tasks and this implies biases in terms of priorities, capabilities, blind spots and risks (p. 4). In many cases co-operation and co-ordination among donors is made difficult because negative assessments of some dimensions or aspects can be used as arguments for non-involvement of other agencies. In addition, the local counterpart situation in terms of staff and functioning institutions is certain to be relatively weak. However, without longer-term development poverty is likely to increase and this may feed the next round of violent conflict.

The book takes a sector approach to post-conflict development. Invited authors were apparently asked to set the agenda and sketch the components of a more integrated approach to post-war reconstruction and development policy, paying specific attention to social and inequality dimensions of activities in the sectors covered (p. 11). While simultaneity of activities seems desirable some sequencing of priorities is unavoidable. The following fields are covered: security, building state institutions, developing local governance, re-establishing the rule of law, reconstructing infrastructure, the role of the media in war and peace building, reforming education, reviving health care and protecting the environment. Three chapters deal more generally with economic policy for rebuilding peace (Kamphuis), financing reconstruction, and donor assistance. Three chapters are in the nature of (too limited) country case studies on El Salvador, Mozambique and Cambodia. The book concludes with sketching an ambitious action research programme for the future, seeking to draw lessons from experience and best practices. The lengthy list of policy dilemmas ensures that the time needed will be long and the chances of reaching consensus will be slim.

The subject matter in all areas covered has an extended history in development studies and development practice preceding the violent conflict stage, and readers would be better advised to consult relevant sector literature in full. This is not to deny that a number of authors have solid first hand and long-term field experience under trying conditions. The Kamphuis contribution is analytically helpful. She distinguishes four sectors: the international aid community, the formal economy, the informal economy and the criminal economy. This framework is used to analyse patterns of demands and requirements between these sectors and to analyse winners and losers of a range of post-war development activities (pp. 186–7). A general issue is whether during the armed conflict the social structures behind sector policies of the past have materially changed so as to permit changes in entrenched policies. A massive influx of donor influence peddling through conditionality on resources made available may be expected. In as far as the post-conflict development effort is spearheaded by the foreign military 'peacekeeper', it could well be that the lessons from forty years of development assistance will not be learned. One of the main lessons is that imposed conditionality rarely worked in countries with a functioning governance structure, however imperfect. What are the chances of it working better where much of civil society has been destroyed during the armed conflict?

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Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004. ix + 138 pp. £14.99/$22.95 paperback.

Adding to the stream of publications over the past decade on civil society, Michael Edwards has written a passionate essay on what he calls the 'civil society debate'. The aim was to provide more clarity about how the concept has been used and abused, and how it can be used even more productively. For those not familiar with his background, Edwards has worked with various key international donor organizations (including Save the Children, Ford Foundation, and the World Bank) and has played a central role in triggering critical debate about the role and impact of development NGOs (*Making a Difference*, 1992; *Beyond the Magic Bullet*, 1994) and about the future role of the international aid system (*Future Positive*, 1999).

The scholarly and activist 'civil society debate' has probably been going on for an entire generation now, but it seems to have increased in recent years. Embraced by the progressive political parties in Latin America in the early 1980s and later by oppositional groups in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, civil society was the source of hope and liberation. Civil society became synonymous with freedom, democratic politics, social justice, and many other 'good' assets. But civil society was soon also touted by free market advocates who were pleased to drastically reduce the role of the state in the economy: civil society possessed the potential to take over many of its functions. Although much of this euphoria has to be seen in proper proportion, civil society is still a powerful concept to explore and debate.

The central concern of the book is that the term civil society often has been simplified and reduced by equating it to the totality of associational life. At the same time it is considered in many circles as an inspiring idea, even a 'big idea' of our times, which will contribute to a better world. As many good things come in three, the author disaggregates the concept of civil society by identifying three different theoretical positions that, taken together, have shaped the civil society debate in terms of who the actors are, what they stand for and what they are expected to do. Explaining and exploring these three layers is the centrepiece of the book.

The first model discussed in the book is the neo-Tocquevillian or 'third sector' approach of associational life, in which civil society is formed by voluntary associations. This idea goes back to the writings of Ferguson and is still a very popular approach by which one can look empirically at those 'civic organizations' that interact with the state or with public life in general. Edwards points here in particular to the rise of neoconservative associations in the United States, especially related to the religious pro-life movement in combination with conservative think tanks. Many (critical) references are made to Putnam's approach that voluntary associations generate social capital, which in turn is necessary to build a 'good society'.

This good society is central to Edwards' second layer of civil society theory: the normative approach. What is a 'good society' actually expected to be and which values is it supposed to pursue, protect and also to reject? In this model it is important to be explicit about these norms and to what extent uncivil elements in civil society can be clearly demarcated to prevent all collective action automatically being put under the umbrella of promoting civic values. For example, violent action is often exclusionary, so is a context of inequality or other discriminating actions, which can lead to the undermining of a good or strong civil society.

These two theoretical approaches have been examined and analysed before in more detail by authors such as Cohen and Arato (1992), and more recently by Howell and Pearce (2001). However, less explored in these volumes is the third theoretical model of Edwards' trinity, which deals with civil society as the public sphere of dialogue, civic engagement, policy advocacy, and public debate. This public sphere is essential as it unites civil society and politics, capacities and processes, thereby confronting the ongoing undermining processes of conformism, cynicism and fatalism. Moreover, he warns that this public sphere is under threat, as it has been weakened over the past few years by privatization and the corporate domination of internet and publishing cartels. But despite having been weakened it is still at the heart of a democratic society.

As we know from his previous publications, the author is a born optimist, so it comes as no surprise that he concludes that the combination of the three schools of civil society thinking will eventually all contribute in some way to deal with the main problems of our time and contribute to positive social change. Despite all the confusion generated by the various conceptualizations of civil society, the conclusion is that we should not try to debate endlessly about the real meaning of civil society but accept the confusion, explore the complexity and richness of the concept and turn the lack of consensus into a fruitful debate.

The strong point of the book is its modest length and non-academic style. For those unfamiliar with the recent discussions on civil society, and looking for a light introduction to the topic, this book will offer many useful pointers and indicate the main authors in the debate and how to deal with the complexity of the concept. The book also recommends itself to those

who feel intimidated by the academic civil society debate: the author has collected some nice examples and inspires the reader to think in new directions.

The book does have its downside. The argumentation is inevitably at times superficial and can therefore become a bit annoying. Moreover, students of development studies might be disappointed, as many examples are rather Northern-focused, and then mainly from the North American East Coast, an area also quite well analysed by Robert Putnam (the most frequently criticized author in this book). This Northern bias actually is a bit surprising, given the author's background in the development business. It reduces the potential for applying the 'civil society debate' to many Southern societies that are so much more deeply affected by conflict, competing interests, inequality and a lack of democratic politics.

On balance, this ambitious and compact book provides a very useful summary of the ongoing civil society debate and will appeal to a broad audience motivated to contribute in some way or another to 'positive social change'.

References

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Gordon Crawford, *Foreign Aid and Political Reform*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. xi + 293 pp. $79.95 hardback.

In this book Gordon Crawford sets out to examine the greatly 'increased linkage of development assistance to the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance' during the 1990s. This certainly is in great contrast with the 1960s, when this reviewer was a British aid official, and in the immediate aftermath of the end of colonial rule, there was a great deal of sensitivity about being too intrusive in political matters. The main political factors influencing aid were the political/strategic considerations of the Cold War, which were as likely to involve supporting non-democratic anti-communist regimes as promoting more democratic ones.

Having surveyed the literature and defined the concepts, the volume moves on to examine the two main aspects of the policy — the pursuit of these objectives through positive programmes ('political aid') in Part II and the use of aid conditionality and sanctions related to political behaviour and governance in Part III.

The study includes a quite thorough analysis, based on a detailed examination of four donors (UK, US, EU and Sweden), a sufficient sample to illustrate the range of donor experience. The detailed empirical evidence covers the period 1992–94.

The study recognizes that democratization must be largely an internal process, and that therefore the impact of aid is likely to be at best modest. However, the study finds that even such modest progress is compromised by a lack of commitment on both sides of the aid relationship. On the donor side, political reform competes with other objectives, both commercial and strategic. Also, the effectiveness of aid as an instrument for reform is constrained by the complexity of reform processes, which are somewhat obscured by the use of ill-defined concepts, such as 'civil society', a term which is widely used but typically imprecisely defined.

In light of his exploration, the author offers a series of fifteen proposals for strengthening the impact of 'political aid' on the promotion of democracy, and six proposals for strengthening conditionality, or sanctions in support of democracy. In other words, despite the weaknesses observed in the actual experience, the author believes that the promotion of democracy through