Labor Rights and Multinational Production

_Labor Rights and Multinational Production_ investigates the relationship between workers’ rights and multinational production. Layna Mosley argues that some types of multinational production, embodied in directly owned foreign investment, positively affect labor rights. However, other types of international production, particularly subcontracting, can engender competitive races to the bottom in labor rights. To test these claims, Mosley presents newly generated measures of collective labor rights, covering a wide range of low- and middle-income nations for the 1985–2002 period. _Labor Rights and Multinational Production_ suggests that the consequences of economic openness for developing countries are highly dependent on foreign firms’ modes of entry and, more generally, on the precise way in which each developing country engages the global economy. The book contributes to the academic literature in comparative and international political economy and to public policy debates regarding the effects of globalization.

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LAYNA MOSLEY

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
for Andy
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What is the impact of the global economy on workers in developing nations? Does multinational production represent an opportunity for improvements for those in low- and middle-income countries, or ought we to worry about the competitive pressures unleashed by firms’ use of global supply chains? This book is motivated by a desire to understand the conditions under which economic globalization helps citizens of developing nations as well as the circumstances under which economic openness negatively affects such individuals. While my framework is a theoretical one, based on the organization of production globally, the issue is very much an empirical one, as activists and policymakers grapple with how best to reconcile the competitive pressures of the global economy with considerations of workers’ rights and conditions.

This project had its genesis when I was a faculty member at the University of Notre Dame, and one of the graduate students in my International Political Economy seminar – Saika Uno – asked about the connection between labor rights and economic openness. She pointed out that, despite the importance of this issue to both policymakers and academics, there was very little cross-national time series evidence examining the potential link between the two. Our initial conversation launched a collaborative project resulting in a journal article. It also spurred my interest in tying together international political economy research on multinational corporations with comparative and international politics investigations of human rights outcomes. The result is Labor Rights and Multinational Production, which focuses on the role of the international economy in affecting the collective labor rights of workers in low- and middle-income nations.
Along the way, many individuals and institutions have supported this research. At the University of Notre Dame, the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies funded the initial data collection and coding of the labor rights indicator. In 2002–2003, a faculty research fellowship from the German Marshall Fund facilitated a larger-scale effort to code the labor rights indicator and to frame the project in theoretical terms. The College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) also provided pre-tenure leave in Fall 2005. A Workshop Grant from the International Studies Association, along with contributions from several units at Duke University and UNC, allowed me to organize a faculty workshop on labor rights, held at UNC in September 2006. I was fortunate to be a Faculty Fellow at UNC’s Institute for the Arts and Humanities during Fall 2008, which allowed for the completion of the penultimate version of the manuscript as well as the opportunity to present my research to an interdisciplinary audience.

While funding is certainly an important part of any academic project, the opportunity to present, debate, and refine one’s research is even more fundamental. I am grateful for many opportunities to gain feedback on various elements of this project. These include talks at Columbia University, the Duke University Seminar on Global Governance and Democracy, the Duke University conference on Foreign Direct Investment (April 2006), the Frontiers of Comparative Politics conference at Duke University (April 2007), the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, UNC–Chapel Hill, the University of South Carolina, the University of Southern California, and the University of Virginia. Papers related to this project also were presented at meetings of the American Political Science Association, the International Studies Association, and the Midwest Political Science Association. Portions of Chapters 5 and 7 were first published in *Comparative Political Studies*. Participants in a seminar hosted by the Center for the Comparative Historical Analysis of Organizations and States (CHAOS) at the University of Washington carefully read and extensively commented on the penultimate version of the manuscript.

Saika Uno collaborated on the initial set of conference papers and the resulting *Comparative Political Studies* article. More recently, as my collaborators on work involving the role of trade and FDI in the diffusion of standards, Brian Greenhill and Aseem Prakash have pushed me to think more clearly about the causal mechanisms connecting labor rights with multinational firms and transnational labor rights advocates. Aahren
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The last decade witnessed important transformations in the global economy, the implications of which we are still seeking to understand. The global economic crisis that began in 2008 may, as I discuss in Chapter 8, alter the linkages between multinational production and labor rights. The last decade also has been one of important changes for me: I arrived at UNC Chapel Hill in 2004. UNC has been a wonderful place for research and teaching. My broader circle of friends and colleagues in Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Durham has provided me with just the right mixture of companionship, motivation, and distraction, much of it on the single-track trails of Carolina North Forest.

Most importantly, my family is an inspiration both to work harder and to stop working. My two stepchildren, Atticus and Madeline, make being an “evil stepmother” a real joy; they even ask about my research, a somewhat remarkable feat for two teenagers. My daughters, Cecilia Jane and Tess Caroline, arrived after I had begun to work on this project, and they always give me plenty of reasons to smile, even in the face of grim reports regarding labor rights abroad. They inspire me to work to better
understand the world around us. Lastly, my partner, Andrew Reynolds, is a constant source of laughter, love, support – and competition. To thank him for these things (and not simply because it is an unwritten rule for second books), this book is dedicated to him.

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