



BOOKS

Toward a World Trade Organization

Fair Trade for All

Joseph Stiglitz and Andrew Charlton, Oxford University Press, 2006, \$30, hardcover, 315 pages.

REVIEWED BY JAMES PATTERSON

Concerned about a longstanding imbalance between developed and developing countries in trade negotiations, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and Andrew Charlton, a research officer at the London School of Economics, have written *Fair Trade for All* to make the case that “trade policies can be designed in developed and developing countries with a view to integrating developing countries into the world trading system.”

Both authors are critics of the Washington Consensus, a set of market liberalization methods some policymakers see as vital to economic growth in developing countries. The authors do not reject the concept out of hand, but do argue that liberalization must be carefully managed. As evidence, they cite the Mexican experience under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In what is perhaps the book’s most controversial line, Stiglitz and Charlton assert that “NAFTA is not really a free trade agreement.” As they document, since NAFTA was signed in 1993, U.S. farm subsidies have grown, not declined. As a result, Mexican imports of subsidized farm products

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have plunged their rural sector into extreme poverty. Clearly, trade liberalization hasn’t worked to our southern neighbor’s benefit.

Paradoxically, however, the NAFTA experience also provides the authors with support for their argument that trade liberalization can work if it is carefully managed. Toward that end, they support a “Development Round” of global negotiations under the auspices of the World Trade Organization that, in their view, would do a far better job of protecting the economic interests of developing countries than have previous multilateral trade agreements.

Under previous accords, developing countries have not realized the benefits that have accrued to developed countries. Some analysts argue this inequity is calculated, even immoral, while others attribute it to other factors. Stiglitz and Charlton strongly advocate trade as a development tool. However it is judged, there has been an increased worldwide sense of responsibility for the economic plight of developing countries, particularly since the riots at the 1999 WTO meetings in Seattle.

Policymakers in the U.S. and Europe have gradually moved to seek trade agreements that provide more benefits to developing countries.

The authors analyze the principles that would underlie a development round of trade negotiations. Their framework concentrates on producing “development-friendly” agreements that incorporate such unquantifiable elements as equity and social justice. This approach would also afford developing countries special treatment in negotiations. As they point out, once developed countries are open to imports, the increased flow of trade from developing countries, primarily in textiles and farm goods, brings them economic and social benefits.

Economics is often called the “dismal science,” in part because individuals and countries with a lack of resources have such limited choices. Recognizing this power differential, developed countries have traditionally protected their industries with their own “special treatment” at the expense of developing countries. This approach may change over time; but once applied, protectionist measures become difficult to remove.

The authors have selected a timely and important subject, recognizing that the general public needs to know more about government trade agreements. Unfortunately, their book is as dry and complex as an economics journal. This is doubly disappointing because it is possible to write best-selling books on trade; in fact, Stiglitz himself did so with his 2002 work, *Globali-*



zation and Its Discontents, a far easier book to digest.

That said, *Fair Trade for All* will appeal to serious readers, and deserves a wide audience.

James Patterson is a former FSO whose writing and reviews have appeared in the Foreign Service Journal, Washington Post and The Christian Science Monitor.

The Sunni Side of the Street

Iraq Ablaze: Inside the Insurgency

Zaki Chehab, *I.B.Taurus & Co. Ltd.*, 2006, \$34.31, paperback, 220 pages.

REVIEWED BY
GEORGE B. LAMBRAKIS

The main contribution *Iraq Ablaze: Inside the Insurgency* makes, for the specialist as well as the general reader, lies in its focus on the Sunni insurgency and its explanation of how American missteps and local suspicions have turned so many Iraqis against coalition forces. Indeed, the title's reference to "insurgency" by itself suggests that the opposition is broader than just foreign fighters and Baathist diehards. While the narrative centers on Sunnis, it details the political costs of Washington's failure to provide effective security and reconstruction immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

A Palestinian journalist who grew up in a Lebanese refugee camp, Zaki Chehab appears to have established excellent contacts in Iraq (his first trip there was in 1978) and elsewhere in the region. This has led to his gaining the confidence of the types of people that Western journalists would never

Chehab relays a common Iraqi belief that the Americans came primarily for Iraq's oil, and are sure to remain there indefinitely as occupiers.

dare approach, even if the opportunity were offered them — especially now that so many journalists have become targets of the insurgency.

The book has useful chapters on foreign fighters, the Shia religious leadership and the Palestinian connection, and offers a tour d'horizon of the regional powers most interested in Iraq (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Turkey).

Chehab clearly enjoys insider accounts of secret manipulations, as when he claims a Baghdad-based human rights activist, Safieh Al-Suhail, hosted three different meetings between Iraqi politicians Ahmed Chalabi and Iyad Allawi at a time when the press was portraying them as not on speaking terms. He reports that during those talks, the two agreed "to postpone their fight for another day" and allow the formation of a coalition government "using Prime Minister Al-Jaafari as a figurehead."

Saddam Hussein is, of course, a pivotal figure in the narrative. In one meeting, he reportedly impressed a delegation of visiting Palestinians with a promise, made while standing before a huge regional map, to free all Arabs

from oppression. Toward that end, he provided Iraqis to participate in actions against Israel by the various rejectionist Palestinian terrorist groups that opposed Fatah. Chehab makes no bones about the dictator's ruthlessness, however. He says Saddam ordered the assassination of Abu Nidal when that terrorist leader appeared in Baghdad as an uninvited guest.

Chehab castigates the U.S. for sins such as Abu Ghraib. He also relays a common Iraqi belief that the Americans came to Iraq primarily for its oil and are sure to remain there indefinitely as occupiers. He goes so far as to list four military bases that the United States plans to hold onto. And he reports that even Ayatollah al-Sistani, who has been relatively cooperative to date, is now pushing for the Americans to leave.

Chehab is clearly not a stickler for details, misidentifying Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of State and Douglas Feith as U.S. national security adviser. He also shares a Middle Eastern tendency for exaggeration and emphatic misstatement, asserting that Arab Sunnis make up 35 percent of the Iraqi population — nearly double the true proportion.

Nor should the reader look to him for a balanced weighing of pros and cons in Iraq (though a partisan attitude is understandable as a way for Chehab to protect his privileged entree to anti-Western sources). Yet his central message is quite reasonable — one might even say indisputable: "As history shows, a military can never defeat a guerrilla force without the support of the indigenous people."

A retired FSO, George Lambrakis spent over half of his 31-year career working in or on the Middle East. He now heads the international relations and diplomacy program at Schiller International University in London.

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Voyages of Self-Discovery

So Far and Yet So Near: Stories of Americans Abroad

Various authors, *American Citizens Abroad*, 2005, \$15.95, paperback, 223 pages.

REVIEWED BY LISA CONNER

T.S. Eliot wrote, “The end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know that place for the first time.” While self-discovery is not often cited as a reason for living abroad, it frequently is a by-product.

So Far and Yet So Near: Stories of Americans Abroad is a compendium of personal stories from a diverse group of overseas Americans, including Peace Corps Volunteers, students and diplomats. The collection was compiled by American Citizens Abroad, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental association dedicated to serving and defending the interests of individual U.S. citizens living all over the world. Headquartered in Geneva, ACA welcomes new members, including Foreign Service members; visit its Web site, www.aca.ch, for more information.

This collection allows readers to share in the triumphs, tragedies and personal insights of their expatriate compatriots. Their stories span the gauntlet from hilarious to sad; some will undoubtedly provoke a sense of déjà vu for many Foreign Service folks.

True, many FSOs and other people who’ve lived abroad have their own stories of cross-cultural misunderstandings, life-threatening experiences and aha! moments, so they may not think strangers’ stories would hold much interest.

But this book transcends the stan-

dard collection of funny/exotic/weird stories in exotic settings. It distills the authors’ experiences and offers them up for scrutiny in a thought-provoking, meaningful and relevant way. Organized thematically, it touches on nationalism, tolerance, guilt, fairness and change. Synergy is at work — perhaps due to the diversity of authorship — with the result that the whole is far more than the sum of its parts.

In “Living History,” a survivor of the December 2004 Asian tsunami retells his chilling experience in a way that will forever change how readers view an ocean wave. A Peace Corps Volunteer in Sierra Leone contracted tumba fly, giardia, malaria, amoebic dysentery, ascaris and uncinaria — all during her first four months. This onslaught, she recounts in “The Lessons of Culture Shock,” resulted in her “lower intestinal tract becoming a 24-hour roadside motel with the comings and goings of all these critters.”

Another contributor recalls being on the scene for a military coup in Peru, while a Foreign Service spouse recalls tending her rose garden in Tehran in the early 1970s.

Anyone who has been overseas will understand and enjoy these stories. But for “official” overseas Americans, who operate under an embassy or consulate infrastructure with social support mechanisms, *So Far and Yet So Near* opens up a much wider window onto the lives of those who don’t benefit from these luxuries we so often take for granted. The book will also prompt many readers to recall how we got the “bug” to live overseas ourselves. One warning, though: Reading it may cause nostalgia for the simple days when our cars weren’t searched for bombs before being allowed to proceed to work! ■

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