

BOOK REVIEW

Gerőcs, T. – Ricz, J. (eds) (2021). *The Post-Crisis Developmental State: Perspectives from the Global Periphery*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, , p. XVI + 337. ISBN 978-3-030-71986-9

Reviewed by **Zsófia Hajnal***

Published online: February 22, 2022

© 2022 The Author(s)



A developmental state (DS) is worth being monitored closely from all angles of regimes and all stages of development. The efforts that developmental states exerted and keep exerting, and the results they lead to, provide academics, policy advisors and decision makers around the globe with plenty of historical and sector-specific lessons. The umbrella-theme of the volume under review is economic and developmental policy-making in the global semi-periphery. The developmental state as a research area has an academic language of its own, and the definition of the developmental state is currently shifting, now including emerging and developing countries as well.

There are six specific dimensions identifiable in the current volume, emphasized by one or more chapters: institutions, technology, environment, education, trade, and finance. These aspects closely overlap with the World Bank's *World Development Indicators'* six data themes, which suggests that the book's approach is comprehensive, despite the geographically selective country themes. The chapters exploring the country themes are more than mere case studies, for the synergy they display: Each highlights issues crucial from the developmental state perspective. The following paragraphs will reflect on three virtues of the book.

First, how the volume keeps it multidimensional. Chapter 2, *Institutions and Change: New Horizons in Economic Theory*, written by László Csaba, contains institutional factors embedded into a series of explanatory variables of economic change, combining economic history with institutional economics. The significance of this essay for the global community lies in the observations made around institutional weakness and hollowing, potential dead ends in the evolution of state-related institutions. Next to be highlighted is Miklós Szanyi's essay, *Catching-up Opportunities of East-Central European States in the Context of Technology Cycles*. What makes Szanyi's chapter unique is the combination of Jánosy's trendlines as a measure of convergence with technology cycles for one specific region. Technological inter- and intra-regional impacts continue shaping states' growth and progress in a decisive way, and developmental states are far from being an exception. Christopher Hope's study – *Easier Said than Done: Namibia's "Declaratory" Developmental State and the Obstacles to Successful Industrial Policy* – presents internal and bilateral (international) conflicts, or conflicting economic interests

*Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science, Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: zsolia.hajnal@stud.uni-corvinus.hu

as obstacles to the developmental state status. This is crucial to understand in a world where, for several countries, this status is desirable in promoting catching-up. To close the line, Ruvarashe Masocha's *The Underperforming State of Zimbabwe – A Case Study on Tobacco Contract Farming* chapter may be brought up. Masocha lays the capital conditions for developmental functioning, and outlines potential reasons for failure. From this – mainly interview-based – essay, the reader may understand more about missed opportunities and points of improvement in the developmental state theme and paradigm, through the lens of one national industry's state. But the book is multidimensional, not just within individual chapters, but also as a whole. The methods applied are both of a cross-sectional nature, reflecting upon several countries or industries, as well as of a historical one, with time series, and at times both.

Second, the volume displays the deepest level of expertise in the developmental state context. In chapter 5, *On the Emergence of Developmental States in the Twenty-First Century: Urgency or Agency?* by Judit Ricz, the reader is given an admirable overview. By presenting the developmental states (past and present), and their environment (with dynamics, changes and challenges), this essay may offer the broadest perspective on the contemporary understanding of the developmental state. Andrea Szalavetz's chapter, *Green Industrial Policy and Development – Taking Advanced Economies Over?* provides novel insights through a comparative analysis, significant in an era of green industrial transition (the green revolution). Szalavetz's chapter is also one of the two in this book that puts China's role under the "magnifying glass". The other such chapter is Gábor Vigvári's *State-Led Development in the Global Trading System – A Real Threat to Stability?* In this latter chapter, China is presented as an outlier, as opposed to being a leader. Beside an extensive analysis based on trade database time series, a model of regime theory is presented, in a feedback loop augmented version. In parallel, chapter 9 can be mentioned, where Ekaette Ikpe applies the linkages thesis to the developmental state paradigm, broadening and enhancing thereby the analytical frame, under the chapter title *Bringing the 'International' into Discourses on Developmental Statehood in Ethiopia*.

Third, the volume remains, throughout its entire array of studies, uniformly interdisciplinary. This is well displayed in Andrei Yakovlev's *On Big Cycles in Development of Global Capitalism*. The varieties of capitalism (VoC) approach is married here with a broader historical analysis, bringing economic dynamics and contemporary crises into the VoC picture, and identifying VoC and related factors for the common future. The country-specific studies, such as György Csáki's *Educational Developmentalism: The Case of Taiwan*, also fit well into the interdisciplinary nature of the volume. This chapter combines education history and research with economic history and its international context. Csáki emphasizes the pragmatism of education strategies and their successful implementation, presenting Taiwan's path – in particular the state's role – as a "best practice". His guidance is crucial in a world where higher education is challenged, as the bases of the economy shifts. Another country-specific essay, *Developmental or Impoverishing Urban Cores? The Case of Slovakia*, by István Kollai, mingles spatial, regional and urban economics, all in the historical context.

Last but not least, chapters 13 to 15 are highly representative cases of the twenty-first century developmental state. The reader is enriched with explanations on the development state's shortcomings, such as path-dependence. The chapter on the North African region (*Development and Trade Policy in North Africa*) is yet another excellent example of a core-periphery analysis, though different from the chapter on Slovakia's case. The chapter on Brazil (*The Demise of the Brazilian Developmental State: Political Constraints and the Role of Finance*) is one of the few



that mentions the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly. The opportunity of witnessing and collectively reacting to policy-mistakes of heads of states is not a standalone phenomenon in our times. Heads of states defying common sense, natural sciences, and the laws of economics may steer the respective countries into financial and other crises. At times, regime changes may not be enough to prevent or solve these problems, and the need of institutional reform is identified, as it happens in the chapter on Pakistan.

Despite its thematic diversity, the book remains internally consistent. The diversity, however, leads to a rich collection of developmental state related terms the reader can familiarize themselves with throughout the book. These include the backwash effect, the underperforming state, the club model, and crony capitalism, just to name a few.

Due to the broad and multifaceted nature of the book, the accessibility of each chapter remains to be judged subjectively, based on personal interests. The book can be read neutrally from any academic perspective, from either “side” of developmentalism, or from any point of identification on the developmental scale or stages. Thus, this book is recommended to all economic scholars: those interested in the developmental state on the level of analysis, and the ones who bear international development directly at their heart.

Open Access. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes, provided the original author and source are credited, a link to the CC License is provided, and changes – if any – are indicated.

