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## REZENSIONEN | REVIEWS

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**Corinna R. Unger: International Development. A Postwar History, London: Bloomsbury Academic 2018, 239 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Uwe Müller, Leipzig

Corinna Unger's book entitled *International Development* deals with "development" in and of itself only in passing. It is neither about the analysis of socioeconomic developments, nor about the identification of global development trends, nor about the measurement of inequalities of economic structures or of trends of divergence or convergence between individual regions of the world. The focus of the book, however, is on strategies to initiate and promote "development".

Unger criticizes that social scientists sometimes prematurely characterize these strategies as "successful" or "failed". Historians, on the other hand, would reject normative evaluations. However, since historians usually look at each case separately, they make learning from history more difficult. Unger is also very cautious in evaluating the development strategies she examines.

But she does elaborate some more general insights that should be of interest to contemporary development policy experts.

Already in the introduction of the book, important tensions between approaches to development strategies are presented: local grassroots initiatives vs. planning of large-scale projects, investment in the economy vs. improvement of living conditions, industrialisation vs. rural development, and paternalistic development aid vs. help for self-help. This correlates with quite different motives of a wide range of institutions and actors on the donor side as well as among the "underdeveloped". The author frequently emphasizes the great diversity of development concepts, which, on the one hand, were shaped by discourses on the goals of development and, on the other hand, were also themselves subjects of a permanent modification due to changing historical conditions.

After a short second chapter on the concept of development, the debate on global inequality, and the (im)possibilities of overcoming it through economic growth in general and industrialisation in particular, five further chapters (3 to 5 as well as 7 and 8) follow in chronological order, describing various conceptions of development and implementation as well as the actors involved and sometimes also the assessment by the respective contemporaries

or their successors. The focus is often on the effects of crises and wars, geostrategic interests, and political striving for stabilisation of social conditions on development concepts and policies. Only in chapter 6 does the perspective shift, by starting from the development approaches themselves (community development, agricultural development, public health, and birth control). Of course, the author does not want to and cannot offer an encyclopaedic completeness in a 200-page book. It is also impossible to consider the perspectives of all participants equally. Both the author's special expertise in rural development issues and the regional focus of existing research (India and Tanzania) affect the narrative. However, overall, there is no major omission, which is a great achievement in itself.

The advantages of Unger's historical approach should be explained by giving two examples: the author repeatedly points out the complexity of the concept of development and the diversity of approaches to promoting development. Especially the attempts to reduce development gaps between different parts of Europe or even within European nation-states (here, especially Italy) played a major role in the development on other continents. Unger pleads "to include both Europe as an image and European actors in the history of international development efforts" (p. 86). Economic historical research shows that the European dynamics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were based on very specific conditions. This finding argues rather against a transfer of European strategies and methods. In fact, many attempts to copy European industrialisation strategies have failed. However, "in practice the

industrialisation paradigm was never replaced, what changed over time were the policies on how to achieve industrialization and what to expect from it" (p. 22). However, adherence to this paradigm was not solely a consequence of the Euro- and US-centric modernization theory's dominance. The thought patterns surrounding dependency theory also ultimately led to import substitution through industrialisation as the only way out of underdevelopment and exploitation. The majority of national political elites in Latin America, Asia, and Africa opted for industrialisation for very diverse reasons. In the end, the crisis experiences of the European states, which are supposedly in a more developed post-industrial phase, as well as the successes of East Asian models, could also speak in favour of building up or maintaining a country's own industrial base.

In the book, connections are repeatedly made between the history of knowledge and political history. The same applies to the interaction of national and international actors, states, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In this way, the author succeeds in constructing a periodisation of international development policy. Incidentally, the subtitle, *A Postwar History*, only makes sense if one relates it to the First World War. Both world wars, the Cold War, and the process of decolonisation brought about changes in the status of development policy approaches. However, it is also clear that the different approaches always existed in parallel. In the Cold War period, for example, not every development policy project was primarily shaped by the logic of the confrontation between the systems. Unger characterizes the 1970s as "a highly dynamic but also

somewhat confusing period in the history of development” (p. 127). New actors came into play. The (capitalist) world economic order was no longer fundamentally questioned only by the states of the Eastern Bloc, but also by numerous actors in important international organisations and the Non-Alignment Movement; ultimately, it did not change – at least not in favour of the Global South. Rural development came back into focus. In this case, Unger sees “a notably similarity” to “development approaches of the first half of the twentieth century” (p. 140). Since the 1980s, things have become even more confusing. The rise of approaches that rely on market mechanisms is unmistakable. The collapse of the socialist world system further discredited the planning of economic development. The West tried to transfer its models through the Washington Consensus, as well as with the demand for “good governance”. At the same time, NGOs were intensifying their activities. This applies all the more to China and other former recipients of aid, which had turned into providers of aid. Finally, a debate was emerging not only about the meaning of development policy, but also about the limits of development itself, especially taking into account the global ecological crises. Unger mentions these problems without analysing them more deeply. She herself states that “comparative historical studies” on development policy of the last four decades “are scarce” (p. 151).

The book’s strength therefore lies primarily in its balanced analysis of development policy from the 1920s to the 1970s. Due to its broad range of topics, it contains some information and makes connections visible that are new and interesting even

for specialists. Above all, however, the book is very suitable as an introduction for students of global studies or similar courses, where it can be a good supplement and sometimes also an important correction to economic and social science literature.

**Binhong Shao (ed.): Political Economy of Globalization and China’s Options, Leiden/Boston: Brill 2018, 241 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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This volume is both a research treatise and a contemporary document. Published at the end of the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency in the USA as well as half a year after President Xi Jinping’s unlimited mandate in office made it into the constitution and after the China Dream as a programme of future development for the country had been formulated, the contributors – all prominent scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the leading research universities with leadership responsibilities in China’s strategic knowledge production – take the occasion to assess current developments and to look ahead. The tone of the volume is set by the Academy’s vice president Cai Fang, who, with great optimism about globalization, sees the developed industrialized countries in a political crisis. He pinpoints that this crisis is the result of insufficient management of the enormous global dynamics