



Human Rights and Structural Adjustment

By M. Rodwan Abouharb, David Cingranelli

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'Structural adjustment' has been a central part of the development strategy for the 'third world'. Loans made by the World Bank and the IMF have been conditional on developing countries pursuing rapid economic liberalization programmes as it was believed this would strengthen their economies in the long run. M. Rodwan Abouharb and David Cingranelli argue that, conversely, structural adjustment agreements usually cause increased hardship for the poor, greater civil conflict, and more repression of human rights, therefore resulting in a lower rate of economic development. Greater exposure to structural adjustment has increased the prevalence of anti-government protests, riots and rebellion. It has led to less respect for economic and social rights, physical integrity rights, and worker rights, but more respect for democratic rights. Based on these findings, the authors recommend a human rights-based approach to economic development.

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Editorial Review

Review

"... one of the most important works on the critical policy juncture of human rights and development... the book's considerable insights... thorough attention to the basics, and its approachable language and style, make it highly accessible to a wide audience."

International Studies Review

"... political scientists, economists, and other empirical researchers will relish analyzing, re-estimating, dissecting, and extending this seminal contribution from Abouharb and Cingranelli for years to come."

Human Rights and Human Welfare

"This is by far the most illuminating and comprehensive research on the effects of structural adjustment on human rights conducted to date. Abouharb and Cingranelli's study goes well beyond past research that has focused on a rather narrow set of human rights related to physical integrity, to examine the effects of these programs on the realization of a variety of rights including social and economic rights, the rights of workers, and potential intervening factors such as rebellion. Their two-stage modeling strategy accounts for 'selection effects' which could easily lead to erroneous findings if the less sophisticated, one stage approach used in previous research had been employed. Most importantly, this study demonstrates how careful quantitative and qualitative analysis can shed light on the answers to hotly contested policy questions that often tend to be argued, and decided, from ideological positions. In the final analysis, this book's most important contribution is its sound, empirically-supported findings which illuminate the variables and processes that result in human suffering around the world. By providing this glimpse of political reality to participants in the political debate on structural adjustment, Abouharb and Cingranelli could very well play a part in improving the human problems that have been their greatest scholarly concern."

Steven C. Poe, University of North Texas, Editor of International Studies Quarterly

"Simply put, Abouharb and Cingranelli present the most comprehensive, sophisticated and illuminating research on the impact of World Bank and IMF policies on human rights accomplished to date. The book provides a convincing and compelling account of the impact of SAPs on poverty, democracy and human rights. The authors' careful quantitative and qualitative analysis will be hard for conservatives, liberals or radicals to dispute."

William Felice, Eckerd College, International Affairs

"This is a comprehensive, well-presented, carefully-researched study on human rights effects of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) conducted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The study stands out as one of the first large-N, systematic quantitative studies in book form that employs multivariate models to test an issue that has thus far been dominated by case studies."

Indra de Soysa, Institute for Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Review of International Organizations

"...pathbreaking in its comprehensiveness, linkage of economic-social and civil-political rights, and thorough empirical testing. It will be the authoritative work on the subject for some time, provoking discussion among political scientists, economists, human rights students, and policy stakeholders...Overall, the book sets the stage for a new and overdue research agenda---assessing how transnational economic factors like finance, trade, and intellectual property shape human rights practices."

"This book addresses a significant policy issue at a time when there is a growing consensus on the importance of human rights based approaches to development. The analysis shows that World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes have actually had adverse effects on a range of human rights practices in aid recipient states; effects which may well undermine the attempt to establish the social and political institutions necessary for good governance. Scholars and practitioners in the fields of development, democracy and human rights should take heed of the robust findings presented in this book and use its important lessons for the future."

Todd Landman, University of Essex

"This study is the most comprehensive work on the impacts of how World Bank and IMF conditional lending have impacted human rights. Filled with many examples as well as careful analysis of a wealth of data, the book convincingly shows not only that the Bretton Woods Institutions have failed to promote human rights, but also that their structural adjustment programs have actually hurt human development. The book - the first of its kind - will spark a new generation of study of the World Bank and the IMF. It is a must read for anyone interested in human rights, international institutions or globalization."

James Raymond Vreeland, Yale University

"Neoliberal economic policies and their imposition on developing countries by the IMF and the World Bank under the name of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) have long been targets of criticism by human rights advocates. Human Rights and Structural Adjustment not only brings together the rich theoretical arguments and empirical evidence but also provides comprehensive comparative analyses of the impact of SAPs on a variety of human rights. It speaks to all who are interested in human rights, democracy, development, poverty and political economy. As a corrective, it should be distributed to the executives of the two agencies and the US Treasury Department as a must reading."

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, Juanita and Jeff Leff Distinguished Professor, Purchase College, SUNY

About the Author

M. Rodwan Abouharb is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Louisiana State University. His research examines human rights and civil and international conflict.

David Cingranelli is a Professor of Political Science at Binghamton University, SUNY, co-director of the CIRI Human Rights Data Project and former President of the Human Rights Section of the American Political Science Association.

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