

# Introduction

**Marc Frey / Ronald W. Pruessen**

In the twentieth century, Asian countries experienced “development” in many ways. South Korea and Taiwan built upon Japan’s example of state-directed, planned, Western-oriented modernization and witnessed transformation from less developed colonies to fully industrialized and post-industrial nations. China underwent dramatic changes in a different fashion. Starting in the late 1970s, the Chinese leadership introduced market reforms and a mainly capitalist economy within a socialist political order. Breathtaking economic growth, accelerated urbanization, industrialization, and the rise of a middle class are only some of the features of China’s transformation into the economic and political superpower of today and tomorrow. Yet other regions of Asia have charted their own courses toward fundamental changes as well. Beginning a decade later than China, for instance, India moved towards liberalization of its economy and transformed itself into an economic heavyweight, capable of providing material well-being for ever more of its citizens in a democratic context (despite the persistence of mass poverty). And in Southeast Asia, countries have also moved far beyond the circumstances of colonial times. Over the course of just two or three generations, they have diversified, expanded, accelerated economic growth, raised standards of living, and, generally speaking, substantially improved qualities of life.

Gunnar Myrdal, who wrote about the development of Asia (or, from his point of view, about the lack of it) some forty years ago – using the title of “The Asian Drama” – would not be the only one who would have difficulties comprehending the vastness of the transformations that the region has undergone. Today, there is no longer any debate about the “Asian Drama”: we speak instead of the beginning of the “Asian Century”.

National paths to development varied greatly – and the countries of Asia faced quite different problems and challenges. It does an injustice to multiple pathways to develop-

ment, in fact, to try summarizing them in a few sentences. To varying degrees, though, countries, governments, elites and people coped with a number of core issues pertinent to development, chiefly among them governance and planning; economic development through changes in agriculture, industry and services; and social development (for instance with regard to population, health, education). While the articles which follow do not have a common theme or a unifying topic, they do explore development issues with an eye to this range of issues. In the process, each focuses on fundamental variables without which the present cannot be properly understood. By suggesting the intellectual rewards that would flow from a comparative analysis of Asian development experiences, this grouping is also at least in part designed to lay out an agenda for further research. The guest editors realize, of course, that a comparative analysis approach inevitably yields a more complicated picture – and that it ultimately requires more difficult research and analytical efforts. As such, however, it brings us closer to a genuine understanding of a world and a stage of history that defy simplification. Seeing the world around us as it really is – and appreciating more thoroughly just how it came to be so – is a prerequisite for charting effective policies for solving current (and often long-standing) problems.

Bai Gao, a sociologist at Duke University, begins the cluster of articles with a discussion of the long-term strategies and underlying motives of Japanese ‘developmentalism’. He argues that both the militarist versions, promulgated in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the postwar market-based one, have to be understood in connection with the history of globalization throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century – pointing to the critical importance of the Japanese state in developing the economy.

Imran Ali, an economic historian at the Lahore University of Management Science, introduces the reader to the complex history of development in Pakistan from the late colonial period until the early 1970s. He points to the troublesome legacies of the colonial period, which made a sustained development policy on the national level so much more difficult, and also emphasizes institutional constraints such as the role of the state and the army. His discussion of the case of Pakistan easily lends itself to a comparison with other decolonized countries.

Marc Frey, a historian of international history at Jacobs University Bremen, looks at aspects of the external dimensions of development in Southeast Asia by turning to U.S. development cooperation with countries of the region during the 1950s. More specifically, he sees Washington development cooperation as an integral part of an American civilizing mission intended to forge a global capitalist system conducive to the growth of the United States both politically and economically. But he also describes the responses of Southeast Asian countries, where there was interest in “development” that could unfold in keeping with local or national prescriptions and in their own due time.

Ronald W. Pruessen, a historian specializing in U.S. foreign policy and the early roots of “globalization,” uses the often controversial career of John Foster Dulles to explore the complexities of American “development” policies in Asia. On one hand, Pruessen uses Dulles as an example of the complexities of Washington thinking (pointing to Cold War calculations as well as deeper “Wilsonian reform” concerns). On the other hand, he sees

the limited effectiveness of Dulles's approach as representative of the longer-term failings of Western development initiatives overall.

Sunil Amrith, Senior Lecturer in History at Birkbeck College, takes our attention back to the regional dimension of development issues. His discussion of public health campaigns elucidates the connection between nature and development in tropical Asia from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Finally, Amit Das Gupta, a research associate at the Institute for Contemporary History Berlin, presents us with a little-known case of multilateral development cooperation, namely the consortia organized during the 1960s. He argues that for all their deficiencies, these consortia had significant benefits, especially for recipient countries, as they provided for more long-term development planning.

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