

BOOK REVIEWS

How Free are Latin American Countries When Choosing Trade Strategies?

by Zaida L. Martinez

Vinod K. Aggarwal, Ralph Espach, and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds, *The Strategic Dynamics of Latin American Trade*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004. 294 pp. US\$29.95, paper, ISBN 0-8047-4900-0

The last twenty years have given rise to a proliferation of regional economic arrangements in Latin America. Using the concept of strategic choice within the context of trade policies, Aggarwal, Espach and Tulchin present an analysis of the wide range of trade agreements and their implications for particular countries in the region. The editors begin by presenting a theoretical foundation for strategic trade choices, followed by a presentation of how political and economic interests at the national and international levels affect trade choices. They then apply the theoretical framework to case studies of four major countries in the region—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. The final section provides conclusions and prospects for future national trade policies.

Aggarwal and Espach introduce their theoretical framework for understanding trade relations in Chapter 1. Their basic premise is that governments have choices regarding trade strategies, albeit choices which entail economic and political tradeoffs. By contrasting the tradeoffs associated with different trade strategies, Aggarwal and Espach are able to demonstrate how four major countries in Latin America have developed different trade profiles: Argentina as a regional partner, Brazil as a regional leader, Chile as a multilateral trader, and Mexico as a hub market.

The theoretical framework is complemented by Tulchin's discussion regarding

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how diverging domestic interests affect a government's trade strategy and its outcomes. Because trade strategies are affected by geopolitical considerations, Tulchin emphasizes how both "hard" and "soft" power are used in trade negotiations. As examples he notes how Brazil effectively used its size as hard power but has not been as effective in using soft power due to the government's ambivalence over whether to pursue a regional or a global strategy. In contrast, Tulchin indicates that the Chilean government has used soft power effectively by showing a strong commitment to free trade policies and thus positioning the country favorably within a broader international community.

The application of Aggarwal and Espach's strategic framework at the national rather than the international level is addressed in Chapter 3. Maxfield provides a detailed analysis of the influences of state-business collaboration on trade liberation programs in the four countries studied. Maxfield stresses that the constructive pattern of government-business interaction in Mexico and Chile contributed to the success of their trade policies. Conversely, the particularistic approach toward business-government relations used in Argentina and Brazil has not been as helpful in developing trade policies.

In Chapter 4, Wise applies the strategic choice framework to previous negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), an agreement that she views as the most viable venue for further integration of the Western Hemisphere. However, she recognizes that the FTAA's proponents must address the negative repercussions on particular segments of society (especially workers), and the current economic asymmetries that prevail in the Western Hemisphere, notably inequalities in the distribution of income. Although she views the trade strategies that governments pursue as partly to blame for these two conditions, she also highlights two additional factors: oligopolistic ownership patterns in Latin American countries and deficiencies in human capital formation.

Although a reprint of a previously published article, Chapter 5 ties in well with the overall scheme of the book. According to Salazar-Xirinachs, the proliferation of regional trade agreements in Latin America is primarily related to governments' perceptions that these agreements are critical for attracting foreign investment. For example, he views this objective as important in Mexico's decision to join NAFTA and become a hub for a network of bilateral agreements. The rest of his chapter assesses various key issues related to regional agreements, singling out rules of origin and dispute resolution as weaknesses of the proliferation of regional agreements.

The case studies presented in the third section of the book provide support for its overall theme and serve as distinct examples of how political and economic relations affect the strategic trade options of specific countries in the region as well as their bargaining positions. The analysis of MERCOSUR at the end of this section further demonstrates how strategic trade choices are not determined by a single strategic decision at a particular point in time, but are the result of a series of adaptive responses to economic and political constraints and international power relations.

The *Strategic Dynamics of Latin American Trade* is a valuable book for understanding the contextual factors that affect trade preferences in Latin America and the reasons for the recent rise in regional arrangements. While occasionally parsimonious, the rich framework the editors developed gives the chapters coherence and provides a useful tool for analyzing current and future trade negotiations in Latin America. What the framework does not provide, however, is a tool for assessing the outcomes of trade agreements. Wise's chapter reminds us of the difficulties of assessing the benefits of trade liberalization, especially regarding inequality in income distribution and oligopolistic ownership patterns. The concentration of economic power in the hands of a few companies has meant that trade liberalization has mainly helped a specific sector of Latin American societies. Consequently, small- and medium-sized companies in Latin America have yet to realize the full benefits of more open borders. Moreover, since many regional trade agreements have included investment rules that facilitate foreign direct investments, a common perception has been that these agreements favor American multinationals, a view that has been taken with NAFTA and more recently with the US-DR-CAFTA.

As with any good book, readers will find that it not only provides cogent explanations for what, at first sight, may appear to be erratic trade liberalization initiatives in Latin America but also gives rise to disquieting and challenging questions about the consequences of these initiatives. Overall, the book is an excellent roadmap for understanding regional agreements as the preferred approach to the bumpy road leading to trade liberalization in Latin America.

George W. Bush, War Criminal?

by Eliot Dickinson

Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy. By Noam Chomsky. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006. 311 pp. US\$24, hardbound. ISBN 0-8050-7912-2.

Noam Chomsky argues in *Failed States* that the most important issues facing humankind include the threat of nuclear war, environmental disaster, and the worrisome fact that the United States government is pursuing dangerously wrong-headed policies—despite opposition from a majority of its population—that threaten the future of peaceful life on the planet. The gravity of the situation has been clear at least since 1955 when Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein made an appeal for peace at the dawn of the nuclear age by pointing out that the choice human beings face is “stark and dreadful and inescapable: shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?”¹ The existing state of international affairs in light of this profound question is both disturbing and unfortunate.

The first half (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) of *Failed States* details how the United States has not renounced war but is instead risking ultimate doom by contemptuously breaking international law, waging war and, most strikingly, showing telltale signs of being a failed state. The second half (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) explores America’s ostensible democracy promotion, which has resulted in immeasurable carnage in the Middle East and a marked gap between public opinion and public policy at home. Using document analysis and the historical method to build his case, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) philosopher-linguist argues that the United States is suffering from a democratic deficit, endangering its own citizens, militarizing the planet and increasing the likelihood of nuclear war. The list of egregious transgressions, in which the United States exempts itself from international treaties and argues that its illegal actions are legitimate, is long. The Bush II administration has, for example, adopted a first-strike military option, engaged in torture and violated the civil liberties of its own citizens. Incredibly, this

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has all occurred alongside self-righteous posturing, declarations of noble intent, hypocritical rhetoric about moral principles and professed Christian piety.

The United States expects the rest of the world to adhere to international law, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Geneva Conventions, while exempting itself in what is not just a double standard, but more appropriately, a single standard. Why, Chomsky asks, is the oft-used term “terror” applied and understood in such a one-sided manner? “*Their* terror against us and our clients is the ultimate evil, while *our* terror against them does not exist—or, if it does, is entirely appropriate.”²² To illustrate but one interesting example of the single standard, Article III of the Nuremberg principles states that “[t]he fact that a person who committed an act which constitutes a crime under international law acted as Head of State or responsible Government official does not relieve him from responsibility under international law.”²³ Under this principle, which the United States used to prosecute Nazis after World War II, George W. Bush would be a war criminal.

Just as Friedrich Nietzsche once said that he wanted to make people uncomfortable with their own thoughts, it is altogether fitting that some American readers may be unsettled by the implicit and explicit questions Chomsky raises. For example, with the United States spending more on war and its military industrial complex than the combined military expenditures of the rest of the world, including 95 percent of the global spending on arms in space, does this not lead inevitably to arms proliferation and pose an existential threat to life on earth? Has the war in Iraq not, in fact, killed more people than it has liberated, helped both Muqtada al-Sadr and al-Qaida recruit more terrorists, and exacerbated the problem of religious fundamentalism? Where there was one terrorist in 2002, are there not now 100? Are the untold number of deaths, maimings and families ripped apart by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan not crimes against humanity?

Published in conjunction with the ideologically progressive American Empire Project, which critically analyzes the perceived imperial ambitions of the United States, *Failed States* is a sequel to Chomsky’s *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance* (2004) and a prequel to Chalmers Johnson’s *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (2007). As such, it is a book that conservatives—should they ever happen to read this provocative work—are bound to loathe and view as treasonous, anti-war and anti-American. Conversely, liberals will likely sympathize with Chomsky’s conclusions, and the book is sure to find a wide audience outside the United States.

Failed States should compel readers to take action, at the very least to contact their congressional representatives or write to their local newspapers. They can urge that the United States be a more responsible member of the world community by, as Chomsky recommends in his Afterword: immediately respecting the authority of the International Criminal Court and the World Court, fully implementing the Kyoto Protocols, following the United Nations’ lead in addressing global problems, using diplomacy and economic sanctions rather than brute military force to combat terror, adhering to the United Nations Charter, voluntarily relinquishing Security Council

veto power, and radically reallocating funds from the military to social welfare programs.⁴ While these suggestions will surely strike many readers as quixotic, they nevertheless reflect the views of one of America's great dissident intellectuals as well as a growing percentage of the thinking public increasingly inclined to favor the serious pursuit of a more peaceful future.

Notes

¹ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

Towards a New Paradigm in International Relations

by Jodok Troy

Bringing Religion into International Relations. By Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 212 pp. \$24.95 (paperback) ISBN: 978-1-4039-7603-1

In *Bringing Religion into International Relations*, Bar Ilan University's Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler examine the role of religion in international relations and attempt to push religion as a relevant factor in international relations theories. This is an important attempt, because apart from Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations"¹ and Mark Juergensmeyer's *The New Cold War*,² religion as a variable in international relations has been continually overlooked, even ignored. However, the widespread influence of religion on social behavior, worldviews, identity, and institutions (such as the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church) demands evaluation. Religion in international relations requires a more fundamental theoretical basis since it is currently seen and interpreted as a part of

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culture.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks took place in the “heart of the West,”³ the Western academic world has regarded religion as a serious driving force in international relations. Fox and Sandler rightly blame the Western-centric social sciences for previously ignoring religion (or seeing it as a “subcategory”) because they were stuck to the secular concept of the nation state which should replace religion and “free man from the need to turn to God”⁴ But ironically, that same secular modernity caused the resurgence of religion.

There are many reasons for the “global resurgence of religion.”⁵ One of the most important is the linkage between domestic and international politics, as religion is likely to transcend state borders.⁶ The authors therefore refer to James Rosenau’s “linkage politics” and Keohane and Nye’s world politics paradigm.⁷

After a short introduction, Chapter 2 elaborates on how modernization theory, Cold War politics, and the dominance of Western-centric thinking (the secularism paradigm) led to the ignorance of religion in the study of international relations. Chapter 3 argues that religious legitimacy is important in international relations, especially due to the increasing influence of identity, cultural, and normative factors in a globalized world. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the international dimension of ethnic⁸ and religious conflicts and the transnational religious phenomena. This is an important field of research not only because religion and nationalism are often linked⁹ and are likely to be internationalized (e.g. conflicts over the control of holy sites are by definition an international issue),¹⁰ but also concerns interventions. States with different religions are more likely to engage in war,¹¹ and states that intervene in conflicts tend to share the religious beliefs with those on whose behalf they are intervening.¹²

Chapter 6 extensively investigates the validity of Huntington’s thesis regarding a “Clash of Civilizations.” The authors note that Huntington’s theory has not passed the empirical test. According to the authors, this debate can paradoxically be described as both the most important debate in international relations during the 1990s and as the biggest waste of time in that decade.¹³ Chapter 7 gives a short overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and emphasizes the continuing important role of religion in that conflict. It is likely that this chapter will be read with some skepticism since it was written by two engaged Israeli scholars.

The final chapter attempts to create a theory of international relations and religion. The authors keep emphasizing that “religion is not the main driving force behind international relations, international relations cannot be understood without taking religion into account.”¹⁴ They also argue that it is not possible to formulate a concrete definition of religion and that there is still a lack of methods to analyze religion in international relations.

Despite the effort to examine and integrate the factor religion in theories of international relations such as realism or constructivism, the book misses the mark in developing a *coherent* approach to integrate religion into the *theories* of international relations. Neither do the authors examine systematically how existing theories

integrate religion, nor do they adapt existing theories to other theories of social sciences or philosophy.¹⁵ Nevertheless, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* offers a practical basis for further studies in that field and clearly articulates the need for doing so.

Notes

¹Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49; Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

²Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993).

³Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21.

⁴*Ibid.*, 3.

⁵Thomas M. Scott, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁶Mark Juergensmeyer (ed.), *Global Religions. An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁷James Rosenau, *Linkage Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Keohane and Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics*; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Independence: World Power in Transition* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977).

⁸The descriptions are mainly based on the results of the "Minorities at Risk" Project: Ted R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk* (United States Institute of Peace, 1993).

⁹Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals" *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 3 (1999): 331-355; Smith, Anthony D. "The Sacred Dimension of Nationalism" *Millennium* 29, no. 3 (2000): 791-814.

¹⁰Fox and Sandler, 77.

¹¹Errol A. Henderson, "Culture or Contiguity: Ethnic Conflict, the Similarity of States and the Onset of War, 1820-1989" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 3 (1997): 649-668; Errol A. Henderson, "The Democratic Peace Through the Lens of Culture, 1820-1989" *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1998): 461-484. The argument that states with different religions are more likely to go to war could be taken as an evidence for the correctness of Huntington's theory.

¹²Fox and Sandler, 81.

¹³*Ibid.*, 133. Despite that judgement it is often forgotten that Huntington's theory offers one of the few metatheories of international relations after the Cold War.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵See for example Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).