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Sorting Out the Recent Historiography of Development Assistance: Consolidation and New Directions in the Field

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Corinna R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History*, London, Bloomsbury, 2018; 272pp; £16.99; ISBN 9781472576293.

David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2018; 512 pp.; £28.95; ISBN 9780674659599.

Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2019; 296 pp.; £25.00; ISBN 978-0691180151.

Amy C. Offner, *Sorting out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Development States in the Americas*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2019; 400 pp.; £34.00; ISBN 9780691190938.

Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela (eds), *The Development Century: A Global History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018; 366 pp.; £21.99; ISBN 9781108453479.

The historiography of international development has clearly entered a new boom period, as exemplified by all five works under discussion in this review. Remarkably, three of the works under discussion are overviews that have all appeared within a year of each other. Corinna R. Unger's *International Development: A Postwar History* and Sara Lorenzini's *Global Development: A*

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Cold War History are both meant to serve as an introduction to the field of development history; *The Development Century*, the volume edited by Macekura and Manela, brings together 15 case studies showcasing diverse methodological and analytical approaches. David Engerman's *Price of Aid* and Amy Offner's *Sorting out the Mixed Economy* are more focused studies that build creatively on the literature of the past two decades. They are fascinating texts in their own right, and show us how to think about the politics of aid, knowledge production, and everyday experience of development assistance, while also pointing the way to integrating the history of development in histories of political economy.

The study of development as history is a relatively recent phenomenon, one that took off in the 1990s and 2000s as a sub-field of diplomatic history in the United States, and, on a smaller scale, among historians of European Empires and decolonization.¹ By that point, the optimistic post-war decades were long past; the 1980s had seen the development enterprise attacked from the right, with economists and politicians decrying the wastefulness of aid, and the left, with academics and academics calling for a new 'post-development' world. The (partial, and perhaps temporary) collapse of the development consensus opened the door to writing histories of development.² Yet, whereas the first generation of historians, Americanists in particular, tended to focus primarily on the intellectual and political history behind 'modernization' and 'development', studies of development now regularly operate at various scales. History that was once written from the perspective of Washington or Cambridge, Massachusetts, now takes into account perspectives from the socialist world and 'recipient' countries. What was once seen as clearly a Cold War story is now often understood as part of a longer history stretching back to the late colonial era, or even further. And yet, placing these books side by side, we see that, perhaps inevitably, a field that has opened itself up to these multiple perspectives is in many ways further than ever from settling on even some basic issues, such as periodization or definitions. The field's ambition to be a truly global history is, for the moment, still thwarted by the dominance of studies focusing on the United States and Western Europe. Finally, the (welcome) attempts to move beyond diplomatic and intellectual history to understand how

1 The former includes such now classic works as Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore 2003); David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele and Michael E. Latham, *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst 2003). The latter would include Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950*. (Chicago, 2011), and the work of Fred Cooper, including the seminal edited volume Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences* (Berkeley 1997), as well as Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge 1996). One might also include Timothy Mitchell's work on colonial and post-colonial Egypt, which has been influential among historians of development, although Mitchell would probably not call himself one. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley 2002).

2 Joseph Hodge, 'Writing the History of Development (The First Wave)', *Humanity* (Winter 2015), 435-6.

development initiatives were experienced is frustrated by methodological limitations.

Until recently, the best overviews of development history had only appeared in article form.³ The books that are sometimes marketed as introductory texts have generally been manifestos, either in favor of development as an enterprise or strongly opposed.⁴ Lorenzini and Unger both take a more neutral approach. They are not interested in praising or denouncing the development enterprise, but rather in historicizing it, considering its origins, how it has changed over time, and how scholars can go about studying it. That alone makes these volumes welcome and timely.

But what is development? When does a history of development begin? All three overviews present development as a fungible concept that has undergone multiple transformations since the beginning of the twentieth century. Unger and Lorenzini agree that it is inseparable from the idea of growth on the one hand and from a hierarchy of societies defined by their socio-economic arrangements on the other. Unger devotes an entire chapter to comparing definitions, including the most restricted (from the encyclopedia Britannica): 'the process whereby simple, low-income national economies are transformed into industrial economies' (Unger, 16) to the most capacious: 'everyman's road to utopia' (Unger, 15).⁵ Lorenzini eschews definitions, and focuses instead on uses, beginning with Joseph Schumpeter's 1911 *Theory of Economic Development* with Sun Yat Sen's *The International Development of China*, written in 1918 and published in 1922 (Lorenzini, 9–10). Manela and Macekura see development as a 'set of assumptions – that history moves through stages; that leaders and/or experts could guide or direct the evolution of societies through these stages; that some places and people in the world are at more advanced stages than others' (Mane and Macekura, 3).

Of course, what historians of development study is not so much how societies develop (a question that only economic historians still ask) but rather development initiatives and development *aid*: that is, how actors began to see themselves as 'developing' or 'developed', and how they mobilize knowledge and resources to promote industrialization, make agriculture more efficient, improve health care and education systems, and teach government bureaucrats (or private entrepreneurs) to oversee the process. But who were these actors? Here too, we are faced

3 *Ibid.*; Joseph Hodge, 'Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider)', *Humanity* (Spring 2016), 125–74; David C. Engerman and Corinna Unger, 'Towards a Global History of Modernization', *Diplomatic History*, 33, 3 (June 2009), 375–85; Frederick Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, 8, 1 (2010), 5–23; David Engerman, 'The Second World's Third World', *Kritika*, 12, 1 (2011), 183–211.

4 For the former, see: Richard Peet and Elaine Hardwick, *Theories of Development* (New York 1999); For the latter, see: Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton 1995); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 3rd ed. (New York 2008). Escobar's work in particular has been seminal for what is often called 'post-development'.

5 Here, Unger is quoting Heinz Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago 1987), 1.

with a menu of choices. Both Unger and Lorenzini discuss the role of transnational and supranational institutions like the United Nations (UN), the European Economic Community (EEC, later the European Union [EU]), and initiatives like the New International Economic Order NIEO. For Lorenzini, however, the main focus is the nation-state: 'development projects served mainly the national purposes of both donor and recipient countries' (Lorenzini, 5). Both sets of actors used development to promote their 'national self-interest', whether expanding markets or securing resources in the case of donors, or securing economic growth for recipients (Lorenzini, 5). The emphasis on national actors is reflected in the following chapters, which provide plentiful examples from US programs, Soviet initiatives, Chinese contributions, and those of East and West European states besides. Lorenzini does not dismiss the role of international fora or institutions like the World Bank, but for her these are important primarily as places where approaches to development are contested and diffused. By contrast, Unger's history is first and foremost one of influential cosmopolitan thinkers, like Albert Hirschmann and Arthur Lewis, and transnational institutions that spread ideas and practices of development.

While Unger frames her overview as a 'post-war' history, Lorenzini frames her study as a 'Cold War History'. Although these two framings largely overlap chronologically, they point to a different focus. Both agree that the origins of development lie in the late colonial era, when European powers began to justify their rule in the colonies as civilizing missions encompassing some mix of economic, political, and social tutelage. Both also see the heyday of development as the second-half of the twentieth century. For Lorenzini, the main catalyst for the explosion of development initiatives, debates, and projects is the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, with other actors joining in to work alongside the superpowers or offer challenges to their approaches. (It is not, however, limited to that framework, and Lorenzini devotes substantial discussion to organizations that transcended the Cold War as well as movements, like the New International Economic Order, that challenged the whole Cold War framework). Unger's framing relegates the Cold War to the background, and the link between Cold War, decolonization, and development, is dealt with explicitly only in chapter 5. There are merits and drawbacks to both approaches: Lorenzini is generally stronger on the political relationships behind development aid, as well as the relationship between domestic politics in the superpowers and the kind of aid they provided. Unger's book, by contrast, more clearly draws out the connections between development approaches originating in the pre-war era and their adoption and transformation in the decades that follow. But in Unger's book the political context behind the adoptions and transformation of different approaches tends to be described more superficially.

The more important difference is in the periodization of development within these two chronologies. There is a tendency in development historiography to treat models of development as succeeding one another: a focus on industrialization in the heyday of Arthur Lewis and Paul Rodenstein Rodin in the 1950s, a focus on

agriculture in the decades that follow, a turn to basic needs in the 1970s, and finally the emergence of neoliberal development and the Washington consensus in the 1980s. This periodization had already been challenged in recent years by authors such as Daniel Immerwahr, who showed in *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* that resistance to large-scale modernization projects not only existed in the heyday of modernization but shaped development aid; and Nick Cullather, who showed in *Hungry World* that the focus of the US in the 1950s was often on agricultural modernization rather than industrialization.⁶ Unger embraces this new chronology more fully than Lorenzini. For Unger, the main streams in development thought co-exist through the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, at which point they are challenged by dependency theory, environmentalism, and feminist critiques. Interestingly, both Lorenzini and Unger link up in their chronologies once they get to the 'Lost Decade' of the 1980s.

The challenge for historians is not only to outline which models existed and when they were favored by donors, recipients, and institutions, but also to figure out why. Here both books have their stronger and weaker moments. The precursor to the UN's Women in Development initiative in the 1970s, we are told by Unger, were 'demands for equal rights and opportunities' by women in industrial countries (Unger, 134). But how, and through what mechanisms, did demands for equal rights at home translate into new approaches to development? And on the basis of which cases did Diane Elson criticize the Women in Development approach in her 1985 book *Male Bias in the Development Process* (Unger, 135)? Lorenzini, because she delves more deeply into the work of institutions and aid donors, provides a more detailed discussion of how models coexisted and succeeded each other, for example in the UN, in the World Bank, or the EEC. But we learn little about the relationship between project ideas and their implementation, and, most importantly, the feedback mechanism that, over time, turns dissatisfaction with projects into paradigm changes. These books are overviews, and it would be too much to ask the authors to give detailed accounts of how such transformations took place. Still, I wished that they had offered some models or principles for studying changes in development approaches over time.

Since the volume edited by Macekura and Manela is a collection of essays rather than an overview, it cannot provide definitive answers to these questions. Rather, it offers a showcase of where development historiography is at the moment, with 14 different cases. At the same time, because most of the authors in the collection have either recently published monographs on the topics of their chapters or have monographs in the pipeline, *Development Century* offers an efficient introduction to recent historiography on development, based on case studies rather than a broad overview.

6 Daniel Immerwahr. *Thinking Small and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA 2015); Nick Cullather. *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA 2010).

Chronologically, *Development Century* begins with the late nineteenth century, but puts more weight on the pre-Second World War era than either Unger or Lorenzini. The first five chapters deal with the pre-1945 period. Amanda Kay McKvetty, for example, traces the 'Origins of Development Assistance' to Adam Smith, who 'narrated a history of progress based on the improvement of land, manufacturing and trade – through the expansion of economic relationships' (Manela and Macekura, 23) but finds the more proximate origins in the interwar period, and particularly the efforts by states like China and Ethiopia to mobilize the League of Nations to secure recognition, technology and capital. This, along with the growth of expertise in the inter-war period, created the necessary preconditions for the 'far more expansive and far more politically charged' international development aid that would take shape after the Second World War.

The subtitle of *Development Century* is *A Global History*, and indeed the book covers all continents except for Australia, with some cases providing the more familiar North-South view and others grounded explicitly within the development initiatives of post-colonial states. The volume also includes several chapters with an explicitly transnational focus, including an excellent study on the rise of NGOs and alternatives to development by Paul Adler. Several chapters are particularly useful in terms of challenging familiar models about how development paradigms travel and how they should be studied. Of particular note here are the fine chapters on interwar Mexico and its influence on US policymakers by Christy Thornton; on post-colonial Sudan's monetary policy by Alden Young; and on reproductive labor in female development in Tanzania and Zambia by Priya Lal. All three start from domestic development and look outwards, helping us think about why we come across similar models and similar language in seemingly different contexts; rather than assuming that models are imported and adapted, they show how ideas and policies are developed locally and then, in some cases, articulated in a language more familiar to international experts and institutions.

Lal's study is particularly interesting because it is able to pay attention to development practice in a way that historians call for but are rarely able to carry out: it examines not only the policy and knowledge production of development, but also its day-to-day implementation and contestation, and demonstrates how those realities ultimately forced a reconsideration of policies. Instead, this work has largely been left to anthropologists of development, who, however, rarely examine cases historically. Lal's focus is 'care work' done by women in a context where such work was incorporated into the developmental paradigm, so that 'all Tanzanian and Zambian women automatically became members of their country's developmental workforce' (Manela and Macekura, 177). Such an approach ran counter to the leading economic theories of the time, which tended to see work within the home as unproductive labor, a point stated explicitly in Arthur Lewis' dual-sector model.⁷ Over time, however, many officials came to realize that their model did not

7 Arthur Lewis, 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour', *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, 22 (1954), 139–91.

reflect what really went on: women ‘very often surpass men as ‘bread winners’, according to one report cited by Lal (Manela and Macekura, 190).

Lal calls for an ‘emic’ study of developmental approaches that avoid the universalist claims of most models and look instead at how post-colonial societies defined their goals and approaches, drawing on external resources and expertise to help execute priorities and models defined internally. The kinds of insights she describes for officials in Tanzania drove the changing debate on gender and development catalyzed by Esther Boserup in the 1970 and 1980s. Although she does not press this point, Lal’s study shows how an emic study can change our understanding of larger paradigm shifts.

Other chapters also showcase the benefits of zooming in and out. Cyrus Schayegh, for example, draws attention to the way development ideas developed *within* the Ottoman empire and continued on among the early Zionist settlers in Palestine and in inter-war Beirut. Like Meiji-era Japan, the Ottoman Empire explicitly rejected the *laissez faire* approaches that had opened the empire to European competition and eventual penetration, and instead adopted ‘defensive developmentalism’, trying to strengthen economic links within the empire while also developing its coastal areas; construction of infrastructure like the Damascus-Hijaz railway; and measures to encourage consumers to favor domestic products rather than imports (Manela and Macekura, 67). This in turn created useful pre-conditions for Jewish settlers, many of whom in the first decades of the twentieth century were not wedded to the idea of a national state, but rather happy to work ‘vertically intraimperially’ within an Ottoman framework (Manela and Macekura 69), until the collapse of the empire, the Balfour declaration, and British control over Palestine changed the political picture. But the ideas that shaped the economic policies of the Jewish parastate in the interwar period were shaped by Ottoman legacies, but also network of experts with experience with experience in Germany, Russia, and the United States. This helps explain why ‘no uniformly “national developmentalist” layer displaced all others and why, in consequence, the Yishuv’s developmentalist landscape was so multilayered’ (Manela and Macekura, 74). Finally, Schayegh draws attention to the American University of Beirut in the inter-war years as a site connecting Jewish and Arab experts in mandate Syria and Palestine well into the 1930s.

Several chapters also broaden out our possible definition of development. Julia Irwin, for example, insists on the inclusion of humanitarian relief in the history of development efforts. In a case study examining US responses to natural disasters in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, Irwin makes the case that ‘[i]n the course of providing international relief, donor countries and institutions have routinely attempted to effect more comprehensive social, political, and economic changes in the nations receiving their assistance’ (Manela and Macekura, 41). Humanitarian efforts led to interventions in sanitation, labor regulations, and even financial systems whose effects could be felt long after the initial mission was complete.

Curiously, none of the overviews pay much attention to the link between counterinsurgency and development. The *Development Century* includes two chapters (by Timothy Nunan on Afghanistan and Edward Miller on South Vietnam) that explore these topics; the volumes by Unger and Lorenzini contain only brief references to war. Wars of decolonization, counter-insurgency and nation-building were central to the first generation of development historians, especially those writing against the background of American-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸ Widening the lens is important: development aid was not exclusively, or primarily, about warfare. Still, it is clear that many kinds of development aid and state practices were developed or accelerated through military intervention, and the lack of sustained discussion on the topic is an overcorrection.

All three books have less to say about development approaches from the socialist world than about those coming from western Europe and North America. Unger covers some of the politics of Soviet aid (or, rather, ‘fraternal assistance’ or ‘solidarity’, as the Soviet preferred to call it) and Soviet reactions to UNCTAD. Consistent with her Cold War framing, Lorenzini does more, with a chapter exploring the links between Soviet anti-imperialism and the problem of development, and brief but useful discussions of the ‘Features of Socialist Aid’ and the ‘Political Economy of Socialist Cooperation’ (Lorenzini, 45–49). There is only a brief discussion of China’s role in Cold War-era Africa (Lorenzini, 174–175). Yet, if development really was a phenomenon catalyzed by the Cold War, we need to know quite a bit more on how socialist aid was conceived, how it evolved, what it meant for socialist states domestically and for their foreign policies, and how socialist approaches were translated, adopted, and even re-exported by recipient countries. There have been some very interesting works in this direction, but both overviews reflect the fact that the historiography is still dominated by accounts focusing on western state donors and institutions.

The *Development Century* does somewhat better in this regard. Priya Lal’s chapter, discussed earlier, looks at some of the manifestations of African socialism. Timothy Nunan’s chapter on Afghanistan discusses Soviet efforts briefly, although his main focus is the role of international aid during the war years in undermining the sovereignty that all outside parties claimed they were protecting. Alessandro Iandolo’s chapter on the development of Soviet development thought in the Soviet Union provides one of the best discussions I have seen of how the USSR developed a model of development to engage the post-colonial world, most of which, of course, was not socialist. Stalin’s understanding of development, Iandolo explains, ‘left the communist in an inescapable catch-22: real economic development could

⁸ See, for example, Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca, NY 2011); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization & the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ 2010); Brad Simpson, *Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960–1968* (Stanford, CA 2008); Thomas C. Field, *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* (Ithaca, NY 2013). In all of these books, counterinsurgency is treated as the culmination of development/modernization thinking.

happen only in the context of a socialist society, which however required preexisting economic development to be born' (Manela and Macekura, 203). It was, initially, political necessity that drove the USSR to engage in development cooperation in the Third World. In the process, Soviet understanding of development was stripped of class and 'reduced to mere economic growth and better living standards' (208). But this engagement, in turn, led to serious thinking about what the Soviet role should be, a project delegated to new institutions like the Institute for the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). Drawing on institutional and party archives, Iandolo shows how scholars and party ideologists articulated a role for socialist assistance that could be adjusted to individual circumstances, but whose primary purpose was lessening dependency on foreign (western) capital. This new approach to development, with its focus on the division between agricultural and industrial sectors and on driving economic growth was 'not too far from the western tradition' (Manela and Macekura, 215). Despite doubt in the years that followed about both the effectiveness of Soviet assistance and its geo-political value for Moscow, these concepts continued to guide Soviet understanding of the Third World until the late 1980s.

Particularly intriguing is the idea that by de-emphasizing class in their approach to development, Soviet scholars were able to move closer to their western counterparts, and to find a productive way to work through institutions like UNCTAD and UNIDO. Class politics aside, however, one wonders what else one could learn by comparing socialist approaches to development assistance to more familiar western cases. Iandolo, for example, notes that Arthur Lewis's dual-sector model was 'more sophisticated than anything produced by Soviet economists at the time' (Manela and Macekura, 215), and yet it was an earlier version of the dual-sector model that was fiercely debated in the USSR of the 1920s, and which informed the crash collectivization and industrialization program undertaken with the first five-year plan in 1928. The case of the Lewis model not only points, again, to the multifaceted circulation of development approaches going back to the nineteenth century, but also leads us to ask about the fundamental assumptions behind different development models.

Such comparisons can be carried out at different scales. Iandolo's chapter focuses primarily on knowledge production and its relationship to politics. In his chapter, Nathan Citino draws our attention to the way development history can be studied in different scales of space and time. Citino examines the case of Nasser's plan for the *national* development of Egypt and a regional plan for the Arab world promoted by the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjöld's project was a development bank to be funded by a 10% share of oil profits to be donated by all regional partners. Hammarskjöld's scheme was defeated by the suspicions of national leaders, who preferred to keep oil revenues for themselves, while Nasser's plan faced difficulties and was eventually abandoned by his successor, Anwar Sadat. The case study helps Citino compare national and regional approaches to political economy, but more importantly it allows him to illustrate the political work of such narratives; in Nasser's case to 'establish his own

authority in the face of revolution, decolonization, and contests over Arab leadership', and in Hammerskjold's, to establish the authority of the UN and to guide sometimes antagonistic parties into regional cooperation by focusing on issues that appeared to be apolitical (Manela and Macekura, 304). Citino thus incorporates the post-development critique that "development" is a discourse in the Foucauldian sense, but shows how historians can usefully find the nuances in development discourses to understand the work that they really do.

Questions of scale – of national, subnational, and regional development – also occupied Soviet planners and their counterparts in socialist countries and beyond. They played an important role in internal Soviet politics, as well as debates within Comecon, as Lorenzini has discussed elsewhere.⁹ But the question of scale can be taken further, down to the level of village and communities (as Lal does) and to the level of individual. As Schayegh points out in his chapter, self-development was central to economic development as conceived in the Yishuv: 'The Jewish body was a central space for the collective Zionist politics of national regeneration' (Manela and Macekura, 75). The Soviets, of course, celebrated the creation of 'new men and women' through the conquest of nature and heroic feats of production; the turn to thinking about why 'poor people stay poor' was also, ultimately, about individual attitudes. The problem for development historians, if we maintain our ambition to write global histories, is to think about the tensions between different scales, but also how the experiences of development at the level of individual and community affected national and regional schemes, and finally, to track the movement not only of macro-economic models but also the concept of developed individuals.

The two remaining books under review are monographs, and together show some of the most promising directions for histories of development. David Engerman's *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India*, is a study of the international and domestic politics of development assistance. Like Lorenzini, Engerman adopts an explicitly Cold War framework, and argues that, despite the vast gap in wealth between the USSR and the US, there was a real competition between the two superpowers when it came to development: 'The Soviet Union had a distinct advantage in the realm of projects while the United States held an advantage in the realm of resources' (Engerman, 128).

Price of Aid traces how the Soviet and American encounters with post-colonial India transformed their ideas about development. For example, Engerman shows convincingly that Soviet scholars worked out the idea of a 'non-capitalist path' to communism in response to what they observed in India. Even before Stalin's death, some Soviet economists had considered the possibility that there was more than one path to communism (the supposed end state of historical development), but Khrushchev's enthusiasm for development aid opened up further possibilities. The economist M.I. Rubinshtein spent six months in India in 1954–55,

9 Sara Lorenzini, 'Comecon and the South in the Years of Détente: A Study on East–South Economic Relations', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 21, 2 (2014), 183–99.

and in 1956 followed up with several articles inspired by what he observed there. While India was clearly not adopting Soviet style economic management, he saw in its commitment to a 'socialist pattern of society' the possibility of development paths that did not follow the standard Marxist-Leninist model: 'the failure of India to live up to true socialism', Engerman writes, 'hardly dimmed Rubinshtein's hopes for the country's future' (Engerman, 124). Political changes thus created the space for a major ideological innovation, which in turn created the basis for Soviet engagement not just with India, but also with much of the post-colonial world.

Price of Aid is also a history of the role that development played in domestic politics. Engerman shows how different Indian officials used ties to the socialist or capitalist worlds to advance their own visions of Indian development. Like Lorenzini, he sees the solicitation and offering of aid as largely about the ways that actors in a bilateral relationship tried to secure their own interests. Since different Indian officials had different ideological perspectives and preferences in terms of possible partnerships, some of the iconic development projects could hardly be called products of any one donor's aid program. The Bhilai steel plant, while initially celebrated as a Soviet project, used West German equipment during construction and an American marketing firm (Engerman, 129–130). Soviet experts worked as employees of the Government of India, not the USSR. Although the Soviets disliked having western equipment favored over their own, allowing Indian officials to be in charge had the advantage for both sides of being able to portray the project as one undertaken by equals, making Bhilai a 'powerful symbol about Soviet aid and Indian control' (Engerman, 132). Yet the overall effect of India's development politics was not so positive for state sovereignty, Engerman argues. By the late 1960s, India was in danger of negative aid flows, meaning that it would 'send out more dollars to pay for past loans than it was taking in'. It faced a similar problem with the USSR (Engerman, 317).

If Engerman's book shows us how the Soviet encounter with India drove a reassessment of Soviet ideological and economic thinking on development, Amy Offner's *Sorting out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* goes a step further. One of the great virtues of Offner's book is that it eschews a discussion of international development in the sense of a project undertaken by donors in a foreign country, but rather views the US involvement in Colombia from the 1950s to the 1980s, as well the New Deal and War on Poverty in the US, as intertwined projects. It is a conceptual shift that has major implications for how we study development, and suggests, as Offner does in her title, that to understand the history of international development we need to understand the kind of political economies that actors in wealthier and poorer countries tried to construct, and the kind of linkages their respective projects made possible. Drawing on materials from the US and Colombia, including personal archives, as well as oral histories, Offner is able to offer an account that operates at different scales in both of the countries under discussion, examining politics, knowledge production, and everyday experience in detail. Ideas and

practices first developed during the New Deal were exported to Colombia, but appropriated and redefined by actors with different agendas, landlords, national leaders, and social scientists among them; these ideas and practices were later redeployed in the US and institutions like the World Bank.¹⁰

Offner's book also scrambles familiar chronologies of development history. Most importantly, she shows that what we call 'neoliberalism' and 'neoliberal development', and particularly the emphasis on the private sector, the decentralization of state functions, the use of private companies to deliver state goods, and the focus on individual performance over collective problems, were not created in the 1980s. Rather, the policymakers and thinkers who pushed these arrangements to the fore drew on familiar policies from earlier periods. Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, Offner shows, was also an opportunity for private companies to sign contracts with the federal government to provide social services like job training; veterans of US foreign aid, like David Lilienthal, were often at the forefront, carving out a 'lasting niche for private capital within the welfare state' (Engerman, 177). During the 1980s, the Reagan administration attacked cash-transfer programs but provided fresh opportunities to for-profit contractors (Engerman, 279). What happened was not so much the creation of a new political economy, but rather a 'reordering' of the mixed economy established in the post-war decades: the same elements were rearranged in new ways, and according to new ideals.

In 1981, the economist Lauchlin Currie wrote that there was no such thing as development economics, only economics applied to particular conditions.¹¹ Offner's book leaves us wondering if there is such a thing as a history of development to be written separately from the history of political economy. We tend to follow the protagonists of development aid in treating donor societies as having 'complete' socialist or liberal capitalist systems; we often assume that development advice is based on getting countries as close as possible to those systems, or in any case drawing on the experience at home. And yet the domestic arrangements of donor countries were themselves constantly contested and changed over time. Offner's book shows that such changes in domestic political economy were not separable from the work done in helping others develop their own economies.

Can such insights be scaled up without losing what has made recent work in development history so exciting? Can one write a truly global history, alert to the movement of ideas and practices around the world, while incorporating the 'emic' perspective advocated by Lal? One thing is for certain: it may be a frustrating time to be a development worker, but it is an exciting time to be a historian of development.

10 A similar point is made by Stuart Schrader on the nature of US policing in Stuart Schrader, *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*. (Berkeley, CA 2019).

11 Andrés Álvarez, Andrés Guiot-Isaac and Jimena Hurtado, 'Lauchlin Currie and Albert O. Hirschman on Development as a Problem of Decision Making', *Æconomia*, 9, 2 (2019), 209–35.

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Biographical Note

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