

Leo McCann

International and Comparative Business: Foundations of Political Economies.

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In spite of deepening globalization and internationalization since the 1990s, a wide variety of models for organizing economies still exist. In *International and Comparative Business: Foundations of Political Economies*, McCann provides a comprehensive and accessible coverage of the institutional diversity of political economies in nine countries across North America, Europe and Asia. With a historical perspective, the book features and elaborates various forms of capitalism by tracing them back to the institutional formations and foundations of respective regimes, so challenging conventional wisdom on the profound effects of globalization.

The book is ambitious and well organized into twelve chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the huge divergences in economic logic and rules of the game across many regions of the world. Chapter 2 reviews 'comparative capitalisms' literature to theorize the concepts of the variety of capitalism (VoC), and outlines the approach taken to study both the macro-level variations of historical, political and economic contexts of the world's major countries, and the organizational level and workplace-level divergences across different regimes. The following nine chapters conduct an in-depth comparative analysis of the distinctive ways of organizing politico-economic structures in nine countries.

Chapter 3 emphasizes the US's liberal market economy, developed from 'wide' capitalism to 'managerial' capitalism that eventually evolved to 'investor' capitalism, which facilitates successful business by prioritizing economic, political and military power over weak social and labour protection. The following four chapters shift to the major European countries. Tracing the UK's historical development from the Industrial Revolution, it characterizes the highly open and flexible but unstable British model of the first major industrializer as one now confronting a high-percentage of low-paid, low-skilled and insecure jobs. The French tradition of state-led organized capitalism, with employee-friendly systems, vigorous public protest and resistance, yet a deep problem of persistent and high unemployment is addressed in particular, by exploring the French approach 'where the state and society take primacy over markets' (p. 140). As a strong example of coordinated market economies (CMEs), due to the difficulties in reunification and the challenges of globalization, Germany shifts towards a form of disorganized capitalism, while remaining a major economic power with high-quality and export-driven manufacturing industries and an ethically attractive employee democracy. Facing the challenges of neoliberalism and globalization, the Nordic countries secure their economies at the cutting edge of European capitalism, with well-developed workplace democracy and gender equality, powerful public welfare systems, high levels of employee involvement and low levels of income inequality.

A powerful but unstable economic model in Russia is identified in Chapter 8, based on the dramatic politico-economic changes from Tsarism, through the establishment of the USSR to the post-Soviet development of capitalism. The unique VoC in Russia is still evolving, generating massive wealth but also huge inequality. Chapters 9 to 11 separately demonstrate the unique models of capitalism in major Asian countries. The current Indian regime displays a weak model of 'disorganized capitalism' due to its

turbulent transformation from a colonial economy to state planning and onwards towards privatization and liberalization. While achieving considerable economic progress, India's poverty and regional inequality still persists. In comparison to India, China's politico-economic reform is more successful. From following a Soviet model to the opening-up and economic reforms, and finally to the market-oriented economy with 'Chinese characteristics', China's current economy is considered to be a combination of state actors such as state-owned enterprises, semi-state actors and private actors. Chapter 11 illustrates the economic fluctuations of Japan. As one of the most successful CMEs, the Japanese regime nevertheless hides a darker side such as bullying, sexism, excessive workloads and authoritarianism in the workplace.

Thus, through debating the institutional foundations of variations of political economies in nine countries, by the end of the book, McCann is able to confirm that complex institutional diversity across countries still exists despite deepening globalization which might suggest increasing homogenization of capitalist models.

Overall, considering 'detailed historical narratives on the development, stabilization and changes of national political economies' (p. 37), this book provides a dynamic and comparative analysis of political power and politics, industrial relations, financial and corporate governance, labour and employment issues in different countries. It explores the distinct models of VoC which have been created, adapted and coordinated along different lines, rather than singling out the best model or the way of building a better model. Each of the twelve chapters in this book offers clear learning objectives at the beginning, broader reviews of the inter-disciplinary literature in the main body, and annotated further reading at the end; together they construct a suitable textbook for students to learn about divergence in international capitalism.