective organization of workers.

A particularly striking analysis is the way the author contrasts firm strategies, showing that the firm which embedded itself most within local communities was left more vulnerable than companies that used a global strategy of decentralizing production, moving into labour markets with much lower wage costs, and moving the risks of production and quality control to subcontractor firms. She also shows convincingly that the ‘high road’ of flexible specialization and quality circles production is not necessary for high fashion garment production. More intensified work process controls (statistical process control) combined with stricter measurement of quality of work for individual operators are mechanisms used by firms to produce high quality products, leaving workers with low income jobs that increase stress.

Her perspective on the industry suggests that the garment industry may not provide the impetus for further economic development as it has done in the past. The tight hold of the transnational firms limits the opportunities for local subcontracting firms to upgrade their activities and to profit from collective learning strategies in their regional clusters. This conclusion is supported by recent studies on how local firms are integrated into exporting networks in Mexico (van Dooren, 2003) and in Southeast Asia (Smakman, 2003).

Although work for women is an opportunity for expanding entitlements, the author shows that the vulnerability of workers remains. Her poignant conclusion is that wage levels lie at about one-third of a locally determined family wage level in Mexico, forcing several family members to combine incomes to survive. For women-headed households, this is not a realistic expectation, so that even when employed, women workers experience poverty. That this may be a more common strategy among firms is seen from the experience of low-waged workers in the US who are prevented from obtaining decent housing and minimum consumption levels (Ehrenreich, 2001).

An interesting conclusion to come out of Collins’ book, although not very new, is that collective organization among women workers is embedded much more in community-based initiatives rather than deriving from classical trade unions. Using examples from the northern states of Mexico, she shows convincingly that this provides women with platforms for raising combinations of reproductive and work issues, something denied by the existing trade unions in the localities studied. However, the perspective of working women themselves is largely absent from the data presented. Particularly, the effects of gendered domestic regimes on women’s agency are hardly discussed. This is a marked contrast with a recent volume by Chhachhi (2004), who shows that women leaders have been able to build up awareness of entitlements and rights among women, because of the freedom from domestic responsibilities, support from their families, and male support in dealing with management and local bureaucracies. She also shows how entitlements, which working women build up, are eroded by job losses among both men

and women in the course of industrial restructuring; not only in the labour market but also within the household.

Although this book should be on everyone's list, a final note concerns the segmentation between the research community in the US and Europe. The author concentrates on research done in this area in North and South America, but makes no use of the European research done in the area of gender and the international division of labour by such well-known authors as Pearson and Elson, and Fröbel, Heinrich and Kreye.

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### Thomas P. Bernstein and Xiaobo Lü, *Taxation without Representation in Contemporary Rural China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xviii + 282 pp. £55.00 hardback.

The authors seek to examine the underlying factors responsible for deteriorating relations between the government and the peasants. The title of the book echoes the rallying cry of the American Revolution in 1776. The oppression of peasants in China is strikingly similar to the working class burdens which contributed to the outbreak of the French and Russian Revolutions.

One of the commendable aspects of *Taxation without Representation in Contemporary Rural China* is the inclusion of a historical overview of the association between taxation and peasants. As early as the eighteenth century, despite low formal taxes and reduced concessions, the peasants in China were unjustly burdened. This was due to local officials who sought to increase their personal gains by informal taxation which included customary fees and assessments. Bernstein and Lü identify the continued existence of this burden on the peasants in the 1990s: 'Rural officials displayed much ingenuity in maintaining excessive extractions even while pretending to comply with regime demands' (p. 172).

Since 1980 there have been suggestions for a national Farmers' Association comprised of peasants in rural China. However, this has never materialized. Bernstein and Lü explain the refusal of the Chinese government to allow such an organization among peasants, 'as demonstrating their inferior and unequal status' (p. 231). Both authors believe such an institution would provide peasants with a voice and improve their socioeconomic status. Additionally, villagers need to be empowered and able to easily access legitimate organizations for redress of their grievances.

The study could have adopted a more comparative approach by including examples in rural India, Japan or other Asian countries. This would have highlighted the uniqueness or similarities of the gloomy scenario in rural China. Such a comparative approach would demonstrate the inherent problems in developing economies and offer possible solutions. One of the book's noteworthy features is the graphic presentation of data through figures and tables.

Additionally, the authors' arguments are considerably enhanced by the use of case studies and interviews with peasants from the various rural provinces.

China has always sought to project an image of a country which is consistently undertaking efforts to reconstruct its state. However, devising solutions and enforcing policies in rural China appear fruitless tasks. This is due to the income differences, intrarural diversities and the dichotomy between agricultural and industrializing areas. Rural economies in capitalist countries encounter similar challenges to rural China, but this study provides compelling evidence that Communist governance is terribly flawed.

The repercussions and pervasive nature of local and government malfeasance is well-documented in this book. This includes uncontrolled bureaucratic expansion, corruption and misspending which are mentioned in chapter 4 'Institutional Sources of Informal Tax Burdens'. Likewise, chapter 5 'Burdens and Resistance: Peasant Collective Action' considers the role of peasant leaders or cadres, whose responsibilities include collection of taxes, and how they act as a catalyst in the eruption of protests. This is important in understanding the nature of the discontent. The isolated incidents of cadres being killed demonstrate the desperation and frustration of these poverty-stricken peasants. This is indicative of an inflexible system and aloof leaders who are isolated from the woes of the poverty-stricken. Indeed, the glaring inefficiencies of the bureaucratic process include the harsh enforcement of exactions and absence of accountability which contribute to the frustration of the rural inhabitants.

The statistical and oral evidence provided by this book will generate overwhelming sympathy for the peasants who undertake, as a last resort, illegal and radical action including sit-ins, demonstrations, looting and blockades. The objective of the study is not to justify the actions of the peasants but to emphasize that their extreme actions stem from peaceful pleas in collective petitioning being consistently ignored by authorities.

This comprehensive volume cannot be easily dismissed as merely an academic study. Indeed, its startling revelations and bold analysis should be compulsory reading for leaders in China and other developing countries who are genuinely interested in social reform and who seek to prevent suffering of a critical sector of the working class.

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