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'Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics' by Amitav Acharya (review)

Zachary C. Shirkey
CUNY Hunter College

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farmers—plays an analogous role in the analysis of revolutions, which become a marker of delayed development, as well as the spur to developmental dictatorship in many parts of the world.

In the case of both wars and revolutions, the analytical framework leaves questions open about the mobilization of political conflict. Plotting political strife as the product of developmental disparities among regions, it underplays both the variety and potential for conflict within regions of the globe. Intraregional conflict was a critical element in the origins of both great wars. Peasants were a problem not only in Russia, China, and Togo but also in Germany, France, and Italy. This analytical difficulty becomes more central as the discussion turns to issues of “enclave development” and global inequality toward the end of the twentieth century, noting that social difference has increased everywhere in the world during the last several decades. A sign of the analytical difficulty is the absence of a discussion of global terrorism since the end of the twentieth century.

Demanding a more detailed and probing account of global politics is not entirely fair. The effort to produce one would require another book and would, in all likelihood, result in an account too bulky to serve as an accessible introduction to the main trends in global history during the modern era. As just such an introduction, Dickinson’s volume is an impressive success.

Roger Chickering
Georgetown University

Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics. By Amitav Acharya (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018) 224 pp. \$28.99

In this clear and compelling book, Acharya examines who makes and manages international order. Like many constructivists, he is interested in the part that norms play in answering these questions. Specifically, how are global norms created, promulgated, resisted, and modified through contestation among interested parties? The book differs from many other accounts of norms by focusing on the role of the global South in this process of contestation. Acharya argues that these developing states and the non-state actors within them have significant agency in shaping global norms. He contends that weaker states can resist and alter norms through appeals to localization and subsidiarity. This simple resistance to norms, however, is the least interesting part of the story. Acharya demonstrates how poor and relatively less powerful states are able to propagate new norms as sources of leverage in disputes with great powers and the global North more broadly, again, by appealing to local conditions. Such changes enacted to fit particular conditions can forever alter a global norm. Acharya also finds that norm creation and implementation is often regional in nature, though regional normative regimes usually support rather than undermine global normative regimes.

Acharya supports his argument in a series of case studies about sovereignty and security: newly independent states in the post–World War II era shaping norms of sovereignty and non-interference; Latin American states incorporating regional institutions, such as the Organization of American States, into the new international-security architecture of the United Nations; the creation of the responsibility to protect norms; and attempts to move away from national-security conceptions based on external threats to the state in favor of human-security conceptions regarding internal threats to individuals. The cases are remarkably detailed given their sweeping nature and the relative brevity of the work. They show that states from the South often successfully shaped norms to fit their preferences or at least achieved serious concessions from states in the North.

This is not to suggest that the cases focus solely on North–South normative conflicts. The South is hardly united when it comes to normative preferences due to varying local conditions, experiences, and threats. Acharya nicely illustrates intra-South contestation, especially between African and Asian states concerning human security and the responsibility to protect. He also shows that norm entrepreneurs in the North and South have at times worked together, such as when they broadened the notion of security to include economic and environmental threats. Although Acharya could have expanded his discussion of Latin America’s distinctive position within the South, given its Western heritage and longer post-colonial experience relative to Africa and Asia, the book is an important contribution to our understanding of how norms are formed and how they shape the global order.

Zachary Shirkey
Hunter College, CUNY

Diet and the Disease of Civilization. By Adrienne Rose Bitar (Newark, Rutgers University Press, 2018) 234 pp. \$99.95 cloth \$24.95 paper

A historical survey of American diet books has been waiting to happen, and Adrienne Rose Bitar has carried out this project with great success. She finds these books to be in dialogue with American culture and that, no matter which diet book you open, the theme is about civilization in decline. Dieting, whether paleo, devotional or detox, is the body’s struggle against toxic modernity and back to a better, earlier, society. In these books, civilization is a disease and the only way to cure oneself is by going back to a more innocent eating era.

Drawing from utopian scholarship, Bitar argues that these diets present “a tragic vision of a life of hope,” which is constantly disappointed but renewed again. The constant renewal of hope is evident in the long history of books that present a diet plan; it started with William Banting’s *Letter on Corpulence, Addressed to the Public* (London, 1863), just as