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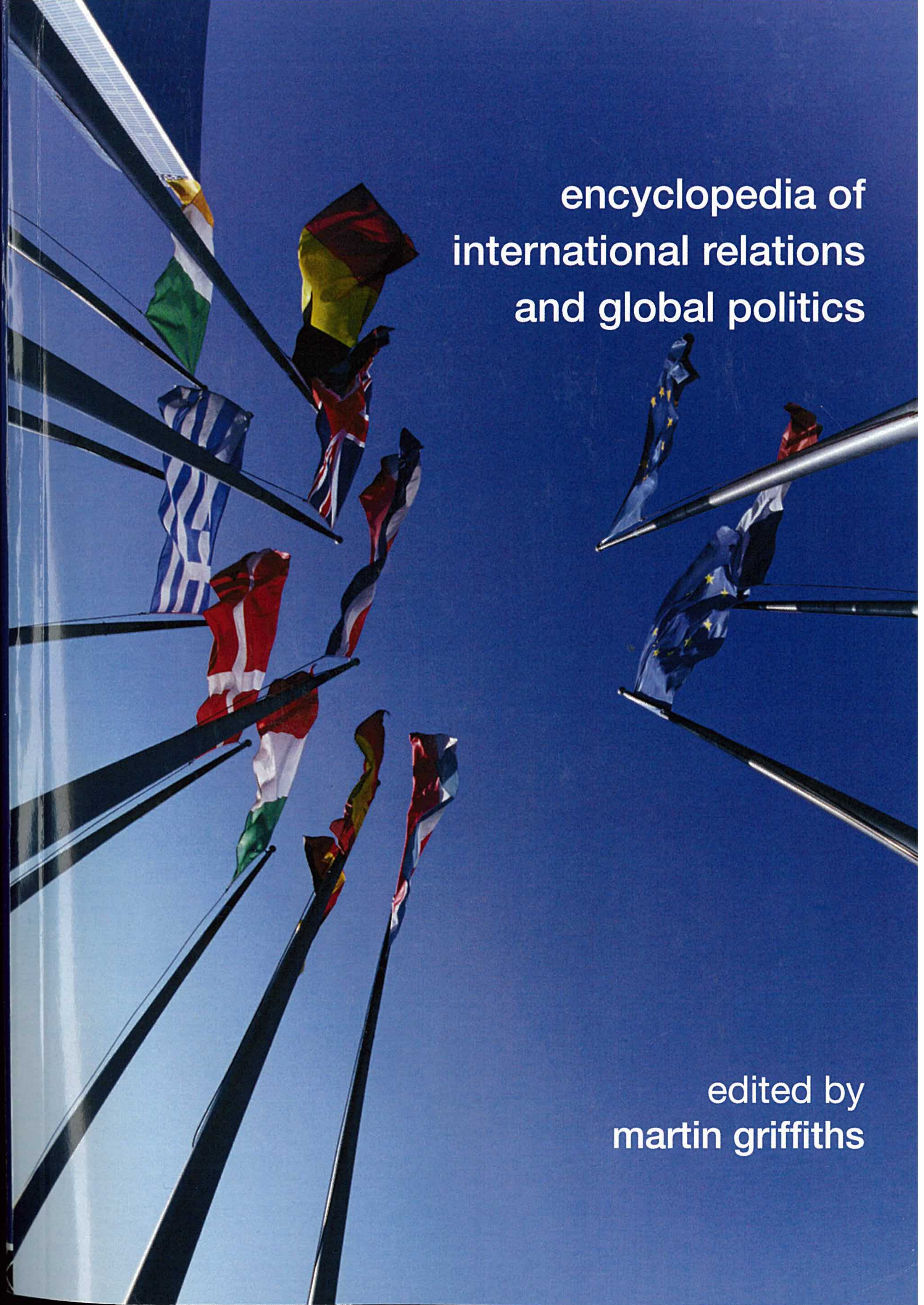

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reform international institutions like the **United Nations** and the World Bank.

Further reading

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See also: cosmopolitan democracy; state formation; end of history

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Dependency

Theories of dependency challenged the dominance of **modernization** strategies in the mid- to late twentieth century. Modernization strategies mapped pathways to modernity for **Third World** states based on the use of external agents for change. Dependency analysts declared such agents exploitative. Without autonomous economic growth, Third World societies could expect no change in their economic fortunes. The result, so dependency theorists argued, could never be modernization or **development**, only underdevelopment.

Dependency's language of neocolonial denial proved extremely influential during the 1960s and 1970s and contributed to international efforts to transform unequal trading relationships (see **neocolonialism**). But not all dependency theorists regarded exchange as the cause of underdevelopment. Others stressed exploitative internal relations of production instead. The debate robbed dependency of its theoretical unanimity. By the 1980s, the rise of newly industrializing countries in the Third World appeared to rob it also of its universality (see **newly industrializing country**). Dependency and modernization, critics declared, were simply two sides of the same coin. Both focused on national solutions and both were ill equipped to counter the growing influence of new **globalization** strategies at the end of the twentieth century.

Certainly dependency theories derived from the same postwar global landscape that bred theories of modernization. In industrial societies state-based Keynesian initiatives, which provided citizens access to education, housing, health services and work, replaced the divisive bitterness and destruction of prewar strategies. Within the space of a single generation, industrial societies were transformed and the consumerism of empowered citizens became the means to achieve sustainable growth.

But in the Third World no similar domestic focus existed. Colonialism had denied people both the opportunity and capacity for self-governance. Above all it had denied them the empowerment that invariably flowed from domestically focused wealth generation, and left them dependent on external demand to generate growth. It never permitted them the opportunity to achieve the same degree of economic autonomy enjoyed by the first world.

Although aspirations for self-reliance had been inherently dangerous for prewar industrial states, they remained central to most Third World national agendas. However, aspirations alone could not transform dependency. Most Third World states remained producers of cheap labor and raw materials dependent on the health of distant markets. They never reinvented their economies drawing on the strength of their own domestic needs. These realities informed the central theses of early dependency theorists. Continued dependency and unequal exchange, they argued, produced **neocolonialism** not liberation, underdevelopment not development.

This simple argument made the notion of dependency extremely attractive as a way of accounting for the inability of many former colonies to transform themselves into democratic consumption-based societies, the goal of modernization. Not only had colonialism systematically underdeveloped their capabilities, it also left their internal economic sectors bereft of overall coherence. Each sector existed separately to meet external demand.

Some dependency theorists argued that this vast developmental gap between internal sectors bestowed on states a centrality no longer possessed in the first world. In newly independent Africa, local elites quickly seized control of these states to maintain their privileges. Linkages with foreign owned enterprises similarly strengthened their status. Since most elites depended also on fragile political and economic bases to maintain their access to state resources, they quickly learned to exploit regional, ethnic, religious or tribal differences to their advantage. Unfortunately these strategies did little for national development. Nations fragmented, capitalist classes failed to flourish, poverty and dependency worsened.

South America's solution to foreign dependency lay with import substitution. But its leaders also benefited from the status quo. They were reluctant to introduce the necessary packages for land reform, income redistribution and political change that successful industrialization required. Consequently import substitution never generated sufficient internal market growth to remove industry's dependence on foreign markets. Nor did it prevent the penetration of transnational capital keen to take advantage of protected markets or to exploit for export purposes the internal colonial relationships that industry relied upon to remain competitive.

Supporters of modernization blamed this situation on internal obstacles to development, not foreign domination. Tradition and the lack of entrepreneurial spirit determined the backwardness of rural sectors and prevented their integration with modern urban sectors, which had no choice but to turn to foreign markets in order to grow. Dependency theorists disagreed. When the industrialized world created colonial economies, they conserved only those pre-capitalist social formations functional to **capitalism**. This created an impression of duality, of contradictory modern and traditional sectors. In reality traditional sectors were integral to the survival of the modern economy. They were not separate from it, although the nature of their integration differed from rural sectors in the first world. In that difference lay disadvantage and underdevelopment, not empowerment and autonomy.

Many consequences flowed from this lack of internal coherence. It created internal colonial relationships that differentiated town and country. It enabled modern urban sectors to remain globally relevant only by exploiting rural sectors as a cheap resource. Such unequal internal relationships kept wages low, reduced political pressures for reform and made development difficult. At the same time they sharpened uneven development and social conflict.

However, the dependency idea that the experience of colonialism most explained differences between first and Third Worlds, provided elites with a convenient scapegoat. The Third World's numerical dominance of most international fora by the 1970s also provided post-colonial leaders with an opportunity to create a powerful new Third World bloc to address these historical legacies and lobby for global reform (see **post-colonialism**). A Non-aligned Movement (1955) attempted to create Third World solidarity. A **United Nations** Conference on Trade and Development in 1964 sought a Third World alternative to the first world's think tank, the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development** (OECD). Both organizations demanded a New International Economic Order (1975) and a redistribution of first world surpluses to the Third World.

No new order materialized. The only surpluses redistributed were petrodollars that arrived as cheap loans of dubious value. By the 1980s the cost of servicing debt negated any gains made during preceding decades. Although the European Community and the United States did improve terms of trade, their actions affected only small groupings of Third World countries and only a narrow range of commodities. Moreover these efforts to address unequal exchange promoted foreign rather than domestic markets as the basis for economic growth. They reinforced arguments that dependency and modernization theories were simply two sides of the same coin. Indeed, as globalization intensified towards the end of the twentieth century, debates concerning dependency withered. Civil society organizations developed alternative localized programs for community capacity building instead. In East Asia, states successfully transformed export-led strategies into domestic growth. Colonial pasts were not always the absolute constraint that dependency analysts had suggested. Thus the political significance of dependency also abated over time.

Further reading

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See also: development; interdependence; modernization; neocolonialism

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Desertification

Degradation of formerly productive land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas due to climatic variation (e.g. prolonged drought or flooding) and/or unsustainable human activity, associated primarily with food production. While the standard view of desertification conjures up images of advancing desert sand dunes, the reality is complex and sporadic. Consequently, desertification is not confined to desert fringe areas such as the Sahel region of Africa and western Rajasthan in India. To date, significant land degradation has also occurred in the United States (30 per cent of land), Latin America and the Caribbean (one quarter is now desert or dry land), China (loss of 700,000 hectares of arable land) and Europe (e.g. one fifth of land in Spain is under threat). Current estimates suggest that this problem affects approximately one third of the earth's land surface (four billion hectares), impacting