

“for renewable generation on behalf of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA),” which stands out as unlikely.⁹ Research reveals that the DVP was inspired by the TVA and leaders worked with TVA experts, but not on behalf of them.¹⁰

These small indiscretions, together with the paucity of human rights discussion, make the monograph seem unfinished. Nevertheless, this book would be a good starting place for those interested in the effect of major infrastructure projects on minority native populations.

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American Law: A Comparative Primer. By Gerrit De Geest. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing. Pp. x, 126. ISBN: 978-1-83910-146-5¹

While *American Law: A Comparative Primer* is not intended to exhaustively cover all the practical and theoretical components of U.S. laws, it offers a concise and approachable introduction to American legal history, philosophy, and practice. As noted in the preface, *American Law* is “a comparative law book in which American law receives 60% of the attention.” Throughout the book, De Geest offers relevant comparisons and contrasts between U.S. jurisprudence and legal traditions in European countries, which help to solidify his descriptions of U.S. legal concepts.

De Geest begins by outlining the general differences between common law and civil law systems, with a brief reference to the Islamic legal tradition. Topics covered include the impact of precedent on future rulings, reliance on statutes or codes, and judicial independence. The introduction posits that the U.S. is the “archetypical common law country” based on the preponderance of judge-made law, its legal realism philosophy, and America’s recognition of law-making as a political activity, all of which are discussed in greater detail throughout the book.

After the introduction, this primer is divided into three parts, with the first section outlining the American case method. De Geest moves through characteristics of American courts that are unique to U.S. legal culture, such as the significance of judicial interpretation and the constitutional right to a jury trial in civil and criminal cases. Summaries of federal statutes and landmark court decisions helpfully demonstrate the practical effects of judge-made law. The last few chapters in this section shift to a description of U.S. law school programs. De Geest appears to target international students who wish to study American law by explaining how to read court opinions and recommending strategies to prepare for American law school classes and exams.

Part 2 discusses American legal culture, with an eye toward how common law and civil law systems differ philosophically. De Geest briefly reviews opposing schools of thought in this regard, such as universalism versus particularism, corporate cultural differences across jurisdictions, and religion and the law. The discussion on each of these topics takes up only a few pages, and De Geest offers background on these ideas in easy-to-understand terms, with limited legal jargon, which will be helpful to readers who are new to these theories.

One chapter in this section describes examples of legal realism and scholastic thinking in common law and civil law structures, respectively. De Geest demonstrates that although courts in both systems effectively create new laws and legal standards, jurists in civil law countries “camouflage” the policy decisions behind their rulings by searching for justifications in the underlying code after deciding how they want the law to change. De Geest persuasively uses court decisions in France and the U.S. to show how rulings in these jurisdictions differ in practice. Other topics in Part 2 include a summary of German legal philosophy and parental legal systems.

⁹ Id., 147.

¹⁰ Sujit Choudhury, “Damodar Valley Corporation, the Missed Opportunity,” *Journal of Infrastructure Development* 3, no. 2 (2011): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F097493061100300202>

¹ The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not reflect the opinion of the Law Library of Congress or the Library of Congress.

The final part of *American Law* outlines 13 American legal topics and how they compare and contrast with those of selected European jurisdictions. In the chapter on constitutional law, De Geest theorizes that although the U.S. is a common law system, constitutional jurisprudence closely resembles the civil law tradition. He remarks, for example, that the U.S. Supreme Court does not “openly admit that many constitutional rules are made up by judges.” Instead, the justices “first make the rules and then go through constitutional texts until they find a sentence in which they can read what they have already decided,” similar to civil law judges. Although the analysis is incomplete, due to the nature of this book as a primer, De Geest presents a fairly convincing hypothesis on American constitutional law in this regard. Part 3 also provides brief comparative summaries on contract law, bankruptcy law, and evidence, among other subjects.

American Law succeeds in succinctly describing the core attributes of U.S. law and jurisprudence in a straightforward manner. In this brief primer, De Geest manages to cover a wide range of topics from legal history to philosophy and jurisprudence to practical law. This book will be a useful introductory guide for a wide variety of audiences, particularly international law students and legal practitioners outside the U.S. Students and researchers in the U.S. who are new to comparative law may also benefit from reading *American Law*.

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Research Handbook on Human Rights and Business. Edited by Surya Deva & David Birchall. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA; Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020. Pp. v, 576. ISBN: 978-1-78643-639-9. US \$ 310.00.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous apparel brands and retailers canceled orders without assuming any financial liability causing supplier factories in Asia to be unable to pay workers' wages. As a result, an estimated one million workers were laid off in Bangladesh, where the government has no capacity to provide economic relief, exacerbating the human rights crisis ushered in by the pandemic.¹

In April, 2013, Rana Plaza in Dhaka Bangladesh, home to several garment factories, collapsed, killing at least 1,139 people.² The collapse occurred only months after at least two of the factories within the Rana Plaza complex passed social audits by the Business Social Compliance Initiative, a common tool used by businesses to satisfy voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments.³

These two events highlight the shortcomings and challenges in integrating human rights responsibility into a corporate model that prioritizes shareholder profits. What are the obligations of big-name retailers to the workers at the bottom of their supply chains during a global crisis which causes severe economic contractions? What can be done to prevent another Rana Plaza tragedy? Social auditing failed to perceive the dangers in Rana Plaza, a tragic failure of the voluntary CSR framework in protecting human rights.

In the *Research Handbook on Human Rights and Business*, a collection of 24 essays divided into six parts, the contributing scholars tackle practical and normative issues that emerge at the interface of human rights and business. An underlying theme in the *Research Handbook* is how to reorient the role of the corporation so that its primary objective is to serve society instead of profit maximization. In other words, how might states and other interested actors compel corporations to treat human rights not as an impediment to profit maximization, nor as a means to achieve profit maximization (e.g., by improving their reputations), but as a goal in itself?

Part I of the *Research Handbook* delves into the history of human rights and business and its relation to CSR, and traces the development of the touchstone of modern business and human rights discourse, the Guiding Principles

¹ *Brands Abandon Asia Workers in Pandemic*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (Apr. 1, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/brands-abandon-asia-workers-pandemic>.

² RESEARCH HANDBOOK ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUSINESS 140 (Surya Deva & David Birchall eds., 2020).

³ *Id.* at 120.