

Solarz, M.W.: *The Global North-South Atlas. Mapping Global Change*. Routledge, London, 2020. 167 p.

People are constantly categorising to make it easier to navigate the world. Nevertheless, there are several problems with social categories (ALEX GILLESPIE, A. *et al.* 2012): rigid boundaries and reifications can make human-aggregates real and endows with an ability to act for a long time, while they are often just imagined communities. Not only societal but also space division and categorisation is a significant characteristic of humanity. The most obvious result of this phenomenon is the nation-states' borders clarity visible on the political map of the world. Social scientists have many problems with ossified borders: thinking in nation-states creates a methodological nationalism (WIMMER, A. and SCHILLER, G.N. 2002) that can enclose research and shift results in one direction. In addition to that, different manners of dividing the globe can create rigid boundaries also. Besides, simplifications in the division of space construct binary oppositions such as North-South, poor-rich, East-West distinctions. This book critiques these simplifications, contextualises and modulates the problem of what humanity thinks of development, progression, and well-being.

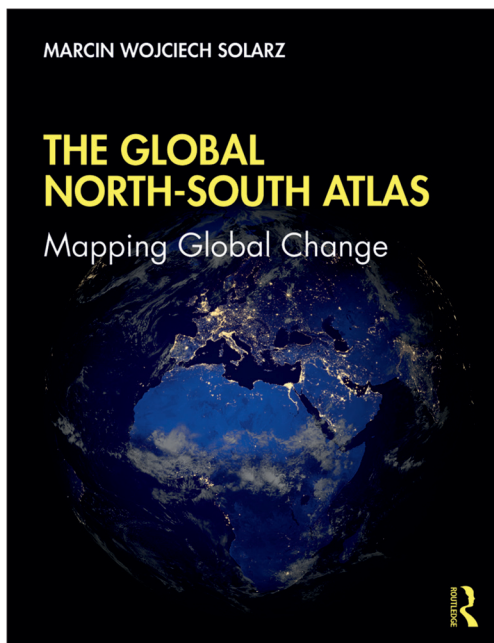
The book's chapters are organised around the topics of geography and development, the global North-South disparities, and the author endeavours to visualise global inequalities on world maps. They appear in a total of 121 different charts and maps.

The volume was published by Routledge in 2020 by Marcin Wojciech SOLARZ, an associate professor at the University of Warsaw, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies. SOLARZ's major research topics are related to political and development geography, his prior book (*New Geographies of the Globalised World*) is also discussed global development issues (SOLARZ, M.W. 2018a).

The book's basic premise is that of all the attempts to divide the world based on development, the so-called Brandt Line (boiled down to the 1980 Brandt Report) remains the most enduring and continues to influence our thinking about the world. In this book, SOLARZ does not focus on presenting the Brandt Report; others have already done so (WILLIAMS, G. 1980; WIONCZEK, S.M. 1981), but instead, tries to outline the international context of the Report while also paying attention to political and personal motivations. After depicting the Brandt Line for the reader, he introduces its misleading nature deploying new aspects and indicators. With the help of the new indices, he presents a plethora of maps on many aspects of development utilising the most recent data.

The Introduction (*The Brandt Line: Political or Developmental Boundary*) provides useful ideas on how the Brandt Report has been evolved and has been received. The Report and the boundary between global South and North named after the German politician, Willy Brandt, was criticised at the time of its creation. Despite this fact, the Brandt Line has become the most typical and well-known representation of the global developmental divide on map. There has been an abundance of reproduction, it was picked up by the media, due to – among other reasons – the fact that maps are highly regarded and seemed neutral while conveyed complex knowledge. It lent trustworthiness and reliability to this division. This special status may have arisen because maps present information clearly and unambiguously. However, SOLARZ claims that the Brandt Line was much more political than a developmental boundary and he provides arguments for this as well. The 'northern club' has the members of NATO (without Turkey), the Warsaw Pact, the Pacific Security Treaty (ANZUS) and the US-Japan security treaties, while the global South is the rest. But if it is approached from a political-civilisational perspective, it can be noticed that the 'successful' European and Anglo-Saxon dominance (plus Japan) is considered to be the opposite of the rest of the world.

The author does not forget about the human factor either. He points out that most of the participants in the Brandt Commission came from the political sphere. These people had ethnical, political, philosophical, personal, etc. background which affected the Report as well.



An important part of the *Introduction* is the Cold War confrontation and its spatial impact on a global scale: East-West dichotomy. SOLARZ finds many similarities between the philosophy of the East-West and North-South subdivision, and the Brandt Line is, in fact, “a political relic of the Cold War period” (SOLARZ, M.W. 2020, 9). In its time, the birth of the Brandt Line was influenced by the power of novelty as it began to put an end to the hegemonic East-West opposition, furthermore it supported Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, weakening the Iron Curtain in Europe.

The author deals with the international interest in developmental boundaries preceding the Brandt Report, from the Sauvy Line (1961) to the Wolf-Philips Line (1979), and places these on maps and graphs. The graphs linked to the Introduction clearly show that while the world has universally become richer (1960–2017), but the gap between the poor and the rich has steadily increased. The most important milestones of development research and long-term socio-political trends, such as the Afro-Asian decolonisation wave and the Cold War, are also represented in the graphs.

While analysing the perceptions of the Brandt Line and putting it into context, SOLARZ points out that it seemed obvious that the synergy among the industrial revolution, population explosion, and globalisation (geographical proximity) has created an unprecedented interest in the rift between the world of the rich and the poor. However, the hope that the underdeveloped countries could break out of their situation was increasingly diminishing, so their status seemed to be congealed. Following the dissolution of the Second World by 1993 the world political map had stabilised. The position of the newly formed countries in the development map of the world had to be also redefined (QUILLIGAN, J.B. 2002). A “new Brandt Line” was demanded, thus the 1980 line could be slightly modified. This also confirmed that the division is acceptable, but the boundary between North and South can be flexible.

Most of the maps can be found in the chapters following the Introduction. Each map is accompanied by a detailed explanatory description along with the map legend, but the skilled eye will find plenty to analyse by scrutinising the maps. According to the author these maps “enable a multifaceted and multidisciplinary analysis of the international situation, including the composition and organisation of the international community. They can form the basis for analysing changes in both political and the socio-economic order” (SOLARZ, M.W. 2020, 32).

The *Mapping Global Change* chapter introduces the differences in development and wealth from the 1st to the 21st century. Spatial representation provides an opportunity for analysis over time. Historical GDP data are retrieved from Angus MADDISON’s database (MADDISON, A. 2010), allowing the reader to compare

the economic development of regions in the ancient, medieval, and modern worlds. The author also faced the problem that the borders of empires, regions, and countries had changed throughout history. The Polish writer demonstrates this in the example of Poland since the Polish territories used to belong to several countries. Therefore, geographical regions change over time, but for the sake of comparability, SOLARZ always uses only one specific global division in each map series. The first series of maps spans the longest time horizon, depicting 13 countries and regions between 1 A.D. and 2008. It shows the recent state borders for the sake of clarity and aggregates them into regions adapted to historical times. These areas are: Western Europe; Central Europe; Former USSR countries; Western Offshoots (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA); China; Japan; India-Pakistan-Bangladesh; Other Asia (Middle East, South-East Asia, Mongolia, Korea, Nepal, Bhutan); Egypt; North Africa; Sahel and West Africa; Other Africa (mainly Sub-Saharan Africa) and Latin America.

The superiority of India and China in the Ancient and the Middle Ages is visible on the maps, added these old empires to ‘Other Asia’, the economic superiority of Asia is unquestionable at that time.

Analysing the second series of maps we can witness the progressive enrichment of the world. SOLARZ always adjusts the regions to the start-up period, to indicate the temporal shift and the evolution of the enrichment of the European empires due to the Age of Exploration. For this reason, Western Europe is no longer united on the second series of maps, with UK & Ireland (British Isles), Spain & Portugal (Iberian Peninsula), Italy, France, and Germany listed separately. (Definitely, it is arguable that interpreting Scandinavia & Greenland, Benelux, Switzerland, Austria, and Greece as one region as “Other Western Europe” is a good idea.)

The third series of maps depicts countries by region between 1870 and 2008. SOLARZ represents our world in more detail during this period due to the reliability of data and the impact of the Industrial Revolution and colonisation, dividing the world into 69 countries and regions. Following the same logic, the fourth series of maps (1950–2008) works with even more detail, while the fifth series (1980–2017) uses HDI data (CONCEIÇÃO, P. *et al.* 2019) and, according to the author, “directly refers to the quality of life” (SOLARZ, M.W. 2020, 79).

Chapter Two (*Different Philosophies of Development*) introduces hypothetical scenarios related to development and progress that have already appeared in his previous book (SOLARZ, M.W. 2018b). The writer interprets eleven philosophers’ and scholars’ concepts on development from PLATO to Jared DIAMOND and represents them on maps. For instance, because PLATO believes knowledge is the key element of progress (“If PLATO had drawn a North-South divide in 2019” see SOLARZ, M.W. 2020, 99), SOLARZ creates a map that

shows the differences among the countries of the world based on PISA results, building a mosaic of “northern” and also non-uniform “southern” groups of countries. The author of the *Theory of Justice*, John RAWLS, believes that freedom and equality are the most important, thus SOLARZ calculates data from Freedom in the World index and parliamentary seats held by women. This is where the most stunning results come from, as the global North includes only Benelux, Scandinavia (with Iceland), Slovenia and Serbia.

In the third chapter (*Towards a New Global Line*), the author attempts to depict selected social, economic and political indicators that are important for development and progress. Fifteen 4-class composite choropleth maps present the world’s developmental differences with 26 indicators. Those include innovativeness, education, concern for the younger generation & the elderly, Internet and mobile phone users, gender equality and social development, etc. The four summary maps based on synthetic indicators refer to all 26 partial indicators. The reference map compering the Human Development Index and Freedom in the World indicators with his own maps validates their outcomes.

In the last chapter (*Conclusions*), SOLARZ makes a distinction between hard and soft boundaries, calling attention to the fact that soft boundary always allows an in-between world between the developed and the underdeveloped parts. The list of developing countries will always be arbitrary to some extent and cannot be defined in such a way that satisfies everyone. The world is more complex than to be able to divide it with a single line and it is more like an “archipelago of highly developed islands dispersed in an underdeveloped ocean”, which is constantly changing. The Brandt Line has a place in political and economic history rather than contemporary 21st-century atlases.

SOLARZ’s work explores the geographic aspects of development in great detail, focusing on the discourse around the Brandt Line. By contributing to the discussion, he resolves the opposition of the global South and North with multiple approaches and offers new alternatives for presenting development on a global scale. The considerable number of pseudo-cylindrical and azimuthal maps provides a visualisation frame not only for the professional audience.

Acknowledgement: The research has been supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office – NKFIH, contract number K 124291.

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