



REVIEWS

Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds. 2005. *The American colonial state in the Philippines: Global perspectives*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc. With foreword by Patricio N. Abinales. First published 2003 by Duke University Press. 316 pp.

Patricio N. Abinales's foreword to the Philippine edition of *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*, with its claim of four "first" for the book, might as well serve as the book's campaign statement for an entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. In his foreword, Abinales claims that the book is the first to compare American colonialism with other colonialisms in Asia, the first to put the Philippines alongside other American possessions and compare colonial state formation with the (re)building of the American state itself, the first substantive critique of American exceptionalism "from below" and from an "Asian location," and the first multidisciplinary volume on the American colonial state in the Philippines.

A reader not conversant with American exceptionalism and the historiography of imperial America and colonial Philippines cannot counter or affirm these claims, or if indeed they are true, discern their significance. Only in reading Julian Go's introductory chapter will dabblers in history have a fuller understanding of Abinales's claims. For Go, the book "marks the first systematic attempt to take stock of [the] moves away from the [American] exceptionalist narrative and toward

seven essays, Abinales's "echoes" might prove to be the unceasing screeching, hammering, pounding sound of the perpetual machine of power called empire.— **JOEL F. ARIATE JR.**, UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN

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Urvashi Butalia, ed. *The disenfranchised: Victims of development in Asia*. Hong Kong: ARENA Press, 2004. 354 pp.

The authors of *The Disenfranchised: Victims of Development in Asia* thoroughly demonstrate how development, rather than eliminating poverty and bringing general prosperity to Asia's populations, has often exacerbated problems for people and the environment. This book is the second volume of a previous publication released by the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), which seeks to document the harmful consequences of development in various Asian countries. The authors examine development's impact in Indonesia, Singapore, Burma, Taiwan, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

The elites of Asia accepted the Western-originated development discourse and pursued high economic growth, rapid industrialization, acquisition of high technologies, modernization of agriculture, and so forth. In pursuit of development goals, states and corporations used large amounts of natural resources and human labor. However, the development discourse has too often been accepted uncritically, including its key assumption that the "underdeveloped" peoples of the world are inferior to and need to be uplifted by the superior "developed" societies. Top-down policies for development have led to the massive dispossession of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, displacement of peasant communities, violent repression against those who resist, adverse impact on women, and alarming environmental destruction. All too often, the benefits of development have ended up in the hands of a few. Indeed, "elite-oriented, North-serving developmentalist discourses are designed not only to secure consent to

the economic and political projects of local ruling elites in our region, but in a very large way to legitimise, protect and reproduce a hegemonic world order” (vii). The authors illustrate this supposition through their examinations of development’s victims.

Indonesia has attempted to develop amidst its own quest for national unity. After independence from Dutch colonial rule and Japanese military occupation, the new Indonesian nation-state, under its first leader Sukarno, began an “aggressive campaign against imperialism, neo-colonialism and internal separatism” (11). Separatist movements in the archipelago were quelled by the Indonesian military. After Suharto came to power in a 1968 coup, he increased the centralization of government power by politicizing the military and used anticommunism as an excuse for harsh political repression. Under Suharto’s regime, the Indonesian economy achieved high growth. However, peasants below the poverty line in 1970 tended to remain there. Oftentimes, poor peasants and indigenous communities, to clear the way for local and foreign investors, have been evicted from their lands, with the Indonesian government taking the side of the business sector. In fact, Suharto himself had a presidential resort built in Tapos, pushing the local inhabitants off their land and terrorizing anyone who resisted. Numerous indigenous ethnic groups in the extremely diverse Indonesian archipelago have faced dispossession of their lands and brutal repression if they resist, such as in West Papua and Aceh. Human rights have been sacrificed to hold the Indonesian nation-state together. Singapore has often been characterized as a highly successful, “developed” city-state. However, Shivdas and Pandian claim that Singapore’s chosen path to development is not without its problems either. High amounts of foreign investment and spectacular economic growth have made Singapore a very prosperous country. In the process, however, certain groups have been marginalized by the state, including gays and migrant laborers. The authoritarian state has criminalized homosexuality and contributes to cultural values that silence and isolate gays from full and equal participation in society. Meanwhile, foreign maids, the majority of whom are Filipinas, have faced unfair wages, various forms of abuses, and inconsistent working arrangements that hinder the growth of political organization., and, in some cases, abuse. Singapore has also attempted to control women’s reproductive habits by encouraging higher birth rates for high-income women without concern for women’s health.

Burma, despite an abundance of natural resources that, if managed properly, would easily provide enough for its population, has been ruled for the past few decades by a military junta that has grossly mismanaged the country, leaving the majority of Burma's citizens impoverished. The Burman ethnic group accounts for about two-thirds of the population; numerous other ethnic groups are effectively deemed as the enemy. To deal with the threat of secession, the Burmese state constantly uses violence, torture, execution, and imprisonment. It employs forced labor to build infrastructure and development projects, such as roads and dams, and it forces people to work for the military. About one million people have been internally displaced in Burma.

In Taiwan, the Kuomintang party (KMT) came to power in 1945 after four hundred years of colonial rule. Martial law was enforced from 1949 until 1988, when parliamentary democracy was established. During this time, Taiwan experienced rapid capitalist development with considerable assistance from the United States. However, Taiwan had maintained a fascist and patriarchal structure that pursued economic policies catering to the needs of the world market and foreign investment. In Taiwan, alongside economic prosperity, development has led to harsh worker repression, evictions of indigenous people, extreme environmental degradation, and the increased trafficking in women.

Bangladesh broke out of colonial bondage twice. The first time as part of Pakistan from the British empire in 1947, and the second time from the Pakistani state itself in 1971. Development has been grossly in favor of urban areas while severely neglecting rural areas. At the same time, Bangladesh has practiced majoritarianism. Development has basically favored the Bengali Muslim majority, while adversely affecting the minority Hindus and Hill people. The latter groups have been subjected to dispossession of their lands and violent repression. The government has also funded development projects that have contributed to the flooding of these people's lands, leading to a huge population of environmental refugees. Bangladesh further suffers from a swelling population, overgrazing, deforestation, and unsustainable farming practices.

Vietnam successfully resisted Japanese, French, and US imperialism. After the war with the US, Vietnam established socialism. However, in the 1980s, the Vietnamese Communist Party decided to abandon their previously dogmatic approach to socialism and transformed

Vietnam into a multisectoral, market economy. Since then, Vietnam has achieved high economic growth and a major reduction in poverty. Despite these achievements, development has also led to environmental destruction and pollution, harsh working conditions particularly for women, an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and an increase in prostitution and sex trafficking.

The Disenfranchised, by providing a glossary of all of the negative consequences of development, clearly shows how development in Asia, despite high economic growth and increased prosperity, has marginalized specific sectors of the population. If the consequences include severe environmental destruction, harsh worker repression, adverse impact on women, and major injustices committed against indigenous communities, then is this the path that Asia should be taking? Indeed, development, a concept that originated in the West, has primarily benefited Asia's elites as well as the powerful Northern countries. The book advocates "people-centered" development. Though the book includes considerable examples of social movements that have resisted the oppression of the victims of development in Asia, and though the authors provided some of their own suggestions as to what should be done instead of the current actions taken, the book falls short of giving the reader a strong sense of what should be done. Rather, the reader is likely to be exhausted from the numerous examples of where development has gone wrong. The concept of "people-centered development" needs to be expanded. Nevertheless, the book plainly illustrates how Asian countries, many of which are known worldwide for their spectacular economic success, must still profoundly reconsider how they will pursue development, in light of the often destructive consequences on people and the environment.— BRADLEY CARDOZO, VOLUNTEER INTERN THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN

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Hussin Mutalib. *Islam and Democracy: The Southeast Asian Experience.* Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2004. 136 pages.

Southeast Asia is home not only to a multiplicity of cultures but also to such dichotomies as development and underdevelopment, poverty and prosperity, capitalism and socialism, and, purportedly, Islam and democracy. Whereas the first three are contradictions arising mainly