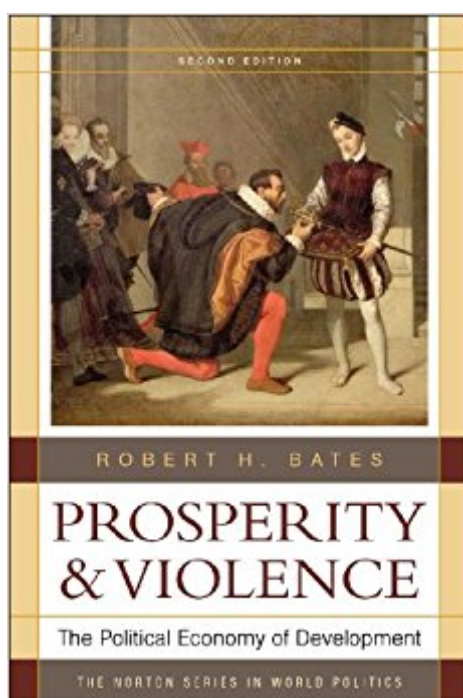


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Prosperity & Violence: The Political Economy Of Development (Second Edition) (Norton Series In World Politics)



Synopsis

In his new edition of *Prosperity and Violence*, Robert Bates continues to investigate the relationship between political order and economic growth. As power and politics play a role in every society, rich or poor, Bates argues it is the reorganization of coercion--not its extinction--that underpins the security needed for investment. Although history makes clear that political structures can be used for destructive ends, it also demonstrates their importance in ensuring the peace needed for prosperity. In this revised edition, Bates strengthens his critique of development studies and development agencies, basing it on his analysis of the nature of states that emerged following WWII.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

January Publications
Robert H. Bates is Eaton Professor of the Science of Government and fellow of the Center for International Development at Harvard University. In *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development*, a thoughtful and instructive book, he examines how underdeveloped societies progress from agrarian to industrial states by examining how governments foster investment and per capita growth and how they manage their political power and use of force. Drawing on the history of highly developed countries, such as those in Europe, Bates compares them with developing countries in Latin America and Africa. For example, he finds in Kenya a government and an economic organization working collaboratively toward prosperity,

which he contrasts with the militaristic, economically destructive situation in Uganda. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Robert H. Bates is Eaton Professor of the Science of Government in the Department of Government and Fellow of the Center for International Development at Harvard University. He has written numerous books, most recently *Open Economy Politics* (1997) and *Analytic Narratives* (1998). He has conducted extensive field research in East and Central Africa and in Columbia and Brazil.

In his book, *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development*, Robert Bates examines how underdeveloped societies transform from rural and agrarian to urban and industrial. Exploring the vast history of the modern state, Bates draws on numerous case studies to formulate a general theory that explains how societies make this great transformation. Central to his argument is the link between prosperity and violence. Perhaps no different from many scholars of development, he contends that agrarian societies face a debilitating cycle where prosperity begets violence which further restricts prosperity. Thus, we would assume that these societies are doomed to stagnation. But if this is so, how might developed industrial societies have come about? One may expect that the solution exists in somehow driving a wrench in the cycle and eliminating the encumbering violence. But Bates takes an unusual perspective and offers an unexpected and fascinating explanation. He argues that in order for societies to develop successfully, they must embrace their propensity for violence and use it to their own advantage. By domesticating coercion to cultivate investments and encourage economic growth, societies utilize violence to overcome stagnation and ultimately transform themselves into prosperous developing states. To understand development, Bates first explores what causes its failure. He begins by examining societies that are predominately agrarian, rural, and dominated by kinship. These kinship societies invest in migration and expansion to control new resources and overcome diminishing returns. They specialize in production, form markets, and engage in exchange. They manage the risks of nature by diversification and reliance on family support. They devise means to promote family welfare and to raise the expected level of income per capita. Economically, these societies have the ingredients for prosperity and development. However they are often characterized by poverty. So, why do they fail? The answer, Bates claims, is in the penchant for violence and a particular formation of political institutions. Violence takes root in agrarian societies and instills fear amongst the people. Eventually this fear lends to the formation of a political system that survives on deterrence. To illustrate this

point, Bates draws on the Nuer of Southern Sudan. The Nuer lacked formal institutions such as a court, a functioning police system, or any inkling of a central government. Although one might picture life as brutish and short in such a case, they actually maintained relative harmony. The reason was simple: everyone was so darned afraid of everyone else. They didn't steal from one another for fear of fierce retaliation. And because the Nuer were so inclined to act violently at the slightest provocation, violence rarely occurred. Peace was maintained, but it was fickle and came at a cost of prosperity. Those within such a society become so concerned with protecting themselves that they easily prefer being destitute over the risk of acquiring wealth. Inevitably, the system thwarts production and progress, and society becomes indolent. The result is stagnation and poverty. And thus, as Bates explains, these agrarian societies fail to develop and never make it to the great transformation. In contrast, the second half of the book focuses on how these societies manage to overcome the obstacle of violence that blocks the path to development. Bates' answer is seemingly simple and yet strangely intuitive. He contends that violence (or more appropriately, coercion) needs to be tamed by the state and publicly provisioned rather than privately provided. Unlike agrarian societies that use coercion as a means of predation, industrial societies find a way to successfully distribute such force so as to promote economic growth. Specialists in violence emerge who learn to invest their power in those that efficiently produce capital. As in the case with medieval monarchies, rulers voluntarily delegated authority to citizens to govern their own affairs. Such liberties allowed people to build economic organizations as well as towns to expand and flourish. In agrarian societies, political force effectively suffocates economic prosperity, whereas in industrialized societies, political force works to promote economic prosperity. The point is clear, this alignment of politics and economics is essential to a society's development. Bates supports his argument through a plethora of historical and modern applications. Each assumption seems to be supported by at least a tid-bit of evidence from the past. However, I cannot help but question the details. His argument is generalized to span across ages, but he seems to pick and choose the subject matter to stand up to his test. The theory appears robust, but I would have liked to have seen more evidence, data perhaps, that further called on cases of agrarian and industrial societies. Would the theory still hold? Other than that, Robert Bates presents a tantalizing argument that departs from the usual approach for interpreting development. He effectively links economic prosperity with political violence in an analysis that should shake the field.

Being a double major in political science and economics, it seems that I'm always looking at ways to connect the two subjects. Prosperity and violence does this so brilliantly that I read the book in a

matter of a few hours. The book talks about how trade has brought people together to create cities to trade creating governments in order to control and facilitate the process. Through time, government and the economy became mutually dependent and modern countries became to develop which the books compares to newly independent countries in the 20th century. The books goes into the present dealing with the cold war and how former allies of America and the USSR are coping with the transition into the 21st century.

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