

## Book Reviews

**John Bellamy Foster and Robert McChesney. 2013. *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 224 pages, ISBN 978-1583673133 Cloth (\$24.95).**

The economic crisis of 2007 has been the deepest and most enduring economic downturn of the past half-century. The immediate trigger for its onset seems to have been the very practices that mainstream economics endorsed, for years, as mechanisms that would ensure a further rationalization of the market. The new-fangled instruments like Collateralized Debt Obligations, Mortgage-Backed Securities, and the institutions that generated them, were all extolled by so many neoliberal economists who argued that they would further deepen financial markets and smooth out economic uncertainty. So, when the whole house came crashing down, one might have thought that it would trigger some churning within the economics profession – a criticism of the free-market fundamentalism of the past decades, and the blind faith in models based on fantastic assumptions. What did we see? Other than a momentary wringing of the hands by a few, in a very small number of media outlets, no such self-criticism occurred. Astoundingly, neoliberal economic theory is no less secure today than it was ten years ago.

Given the blind intransigence of mainstream economics, people looking for sober and realistic analyses of the crisis would do well to pick up a copy of John Bellamy Foster and Robert McChesney's latest book, *The Endless Crisis*. Foster and McChesney present one of the most arresting accounts of how the global economy descended into collapse in 2007. But even more, they embed their story in an alternative economic theory, not just of the recent past but of twentieth century capitalism.

Foster and McChesney have for years been associated with the venerable journal, *Monthly Review*, founded by Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman, and later joined by Harry Magdoff. Sweezy was one of the shining lights of the economics profession in the 1930s, who turned to Marxism after living through the Great Depression; Magdoff was an economist working in the New Deal administration. Working closely with Stanford economist Paul Baran, they developed a theory of the modern capitalist economy that departed sharply from mainstream assumptions. Foster and McChesney draw upon that theory, and argue that this crisis was no accident. It was, instead, a direct outgrowth of the systemic weaknesses of capitalist growth.

Two claims about late capitalist development are at the heart of the argument in *The Endless Crisis*. First, and most importantly, the economy is dominated by monopolies and oligopolies, so that it systematically departs from the model of competition advertised by neoclassical economics. Second, this monopoly capitalism suffers from a chronic problem of overcapacity, and hence, a shortage of outlets for investment. The attenuated competitive drive, and the slowdown in investment naturally results in a slow choking off in growth rates, and hence in a long-term tendency for the economy to stagnate. But as economic growth settles into a lower-growth path, and firms cannot sink their funds into new plant and equipment, they turn increasingly to financial markets as a place to park their monies. This leads, in turn, to the phenomenon known as financialization, which has come to dominate the economic landscape over the last quarter century or so.

Foster and McChesney are building here on arguments by Baran and Sweezy in *Monopoly Capital*, and the path-breaking analysis of Sweezy in the 1980s, which was one of the first to point to the emergence of finance as a pillar of investment at the fin de siècle. They are able to make a credible case that the mountain of increasingly baroque financial instruments, and the mountain of debt that was built up through them, was a direct outgrowth

of the growth model of late-century capitalism, which in turn was only the most recent mutation of monopoly capitalism. In this, they provide a very valuable antidote to economic orthodoxy.

Even though the book is ostensibly a collection of previously published essays, they hang together very well. It begins with a clear summary of the main argument, so much so that readers in a hurry can get a very good idea of the core elements, just from a close reading of the Introduction. But there is a very definite benefit to be had from a leisurely perusal of the entire book. Perhaps the highlight is Chapter Five where Foster and McChesney offer a wonderful examination, and analysis, of the global reserve army of labor – the veritable ocean of the unemployed and semi-employed – who have flooded into cities across the world, sequestered into sprawling slums, living in unimaginably squalid conditions. Foster and McChesney focus on this phenomenon, pointing to it as a searing indictment of capitalism in its current guise. They surmise that when we add up the various categories of people who belong in some way to this category, it probably amounts to a staggering two and a half *billion* people. And there seems reason to doubt, they argue, that growth rates can ever reach the levels needed to absorb this army of labor into gainful employment – if we continue to stick to private profits as the motor for investment.

As a criticism of mainstream economics, *The Endless Crisis* succeeds along several dimensions. But Foster and McChesney also wish to critique recent trends in heterodox economics. They note, correctly, that the framework developed at *Monthly Review* no longer has the influence it did in the 1960s and 70s. Much of the criticism directed at it has come from within the camp of heterodox and radical economics, particularly the claims for capitalism being dominated by monopolies. While the authors present a defense against these criticisms, they will probably fail to sway their critics on the Left. The arguments they mobilize are too short, the evidence too open to counter-arguments, for it to succeed. This is understandable, for the book is not intended to be a full-fledged defense of the argument for monopoly. It is more a brief introduction to that view, and a demonstration of how it presents a coherent framework for economic analysis. In this, it succeeds admirably. Readers wishing to understand the economic rhythms of our times would do well to start with this book.

Vivek Chibber  
Department of Sociology  
New York University  
vivek.chibber@nyu.edu

**Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson. 2011. *The Arc of War: Origins, Escalation and Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 280 pages, ISBN 978-0226476292 Paper (\$27.00).**

Over the last few years a number of influential books and articles have been published focusing on the dramatic and continuous decline, or even obsolescence, of war. Whereas previously intellectuals were involved in daydreaming schemes for a world without violence, many contemporary academics aim to show that we actually live in the most peaceful era of human history. Thus Steven Pinker, John Mueller, John Horgan and Joshua Goldstein, among many others, have made a case that all forms of organized violence are in steep decline. They point out that civil wars have replaced inter-state wars and that both models of warfare have experienced significant decreases, with a substantial drop in human casualties over the last four decades. Moreover they argue that there are fewer outbreaks of all types of political

violence (including revolutions, riots, genocides, terrorism, insurgencies etc.), and that most contemporary wars tend to be more localised, smaller and shorter than those fought in previous times. These findings are then used to speculate about the exceptional character of our era and about the war-free world of the near future. The main problem with this approach is that it tends to extrapolate on the basis of, historically speaking, a very short period of time. To fully understand the changing dynamics of warfare it is crucial to take a proper *longue durée* view and analyze the relationship of war and society over the millennia, and not what Michael Mann properly calls ‘the last five minutes of history.’

Jack Levy and William Thompson’s book provides exactly that kind of long-term historical analysis which makes refined generalizations on the basis of the most up-to-date research on war over the past ten thousand years. For Levy and Thompson the institution of war is characterised by periods of expansion and contraction, and what some scholars see as the unique and inevitable waning of war today is in fact just another historical episode of war’s transformation. More specifically, to understand the contemporary context one has to take a bird’s eye view of the past and explore the origins and different historical trajectories of warfare. Levy and Thompson argue that rather than being an innate human propensity, war emerges relatively late in human history with some evidence for its widespread presence ten thousand years ago and with solid and reliable proof of its global prevalence only for the past five thousand years. Furthermore they emphasise that war is historically variable, emerging in different places at different times, and has coevolved with many other social processes including changes in economy, military and political organisation, technology and the threat environment.

In this evolutionary context of constant waxing and waning, they identify three momentous periods when the institution of war experienced revolutionary acceleration: 1. The Bronze Age southern Mesopotamia (late fourth and early third millennium BCE) where intensified urbanization, greater population density and expansion of agriculture fostered proliferation of inter-city wars; 2. The early Iron Age eastern Mediterranean and China (last half of the first millennium BCE) when rising economic and political competition between states generated incessant wars and corresponding increases in army sizes, weaponry development and production and economic growth; and, 3. The early Modern and Industrial Age Europe (roughly between 1500-1945) when another wave of state competition engendered technological development, protracted warfare, large armies and mass weaponry production. In this account, the history of war is understood in evolutionary terms with the hunter gatherers experiencing little organised violence and the two agrarian accelerations giving rise to protracted and more destructive wars. Ultimately industrial acceleration generated strong states able to wage total wars with historically unprecedented killing ratios and huge environmental devastation, threatening the very existence of the human species. For Levy and Thompson the three periods of warfare acceleration are all characterized by attempts to centralize political and military power, and the expansion of war went hand in hand with the development of large scale political and military organizations, weapon systems and political economies. However this does not mean that the entire world has undergone the same type of evolutionary transformation. In fact as much of the world did not directly experience industrial acceleration, it essentially remains more agrarian than industrial and as such bestowed with quite weak state structures.

Levy and Thompson advance a complex, synthetic theory which traces the origins of war to the early generation of hunting-related military skills, the segmentation processes that helped create “identities larger than immediate families” (p. 13), agrarian-induced population growth and density, rising environmental constraints, and the expanded division of labour. They see all these factors as contributing towards simultaneous coevolution of war, political/military organizations, political economy, weaponry and threat environment. While

recognising the mutual interdependence of these different spheres of social action, they nonetheless emphasize the pre-eminence of material causes: “Ultimately, it was the interaction between political-economic complexity and scarcity that generated warfare” and hence their theory “gives priority to...the political-economic change in explaining fundamental transitions in behaviour over the very long term” (p. 13-4).

There is no doubt that this book represents a major contribution to the study of war. Despite its brevity this is a dense, complex, and sophisticated analysis that brings together Levy and Thompson’s decades of research on warfare. The book offers a compelling and original account of war transformation over millennia and the authors’ theoretical insights are very well grounded in interdisciplinary evidence from all over the world. Nevertheless as with any attempt at building a bold, grand theory in this almost Promethean fashion, it is bound to invite a variety of criticisms. Some might challenge the falsifiability of evolutionary arguments about war; others are likely to question the very notion of a unified ‘Western military trajectory,’ which, in Levy and Thompson’s understanding, encompasses geographically and culturally diverse polities such as ancient Sumer, Egypt, Persia, Cartagena, and Rome as well as modern-era European and North American states. A number of scholars will be surprised to see that Levy and Thompson attempt to revive Desmond Morris’s highly suspect idea that war originates in hunting. However there are two more substantial issues that require critical scrutiny.

Firstly although Levy and Thompson clearly recognize the significance of different causal factors in the origin and transformation of war, they still espouse an overly materialist, and more specifically economistic, interpretation of warfare. In this context they explicitly downplay the role of ideology and culture, seeing them not as autonomous but as regularly embedded in material circumstances (p. 59). While it is certainly true that ideas without organizational structure are not particularly effective, one cannot simply dismiss ideological power as irrelevant for warfare. On the contrary, to fully understand the origins and dynamics of war one has to devote much more attention to the complex interdependence of ideological and organizational powers in history. Since human beings are complex creatures, and not only *homines economici*, the strength of particular political, economic and military organizations entails also their ability to create, foster and manipulate meanings. In other words, material interest, political power and coercive capacity work best when firmly grounded in legitimizing ideological doctrines and practices. Although war is first and foremost a material event, its dramatic proliferation and acceleration is in part rooted in the ability of complex social organizations to mobilize mass support and legitimize their very existence. There is no war without ideology.

Secondly Levy and Thompson’s understanding of social processes that accompany warfare is utterly underdeveloped. For one thing they operate with essentialist and, what Rogers Brubaker calls, groupist epistemology, perceiving ethnic groups and nations as unified, coherent and trans-historical entities rather than analyzing them as malleable, dynamic and processual categories of practice. Hence we can read how Celts, Etruscans, Greeks, French, Germans, etc. wage wars on each other throughout history and how different ethnic groups are engaged in incessant competition for power and resources. So instead of identifying the specific social organizations and movements that enable such essentialist claims (i.e. we fight in the name of our ethnic group) and dissecting such views, the authors take those claims for granted. Similarly Levy and Thompson tend to project contemporary concepts on to the pre-modern world. Thus the world of unsegmented foragers is characterized as consisting of “nuclear families,” whereas the first settled populations are associated with “the construction of identities larger than immediate families” (p. 13). Anthropological archaeology has thought us well that foraging bands were nothing like our nuclear families but were instead highly flexible, mobile, fluid, unstable networks of

individuals characterized by weak ties. It is the development of social organizations that made the kinship bonds sturdy. There were no 'identities' in the universe of pre-modern humans, as an individual's place in the world was not determined by individual choice but by one's social and geographical location. To fully understand these complex processes it is necessary not only to take ideological power much more seriously but also to engage with the recent research in historical sociology.

However notwithstanding these criticisms Levy and Thompson have produced an excellent book. This book gives us some hope that the debate on the presumed inevitable decline of war will move in a new direction: one cannot understand the dynamics of warfare without taking a long and hard look into the very distant past.

Siniša Malešević  
School of Sociology  
University College Dublin  
sinisa.malesevic@ucd.ie  
[www.ucd.ie/sociology/staff/profiles/profsinisamalesevic/](http://www.ucd.ie/sociology/staff/profiles/profsinisamalesevic/)

**Ian Richardson, Andrew Kakabadse, and Nada Kakabadse. 2011. *Bilderberg People: Elite power and consensus in world affairs*. New York: Routledge. 256 pages, ISBN 978-0415576352 Paper (\$28.95).**

Since the appearance of Kees van der Pijl's *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* in 1984, a burgeoning literature has developed around the question of transnational elite formation, with an emphasis on the North Atlantic region. This book makes an important contribution to that field. Based on a doctoral dissertation completed in 2009 by Ian Richardson, this interview-based study illuminates the cultural, social psychological and in some respects political-economic practices through which a certain informal hegemony is constructed in and around the annual meetings of the Bilderberg group. 'Bilderberg people' have long been believed to exercise behind-the-scenes influence vis-à-vis national states and intergovernmental organizations. The private, low-profile character of the annual, by-invitation-only meeting has nourished conspiracy theories, which the authors disavow in favor of a reading that combines structural analysis with social-constructionist interpretations based on in-depth interviews with 13 individuals who participated in the conference between 1991 and 2008. The investigation is squarely positioned within the C. Wright Mills/G. William Domhoff tradition of elite studies, emphasizing the formative role that well-integrated economic and political elites play in a process of "policy-planning". Within this process, what is crucial is that the elite constructs a moving consensus on the broad-stroke issues of the day, while garnering some measure of legitimacy in the eyes of citizens, who are excluded from the higher circles.

Structural analyses of transnational elite networks have underlined the importance of Bilderberg as a central meeting place. What Richardson et al. contribute are thick descriptions and accompanying interpretations of how some of the key participants understand their contributions and the contributions of transnational elite policy forums to global governance in an era of neoliberal hegemony, capitalist globalization and endemic crisis and uncertainty. The study is limited of course by its small sample size, and further by the sample's homogeneity (all participants were male Europeans, equally divided among business, political, and media/academic fields). Still, given the norms of secrecy under which the Bilderberg conference takes place, the authors are to be commended for their efforts to go beyond secondary sources.

What the interviews reveal is an elite habitus which, once one gains admission to the club, bears a curious resemblance to a Habermasian ideal-speech situation, within which pluralistic beliefs, pragmatism and collaboration are valorized and dogmatism is met with the ultimate sanction – not being invited back. To be a Bilderberger, one must check one’s particularistic interests and identities at the door and engage sincerely with one’s interlocutors. Paradoxes abound in this exclusivist life-world which is at once a very private retreat and a bourgeois-cosmopolitan public sphere. One recent participant opines that “it is very much in the public interest that powerful people get together in a private environment and exchange views” (p. 74). As an open space for the transatlantic elite (if not ruling class) Bilderberg intriguingly shares some of the features of the World Social Forum. It eschews specific policy outcomes, recommendations and lobbying in favor of open discussion as an end in itself. Yet a broad consensus both underlies and issues from these discussions. A participant with expertise in European policy matters plainly observed that at Bilderberg “you’re not going to get the revolutionary communists. ... It’s not really consensus formation, I would say it’s consensus reinforcement” (p. 110). And at the center of the consensus, beyond debate, is the free market, operating globally. As Viscount Davignon, long a member of the 35-member steering committee that forms Bilderberg’s inner circle asked, “Who questions the free market today? Nobody” (p. 76). In the Bilderberg world view, the strengthening of structural economic ties through free trade and investment creates the conditions for greater harmony between states, and *vice versa*. Richardson et al. deftly explain how this specific world view and standpoint are, at Bilderberg, naturalized and universalized. Not surprisingly, it is only among the few participants from semi-peripheral states like Turkey that the agenda and discussion are recognized as slanted towards “the western view” (p. 114). The prevailing liberal-internationalist consensus is viewed by most attendees as objective, rational and “superior to the more parochial considerations of nationalists and protectionists” (p. 207).

The book is especially in its element when recounting the often subtle, even unconscious practices by which power operates in a mobilization of bias. Bilderberg appears to be an open space for wide-ranging, pragmatic discussion of global issues. Yet it is enclosed within a selection process governed by those at the heart of the network and by the explicit rule of non-disclosure as well as codes of elite conduct that function as “prerequisites for network inclusion” (p. 212). And although Bilderberg people insist that the group does not stand for anything, nor does it wield power, its steering committee and advisory group form an old boy’s club of permanent members, while its periphery, whose composition turns over regularly, is subjected to the informal dynamics of elite social control. Within the context of elite collaboration, the desire to be invited back after making a good impression carries important implications related to “the unconscious absorption and dissemination of dominant forms of consensus” (p. 137). The conferences, in short, have educative value for capitalists, politicians, journalists and academics alike. Behind closed doors, among the elect, there is openness. Indeed what is prized most at Bilderberg is the ability to think independently, differently and abstractly as well as the willingness to detach oneself from the demands of “constituents or stakeholders in order to engage in a transcendental form of discourse” (p. 120). The mobilization of bias works on attendees dialogically and affectively, not didactically. Within the conference one experiences detachment from the quotidian, conviviality, and an intimacy that bonds invited participants with established members. After the conference, attendees are free to interpret and take whatever they choose back to their local contexts and constituencies, without overt interference or manipulation by the permanent insiders to the network. “The process is extremely soft, and practically impossible to control or measure in any way” (p. 205). In tracing out this process, Richardson et al. document a specific modality of hegemony within global civil society. As they conclude,

“elite policy networks are biased at source and, consciously or otherwise, have the effect of amplifying their biases” (p. 213).

This engaging book helps dispel two myths that have been influential in narratives of transnational power: first, that of a shadowy elite, wielding power to satisfy its immediate material interests; second, that of a global civil society whose protagonists are irrepressibly opening up spaces for popular empowerment and democratic globalization. *Bilderberg People* adds texture and detail to our understanding of how transnational elite networks function as aspects of the multifarious governance apparatuses of global capitalism. Bilderberg is one of several transnational elite forums that are themselves interconnected, forming a network of networks and underwriting the development of common narratives within “a transnational policy community comprised of no more than a few hundred individuals” (p. 185). While consistent with the notion of a transnational capitalist class, and of a wider transnational historical bloc, the book’s conclusion also emphasizes the regional character of elite transnationalism. In this respect (and despite the rise of challenger states, particularly China), Bilderberg’s continuing significance lies in giving “a peculiarly Atlantic flavor to emergent global governance systems” (p. 217).

William K. Carroll  
 Department of Sociology  
 University of Victoria  
 wcarroll@uvic.ca  
<http://web.uvic.ca/~wcarroll/>

**Salvatore Babones. 2013. *Methods for Quantitative Macro-Comparative Research*. New York: Sage. 288 pages, ISBN 987-1412974950 Paper (\$70.00).**

Salvatore Babones, a senior lecturer in sociology and social policy at the University of Sydney, has produced a book suitable for students and applied researchers engaging in comparison of structures and processes across nations. Although this book is about quantitative macro-comparative research (QMCR), the focus lies in the interpretation of advanced statistical methods, and explanations are kept non-technical. The goal is to improve the meaningfulness of research results by avoiding mistakes and to advance data analysis in QMCR, whereby Babones advocates an “empirically grounded, interpretive approach to model-building” (p. xii). To get there, he summarizes the main sources for country data, how to interpret, transform and organize them in a dataset, and then discusses the numerous models routinely applied in social science QMCR. Besides these very practical insights, the reader learns to think more carefully about his or her own research and the methods applied in macro-comparative research.

Babones starts by setting out the ‘one-world problem’ that is at the heart of QMCR (and world-systems theory). As there are only some 200 countries in the world, we do not have the possibility to draw a random sample from that population again and again to test hypotheses using new data. Furthermore, it is not even clear to what extent we can treat each country as an individual case, or whether it would be more appropriate to think of regions as the appropriate unit of analysis, or even the whole world as one single case. In Babones’ view, this is why QMCR has to adopt an interpretive approach, rather than a positive one, for QMCR cannot live up to the positivist standards of falsification and out-of-sample validation. In discussing these considerations, the author touches on the philosophical foundations of social science analysis, thereby familiarizing the reader with the special nature of QMCR and providing some indication of the challenges ahead when putting our hands on the data. This is

a fruitful approach from a didactic point of view, for students are obliged to think about the nature of the data and the research questions posed in the social sciences from the very beginning, something traditional (econometrics) textbooks on quantitative research often leave for the last chapter – or leave out completely.

The book, which is divided into two parts, first addresses the available data sources for QMCR, the operationalization of theoretical concepts, and measurement error in cross-national data. Built up in this manner, Babones takes the student by the hand and guides her through the main steps from a research idea to an empirical project. He starts with a valuable overview of the different country data widely used in QMCR and readily available to researchers. This will be most helpful for students new to comparative country research. Besides pointing out the advantages and caveats of different sources, such as the World Bank's World Development Indicators, OECD country data and standardized individual survey data, he discusses how the dependence on data collected by international agencies, which follow their own institutional requirements, determines the QMCR research agenda. Especially cultural data but also political data is either non-existent or very limited in scope and country coverage, thereby restricting QMCR in these areas.

Next, attention is turned to data operationalization, normalization and standardization. In a simple manner Babones explains what a well-behaved variable is, not only for continuous variables but also for indicator variables typically found in QMCR. Standardization by population and national income are illustrated using several practical examples. Normalization by log and logarithmic transformations is explained in an intuitive way along with the instance of when to use them. However, the problem of how to deal in practice with values at the boundaries of zero and one when using logarithms is not addressed. Babones devotes a complete section of the third chapter to the operationalization of national income, where he not only discusses technicalities like the use of market exchange rates versus purchasing power parities (PPP), but also the appropriateness of using national income to operationalize many concepts in the social sciences. These are questions researchers unfortunately tend to overlook in practice, often using the data prevalent in their respective fields.

Before moving on to the second part of the book dedicated to statistical modeling, Babones addresses the different measurement errors inherent in cross-national data. He points out that often information is not directly measured, or indicators are not actually measured for the particular years that are attached to them, or they are simply measured with error. These issues are problematic in QCMR models especially when errors are non-random, for example when data quality is systematically lower for poor than for rich countries. The chapter discusses the construction of datasets, weighting by population, treatment of points in time or periods, how to deal with missing observations or cases, and questions of case selection and representativeness of cases. These are all matters that should be addressed before starting statistical modeling, yet they are often left out in practice, and Babones does a good job in pointing them out. Only when explaining some of the characteristics inherent to country data, such as autocorrelation and lagged correlation (p. 100), his explanations get a bit scant, due to his effort to keep things simple.

Babones clarifies the misconception that in the QMCR context, where research normally is conducted on the whole population of relevant countries, not on a sample, it would be inappropriate to make statistical inferences. The error in regression analysis does not only come from sampling, but is also due to measurement error and omitted variables, which is why statistical inference in QMCR is just as essential as elsewhere. He lays out the implications of these two sources of error in regression models in an intuitive and non-technical way; however, the reader needs to be familiar with regression analysis and statistical inference to understand these concepts and their implications for inference. This is

why it is somewhat surprising to then find a simplistic explanation of a linear regression model, written for readers who are not familiar with simple regression analysis at all.

After an introductory discussion of the concept of causality in social sciences following Hume, different model designs for establishing correlation, precedence and non-spuriousness are presented. While the Instrumental Variable Approach is well explained in a non-formal way, the section on difference models suffers from simplicity, and briefly introducing Diff-in-Diff Models at the end of the chapter probably causes more confusion than clarity for the inexperienced reader. Time Series, Fixed Effects and Random Effects Models are presented as ways to overcome the problems arising in the context of repeated measures, where the standard assumptions made with respect to the error structure are violated. Babones gives an overview of Fixed and Random Effects Models without any technicalities, yet again it remains unclear how well someone not familiar at all with these models will understand the idea. What he describes well is the difference between Random and Fixed Effects in a QMCR setting. However, his conclusion is that in QMCR none of these methods does a satisfactory job, as they require strong assumptions, which in QMCR are normally violated. His suggestion for students and practitioners is to use Slope-Slope Models when dealing with repeated measures and trended data. This is a simple, yet so far not often applied research design, which “may point the way forward” (p.186) in QMCR research where data often are not suitable for highly refined repeated measure designs.

After reviewing the data and the different methods available in QMCR to analyze them, the question remains how to deal with the contradictory results found throughout the literature. Babones discusses this question comprehensively, mapping out different philosophical views on the existence of objective reality(ies) and on the proper way to do science, including Popper’s empirical positivism (which Babones rejects for QMCR), Comteian logical positivism seeking verification, and grounded interpretive research. In QMCR, Babones strongly advocates the last of these “based on data description and the bottom-up building of theories from data” (p. 200). He further questions the use of *ceteris paribus* interpretations in QMCR, due to the endogeneity of most variables used, which makes it impossible to implement the counterfactual model of causality in practice.

In his conclusion, Babones makes a case for the interpretive research method. He argues that space should be made to report all, not only the positive results of our research, since all results describe reality by looking at it from different angles. To advance science further, more studies of such a comprehensive scope are needed; yet negative results are hard to publish and as the academic research industry values the number of publications more than their depth, researchers have an incentive to stress the positive results of their work to get published. Nevertheless, Babones encourages social science researchers to “smuggle a paragraph or two summarizing negative initial results into a paper that publishes at least some positive results” (p. 218). I strongly agree with this recommendation.

This is a well-written book, pointing out to students and researchers alike the problems and issues in QMCR. These issues are due to both the practical implementation of statistical models and to the logic of academic productivity. The book is structured so as to make it easy to identify and understand the author’s main messages. It is appealing that a book about quantitative research is written in a non-technical manner, illustrating what the statistical models are able to explain with the data at hand, and what they cannot. However, students should be aware that statistical knowledge is required for a thorough understanding of the book. This work aims at a more intelligent implementation and interpretation of statistical models in QMCR. Even though quantitative knowledge is indispensable, the interpretive approach, coined to country-level research, adds value to the existing literature.

Isabel Martínez  
Swiss Institute for International Economics and Applied Economic Research  
University of St. Gallen  
[Isabel.martinez@unisg.ch](mailto:Isabel.martinez@unisg.ch)  
<http://www.siaaw.unisg.ch/de/Team/Assistenten>

**Kenneth Worthy. 2013. *Invisible Nature: Healing the Destructive Divide Between People and the Environment*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. 396 pages, ISBN 978-1616147631 Paper (\$19.00).**

In *Invisible Nature: Healing the Destructive Divide Between People and the Environment*, Kenneth Worthy seeks to understand the historical roots of, modern iterations, and potential solutions to, what he calls our dissociation from nature. He argues that this separation mystifies humanity's dependence on the natural world. Material manifestations of our detachment from nature take the form of separation of production and consumption, divided landscapes (such as border fences), and the rationalization of labor via mechanization. All of these conditions elevate certain types of relationships and values that are counterintuitive to a healthy connection with nature. Worthy argues that these material disconnects are rooted in a particular way of thinking about the world—namely the dualisms found within the Western worldview, such as mind/body, culture/nature, master/slave, male/female, etc. These dualisms, which the author claims are inherent within Western thought, are also imbued with value judgments that elevate one position over the other. For example, nature and female exist on a lower plane than humans and males. Within this book, there exists a tension between the material forms and ideational roots of separation that contribute to the relative strengths and weaknesses of *Invisible Nature*. On the one hand, there are many fantastic insights that are invaluable for understanding the relationship between the global economy and our alienation from nature. On the other hand, though, the general framing that the roots of dissociation are within the realm of Western mechanistic thought is problematic.

Worthy begins *Invisible Nature* with an excellently crafted chapter about the “Banality of Everyday Destruction.” With perspicacity, he discusses a number of examples of contemporary detachments that are woven into our everyday existence. Changes in the organization of production and consumption are happening on a global-scale and are the result of macro-level processes. Economic and ecological consequences, Worthy notes, are disproportionately shouldered by people living in poorer areas of the world far away from the lifestyle choices and consumptive habits of people in wealthier countries (p. 36-39). The environmental degradation associated with the economic system is outside of many people's immediate and direct experience. One of the most compelling ways that Worthy shows the dissociation of humans from nature in our everyday life is through the growth of electronics and, subsequently, electronic waste.

Electronics have become ubiquitous features of daily life for a large portion of the American population. In 2010, approximately forty million laptops and twenty-three million desktop computers were sold in the United States. Furthermore, Americans purchased over two hundred million cell phones, thirty million televisions, and over twenty-nine million fax machines and printers (p. 39). Worthy asserts that electronics simultaneously organize our daily lives and experiences with nature and are shaped by the long commodity chain needed to obtain raw materials and cheap labor necessary to produce them at an ‘affordable’ price. In doing so, Worthy highlights the intense material and energy commitments necessary to make these electronic goods; however, later in the book electronics are regarded as one of the ways to increase our knowledge of nature and resolve certain dissociations, illuminating one of the

problematic aspects of Worthy's larger argument. Given the increasingly impressive computing power of smaller and smaller circuitry, more purity is demanded in the manufacturing process, leading to the intense use of energy and water, and the utilization of toxic chemicals. Throughout his discussion, Worthy examines a number of ways in which consumers and even producers are dissociated from the harms associated with electronics manufacturing.

High-tech devices are manufactured in sealed-off rooms in order to avoid contamination and the spread of toxic chemicals. Worthy highlights that workers for some electronics firms, such as IBM, are at higher risk for various cancers, injuries, and mortalities than workers in other industries (p. 43). These facts are kept within the files of companies and are rarely reported. As a result, the link between high-tech manufacturing and health risks is relatively unknown. While Worthy does not expand on the social organizations, forces, and barriers that prevent this news from becoming public knowledge, he does begin to highlight dynamics that other environmental sociologists address. By exposing these contested illnesses, it is possible to reveal social inequalities, power differentials, economic structures, and organizational dynamics that benefit the dominant economic system (Cable, Shriver, and Mix 2008).

In the electronics discussion, Worthy discusses the global dimension and unevenness of electronics recycling, or E-waste. He points out that the vast majority of electronics that are consumed in the United States are recycled outside of its borders, mostly in Asia (p. 51). As a result, people who have few opportunities, power, and protections shoulder the burden of toxic waste. For people in the United States, E-waste is truly out of sight, out of mind. The constitution and organization of space within the global economy, Worthy explains with great insight, reflects existing ideas and histories of societies (p. 218).

How space is organized is important for understanding certain types of dissociations. Worthy illuminates that space, in modern, Western societies, reflects the broken, fragmented, and compartmentalized ideas of Western thought. Relying heavily on the spatial ideas of Henri Lefebvre, Worthy examines how space is organized to alienate people from the land (p. 221). This diremption of people from the land does not allow for humans to directly experience and engage with nature, which, Worthy argues, is one of the foundational and most problematic dissociations in the modern world. Compartmentalizing space promotes certain values and practices over others. Breaking down the landscape into small, private parcels tends to reduce diversity and limits space for community engagement. By separating people from each other and nature, we reduce our ability to know and experience one another. In a cogent summation, Worthy writes, "material networks connect us like enormous tentacles out to the larger world, dispersing our consequences far and wide, mixing them with those of many other people. Nature has become an abstraction, and so, too have our social and environmental problems" (p. 241).

Although the material relations that manifest dissociations are important, Worthy argues that they reflect a hazardous philosophical tradition that is fragmentary and mechanistic. Furthermore, he suggests, the roots of Western thought teach us to create unnecessary divisions between humans and nature while reducing the importance of the natural world to simply meeting human needs. Worthy contrasts this distinctly Western way of thinking, which is relatively devoid of context, to that of Eastern thought, which tends to take larger contexts into account. In order to do this, Worthy presents a brief history of Western thought from Greek philosophers through Sir Francis Bacon and René Descartes and more contemporary thinkers. Surprisingly, his explanation of Eastern thought is limited to a few pages where he discusses its central tenets. For him, the major differences between the two philosophical orientations are that Eastern thought embraces notions of change, contradiction, and holism over Western concepts of fixity, noncontradiction, and mutual

exclusion (p. 141). Throughout this discussion, Worthy is critical of Western, mechanistic thought—and to an extent, rightfully so—however, he does not extend the same critical lens to Eastern thought. His lack of systematic engagement with Eastern thought creates an unbalanced analysis which, in some places, falls short of a sophisticated, nuanced discussion of philosophical traditions that exacerbate or diminish dissociations.

Worthy traces the roots of modern dissociations to the development of Greek philosophy. He argues that this philosophical tradition is based on a fractured understanding of the world that conceived of the world “and living in it as a profoundly disconnected place.” As a result, Greek philosophers tend to think “of themselves as completely independent” of nature (p. 164). In general, Greek philosophy is individualistic; it separates people, animals, and nature from one another, stripping away their rich interconnections. Worthy’s prime targets are Plato and Aristotle. Plato’s focus on Forms portrayed the sensual world as an illusion of a larger, invisible eternal and true world. Essentially, allegories such as Plato’s *The Cave* showed that the natural world, as we perceived it, was not to be trusted and, therefore, he placed little value on it. Aristotle, while elevating nature more so than Plato, still devalued the importance of the lived experience.

This discussion, essentially, is a rehashing of the arguments made by philosophers such as Val Plumwood and J. Baird Callicott. While it provides an investigation of the roots of Western thought, it does not seem to add much to earlier discussions of its development. Additionally, by focusing primarily on Plato and Aristotle, Worthy misses out on the complex intellectual environment of Greek philosophy. Ionian philosophy is only briefly mentioned and the entire contributions of the Atomists and of Epicurus in particular, who did not think about the world in the idealist ways of Plato and Aristotle, are missing.

In his discussion of modern dissociated thought, Worthy examines the mechanism of Bacon, Descartes and Thomas Hobbes. He argues that the mechanistic view allows thinkers to divide the world more easily by creating different categories that are imbued with power differentials. In discussing Bacon, Worthy relies on critiques developed by philosophers such as Val Plumwood and Carolyn Merchant who saw Bacon’s instrumentalism as a means of dominating nature. While there is certainly an element of truth to this, such arguments fail to take into account the larger context in which Bacon was writing and, therefore, do not see how Bacon’s position might not be as incompatible with sustainability as it is made out to be (Foster 2000). For Descartes, Worthy focuses on the dualistic style of thinking that has become known as Cartesian. He indicates that Descartes divided the world into mechanistic parts, eliminating focus on interconnections. Worthy suggests that the intellectual heritage of the ancient Greek philosophers and Enlightenment thinkers places less value on direct experience of the natural world and moves away from the idea that nature and humans are interconnected. Recent scholarship offers a counter position, but it is not engaged in this book (see Marx and Engels 1975, vol. 1; Clark, Foster, and York 2007).

In discussing ways to overcome our dissociated thought patterns, Worthy calls for an increase in thinking that focuses on interconnections and relationships—more akin to Eastern thought. He suggests that holism, as developed by numerous scientists and philosophers working in the realm of ecology, most specifically Jan Christian Smuts, offers a useful position. Smuts was a statesman who developed a holistic perspective rooted in “the idea of interconnection.” This conception was to serve as an alternative to mechanistic worldviews. Reflecting on this position, Worthy writes, “holism integrates wholes temporally in a flux of time, implicitly challenging Aristotle’s law of identity, which presupposes a sort of stasis” (p. 279-280). In this, Worthy uncritically accepts holism as an unproblematic approach towards dissolving dissociations in the modern world. He is not aware of the social, racial, and historical context that influenced Smuts’s philosophy. As a result, Worthy misses Smuts’s belief that there is a hierarchy of wholes that exists in the natural and social world. Smuts

engaged in a double transference where he looked to nature to find justification for social and racial inequalities in society. Smuts viewed the more advanced wholes as being less dependent on their immediate environment. In the South African context, this conception was used to excuse white domination of the African population (Foster and Clark 2008). This uncritical assessment of holism presents a serious shortcoming in Worthy's argument that the development of Western thought is a primary contributor to modern day dissociation.

*Invisible Nature* attempts to understand the contemporary divide between humans and the environment through examining its intellectual roots within the history of Western philosophy. While it fails to engage in a nuanced discussion of Western and Eastern thought—resulting in its problematic emphasis on a non-dialectical holism, particularly that of Jan Christian Smuts—it does provide intriguing insights into the nature of modern day dissociations. In *Invisible Nature*, Worthy illuminates the complex set of social relations, particularly those associated with the global economy that contribute to and perpetuate dissociations between humans and nature. Importantly, Worthy reveals that environmental problems are social problems.

## References

- Cable, Sherry, Thomas E. Shriver and Tamara L. Mix. 2008. "Risk Society and Contested Illness: The Case of Nuclear Weapons Workers." *American Sociological Review* 73(3):380-401.
- Clark, Brett, John Bellamy Foster, and Richard York. 2007. "The Critique of Intelligent Design: Epicurus, Marx, Darwin, and Freud and the Materialist Defense of Science." *Theory and Society* 36(6):515-546.
- Foster, John Bellamy. 2000. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Foster, John Bellamy and Brett Clark. 2008. "The Sociology of Ecology: Ecological Organicism Versus Ecosystem Ecology in the Social Construction of Ecological Science, 1926-1935." *Organization and Environment* 21(3):311-352.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1975. *Collected Works, Volume 1*. New York: International Publishers.

Daniel Auerbach  
 Department of Sociology  
 University of Utah  
 daniel.auerbach@soc.utah.edu

**Amy Quark. 2013. *Global Rivalries: Standards Wars and the Transnational Cotton Trade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 282 pages, ISBN 978-0226050676 Paper (\$24.50).**

*Global Rivalries* is an important contribution not only to the growing literature on the role of standards in governing global trade, but also to institutional theory and international political economy more generally. The book is a pleasure to read: well-written and logically-organized, it weaves seamlessly different logics of capital accumulation and other macro-structural trends with the minutiae of negotiations and struggles over quality standards, benchmarking and arbitration in transnational cotton trade.

Combining broad-stroke pictures of the changing shape of the global economy and its geopolitical features with rich interview material and archival work, Amy Quark manages to bring to life conflicts and shifting alliances around cotton standards in three historical

periods: (1) an earlier period of internationalization (1870-1922) dominated by British cotton merchants and their association (the Liverpool Cotton Association, LCA) in the context of a British-led project of economic liberalism; (2) a period of gradual consolidation of U.S. interests through the assertion of 'standards power' by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (1922-2004), in the context of a U.S.-led project of embedded liberalism and unequal market liberalization; and (3) the current period (2005-), following the establishment of the WTO and the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA), which is characterized by the ascendancy of China and industry consolidation.

Quark's main argument is that institutional change can only be properly understood by embedding the analysis of changing strategies by key actors (businesses, their associations, and state agencies) in a more general understanding of broader political projects. By examining conflict, resistance and compromise that flare up around definitions of standards, inclusion and exclusion of key parameters, measurement devices, and the design of arbitration measures, Quark is able to explain trajectories of institutional change that are necessarily incremental and often create hybrid forms of governance.

For each historical period, Quark provides three useful orientation devices that make the book approachable even to non-specialists. *First*, she organizes the discussion of relevant changes in cotton standards along three distinct elements: definition of quality; benchmarking; and arbitration of dispute settlements. Although these elements often intersect, they have their own individual features that lead to sometime unique outcomes. *Second*, she highlights the changing fault lines of conflict between: state and business; different types of cotton industry operators (producers, ginner, merchants, spinners, textile manufacturers); operators of different size and economic might; operators based in different countries and regions; and national and transnational jurisdictions. *Third*, she analyzes strategic intent and outcomes along three themes: *redirection* strategies employed by emerging rivals that attempt to change standards controlled by dominant players; *preservation* strategies that dominant players roll out to either fight back or partially accommodate these attempts; and *protection* strategies activated by marginalized actors trying to improve their situation. The end result of this approach is a sophisticated, fine-grained analysis that ultimately leads to a solid and convincing argument.

Theoretically, Quark targets institutionalist approaches to governance, crediting them with unfolding uncertainty and hybridity in institutional transformation, but also critiquing their lack of explanation of *why* institutions change (see Chapter 1). To provide an answer to this question, she proposes to analyze conflict, changing alliances, and compromises that emerge "out of the concrete class relations and material and ideological circumstances characterizing the actually-existing capitalist system" (p.7). While the specific focus on institutionalism ensures a tighter theoretical framework, it also misses opportunities of debate with other relevant analytical approaches. Strangely for a book dealing with quality standards, Quark's coverage of the rich literature on this topic (spanning international political economy, economic sociology and economic geography) is tentative and superficial. The same can be said about global commodity chain (GCC) analysis, the Regulation School and world-systems analysis, which she mentions only in passing. This problem spills into methodology as well: Quark claims to use GCC analysis (p. 31) without explaining in much detail what it entails. More information about the breakdown of interviews by type of actor and location, and about the challenges and limitations of her research approach, would have also been helpful. On the other hand, she provides a convincing claim of why we should care about standards, and about cotton, in order to understand where the global economy is going and "what kind of integration is desired and on whose terms in a period of hegemonic struggle" (p. 5).

Chapter 2 is the best empirical chapter of the book. It deploys the analytical framework provided in Chapter 1 to explain struggles over cotton quality standards from the 1870s to 1920s. Quark chronicles the rise and formalization of private standards within a British-led project of economic liberalism. She shows how merchants in Liverpool came to claim authority to define cotton quality, benchmarking and dispute settlement. At the same time, she highlights how the liberal project also generated new patterns of social conflict that came to destabilize the Liverpool standards, leading to redirection strategies by increasingly powerful U.S. merchants and protection strategies by impoverished U.S. cotton producers. These strategies became embedded in a technocratic state-building project centered around the USDA. As Quark underlines in the following chapters as well, one of the main features of these conflicts is that emerging rivals face the problem of overcoming institutional dependence – they need to rely, at least for a period, on the very same institutions they are seeking to replace. Therefore, it was only after World War I that the USDA was able to start imposing its standards, and only after having engaged in a “process of *bricolage*, grafting the elements of most concern to Liverpool merchants” (p. 74). This shifted “quality governance from private, transnational standards centered in Britain ... to public, transnational standards centered in the United States that would ultimately prefigure the goals of embedded liberalism” (p. 77).

Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the various elements that reconfigured cotton quality standards in the post-World War II period up through 2005. Chapter 3 examines the “project of uneven liberalization” that the U.S. was able to deploy to serve the interests of the U.S. cotton industry. This project was implemented through the negotiation of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) in 1974; the promotion (via the World Bank and the IMF) of structural adjustment programs in other cotton-producing countries (especially in Africa); and the establishment of a comprehensive system of subsidies at home. Most importantly, Quark shows that the introduction by USDA of a new, mechanized measurement system for cotton quality marked a significant shift from the existing manual classification system. USDA portrayed this new system as “more scientific,” reliable, and faster. In reality, it included some measurements that were of advantage to U.S. cotton producers, while omitting others that would have been of advantage to hand-picked cotton producers, especially in Africa. Chapter 4 focuses on the impact that the establishment of the WTO (and the phasing out of the MFA) and China’s accession had on reconfiguring conflict and strategic action. It shows how China started challenging USDA’s quality classification system and how USDA responded by challenging the “scientificity” of alternative approaches.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on cotton quality struggles in the 2000s. Chapter 5 is strangely short and could have been usefully merged into Chapter 6, which contains too much empirical detail even for the specialist reader. Quark examines how the Chinese state first sought to import the technology and related institutional arrangements that USDA had developed, and then challenged USDA on its own turf. Eventually, however, USDA and transnational merchants addressed some of the key concerns posed by the Chinese state in an attempt to keep control of the cotton classification system and standards, leading to a new hybrid institution—“standards with Chinese characteristics.”

In the concluding chapter, Quark provides helpful updates on how the financial crisis has led to increased price volatility and to further consolidation in the cotton industry, which “sharpened cotton players’ focus on ... [homogenizing] quality standards and associated rules for dispute settlement” (p. 223). She also points out that tensions over US cotton subsidies continue to simmer, weakening the legitimacy of the U.S. as leader in the sector. Quark concludes that “institutional change in the global capitalist system is inevitably incremental in nature due to institutional dependence” (p. 232). This dependence can create constraints but also opportunities for emerging rivals – they can effectively redirect existing

institutions, instead of starting new ones from scratch. Overall, Quark shows that “private authority is enmeshed in ... geopolitical tensions” (p. 242), suggesting that transnational firms, rather than becoming ‘placeless,’ are anchored in state-firm alliances that shift and take new forms. In leading the reader through the transitions from a British-led to a U.S.-led hegemonic coalition on cotton standards, and from the latter to a new coalition in which China and transnational firms figure prominently, Quark allows us to “conceptualize specific instances of institutional change as constituted by and constitutive of broader transformations in the organization of the global capitalist system” (Ibid.). This is a book worth reading.

Stefano Ponte  
Department of Business and Politics  
Copenhagen Business School  
sp.dbp@cbs.dk

**Salim Lamrani. 2013. *The Economic War Against Cuba*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 142 pages, ISBN 978-1583673409 Paper (\$12.95)**

For more than fifty years the United States has maintained a comprehensive economic embargo on Cuba that makes most financial and commercial transactions with that country illegal for U.S. citizens and severely restricts U.S.-based travel to the island. In *The Economic War Against Cuba*, Salim Lamrani offers a concise yet informative study of these economic sanctions. He sheds light on the historical evolution and the goals of sanctions, their far-reaching effects, how they contravene international law, and the main reasons why they are still in place today. An anachronistic holdover from the Cold War, the U.S. embargo against Cuba (or “blockade” as Havana’s authorities and Lamrani call it) remains a key tool of American foreign policy nearly a quarter-century after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. During this period, the United States normalized its relations with communist countries like China and Vietnam but, as Lamrani fairly claims, “Washington has never hidden its determination to subvert, by whatever means necessary, the established order in Cuba” (pp.14-15). Arguably the most insightful part of his book, Lamrani documents the serious harm U.S. embargo restrictions have caused the Cuban people by considerably limiting Cuba’s ability to import medicines, medical equipment, and technologies essential for preventing and treating a wide array of illnesses. In his words, “economic sanctions are, at their core, a war against public health” (p.49).

Lamrani begins his study with a brief examination of the events that led the United States to impose an embargo on Cuba. Most economic and political ties between the two countries were severed after Fidel Castro’s victory over Fulgencio Batista in early 1959. To be sure, it was neither Castro’s record on human rights nor the lack of democracy in Cuba that worried Washington in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. At that time the Cuban economy was almost entirely dependent on the U.S. market. Indeed, 65% of Cuba’s exports went to the United States and 73% of its imports came from that country. Furthermore, the island’s economy benefited little from U.S. investments since the latter were carried out under conditions disproportionately favorable to foreign companies (p.19). There is no doubt that Fidel Castro’s economic reforms were highly detrimental to American business interests in Cuba and reflected a strong rejection of decades of U.S. imperialist schemes and paternalism. Between May 1959 and October 1960, the Cuban government expropriated seventy thousand acres of property owned by U.S. sugar firms. It also nationalized the assets of numerous overseas companies, especially U.S. enterprises, in key sectors such as telecommunications, mining, oil, banking, and electricity. Albeit with greater interests at

stake than other nations (among them Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland), the United States was the only country to refuse the settlement terms that Castro offered, even though the legality of the nationalizations was recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Banco Nacional de Cuba v. Sabbatino* in March 1964 (p. 26). Most telling in Lamrani's account is the fact that the Eisenhower administration made a formal decision to topple the Cuban government in mid-March 1960, one month before the resumption of ties between Havana and Moscow (p. 23) and before Fidel Castro declared himself a 'Marxist-Leninist' and intensified efforts to export Cuba's revolution throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Lamrani's historical review of U.S. policy toward Cuba over the past five decades reveals not only that Washington has maintained the structure of economic siege against its communist neighbor largely unaltered, but also that U.S. sanctions clearly flout international law. The analysis of the embargo from a legal perspective in Lamrani's book is truly remarkable. Following the cancellation by the Eisenhower administration of Cuba's portion of the annual U.S. sugar import quota in July 1960, economic sanctions were significantly expanded. John F. Kennedy imposed a total embargo on U.S. trade with Cuba in February 1962 that included a ban on drugs and food products in violation of international humanitarian law. Most importantly, sanctions took an extraterritorial turn also in conflict with international legal norms and the national laws of the affected countries (p. 63). Among various measures, the United States vowed to deny financial aid to every nation providing assistance to Cuba, successfully pressured all members of the Organization of American States (with the sole exception of Mexico) to break diplomatic and trade relations with Havana, and in 1966, during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, outlawed food shipments to any country that sold strategic or non-strategic goods to Cuba. Timid U.S. efforts toward a rapprochement with the Castro government in the second half of the 1970s during the Carter administration were replaced by a more bellicose policy with the rise of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1981. Committed to revive the goal of rolling back communism, Reagan reestablished the Cuba travel ban despite the fact that U.S. courts had upheld the constitutional right to travel, included Cuba on the list of terrorist nations, and ruled that foreign companies could export products to the island only if they contained less than 10% of U.S. components.

The U.S. rationale for its embargo on Cuba has changed markedly over time. Initially justified as retaliation for nationalization, the embargo quickly became a punitive measure for Cuba's international behavior. Well into the 1970s, the United States conditioned the reestablishment of normal relations with Cuba on the end of Fidel Castro's efforts to spread the revolution in Latin America and the termination of his alliance with the Soviet Union. Then, in the second half of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the removal of Cuban troops from Africa constituted the main U.S. demand. It was only after the demise of the Soviet Union, as Lamrani notes, that the issue of human rights took center stage (p. 31). Allegedly to hasten democratic changes in Cuba and certainly galvanized by the dire situation of the Cuban economy, Washington further strengthened its sanctions against Havana in the post-Cold War era. The Torricelli Act of 1992 forbade foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms to trade with Cuba and prohibited any vessel from entering a U.S. port for a period of 180 days if that vessel had hauled freight to or from a Cuban port. Flouting both U.S. and international law, the extraterritorial Helms-Burton Act of 1996 (which codified all existing embargo restrictions) allows U.S. citizens whose property was expropriated without compensation by the Cuban government, including those who were not citizens when the expropriation occurred, to sue in U.S. courts foreign firms or individuals that 'traffic' in that property. During his second term in office, Bill Clinton used his limited licensing power to ease some embargo rules; in 2000, he also signed historic legislation that allowed U.S. companies to sell

medicines and food products to Cuba. Since then, U.S. sanctions were tightened by George W. Bush and relaxed again by Barack Obama, who, in 2009, lifted all restrictions on Cuban Americans in terms of remittances and travel to the island. Lamrani concludes his study by pointing out that the international community widely opposes the U.S. embargo on Cuba and that even the American public is largely in favor of lifting these failed unilateral sanctions and normalizing relations with Cuba (p. 71).

Two minor problems in Lamrani's book should be emphasized. First, notably absent is a discussion of the role of domestic politics in U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba. Between 1992 and 2004, all major U.S. moves to intensify or relax economic sanctions against Havana occurred in presidential election years, when partisan bidding for Cuban-American votes (and money) in the politically pivotal state of Florida takes center stage. Even Barack Obama, who had called three years earlier for the end of the embargo, said on the campaign trail in 2007 that he supported the preservation of such tool as an important inducement for change. While Lamrani is technically correct in writing that "the most severe recrudescences of these economic sanctions – except for the Bush administration – were generally the responsibility of Democratic administrations" (p. 45), the reality is that domestic politics influenced the U.S. approach toward Cuba in the post-Cold War era regardless of who was in White House. Second, Lamrani fails to recognize that despite a growing a consensus against the embargo within the American society there is currently no major domestic constituency (including the business community) in the United States willing to push hard for the resumption of normal relations with Cuba. It must be noted that Obama's decision to remove limitations on Cuban American travel and money transfers to Cuba, albeit well-intentioned, greatly reduced the potential role of the increasingly diverse Cuban American community as an agent of change in U.S.-Cuba relations. Recent Cuban migrants to the United States are more inclined to favor engagement with Cuba than older exiles. But the former can now more easily sustain strong family linkages with relatives on the island while the latter can still rally behind the embargo.

Notwithstanding these problems, Lamrani's book is an invaluable addition to the literature on the Cuban embargo. It is a superbly written and cogently argued study that enhances our understanding of U.S. economic sanctions with respect to Cuba, exposes the ill-conceived nature of Washington's plans and the questionable legal aspects of its measures, and provides substantial evidence of the dramatic impact that sanctions have had on the well-being of the Cuban people.

Paolo Spadoni  
Department of Political Science  
Georgia Regents University – Augusta  
pspadoni@gru.edu