

Critique on destabilizing power assignment

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John Macdonalds and Ken Plummer discuss the multiple ways in which political activity exceeds or tries to do away with established practices. Whilst they claim that a political system tries to resolve controversy within a system of rules, their chapter “ Power Beyond the Rules” describes politics as an entity which is a disagreement about goals and the means to achieve them. The authors identify five common means in which to change a political system. The first of these is labeled “ Revolution”. The passage described a political revolution as “... the overthrow of one political system in order to establish another”. Perhaps because of the colloquial use of the word, I found their claim that revolutions rarely escalate into something of a violent matter rather perplexing. However, they later explain that the said revolution may spark a reform, which in turn may spark violent action, but not the actual political revolution.

Macdonalds and Plummer state that revolutions share several traits, such as rising expectations, an unresponsive government, radical leadership by intellectuals and establishing a new legitimacy. All four points were discussed but one would have to look elsewhere for a more in depth look as the passage lacks examples. Like revolution, terrorism is a political act beyond the rules of established political systems. Unlike the first point, this section is filled with examples which do grant the reader a rather elementary understanding of the subject. This section includes four insights into the subject drawn from

Sociologist Paul Johnson, namely: Violence as a tactic, it may be committed by government/authority figures, democracies are more susceptible to it.

and terrorism is simply a matter of definition. This final insight stipulates that one person's terrorist may be another's freedom fighter. Whilst these do help with the general notion of what terrorism is by definition, the characteristics were simplified and lacked thorough clarification. The last two points both fall in to the category of war. The authors decided to separate them in to "War" and "Nuclear Weapons".

The former discussing the costs involved, a brief overview of its history as well as some interesting facts concerning the issue. This section in particular failed to clearly demonstrate how war was linked to the changing of political power. Additionally, the combination of both of the sections may have provided a more accurate depiction of how war-like scenarios effect the changing of power from outside the legal boundaries. Nuclear weapons are a highly significant part of modern warfare, however, it does not necessarily warrant a separate section.

Overall, this chapter did grant an introductory style insight to the shifting of power and ideologies. I do believe that the authors message is effectively told and does not hold any contradictions. Moreover, the chapter is fully referenced and both the authors are professors at prestigious universities. Whilst the chapter does provide reliable information regarding the basic tenets of the subject, it does not, as I have mentioned before, give enough of an insight to expand on in one's thesis.

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