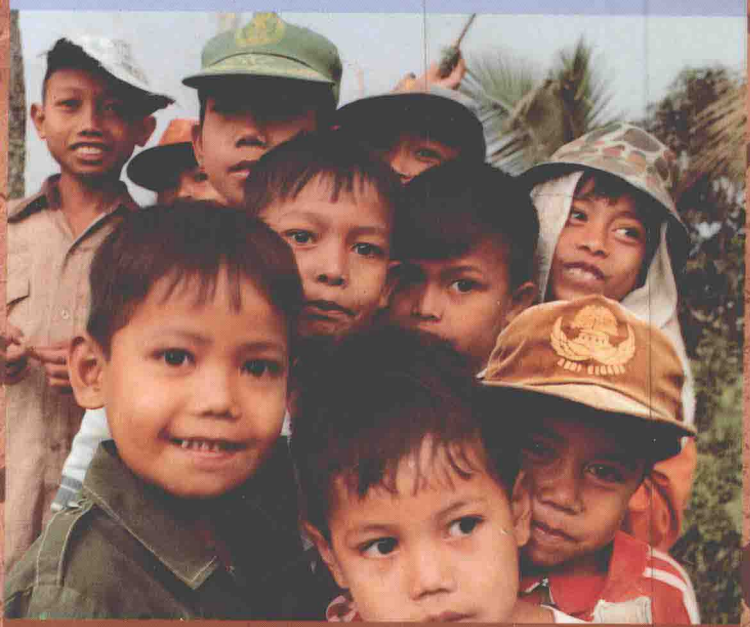
POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1990s



Edited by
Tim Allen
Alan Thomas

POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1990s

Edited by
Tim Allen and Alan Thomas
for an Open University Course Team

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U208 *THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT*
COURSE TEAM AND AUTHORS

Tom Hewitt, Lecturer in Development Studies, The Open University (Course Team Chair)

Ben Crow, Lecturer in Development Studies, The Open University (Course Team Chair)

Tim Allen, Lecturer in Development Studies, The Open University

Carolyn Baxter, Course Manager, The Open University

Henry Bernstein, Senior Lecturer in Agricultural and Rural Development, Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester

Krishna Bharadwaj, Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Suzanne Brown, Course Manager, The Open University

Janet Bujra, Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Social and Economic Studies, University of Bradford

Angus Calder, Staff Tutor in Arts, The Open University, Edinburgh

Kate Crehan, Associate Professor, New School for Social Research, New York, USA

Sue Dobson, Graphic Artist, The Open University

Harry Dodd, Print Production Controller, The Open University

Kath Doggett, Project Control, The Open University

Joshua Doriye, Professor, Institute of Finance and Management, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Chris Edwards, Senior Lecturer in Economics, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia

Diane Elson, Lecturer in Development Economics, University of Manchester (Part Assessor)

Sheila Farrant, Tutor Counsellor and Assistant Staff Tutor, The Open University, Cambridge (Course Reader)

Jo Field, Project Control, The Open University

Jayati Ghosh, Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Heather Gibson, Lecturer in Economics, University of Kent at Canterbury

Angela Grunsell, Oxfam Primary Education, London (Course Reader)

Liz Gunner, Lecturer in Literature, Languages and Cultures of Africa, School of Oriental and African Studies, London (Course Reader)

Garry Hammond, Senior Editor, The Open University

Barbara Harriss, Lecturer in Agricultural Economics and Governing Body Fellow, Wolfson College, University of Oxford

John Harriss, Director, Centre for Development Studies, London School of Economics (Part Assessor)

Pamela Higgins, Graphic Designer, The Open University

Caryl Hunter-Brown, Liaison Librarian, The Open University

Gillian Iossif, Lecturer in Statistics, The Open University

Rhys Jenkins, Reader in Economics, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia

Hazel Johnson, Lecturer in Development Studies, The Open University

Sabrina Kassam, Research Assistant, The Open University

Andrew Kilmister, Lecturer in Economics, School of Business Studies, Oxford Polytechnic

Patti Langton, Producer, BBC

Christina Lay, Course Manager, The Open University

Anthony McGrew, Lecturer in Government, Social Science Faculty, The Open University

Maureen Mackintosh, Reader in Economics, Kingston Polytechnic

Mahmood Mamdani, Professor, Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, Uganda

Charlotte Martin, Teacher and Open University Tutor (Course Reader)

Mahmood Messkoub, Lecturer in Economics, University of Leeds

Richard Middleton, Staff Tutor in Arts, The Open University, Newcastle

Alistair Morgan, Lecturer in Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University

Eleanor Morris, Producer, BBC

Ray Munns, Cartographer, The Open University

Kathy Newman, Secretary, The Open University

Debbie Payne, Secretary, The Open University

Ruth Pearson, Lecturer in Economics, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia

Richard Pindar, Training consultant, Sheffield (Course Reader)

David Potter, Professor of Government, The Open University

Janice Robertson, Editor, The Open University

Carol Russell, Editor, The Open University

Vivian von Schelling, Lecturer in Development Studies, Polytechnic of East London

Gita Sen, Fellow (Professor), Centre for Development Studies, Kerala, India

Meg Sheffield, Senior Producer, BBC

Paul Smith, Lecturer in Environmental Studies, The Open University

Ines Smyth, Senior Lecturer, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands; Research Associate, Department of Applied Social Studies and Social Research, University of Oxford

Hilary Standing, Lecturer in Social Anthropology, School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex (Part Assessor)

John Taylor, Head of Centre for Chinese Studies, South Bank Polytechnic (Course Reader)

Alan Thomas, Senior Lecturer in Systems, The Open University

Steven Treagust, Research Assistant, The Open University

Euclid Tsakalotos, Lecturer in Economics, University of Kent at Canterbury

Gordon White, Professorial Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

David Wield, Senior Lecturer in Technology Policy, The Open University

Gordon Wilson, Staff Tutor in Technology, The Open University, Leeds

Philip Woodhouse, Lecturer in Agricultural and Rural Development, Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester

Peter Worsley, Emeritus Professor, University of Manchester (External Assessor)

Marc Wuyts, Professor of Applied Quantitative Economics, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

ALAN THOMAS

Figure 1 Ugandan children helping to build their own school.

This book is about development in what has become known as the 'Third World', although the term 'Third World' is not used in the title of the book; this is because it may soon, as will be explained, have outlived its usefulness. In practice, 'Third World' has come to be a synonym for the pooorer, southern, less developed countries of the world as a group. Poverty is an age-old concern, but the term 'development', like 'Third World', was hardly in use before the last 40 years. Alternative meanings of 'development' are hotly contested and indeed the whole terrain of debate around development is changing extremely fast and in very uncertain ways, to an extent not foreseen even a few years ago.

So a book introducing poverty and development *in the 1990s* is a great challenge. In many ways, extrapolating from the experience of the past 40 years is likely to be a very poor guide to the next ten. But the past is all we have to go on. We have to find modes of analysis that will help in

understanding and assessing future experience in different parts of the world, however new and unexpected they may be.

During the decade of the eighties there were a great many changes in how development issues were perceived and how world poverty was tackled. New issues came to the forefront, notably the environment, international debt, and the question of gender relations. Neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on market mechanisms, became, at least for the time being, the dominant way of thinking about development in terms of development theory and in terms of influence on policy.

Major changes in the world at large also influence the position of the Third World and thinking about development. At the beginning of the 1990s the pace of world change seemed to be greater than ever. The 'end of the Cold War' brought so-called democratization in Eastern Europe, including the reunification of Germany in October 1990, and continued changes in the Soviet Union. The Gulf War which followed the crisis precipitated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 underlined the fact that the world now apparently had the USA as its sole superpower. We have hardly had time to begin to analyse the implications of these changes for development, and there is every reason to suppose that further changes will occur that affect our field of study throughout the 1990s.

At the same time, the questions of the appalling poverty of large numbers of the world's people, with continuing enormous inequities between rich and poor, and the apparent inability of national governments and international agencies to mount a concerted and successful development effort to remedy the situation, remains as potent as ever. Given the increasing inequality in wealth between different parts of the Third World over the past decade, and the new importance of questions such as environment, debt and gender, I believe it is even more urgent to address such issues.

You may well be motivated to read this book by a wish to answer the very practical question: 'What can be done?' There are of course no easy prescriptions, not least because of the wide variety of interests (often conflicting) at stake, and the great range of agencies that might potentially be involved in 'doing something' about any one of the varied issues that make up the field of development.

By whom is development being done? To whom? These are also potent questions. They should particularly be asked when 'solutions' are put forward that start 'We should...' without making it clear who 'We' are and what interests 'We' represent. In fact, rather than pursue the impossible aim of giving 'solutions' to development 'problems', the overall aim of this book is to provide you with means to begin *analysing* and *assessing answers* to the question 'What can be done about world poverty and development?'

By the end of the book, the question will have been raised as to how far development in the 1990s is likely to involve new and different issues from those thought of previously as most important. To put it another way, is the Third World and its development about to be transformed by the impact of recent events and world changes? Or, is the current highly turbulent state of affairs simply a transition to a new phase of development in which more or less the same concerns, the same theoretical frameworks, the same analytical tools, will continue?

Q What is the 'Third World' and does it still mean something in the 1990s?

Q Does 'development' mean something new in the 1990s?

In this Introduction we take a first closer look at these questions before I explain how the rest of the book is arranged and give some guidance on how to read it.

1 The 'Third World' from the 1950s to the 1990s

The term 'Third World' came into use in the post-war period of the Cold War, at the same time as the growth of international institutions surrounding

the United Nations. It was originally a political or ideological concept, roughly denoting the search for a different approach from either capitalist ('First World') or communist ('Second World') – not necessarily a *middle* way, but certainly a distinctive, positive force.

This idea emerged first in France. There and elsewhere the independent Left were seeking a new form of democratic participation; neither the capitalist parties nor the organized communist parties on the Eastern European model provided for the sort of direct democracy they were after. In 1956 the Suez crisis provoked great disillusionment with the capitalist parties, but the Soviet invasion of Hungary in the same year generated a similar disillusion with Eastern European state socialism. This double crisis also gave Nasser, of Egypt, and Tito, of Yugoslavia, independent stature, and with India's Nehru they became the driving force behind the non-aligned movement (Box 1).

In the words of Peter Worsley, author of *The Third World* (first published in 1964):

> "What the Third World originally was, then, is clear: it was the non-aligned world. It was also a world of poor countries. Their poverty was the outcome of a more fundamental identity: that they had all been colonized."
>
> (Worsley, 1979, p.102)

The 'fundamental identity' of having all (or almost all) been colonized allowed for solidarity in anti-colonialism and backing national independence movements, at a time when independence was recent for some and still to be achieved for others.

Box 1 The non-aligned movement

Non-aligned conferences have been held approximately every four years since 1961. The members are simply those states and national independence movements who are invited, and accept an invitation, to the conferences.

A forerunner of the non-aligned conferences was the 'Bandung' conference held in Indonesia in 1955 as an *Afro-Asian* solidarity conference. It included virtually all the independent Asian and African countries of the time, including those like Pakistan and Thailand with clear military and economic allegiance to the West. The non-aligned movement (NAM) came about as they were joined by increasing numbers of newly independent Black African countries, starting with Ghana in 1957, for whom the achievement of independence from colonial rule translated into a vehement desire for freedom from foreign military domination. The 'non-aligned philosophy' which arose emphasized certain positive principles, notably *peaceful co-existence* and *anti-colonialism*.

The main criteria for invitation to the first non-aligned conference, held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961, were given by Willetts (1978, pp.18–19) as:

1 an independent policy based on the coexistence of states with different political and social systems and non-alignment or a trend in favour of such a policy;

2 consistent support to movements for national independence;

3 non-membership of a multilateral military alliance concluded in the context of Great Power conflicts.

Since 1961 the NAM had changed a great deal even before the collapse of Eastern European state socialism and the apparent end of the Cold War in 1989 and 1990. Most notably, at the Third Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka in 1970, a third 'basic aim' of non-alignment was added to those of peaceful coexistence and anti-colonialism: namely the struggle for *economic independence*. In recent years the NAM has functioned more as an economic pressure group over common problems such as debt and less as a political bloc.

There were also movements in the cultural field towards creating a new, positive identity to counter what was seen as the divisive and alienative character of Westernized industrial culture. Frantz Fanon, for example, who was born in Martinique but spent many years helping in the fight for Algerian independence from France, published several books aimed at countering 'the colonization of the personality'. Fanon's writing epitomizes the hope that something positive would come from the new force represented by the many Black African and other states gaining independence in the 1950s and 1960s. The extract in Box 2 is from *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961 just before Algerian independence.

Worsley, however, in the same 1979 article, went on to point out how, as time went on, divisions tended to break up the rather fragile unity among Third World countries. By 1979, both economic differentiation and political polarization were destroying the original idea of the Third World as the non-aligned world.

In economic terms there were enormous and growing differences between the 'newly industrializing countries' (NICs), including the four East Asian 'dragons' (Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong) and some others such as Brazil and Mexico, and the continuing poor agrarian countries such as most of those of sub-Saharan Africa. East Asia and East Africa are completely different places – far more so than, say, the United States and parts of Latin America. In political terms, Worsley himself points out that from the beginning 'Third World countries were overwhelmingly a sub-set of capitalist countries'. Nevertheless, by 1979: 'The choice has become, increasingly, polarized between capitalism and some variant of communism. In the wake of the US defeat [in Vietnam], a few countries have crossed into the other camp. But the choice has been between the two camps, not in some 'Third' direction' (Worsley, 1979, p.108).

Throughout the 1980s, these divisions if anything became even more pronounced. Then at

Box 2 Extract from *The Wretched of the Earth*

The Third World today faces Europe like a colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers.

But let us be clear: what matters is to stop talking about output, and intensification, and the rhythm of work.

No, there is no question of a return to Nature. It is simply a very concrete question of not dragging men to mutilation, of not imposing upon the brain rhythms which very quickly obliterate it and wreck it. The pretext of catching up must not be used to push a man around, to tear him away from himself or his privacy, to break and kill him...

So, Comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies which draw their inspiration from her.

Humanity is waiting for something from us other than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature.

If we want to turn Africa into a new Europe, and America into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to the Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us.

But if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries...

For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, we must set foot a new man.

(Fanon, 1961, pp.253–55)

the end of that decade came the sudden changes in Eastern Europe linked to the slogan of 'democratization'. It looked briefly as though there was a possibility of the new form of democratic participation envisaged by those whose ideas of a third way gave rise to the 'Third World' label back in the 1950s. However, it soon became clear that what was happening amounted to the collapse of the Soviet model of state socialism in Europe. One of Worsley's two 'camps' that previously polarized the world was enormously, perhaps fatally, weakened.

The United States in particular saw an outbreak of triumphalism. In the words of Henry Kissinger: 'There has been a war between capitalism and socialism and capitalism has won!' The outcome of the Gulf War seemed to underline American world dominance. American commentators referred to 'the new world order', using phrases such as 'Pax Americana' and 'the coming American century'.

The essay 'The End of History', by US State Department analyst Francis Fukuyama (1989), had already come to epitomize this popular feeling. In it Fukuyama put forward a grand view of history as the working out of struggles between great ideological principles. He caught the mood of the moment in the West by arguing that the fusion of liberal democracy and industrial capitalism now represents the only viable basis for modern human society.

Perhaps the term 'Third World' has lost any useful meaning. Indeed, a book was published in 1986 called *The End of the Third World* (Harris, 1986), thus foreshadowing Fukuyama's phraseology. There are three reasons behind this argument:

1 As pointed out above, the 'Third World' seems more than ever disparate rather than representing any kind of unity.

2 The logic of trying to find a third alternative to two dominant models seems to have disappeared, since one of the two models has demonstrably failed, at least in Europe.

3 If its political meaning is lost, the term 'Third World' implies mainly a world of poverty, lack of industrialization and so on; the idea of an 'end' to this Third World would express the hope or intention to do away once and for all with such problems.

But there are difficulties with each of these arguments.

1 The first point seems to make the Third World unimportant, when there is already a problem of Western attention being drawn away from the Third World to Eastern Europe. However, even if one discounts the East Asian NICs (which probably do not represent a way forward for the rest of the Third World) those remaining poor countries still contain the majority of the world's population.

2 The second point ignores the fact that China and some other smaller Third World states such as Cuba continue with 'socialist' development models. It also implies that distinctive Third World concerns have gone away, whereas in fact they are very much still there.

3 Looking at the problems of the Third World shows the continuing need to ask 'Is there an alternative?' As Galbraith (1990) has argued in a reply to Fukuyama, a concerted attack on poverty cannot be mounted within a pure capitalist framework. In a free market system, public resources are not likely to be mobilized in support of policies aimed directly at improving health, providing employment or protecting the environments which enable people to make their living. There are strong grounds, which come from the Third World itself and its concerns, for continuing to seek a new alternative (or at least a strong modification) to capitalist industrialization.

All this implies either dropping the term 'Third World' or looking for a different kind of definition. The *Third World Guide*, published annually by a group of independent journalists in Latin America, uses the following definition, by the Egyptian economist Ismail-Sabri Abdalla:

> "All those nations which, during the process of formation of the existing world order, did

> not become rich and industrialized...A historical perspective is essential to understand what is the Third World, because by definition it is the periphery of the system produced by the expansion of world capital."
>
> (quoted in *Guia del Tercer Mundo*, 1981, p.6)

This definition combines recognition of these human issues of poverty with an emphasis on common historical explanations. It relates the Third World to the formation of the international capitalist system (a process that occurred over several centuries of European colonialist domination of the world – see Chapters 8–10 of this book) rather than to the polarized post-war world political order of the 'Cold War'. Thus it is as valid as ever with the end of that Cold War.

Another possibility is to continue to emphasize the concerns of the poor countries but to use different language. One can talk in terms of 'less developed countries' (LDCs) and 'advanced industrial countries' (AICs). However, this fails to emphasize the common ground and the scope for political and economic solidarity that arises from being in a common position in relation to global capital. The idea of 'the South' is one that has gained ground recently, and with it the notion of the 'North–South divide' placing industrialized countries, both Western capitalist countries and Eastern bloc state socialist countries, on one side and the non-industrialized countries (along with the NICs) on the other. Among several new groups formed has been the South Commission, which published *The Challenge to the South* (South Commission, 1990).

In this book, several authors continue to use 'Third World' while others use different language to refer to the poorer countries of the world as a group. Note, however, that whatever language is chosen and whatever definition is used it must contain an implicit view of the world. Abdalla's view, for example, is strongly critical about the effects of the world capitalist system on Third World countries and negative about those countries' future prospects under the same system.

2 Changing views on development

'Development' is a positive word that is almost synonymous with 'progress'. Although it may entail disruption of established patterns of living, over the long term it implies increased living standards, improved health and well-being for all, and the achievement of whatever is regarded as a general good for society at large.

In this book we are primarily concerned with development at the level of societies rather than individuals or even localities. What people learn from their experiences may be regarded as 'personal development' and particular building projects may be called 'developments', but these are not the focus for considering the development (or lack of development) of the Third World. This is not to say that such aspects are unimportant. One of the most influential attempts at defining what is meant by development is based on the idea of creating the conditions for 'the realization of the potential of human personality' (Seers, 1969; see Chapter 6 of this book). And development as building is an important idea when considering *how* development occurs or may be brought about. The relationship between development at local levels and at national or societal levels also brings in the idea of equity between various localities or between different social groups or classes.

Already we can see that the very word 'development', seemingly an idea of which everyone must approve, hides a number of debates. For example, what aspects should be included when considering development, and how should it be measured? Is it primarily an economic concept? or should social aspects be of equal or even of greater importance? Should ideals such as equity, political participation and so on be included in a *definition* of development – or regarded as additional desirable elements which may actually be in conflict with the achievement of development itself?

In trying to answer the question whether development means the same thing as it has done and

whether the meaning will remain the same throughout the 1990s, we have to realize that there have always been such debates – the question is whether what is debated is changing. We have already noted that certain issues are being given increased importance, and this is reflected in the way the meaning of development is debated. Thus, debates over the environment, for example, have given rise to the concept of 'sustainable development' (see Chapter 5), though there is as yet no consensus on how to relate this to conventional definitions of development. There have also been moves to include specific mention of the impact of changes on women in definitions of development, and more generally to analyse development in terms of gender relations (see Chapter 15).

The particular form taken by gender relations in any given social context is one example of the importance of culture. Worsley, in a later book, refers to culture (in the sense of a shared set of values) as 'the missing factor' in many studies of development (Worsley, 1984, p.41). In the present book there is also an attempt to include culture, with a view, as Worsley suggests, to 'examining the interplay between economic and political institutions and the rest of social life' (ibid., p.59). However, although development clearly always has cultural implications, as it has implications for gender relations and for the environment, it is not possible to discuss every aspect at once. Development is intrinsically interdisciplinary. The various chapters of this book are written by different authors with different primary foci; although all are writing outside conventional disciplinary boundaries, you will still find more emphasis on the cultural in some, and less (or none) in others.

However, there is no evidence of any major new change in how development is likely to be viewed in the 1990s. Indeed, despite all the debates, there is some agreement on two points. First, tackling poverty is of basic importance. The World Bank's *World Development Report 1990* comes close to a definition of development in such terms with its view that 'Reducing poverty is the fundamental objective of economic development' (p.24). Second, development is a multi-faceted process with political and social as well as economic aspects.

So far we have looked at what development is in terms of how to recognize whether development has taken place. The question of *how* development occurs is equally important. Development can be seen in two rather different ways: (1) as an *historical process of social change* in which societies are transformed over long periods; and (2) as consisting of *deliberate efforts aimed at progress* on the part of various agencies, including governments, all kinds of organizations and social movements. However, as an historical process development is certainly not necessarily positive; for their part, development efforts do not all succeed.

The two ways of looking at how development takes place are of course related. The idea of development as historical social change does not negate the importance of 'doing development'. Historical processes incorporate millions of deliberate actions. Conversely, one's view of what efforts are likely to work is bound to be coloured by one's view of history. For example, Abdalla's definition of the Third World, quoted above, embodied the view that the historical process which resulted in the development of the industrialized world was the same process in which the Third World did not become developed.

We already noted that this definition of Abdalla's implies a particular view of the world – one which has in fact informed much thinking on how to achieve development. Put simply, in this kind of view, Western capitalist industrialization created structures in which Third World economies were dependent and which tended to lead to and maintain underdevelopment.

This is one version of a 'dependency view', which is in turn one of a number of views which may be grouped under the heading of *structuralism*. In general, such views are concerned with underlying social and economic structures and see development as involving changes in these structures.

An essentially different view is that of *neo-liberalism*, which has its emphasis on the importance of market relations, and which has been in the ascendancy, not only with the main international agencies such as the World Bank but also with increasing numbers of Third World governments, and others, for the past decade. These two competing approaches entail different views of history, of what is meant by the Third World, of how to achieve development and who should be the agents of it.

Although *neo-liberalism* and *structuralism* both incorporate a range of variations, there are other approaches to development which fall outside these two labels. In Chapter 6 both these terms will be explained in more detail, as well as other approaches, notably *populism* and *interventionism*. The point to realize for the moment is that in an area of debate such as development, definitions and explanations are not cut and dried. They carry implications about one's view of the world that can lead into wide-ranging political, moral and theoretical disputes.

3 The structure of this book and how to read it

The book is arranged in three parts. The first part presents the idea of the 'Third World' as 'a world of problems'. Chapters 1 to 5 deal in turn with hunger and famine, diseases, unemployment, population, and environmental degradation – each of which relates to an aspect of poverty and may be seen as one of the 'problems' endemic in the 'Third World'. Then Chapter 6 discusses what is meant by 'development' in relation to such concerns and introduces alternative views on how development occurs in the context of global capitalism and a world of nation states.

The second part, on the making of the Third World, analyses the historical context from which current concerns arose. Chapter 7 looks at pre-capitalist diversity; Chapters 8 to 10 consider European colonialism in relation to the development of capitalism on a world scale; and Chapters 11 and 12 discuss post-colonial influences that have also shaped today's Third World.

The third part explains further some current issues and concepts useful for understanding development in the 1990s. Chapter 13 sets the scene by relating the Third World to its position in the 'new' global order and Chapter 14 relates development to the current trend towards the 'democratization' of Third World states. Chapters 15, 16 and 17 underline the necessity of including consideration, respectively, of technology, gender relations, and wider aspects of culture in any assessment of development. Particular cases are used to emphasize the importance of class and ethnicity (Chapter 18) and the politics of cultural expression (Chapter 19). The concluding chapter returns to the discussion of what general options are feasible for development in the 1990s, and in particular whether any such options are at all viable unless based, like previously dominant models of development, on large-scale industrialization.

By the end of the book you should be in a better position to begin to analyse or at least to ask the right kind of questions about any given example of 'development' in the coming years.

Throughout the book various devices are used to help you in your reading and study, most of which have been introduced already. Within the first introductory paragraphs of each chapter there is an emphasized Question or Questions, to which the rest of the chapter should provide some sort of answer. Each chapter ends with a Summary or Conclusion which you should be able to link back to the chapter Question(s). Key concepts are emphasized in bold lettering and have a boxed summary discussion of their meaning nearby. Numbered Boxes are used for long examples, cases, illustrations or specific explanations that can be taken separately from the main flow of the argument. Photographs and cartoons may be used not just to illustrate the text but to give additional examples, so you should look carefully at the captions. Tables are used to provide data to back up arguments in the text; note that different authors may have used

different sources so that not all the tables are precisely compatible with each other.

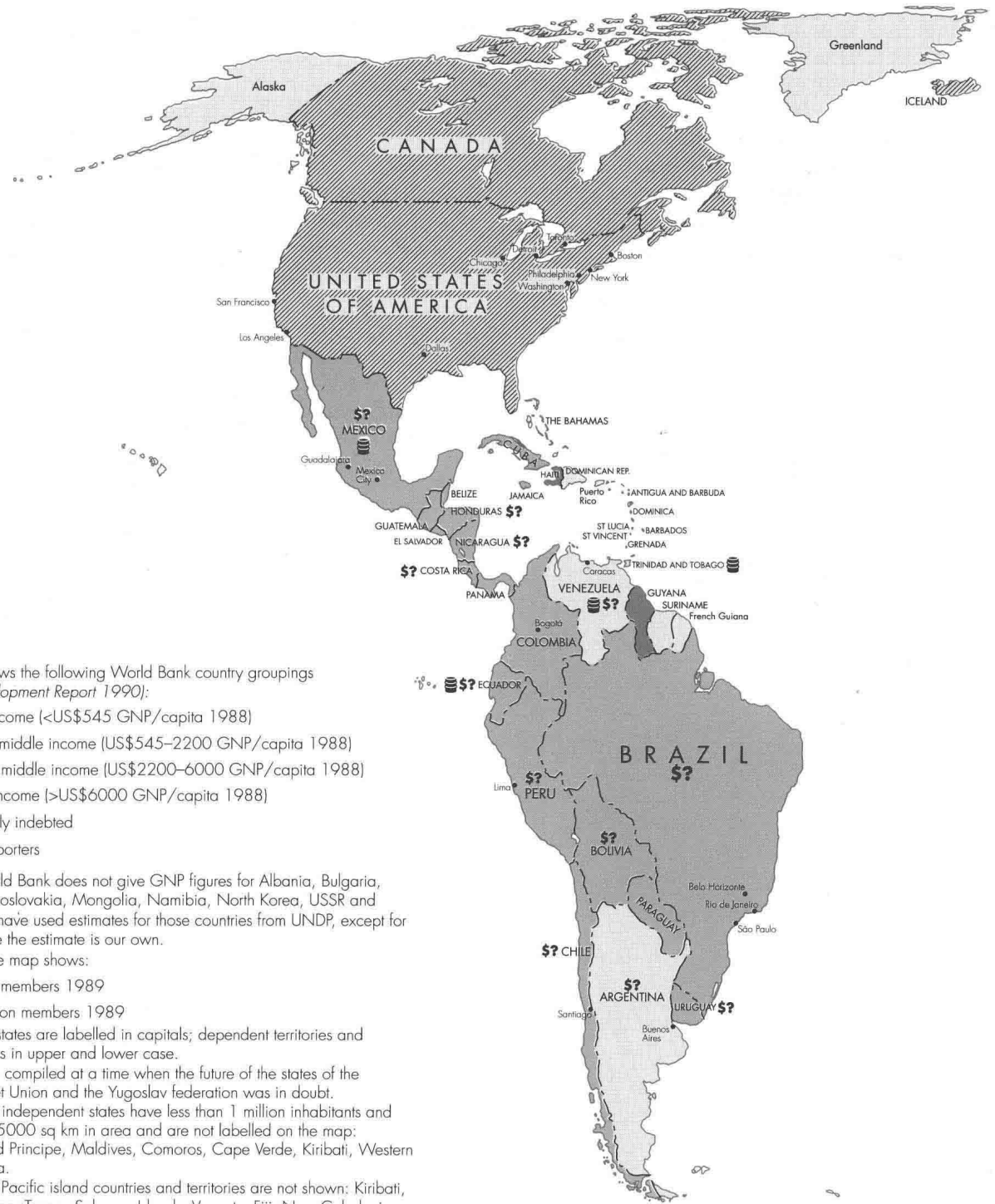
Concepts may be mentioned without definition that are discussed more fully later. (This has happened quite frequently in this Introduction, for instance.) You should find that the Index emphasizes the place in the text where a concept is explained or where the boxed summary discussion of a concept occurs.

Apart from the Index, other points of reference are the map at the end of this Introduction and the List of Acronyms, Abbreviations and Organizations at the end of the book.

Sometimes the text asks you to make some calculations on a table, look carefully for certain features of an argument in an extract, consider your own views on a subject before going on, etc. Of course, you can simply read on and treat such questions as rhetorical – but in general you will gain more understanding through stopping briefly to try to answer the question posed.

Finally, please note that although this is a textbook rather than a collection of academic articles, and the editors have endeavoured to arrange it so that conceptual material is explained and built on throughout the book, it is written by a variety of authors with differing expertise as well as differing views. Not all the disagreements, points of overlap, possible cross-references, etc. have been pointed out, though I hope there are not too many places where one author actually contradicts another! You should find it useful to try to make as many links for yourself as you can between the arguments in different chapters, so that you get as rounded a picture as possible of the complexity of development in the 1990s.

Countries and major cities of the world



This map shows the following World Bank country groupings *(World Development Report 1990)*:

- Low income (<US$545 GNP/capita 1988)
- Lower middle income (US$545–2200 GNP/capita 1988)
- Upper middle income (US$2200–6000 GNP/capita 1988)
- High income (>US$6000 GNP/capita 1988)
- $? Severely indebted
- Oil exporters

NB. The World Bank does not give GNP figures for Albania, Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Mongolia, Namibia, North Korea, USSR and Taiwan. We have used estimates for those countries from UNDP, except for Taiwan where the estimate is our own.

In addition the map shows:

- OECD members 1989
- Comecon members 1989

Independent states are labelled in capitals; dependent territories and disputed areas in upper and lower case.

This map was compiled at a time when the future of the states of the ertwhile Soviet Union and the Yugoslav federation was in doubt.

The following independent states have less than 1 million inhabitants and are less than 5000 sq km in area and are not labelled on the map: São Tome and Principe, Maldives, Comoros, Cape Verde, Kiribati, Western Samoa, Tonga.

The following Pacific island countries and territories are not shown: Kiribati, Western Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia, Guam, French Polynesia, Netherlands Antilles, Pacific Islands Trust Territories

Cities shown are those with population over 3 million in 1985.