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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World by Arturo Escobar

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many Europeans have been in the habit of expressing that relationship less circumspectly), but the household has been a forum of spirited arguments ever since its foundation.

Ronald Powaski renders these debates faithfully enough. He has divided the years under review into chapters corresponding to US presidential terms, from Truman to Bush, with just a glance at Clinton's inheritance. All the controversies are here: the questions revolving around German rearmament from 1950 to 1954, which almost crippled NATO in its infancy and produced the most serious alliance failure, the European Defence Community (EDC); the promise of a permanent deployment of US troops to Europe; the arguments about short- and medium-range nuclear missiles; the abortive Multinational Nuclear Force proposal; de Gaulle's withdrawal of French forces from the joint military command in 1966; the dilemmas of 'flexible response'; the rows over the Berlin crisis of 1961; the Cuban missile crisis of 1962; the Middle East crisis of 1973; the sad fate of Kissinger's 'Year of Europe'; and the arguments over 'burden-sharing'. Even the increasing progress of arms control arrangements with the Russians, and the *détente* which, in due course, 'wound down' the cold war, before it finally expired, seemed at the times concerned to produce friction rather than harmony within the alliance. The Reagan years in particular were a period of endemic crisis, the Europeans not liking the 'Star Wars' project any better than they liked the Reagan Doctrine in the Third World.

Perhaps the whole forty-six years of NATO's survival could be regarded as an illustration that a solid common apprehension (such as NATO members originally felt *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union) creates a bond strong enough to endure even constant frictions. But can the alliance survive the loss of that bond of apprehension? That is the unresolved problem of NATO's future.

There is not much new here for those familiar with the history of the cold war, but the book should be very useful to students needing an up-to-date account of the evolution of the alliance. It is well organized for teaching purposes, with ample suggestions for further reading appended to each of the chapters.

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CORAL M. BELL

ARTURO ESCOBAR. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Pp. ix, 289. \$15.95 (US).

ARTURO ESCOBAR'S WORK unabashedly and passionately engages conventional development approaches from a critical perspective – thus joining the ranks of Marxist and dependency theorists – but it also goes beyond a materialist critique to offer a fresh, subtle, and powerful attack on structures of Western power. The

book characterizes the Western economy as a 'system of production, power and signification' (p. 216) to explain how the West is defining the very core of Third World identity. His specific focus is on the development discourse that has arisen since the end of the Second World War. Escobar's aim is 'to expose the arbitrary character of the concepts [of developmentalism], their cultural and historical specificity, and the dangers that their use represents in the context of the Third World' (p. 13).

For Escobar, cultures are characterized not only by rules and values but also by ways of knowing, or knowledge systems. His central preoccupation is the dominance of the Western knowledge system and the attendant marginalization of non-Western systems. He begins by demonstrating how, over time, development began to function as a discourse – that is, 'it created a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined' (p. 39). Indigenous populations had to be 'modernized', which meant the adoption of 'right' values, that is, Western values.

In chapter 2, Escobar provides a historical overview of post-Second World War development discourse and programmes, and suggests that its articulators have systematically 'discovered' (that is, rediscovered and recast) poverty, peasants, women, and most recently, the environment. As new domains of knowledge, they have become targets of developmental intervention, reconceptualized in narrow economic and Eurocentric cultural terms.

The key factors influencing development strategies are seen to be the dictates of capital, patriarchy, and ethnocentrism. But in Escobar's view, the professionalization of development made it possible to abstract the political and cultural dimensions of a problem and present it in the ostensibly neutral terms of science. This kind of power undergirding the Western system translates into a genuine hegemony that goes far beyond the more raw levers of power exercised by the West in the past. The purveyors of this new power are development experts – the 'sorcerer's apprentices', as Escobar calls them – who are deployed in massive numbers to investigate and categorize every aspect of Third World societies. Escobar reserves some of his strongest criticism for these experts.

The policies and strategies the experts are armed with are, of course, embedded in paradigms and, in chapter 3, Escobar offers a comprehensive discussion of the field of development economics. Even economists, not to mention political scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists, should find something of interest in his social constructions of the economic models. Having sketched the broader framework underlying developmentalism, Escobar moves on to more specific topics, beginning with the central problem of poverty in chapter 4. He expertly reveals how the highly touted strategy of integrated rural development (DRI), as conceived and implemented by the international institutions centred in the Western system, have little to do with – in fact, they even work at cross purposes with – the Third World concerns of hunger and agrarian transformation. For example, the lack of attention and legitimacy accorded to local systems of self-

sufficiency in food in favour of economic growth is indicative of how developmentalism becomes destabilizing. Escobar tries to substantiate his assertions with fairly rich empirical material, including studies of the structure and functioning of relevant institutions at the global, national, and regional levels to illustrate the ways in which development strategies based on biased assumptions, utilizing faulty information but backed up with their invisible power of discourse, go on to distort the societies in which they intervene.

An especially intriguing assertion in the book in chapter 5 relates to the notion of 'sustainable development' that, Escobar argues, has become something of a fashionable tool in the hands of development experts. The crux of the problem is that, for the ecoliberal, it is ultimately growth or capitalist expansion rather than the environment that has to be sustained.

Escobar does consider how to contain or constrain this enormous deployment of Western social and material power, but it is the weakest part of the book. He points to popular movements and resistance at local levels but his examples are limited and he relies heavily on Latin America, specifically Columbia. In the end, if we are left with the distinct sense of the weakness of these dispersed and fragmented movements, it is only because he has only too well convinced us of the totalizing power of the Western development discourse. None the less, Escobar points the way for future research to take more seriously grass-roots movements and their potential transformatory power.

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CHRISTIAN JACQUELINE JOHNS and P. WARD JOHNSON. *State Crime, the Media, and the Invasion of Panama*. New York: Praeger, 1994. Pp. vi, 157. \$55.00 (US).

THIS BOOK IS full of provocative quotations, citations, and contradictions. The authors explain that the 1989 United States intervention in Panama was part of a global roll-back strategy aimed at returning to a pre-Communist world. The United States is said to have a 'stranglehold of the world financial system, wherein the IMF and World Bank guide the international economy [to] ensure a continuous transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich and encourage the concentration of capital in the hands of the private sector' (p. 7). This requires, in turn, that the United States rely on controllable oligarchies in regions such as Central America. When the United States loses control of the head of an oligarchy, as occurred with Manuel Noriega, the head must be chopped off. The Pentagon's '\$1.2 trillion strategy to establish the hegemony of the United States' (p. 6), outlined in the well-known 1992 planning document, is said to guarantee this ability and to apply to pre-1992 foreign-policy behaviour.

Noriega, Johns and Johnson assert, had established links with at least ten