

**Third World Affairs 1987. Editor-in-Chief, Altaf Gauhar.** London: Third World Foundation for Social and Economic Studies, 1987. 534pp. ISBN 0-907962-38-6, ISSN 0267-2499. US\$39.

This annual volume, published by the Third World Foundation since 1985, is an eclectic collection of articles covering a wide spectrum of problems and issues related to the affairs of an equally diverse grouping of entities collectively known as the "Third World". However, the present selection of views, comments and analyses covers a variety of interconnected and universal themes to the extent that the resulting discussions assume global proportions far beyond its nominal Third World focus.

Economic, political and social issues linking the Third World to the rest of the interdependent global system of international capital and industrial structures are covered in the form of case studies usually preceded by an introductory essay delineating the salient features of the problem or issue in question. This is a particularly useful approach for the uninitiated. Moreover, there are specific case studies on special topics such as the consequences of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza which raise issues transcending the spatial and temporal confines of the particular case study, children's rights, and the Third World's educational problems.

The last section of the volume discusses three film festivals (Damascus, Havana and Hong Kong), ethical and aesthetic concerns in ethnographic film, and the development of an Islamic cinema in post-revolutionary Iran.

Regarding the closely concatenate problems and issues apparently emanating from the Third World, and which are of international relevance, the papers presented under the theme of "global monetarism and economic stabilization" are particularly illuminating, given the nature and extent of the debt crisis which exploded in 1982, portending to ossify the international financial system and disrupt national economies. With "debt fatigue" setting in on both creditors and debtors, the need to reform the international monetary system to one more conducive to achieving smooth and effective international adjustment, with an increasing role for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), cannot be stressed more. Even from a non-economic perspective, the significance of the papers is to be appreciated, given the broader social and political dimensions of the Third World's debt problems which are emasculating the domestic political autonomy of national governments while accentuating the tensions inherent in their international relations. Even in Southeast Asia where international indebtedness has yet to assume crisis proportions, its potential for destabilizing national security and disrupting political cohesion

in the face of “developmental failure” warrants sober attention being paid to the issues raised.

The section on “GATT Gambits” discusses the pressing issues in contention prior to the new “Uruguay Round” of multilateral trade negotiations. Recent trends toward bilateralism and protectionism seem to be undermining the multilateral trading system which has already been buffeted by exchange rate fluctuations. This calls for an enlightened dialogue between the developed and the developing nations, preferably within the GATT umbrella. Meanwhile, the controversial issue of trade in services remains to be settled. All these have serious implications in the developmental strategies of the newly industrializing countries (NICs) and near-NICs of Asia and elsewhere. Since the ongoing nation-building process of these countries is closely tied to their economic development based on export orientation and technological acquisition, trade issues tend to spill over into the domain of politics and governance.

The theme revolving around “economic sanctions” covers the nature of, the rationale for, and the operationalization of economic sanctions on errant states in the international community, with examples drawn from South Africa and the Middle East.

“Challenge of Peacemaking” deals with the intricacies of the peace process as manifested in Central America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and South Africa. The short account on the development of peace initiatives following the August 1985 Vietnamese announcement of its withdrawal in 1990, adds no new insight towards the solution of the Cambodian impasse. The author suggests that real progress could only occur when one or all of the three superpowers involved changes or modifies their intractable stance.

“Small States and Vulnerability” is concerned with the formidable political, economic, security, and societal issues faced by small nations with populations not exceeding one million. Embedded in a strategic environment dictated by geopolitical trends and overshadowed by superpower rivalries, small states find themselves contending with the dilemma of preserving community integrity and exercising resource control against security and economic dependence on the developed nations. With historical, geographic, and demographic constraints imposing structural limitations on the comparative advantage of their open economies, the fragility of their sovereignty and their vulnerability to both internal and external perturbations are highlighted in the essays, reviewing the Caribbean states and the Pacific islands as case studies. Tony Payne’s suggestion to work for “regionalisation” as opposed to “regionalism” as a measure to enhance national as well as sub-regional “resilience” is worth noting. The last paper deals with the plight of the Marshall Islanders caught in

the strategic web of America's earlier quest for "escalation dominance" in the nuclear arena. Apart from some insights into an apparent wellspring of psychological and political inspiration for the anti-nuclear movement in the Asia-Pacific setting, it raises the larger question of how dominant states should take into consideration the democratic rights and cultural heritages of the people in their "trust territories".

The series of papers appearing in the section called "Rethinking Refugee Problems" range from the very specific account of Vietnamese refugees in the "closed centres" of Hong Kong to a general survey of the rise of protectionism in European asylum policy. In the former, the author argues that the introduction of closed camps in Hong Kong as a policy of "humane deterrence" to discourage the influx of Vietnamese refugees does little to deter them while fostering passivity and dependence among its inhabitants. Although basic human needs are met, the contention is that such a "life in limbo" situation devoid of conscious decision-making by the refugees themselves is detrimental for their re-integration into society after resettlement. Papers on the specific problem of women refugees and the non-material needs of child refugees, with its far-reaching implications regarding their psycho-social development, are most interesting.

The ubiquitous role of the state and its agents in conflict situations where caste, class, ethnicity, religion, poverty and politics produce a complex interplay of pathological conditions is the common thread running through the three case studies on urban unrest in South Africa, Latin America and India. These are portrayed as deeply rooted in the structural condition of the urbanization process where different polities with diverse cultural, historical, social and political experiences react violently to threats and tensions endangering their perceived interests and which is more often than not aggravated by the interventions of a partisan and manipulative state.

In line with the philosophy of its parent foundation, this volume represents a cross-section of Third World perspectives on many important problems and issues affecting the developing nations. Despite an occasional rhetorical reference to the dark side of industrial capitalism, many of its papers are substantive and stimulating. Although some essays seem to be too brief for those seeking a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter, it is in many ways a useful contribution to the broad debate on issues which cut across nations and disciplines. It would, however, be more convenient for the non-specialist reader if selected references were included in those articles without footnotes.

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