



# Human Rights and International Political Economy in Third World Nations: Multinational Corporations, Foreign Aid, and Repression

*By William Meyer*

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What impact do international economic inputs have on human rights in Third World nations? William Meyer explores the effects of direct investment by U.S. multinational corporations, economic and military aid, and MNC manufacturing plants. He examines the international political economy of human rights at both the national and the international levels. Case studies are combined with quantitative studies that use aggregate cross-national data, and theories that link MNCs to human rights are subjected to empirical testing.

As Meyer illustrates, at the national level, human rights violations are associated with U.S. MNCs in Chile, Honduras, India, Indonesia, and Mexico. MNCs have been especially guilty of violating labor rights, particularly through their reliance on sweatshops. MNCs have also been responsible for widespread pollution and environmental degradation. At a broader international level, increased investment by MNCs tends to go along with human rights improvements in the Third World as a whole. Meyer shows that there is a broad positive relationship between direct investment by MNCs and broader political rights and improved living standards. Aggregate data are also analyzed for human rights as compared to U.S. economic and military aid. Economic aid is found to be associated with improved civil-political rights and improved socioeconomic rights. Military aid, by contrast, is associated with declining levels of civil rights and with lower levels of social welfare. This book will serve as an important study for researchers, activists, and students of human rights.

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#### Review

"Meyer's analysis provides much in the way of a new approach to evaluating international political economy. His findings, which support the notion that political decisions significantly shape the role that MNCs play in third world economies, entail important policy implications and must be used to inform the policy debate. The book is lucidly written, empirically balanced, and remarkable insightful. It is a most welcome addition to a growing literature aimed at tackling in a forthright manner complex links between the international political economy and the emerging global standards of human rights."-The Review of Politics

"[T]his is a good introductory text which goes over the main arguments surrounding the issues of aid, multinationals, and human rights. It is a clear...account, well-organised into readable sections."-Development in Practice

"This book is a necessary first attempt to discuss methods and concepts of human rights in relation to MNC operations. It demonstrates clearly the difficulties faced by the human rights field as it now moves beyond the operation of states and into the sphere of private sectors....Meyer deserves recognition for tackling a complex issue that will become all the more important in the next few years."-American Political Science Review

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#### About the Author

WILLIAM H. MEYER is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Delaware. Among his earlier publications is *Transnational Media and Third World Development* (Greenwood, 1988).

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