

Green, D., & Luehrmann, L. (2003). Comparative Politics of the Third World: Linking Concepts and Cases. Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States.

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The abstract of the book introduces the dynamics in international politics and the understanding of the most debated words in the context of developing states, “democracy” and “globalization” (p. 1). The authors noted terrible changes in world politics, where Russia dropped from being a contributor to being a competitor of foreign aid, and the “isolationist US president became more internationalist after 9/11” (p. 2). The authors used a political interaction approach and comparative studies as means of study, where cross-national and case study approaches were employed to assess globalization, human rights, the environment, and disease in developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. They indicated the lack of consensus on the use of the terms “developing,” “less developed,” “underdeveloped,” and “Third World,” referring to the non-Western world.

Part 1 deals with historical legacies, pre-colonial history, colonialism, independence, or dependence, and links concepts and cases of comparative politics in Third World countries. On tracing the origin of politics in the Third World, the authors draw disagreements between historians on population boom, food production, and state societies and refer to them as “causal relationships” (p. 31). The authors shaped their study by identifying stateless societies that existed in case studies during ancient times, such as northern America and Masai in East Africa; state societies, such as Chibcha in Colombia, Panama, and Jamaica; and empires such as the Ottoman, Aztec, Inca, Great Zimbabwe, and Egyptian, and delineating how they exercised authority. China and Southeast Asia were identified as “the pioneers in the development of early naval capacities” (p. 35). The word ‘third world’ was connected to colonialism’s pride and dominance, “gold, God, and glory” (p. 51). The authors realized that the postcolonial world’s independence was not achieved because they suffered a lack of self-determination and economic and social development. “New leaders came to promise to improve standards of living, but economies were weak and under the direction of foreigners” (p. 65). Evidence from the case study in Mexico, Peru, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Iran, and China reflected that their pre-colonial economies and politics were powerful, but ethnicity division rocked the ability to resist colonialism, and neo-imperialism impeded the chances of economic development.

Part 2 introduces the chick or egg debate, “globalization as the cause or the cure for underdevelopment” in LDCs (p. 107). In the context of globalization, understood as “the spread of capitalism worldwide”, economic liberalization’s laissez-faire (let it be) allowed the penetration of the invisible hand, the ‘market forces’ promoting imbalanced trade and debts in LDCs. Dominant players argued that “LDCs should embrace globalization, raise growth in the international marketplace, and compete to attract foreign capital” (p. 117); however, critics argued that openness does not guarantee wealth; a country’s wealth depends less on ease of trade than it does on what is being traded. The authors evaluated the existence of low-paying jobs, environmental degradation, forced overtime, corporal punishment, and child labor experienced as a result of FDI in Thailand, Zimbabwe, Mexico, India, South Africa, and Pakistan. “Sweatshop belts” was the term used to refer to MNCs working from 0700 to 2300 hours. Aid, debt, prices, and politics were

identified as major threats to good governance in LDCs; free movement of labor was indicated to be the harbor of disease transmission; “the rapid transmission of diseases (including HIV) in Southern Africa is facilitated by a migrant labor system dated back to colonialism” (p. 153).

Part 3 deals with politics and political dynamics, with “the first wave being the expansion of democracy in the US and Western Europe, the second associated with independence and experimentation of democracy in Asia and Africa, and the third wave being the democratization of much of the world” (p. 185). In bringing ideas into action, LDCs emerged as the battlefield of the Cold War, and this weakened the system of governance. The communists settled for military aid to help the decolonization of LDCs, while the capitalists applied dollar diplomacy and SAPs to gain control over the post-colonial LDCs. In the cross-case study, SAPs had political, economic, and social setbacks that empowered civil society groups and opposition political parties to challenge the governance of revolutionary parties of “injustice and deprivation” (p. 233). This resulted in deep-rooted conflicts and civil wars plundering infrastructure, the loss of an active economic population, and the loss of peace and stability in Mexico, Peru, Iran, and Zimbabwe. The authors observed the revolutionary party grip on power using bullets instead of ballots against opposition parties; respect for civil and political rights was threatened; and totalitarianism was a term that was used to express the form of revolutionary party governance (p. 309). Centralization of power, corruption, and repression—the authors used the “zero-sum game,” referring to the rule of Mugabe against opposition parties in Zimbabwe (p. 337); cross-case study results revealed that regimes in retaliation perpetrated violence against the masses to retain power as economic liberalization brought about debt, unemployment, inflation, poverty, and social misery. In the case studies, the institutionalization of democracy in China, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, and Iran is not a happy one.

Part 4 deals with issues beyond the nation-state, which are sovereignty and the role of international organizations, global challenges and responses to environmental problems, human rights and refugees, and dealing with superpowers. The sovereignty of the nation-state, the “degree of noninterference in one’s affairs,” and the “Clinton Doctrine of humanitarian goals and human rights of suppression of crimes against humanity, i.e., mass rape, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, above claims of state sovereignty” (p. 361) are the grounds of fierce controversy in the book. Where classical humanitarian intervention and preemptive self-defense applied, the sovereignty of those particular states was violated. The authors observed the abuse of power in international government organizations, particularly the US and EU in the United Nations. The authors observed that developed states used international law to justify their dirty actions in developing states, such as the US war on terrorism in the Middle East.

Part 5 established that “terrorism is one of many challenges to humanity, but the basic threats to world peace are poverty, inequality, illiteracy, disease, and environmental degradation” (p. 453). All problems, whether economic or social, were linked to political deficiency, foreign aid, and an increase in the defense budget, cited as the best weapon against terrorism. The United States was advised to seek justice, not revenge.

The book reviewed the most controversial arguments on how politics, at every level, influences poverty. It established the consequences of capitalism in the international political economy, where self-interest was the motive of developed nation-states towards LDCs, not development. Developing nation-states are argued to be in dependency, not independence, as the developed states do have direct control of the international economy. The book is very important for students of peace and security studies, development studies, international affairs, and political science as it sets a clear picture of the international political system.