

politics against the international justice regime, it may be that doing so allows for a reformulation and redefinition of international criminal law. Indeed, backlash against international courts could expose the limitations and flaws of the current international justice regime and potentially help the international community move

from merely sanctifying law to actually delivering justice.

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***International Development Cooperation Today: A Radical Shift towards a Global Paradigm***, Patrick Develtere, Huib Huyse, and Jan Van Ongevalle (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2021), 317 pp., paperback \$39.50.

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The literature on international development cooperation tends to be dominated by scholars and policymakers based at Anglo-American universities and research institutes. It is therefore refreshing to encounter perspectives from outside of this somewhat insular bubble. A recently published compendium by Patrick Develtere, Huib Huyse, and Jan Van Ongevalle is a case in point. Over the course of twelve engaging chapters, the Belgium-based authors outline distinctly European positions and policies as they take the reader on an intellectual journey from development's mercantilist-colonial origins to its myriad current forms. The authors' core argument is that international development cooperation has turned into "a maze" (p. 26) and "a truly global ballgame" (p. 287) in which nonstate, nonexpert actors play increasingly central roles. They argue that this transformation constitutes "a radical shift" (p. 28) away from a system of interstate transfers made in return for political allegiance, market access, and

regional stability, and toward a "whole-of-society paradigm" (pp. 62, 222–32) that reflects an emergent pluralism in the field of development. These are exciting times, they argue, in which the story of development cooperation is being rewritten.

Develtere, Huyse, and Van Ongevalle begin by charting international development cooperation's wobbly first steps during the Cold War and its inherently geostrategic entanglements. They then dissect donor countries' political self-confidence—some might call it epistemological arrogance—as epitomized by the neoliberal "Washington Consensus," and chronicle the lost decade of the 1990s, when indebtedness rose amid deteriorating development indicators. This critical stock-taking is followed by meticulous introductions to what the authors call the "four pillars" of international development cooperation: bilateral and multilateral architectures, nongovernmental development organizations, the growing involvement of other nonstate groups such as

trade unions and social movements, and philanthropists. Their subsequent discussion of European African multilateralism (pp. 127–42) leverages the authors' own research and exudes their intimate familiarity with multilateral policy processes; for instance, the European Union's Economic Partnership Agreement instrument in its cooperation with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, which has often remained underappreciated by non-European scholars. The book even includes a brief stand-alone chapter on humanitarian aid, a field intersecting with development cooperation in multiple ways and one facing similar pressures to respect and heed non-Western knowledge sets.

Historical and contemporary vignettes add further value to the book's main tenets. The authors map out the emergence of the global goal of allocating 0.7 percent of gross national income as aid, which few donor countries manage to meet (pp. 42–43); delve into seminal speeches by heads of state (notably on pp. 136–37); and outline a long list of Nobel Prizes awarded to actors in the arena of development cooperation (pp. 276–80). Laudably, their discussion of China as the most decisive rising state actor on the global stage explores both advantages and risks to recipient countries accepting Chinese support (pp. 56–60, 150–51). Throughout the book, the authors reflect on challenges brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on priorities and modalities of international development cooperation.

The book's analysis is most compelling when it draws on sociological thinking. The authors' astute review of organizational zombies—international agencies that continue to exist despite being redundant (p. 31)—and interorganizational rivalries

in the UN system, as well as their diagnosis of the development field's self-referentiality as a source of defensive legitimacy, adds viewpoints seldom explored elsewhere. They trace the field's "fashion" trends (p. 77) and "buzzwords" (pp. 117–18)—whether in education or capacity development—as a *gemeinschaftlicher*, or communal, discursive habitus, and their comparative analyses (pp. 119–25) use up-to-date OECD Development Assistance Committee data to illustrate trends in development finance that speak to world-systems theory, inter alia. Their closing call for more scrutiny when it comes to "win-wins" while seeking genuine ownership once again exemplifies an incisive overarching ontology.

Notably, the authors pay rather scant attention to the Millennium Development Goals and their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—enough, though, to wisecrack that "criticising the SDGs sounds like criticising Jesus' Sermon on the Mount" (p. 92). Such editorial choices are refreshing, as they indicate a critical distance from what is often propagated as the ultimate global policy framework. Indeed, the latest evidence published in *Nature Sustainability* attests to the SDGs' underperformance in galvanizing global forces and resources for human development. The SDGs may enter the history books as the last marketing breath of a financial-technical complex struggling to uphold its claims of expertise and convening power amid a surge of decentralized networks that eschew the "linear top-down management model" (p. 96) of (inter)governmental hierarchies that dominated international development cooperation during the past seventy-plus years. Here again, Develtere, Huyse, and Van Ongevalle demonstrate their capacity

to analyze a complex system without necessarily falling in with its implicit logics and instrumental discourses.

The book also discusses in useful detail why some countries receive favorable treatment by donors while others struggle (“donor darlings” and “donor orphans”) and offers several fascinating comparisons between recipients of official development assistance (for instance, Burundi and Rwanda, pp. 109–11). Nonetheless, recipient countries often appear in lists that rank, cluster, and track them, an approach that risks relegating them to a passive role. Local structures and actors certainly are less influential in international development cooperation than one might assume (p. 65) or hope for (pp. 178–79). But this is not to say that institutional variation on the ground in terms of state apparatuses does not matter. A critical geographical perspective on spatial variations of the many sociological phenomena the authors describe would therefore be welcome.

Like most works aiming to cover this much ground, the book contains a few implicit contradictions. Early on, the authors propose that “a collective set of standards that clearly define what constitutes good aid” (p. 28) is presumably lacking; later in the book, however, they discuss the 2005 Paris Declaration (pp. 88–91, 100–102) and related efforts to make aid more effective (pp. 264, 271–79) at length. While such measures may not live up to the standards envisioned by the authors, the debates around them are vivid and expedient, and they have catalyzed a promising turn toward more evidence-oriented planning. Another concern arises from the authors’ discussion of nonstate, specifically faith-based, organizations as part of a now-emerging “whole-of-society” approach (pp. 190–93).

Historians of development will be quick to point out that faith-based actors have always played a pivotal role in development cooperation across hemispheres, running the gamut from benevolent to radical. The deep involvement of these actors in this field is thus neither novel (although their organizational diversity may be) nor more consequential today than it was during colonial times.

The authors’ proposition that extant literature on international development cooperation has scarcely taken a critical stance (p. 25) may also surprise expert readers, as may their claim that development policymakers have insufficient information about public preferences (pp. 247–48). Considering the limited scope of public debate on development aid in most donor countries, one might agree. However, academic journals are ripe with critiques of development cooperation and its underlying interests and power relations. Books on the perils of aid written for nonspecialist audiences have made best seller lists, and data on voter preferences around international development topics are readily available. Nevertheless, despite arguably overstating the gap in the literature, Develtere, Huyse, and Van Ongevalle’s analysis of the field’s fractionalization and whether it can help bridge disconnects between different sets of actors and possibly even supersede the causes of development failures raises excellent and thought-provoking questions for further research. Will the arrival of hitherto excluded actors catalyze mimicry or innovation, convergence or competition?

Throughout, *International Development Cooperation Today* remains eminently accessible in language and layout. Comprehension of basic concepts in international

affairs, economics, and sociology are helpful but not required to follow the authors' arguments. Although it lacks an index, the compendium offers a wealth of insights for students in advanced undergraduate courses. Postgraduate students not yet familiar with the field's institutional landscape should find it equally enriching and inspiring. Whether or not the authors' assertion of a *radical* shift holds, their nuanced and at times witty analysis of how international development cooperation

has morphed into a complex web of relations and flows contributes a multifaceted perspective to global debates on development histories, practices, and the field's uncertain future.

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