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## DISASTERS AND DEVELOPMENT: SAME MISTAKES ALL OVER AGAIN?

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Cuny, Frederick C. *Disasters and Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. 272 pages. ISBN 978-0195032932

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In *Disasters and Development*, Frederick Cuny challenges disaster relief practices toward underdeveloped nations. The book is based on Cuny's firsthand experience as an international disaster relief specialist.<sup>2</sup> Whereas disasters hit the poorest population the hardest, he states that the aid provided is frequently inadequate to mitigate the impact of the disaster and can even delay recovery. Almost 30 years ago, Cuny emphasized that the basic assumptions of aid relief must be reexamined and explained why a better strategy would focus on the aid giving process. To enhance development, aid should support local coping mechanisms (internal social structures used to adapt and respond to crisis) instead of rapid delivery of large quantities of supplies. The author addresses three questions: 1) What happens in a society when a natural disaster occurs? 2) What is aid's impact and how is aid in reality delivered? 3) How can disaster relief be improved? He analyzes the practices of real and fabricated disaster events to elaborate on these points, with the topic of housing reconstruction given much importance.

The relationship between disasters and development is closer than one would expect. Disasters not only expose but also exacerbate poverty and underdevelopment, which at the same time are the root causes of a community's vulnerabilities. To illustrate what happens in a community when a natural hazard occurs, Cuny fabricated a hurricane in the fictitious Republic of Borracho based on events that would typically occur in such a situation. The example chronologically describes the roles and actions taken by the government, the

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Cuny disappeared in Chechnya in 1995.

community, relief organizations, the media throughout the warning period, the moment of the disaster, the emergency phase and finally, the transitional and reconstruction phases. Some actors were informants, providers, decision makers and/or coordinators among the different tasks such as disaster assessment, emergency operations, aid management, programs implementation, reconstruction, etc. Cuny believes that disasters create a climate where drastic improvements to a society's structure are possible. However, even with good intentions, Cuny argues that if organizations fail to understand the overall impact of aid, interventions will have a limited or even negative impact on the development of the community.

When a disaster occurs, most organizations center their efforts on the delivery of emergency supplies such as food, blankets and tents with the intention to relieve the effects of the impact. However, they fail to offer adequate responses to each unique situation. Based on the impact that aid mechanisms have had in post-disaster communities, the author questions organizations' basic assumptions regarding aid relief. He identifies errors in the planning and execution of activities which undermine local coping mechanisms, destroy local markets, and reduce the confidence of the community to recover from the disaster. Coping mechanisms in particular play a crucial role; they provide a strong crisis support by making available economic assistance, material goods, emotional support and physical labor. These internal social structures are acquired by a community over several generations. The family is the basic social structure but it can also include relatives, friends, patrons, religious organizations and villages, among others.

Common mistakes organizations make include concentrating on the rapid delivery of material aid, treating the victims as aid recipients, supplementing local coping mechanisms and being accountable only to donors. Aid relief mechanisms that can foster development would concentrate on the process of aid delivery while having the people as participants of the programs which should be designed only to complement local coping mechanisms. Cuny emphasizes the process because it is crucial that in every stage it promotes development, but more importantly so that the process does not interfere with the medium and long-term recovery of the community. Other issues act as disincentives to apply development strategies, such as competition among organizations, the difficulty in evaluating the impact to development, the influence of the media and conditions placed on aid by donors. Organizations should be accountable to the victims, not to the donors. During disasters, local organizations suddenly receive large quantities of economic assistance and an overload of

responsibilities to which they were not prepared; these negatively impact their ability to function. Finally, due to the high staff rotation, the use of volunteers, lack of research and evaluations and decisions taken from the top, organizations miss the opportunity to learn from past experiences.

To improve disaster relief within the context of development, the author stresses the importance of balancing mitigation and preparedness activities. Mitigation activities can be integrated with development activities with little or no cost. Their purpose is to reduce vulnerabilities of physical structures, the economy and the social structure; as a result, they minimize damage and allow coping mechanisms to better absorb the impact. Strategies should be planned in a way that each activity contributes to the next one and includes all sectors. Cuny also points to the importance of making all decisions locally and of always taking into consideration the key elements of a community. Preparedness examines the possible responses, estimates required resources and assigns the activities carried out immediately before and after the disaster. It also requires periodical reviews and drills. The selection of appropriate shelters is mentioned several times by the author because its absence causes many preventable deaths. For example, there is the misconception that schools and churches are safe places to relocate. While this is true in developed countries where structures are strong, that is not the case in many developing countries. Other recommendations included are emphasizing the importance of donors' education before the disaster regarding aid conditioning and promoting research of innovative approaches that target developing countries.

Concerning the author's proposed approach, there are two things that should be mentioned. The first is the author's idealistic expectations regarding how organizations and government should act; the second is the book's lack of a political approach. Taking into consideration current disaster relief practices, the book's expectations have not yet been met. The same practices he criticizes are present almost 30 years later even with the knowledge of his work, leading to the possible conclusion that perhaps Cuny's expectations are unrealistic. Focusing on the process of aid delivery rather than the simple delivery of goods is more complicated, requires research, is more likely to have an erroneous approach, takes longer to see the results and requires prior planning. The author acknowledges that most of the time donors' funds serve a specific agenda. Nevertheless, he sustains that organizations should educate donors in giving funds without preconditions and take precautions in accepting earmarked funds. Accountability from organizations to donors is also a way that donors can discard inefficient organizations, which is highly important due to the fact that needs

outnumber resources. If not carefully implemented, Cuny's recommendations could discourage donors' assistance. I suggest a more realistic proposal: organizations, accepting that donors have an agenda and must be accountable to their sources of funding, should select those whose interests are similar to the specific development needs of the community. Of course, this too has its setbacks; it should be done prior to the disaster and still requires a lot of time, planning and research. Regarding the lack of a political approach, although he clearly stated that the book will not include anything related to politics, political issues are crucial for disaster relief response. These are country and time-specific, but readers should know that due to the lack of political background, the book can only be a partial guideline. Thus, readers should expect disaster relief practices to be subject to other influences.

Even with the passing years, the book, written by one of the first disaster relief specialists, is a very important contribution to the field of disaster relief. It provides general knowledge about issues useful for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of aid mechanisms in post-disaster development. Except for the mention of some outdated relief organizations and projects, the book's teachings continue to be current, significant and relevant. Since then, the field has seen no new significant contributions. Because of its richness in information, examples and illustrations, the book is like a handbook that anyone interested in disaster relief can continually refer to. Even though it does not elaborate on a specific topic, it gives the reader a solid foundation to begin further research on how to respond to disasters within the context of development.

**PEAR**

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## THE LAND OF THE RISING INSTITUTIONS: HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AS AN EXPLANATION OF THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN

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Krauss, Ellis S. and Robert J. Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 311 pages. ISBN 978-0-8014-4932-1

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This work is an attempt to apply the concept of historical institutionalism to the case of one of the most successful parties within a democratic country, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan. The LDP is a conservative party founded in 1955 with membership ranging from center to right-wing. Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen argue that attempts to explain the rise and fall of the LDP lack explicative substance because they were unable to determine how, fifteen years after the 1993 electoral reform, the LDP was still able to maintain political power within Japanese politics. Krauss and Pekkanen use historical institutionalism to explain the functions of the LDP's support organizations: the *kōenkai*, or Japanese political support groups, party factions, Policy Affairs Research Committee (PARC) and party leadership both within the traditional '55 system and post-electoral reform. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations and Historical Institutions* argues that if the LDP is viewed using historical institutionalism, it is possible to determine both *why* the LDP functions unlike other political parties within a parliamentary system and *how* the LDP was able to maintain power after sweeping electoral reform.

The authors comment that the predictions of the fall of the LDP were insufficient because they did not take into account the fact that the LDP was shaped and structured based on the actions of politicians that were attempting to manipulate the party during a particular time period. At the core of this work

are two main arguments: first, the authors argue that traditional explanations of the rise of the LDP ignore the fact that it does not function like a normal party in a parliamentary system. The Japanese parliamentary system is centered on the Diet, which is the strongest decision-making body in Japan. The Diet consists of two houses: the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives. However, unlike the British parliamentary system, members of the Diet are elected using a single non-transferable voting (SNTV) system. In the SNTV, the people vote for candidates in a multi-candidate race that allows for candidates from the same party to run against each other. This increases the chances of factions occurring within the different political parties. For Krauss and Pekkanen, previous explanations regarding the rise in power of the LDP ignored this integral fact, therefore ignoring the influences of factions within Japanese politics.

Moreover, because of the historical context of the LDP's rise in power, Krauss and Pekkanen comment that it is necessary to view the LDP as an institution. This is because institutions are "durable patterned organizations composed of established rules and relationships" which are influenced by the actions of multiple actors (p. 2). The historical context of the creation of the party matters because, in the long run, the consequences of the actions of historical members will have a lasting effect on the party's structure and operation. Previous theories did not classify the LDP as such; therefore, these theories could not predict the reaction of the party to the change in the electoral system.

Second, they argue that historical institutionalism is a better method to understanding the workings of the LDP because it takes into account other factors, such as interpersonal relationships and patterned behavior. Krauss and Pekkanen comment that political analysts assumed that many aspects of the LDP's party organization were created and institutionalized in the early years of LDP party dominance; however, that is not necessarily the case. In particular, *kōenkai*, factions, and the PARC did not truly solidify into the institutions that most Japanese political analysts recognize until the 1980s. Therefore, these party institutions must have been created at an earlier time. The timeliness of this creation would help members to learn and eventually normalize certain behavior, therefore influencing how the LDP institutions would change in relation to electoral reform. For Krauss and Pekkanen, the electoral reform cannot truly explain the changes within Japanese politics because it ignores other potential influences, such as patterned behavior, that were created and normalized during the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the main strengths of this book is its organizational structure. The book is organized into ten chapters, with each chapter using supporting evi-

dence from interviews with former LDP politicians, *Asahi Shinbun* articles and quotes, case studies and empirical research. In particular, the interviews both illustrate the inner workings of the politicians' personal political machines and exemplify the rigidity that characterizes institutions. Furthermore, the chapters correspond to the political party institutions as they were under the '55 system and then post-electoral reform. By arranging the book in this manner, Krauss and Pekkanen create a volume that both explains the historical underpinnings of the creation of each of these organizations and how each of these institutions were effected by the 1993 reform.

Another strength of this work is that the authors use Paul Pierson's main analytical concepts (institutional complementary, sequencing and path dependence) to help overcome some of the pitfalls of using historical institutionalism as a way to explain a political phenomenon. Krauss and Pekkanen admit that historical institutionalism has many pitfalls, including the tendency to not be explanatory or to not allow for a comparative analysis. Each of these concepts prevents the work from being viewed as an unrepeatably examination that only proves that history matters. The best way to understand this application is to analyze one of the chapters. In chapter three, Krauss and Pekkanen successfully argue that *kōenkai* was first an organizational process under the leadership of Kakuei Tanaka in the 1950s. As his success grew, it became obvious to other politicians that *kōenkai* were necessary political drivers. This mentality did not change after the 1993 electoral reform for many reasons. One reason is that the complementary institution of strict election laws is still in effect. As such, politicians must use *kōenkai*'s far-reaching effects to build voter-support.

In addition, the sequence of events regarding the creation of *kōenkai* is also integral to the understanding of how it became an institution. The creation of the voting system under the United States occupation is integral in understanding *kōenkai*. If the voting system determined by the American Occupation authorities and Japanese bureaucrats had been different, then *kōenkai* may not have been as powerful within politics and the party could have been shaped differently: the sequence of the events are integral in understanding how this aspect of the party functions. Furthermore, as *kōenkai* became institutionalized, there were both increasing returns for politicians to maintain these groups as well as a fear of the negative externalities (such as loss of power or prestige) if *kōenkai* were not maintained. In summation, Krauss and Pekkanen argue that the complementary institution of strict voting laws, the sequence of the history regarding *kōenkai* and the resulting path dependence are vital in understanding its longevity.