

multinationals. For this reason, multinationals that enter foreign markets can be reasonably confident that government policies in place when the firm entered the country will continue over time. Whereas I agree with many of Klein's arguments within the book, I felt, however, that she overinflated the case that firms prey on disaster-shocked countries. On the contrary, it can be shown that firms invest for different reasons in different places and at different times.

In conclusion, this book is hugely informative and controversial. Klein's written style is comprehensive and accessible. The value of the book, though, lies in its breadth and its critical analysis, especially its shocking portrayal of prominent individuals and traumatic events in the world. In spite of some limitations, I highly recommend it.

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### Disaster capitalism in historical perspective

Naomi Klein believes there has been a recent and wholly understudied shift in the practices of corporate capitalism. Far from considering disasters a travesty, corporate capitalists now freely embrace catastrophic situations – military coups, pre-emptive wars, climatic hazards, etc. – as opportunities to engage in radical socioeconomic and political restructuring. As an ideology, 'disaster capitalism' is strongly tied to broader structural developments, including militarism (as a first rather than last resort), deregulation and privatisation, the promotion of a security state, and the expansion of market fundamentalism. Disaster capitalism is, therefore, structurally linked to the demotion of democracy and the consolidation of power in the hands of a kleptocracy usually referred to as the 'Washington Consensus'.

We find this argument extremely persuasive. Arguably Klein's greatest contribution is to extend our understanding of the violent and predatory forms of capital accumulation under neoliberalism. Klein complements Rosa Luxemburg's (1913, 371) classic analysis of the primal role of force in accelerating the formation of capitalist markets: 'Force is

the only solution open to capital; the accumulation of capital, seen as an historical process, employs force as a permanent weapon...'. Luxemburg's study has been extended by David Harvey's (2003) recent analysis of 'accumulation by dispossession'; however, Klein's argument goes one step further in observing how catastrophe itself has become an accumulation strategy – not only a way of accelerating the transition to a commodity economy, but a new *constituent element* in the 'spasmodic expansion' of capital. A military presence abroad, and the costs of post-war reconstruction can now be paid for by giving local resources to companies from the country of the occupying power; accumulation by occupation (Kearns forthcoming). Neil Smith (2007) shows how climatic events have become accumulation strategies through direct manipulation of 'weather futures' and insurance brokering.

This is more than an extension of the Schumpeterian notion of 'creative destruction', although the forces Klein identifies may not be as new as her analysis suggests. Capitalising upon disaster has long been integral to imperialism and this is evident for famine, disease, and military occupation. David Keen (1994) suggests that 'natural' catastrophes can have political functions, allowing some groups to garner resources not so much through 'market forces', as through 'forced markets'. This mechanism was at the heart of the use of colonial famines for social and economic engineering in Ireland (Nally forthcoming), India (Davis 2001), and Nigeria (Watts 1983). The European colonisation of the Americas was aided very materially by the depredations wrought by infectious disease among indigenous populations. The catastrophe of smallpox and measles made it easier to eject native peoples from the land that was the one resource necessary for their gradual (and now aborted) demographic recovery. Finally, occupation also is not new. To pay for the policing of colonial territories, the British levied taxes from Ireland to India, from Egypt to Nigeria. In each case, these cash payments accelerated the commodification of land and labour (Smyth 2006) and helped force markets into subsistence economies, with, as Reclus (1908) noted, locally disastrous consequences for food security.

The use of catastrophes as an engine for 'historical transformation' (Arnold 1988) has an historical geography tied to the global inequalities of imperialism. This is not to minimise the very real and dangerous developments in recent years, but merely to add a further historical focus to the relationship between disasters, markets and violence highlighted so astutely by Klein.

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