

**Rival Capitalists: International Competitiveness in the United States, Japan,  
and Western Europe.**



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Readers will be tantalized but probably hungry for more details on the authors' five major recommendations: an international review mechanism for humanitarian emergencies to prioritize and deal with the range of such problems worldwide; the achievement of a sense of balance in responding to multiple emergencies (inter alia, avoid being driven by the media); establishment of a professional code for relief administrators and staff; utilization of indigenous resources to rebuild local institutions in the process of delivering relief; creation of authority for the UN to apply humanitarian principles in the midst of armed conflict. These are useful thoughts. They begin to cut a path into the thicket encountered by a policy of assertive humanitarianism. But we must ponder the implications of the generic problems considered inherent by the authors only a short distance from where we (and they) started. Emergency relief assistance remains external in character, at best an embarrassment and at worst a threat to vulnerable regimes. The authors presciently observe, "the international community must be willing to override the resistance of political authorities to intervention . . ." (p. 121). While the present U.S. involvement in Somalia may not be exactly what they had in mind, the consequences of a process of riding over political resistance remain unexplored and indeed are unsettling. Context is the second "generic problem," the fact that planning for emergencies is inherently difficult and indeed ought to involve prevention rather than hasty cures. The third problem, that of coordination, is a staple of every international effort. And the fourth problem, ambivalent results, could characterize the whole story of emergency relief — an increase in dependence and limited learning from the past on each new occasion. In fact, the suggestion that the international community ought to attend to these problems raises the ultimate question of the meaning of community: if we had one we would not have these problems to the extent we do. Nevertheless, the United States is now in Somalia attempting to end a famine and has created the precedent of protecting the Kurds in Iraq, in part to prevent starvation there. Charting a direction in this new era will benefit from serious consideration of the analysis and recommendations of this little book.

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*Rival Capitalists: International Competitiveness in the United States, Japan, and Western Europe* by Jeffrey A. Hart. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1992. 305 pp. Cloth, \$32.95; paper, \$16.95.

Victory in the cold war, many have argued, means not the end of history but rather the start of a new phase of economic conflict among the major industrial countries. Capitalist rivalries, no longer constrained by a need to preserve the western security alliance, are expected to multiply in both scope and intensity. A new great game is beginning, it is said. And in this looming geo-economic

battle, the key to success will lie in how well each nation can organize itself to promote the international competitiveness of its industries.

In this context, Jeffrey Hart's fact-filled new study is both timely and useful. Focusing on five of the world's largest capitalist powers—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, and Britain—the book carefully examines the strategies followed by each in dealing with fundamental change in national and international markets. Three key industries are selected for detailed analysis, each representing a distinct period of historical transformation in the years since World War II: steel, automobiles, and semiconductors. Hart's principal conclusion is that variations in what he labels "state-societal arrangements" best explain observed changes in international competitiveness. State-societal arrangements encompass patterns of relationship among three core groups of actors in each country: the state, business, and organized labor. These patterns of relationship matter, Hart argues, because they can be decisive in either accelerating or impeding the development and diffusion of technological innovations that are crucial to commercial success.

The book is organized like a sandwich, with the real meat of the analysis—five substantial country studies—squeezed between relatively thin slices of introduction and conclusion. All five country studies are structured similarly to permit direct comparison and contrast of diverse national and industrial experiences. Each is a model of clarity and concision, providing as much information as needed to make intelligent judgments about the events discussed. Overall, they appear to suggest that Japan and Germany perform best at preserving or promoting international competitiveness, Britain and the United States do worst, and France falls somewhere in between.

Hart compares his state-societal approach with five alternatives that have been proposed in the literature to explain changes in international competitiveness: the macroeconomic, culturalist, statist, neocorporatist, and coalitional approaches. All, he argues, have shortcomings as compared with his own preferred perspective, being either unwittingly superficial or exceedingly parsimonious; only the state-societal approach is sufficiently general to fit the data at hand. But this is surely somewhat disingenuous. At least three of the alternatives (the statist, neocorporatist, and coalitional approaches) are really more like variations on a theme than competing explanations. Each in effect directs attention to a particular subset of the broad groupings included in state-societal arrangements; and it is clear that depending on circumstances one or another of these subsets rather than the more general approach may in fact represent the proper level of analysis. Hart's effort at product differentiation here seems just a bit strained.

One might also raise some questions about selection bias in this study's design. Can one generalize as much as Hart does from the limited sample of three industries he has chosen to examine? Would the United States come out looking so bad had the aerospace or computer software industries been selected rather than steel and automobiles? Would Japan or Germany look so good had high-definition television been included alongside semiconductors? Hart's handling

of the evidence is thorough and fair. But would evidence from other industries lead us to the same conclusions? The last word is not yet in.

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*The Congressional Experience: A View from the Hill by David E. Price. Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1992. 194 pp. Cloth, \$55.00; paper, \$16.95.*

David Price has taken advantage of a rare opportunity. As a political scientist and, since his election in 1986, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, he is uniquely well trained and placed to offer thoughtful perspectives on the workings of Congress. We, the readers, are indeed fortunate that he has chosen to devote the necessary time and effort required to produce this volume. Although David Price's story, as he reminds us, is not a typical one, it provides us with important insights into the congressional career and the operations of the House that are not available elsewhere.

Price covers a range of important topics in separate but interrelated chapters. We learn about the struggle to win office; adjusting to life in Washington and in the district; developing policy interests and expertise; the growing importance of political parties in the House; the struggle over the budget, religion and politics, and the ethical dilemmas of public service. In each of these areas Price starts at the personal level and then develops a broad-ranging and often theoretical perspective to the subject matter. Thus, much of his chapter on getting elected focuses on his efforts to raise large amounts of money for his campaign, especially the difficulties he faced when he was a challenger. From this he builds to an analysis of incumbency advantage, turnover, and the need for campaign finance reform.

Throughout the book I was struck with the range of representational dilemmas Price has had to face. These go beyond the usual ones of committee choices, how often to go home, where his family should live, and whether to vote in accordance with his constituents' preferences; they include things like what issues should receive a member's attention and what kind of member does one want to be. As political scientists, we would like to believe that one of our own is more troubled by questions of representation than most members. Yet what comes through Price's manuscript clearly is that these dilemmas are ones that confront and concern all members.

As with Richard Fenno's recent studies of the career development of individual senators, Price indirectly demonstrates how much of a member's life is spent on activities that are not oriented toward a concern with reelection. Being there and staying there for their own sake is not the prime motivation of most people in political office. There is a commitment on the part of these individuals to make a difference in the lives of people, to be good public servants, and to achieve