

Overall, this book constitutes an interesting and useful addition to the literature in relation to developments in investment treaty practice in the important Asia-Pacific region and will be a helpful resource for students and scholars seeking to understand how the treaty works and the context in which it will operate.

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***Asia–Africa Development Divergence: A Question of Intent.* By David Henley.** London: Zed Books, 2015. xiii+248 pp.

Despite decades of international efforts to sustain developmental growth through the use of foreign aid and economic structural adjustments, development in contemporary Africa has generally paled in comparison to the likes of Southeast Asia. Indeed, one might have expected Africa's political elites to have taken heed of the challenges and successes that facilitated the meteoric levels of development and economic growth witnessed in Southeast Asia during the 1960s. Yet the perennial question concerning Africa's enduring difficulties in achieving similar development success, despite starting out on comparable footing with Southeast Asia, has remained largely underexplored.

Therefore it is perhaps timely that David Henley attempts to address this persistent issue through an appropriately comparative paradigm in *Asia–Africa Development Divergence*. Through the book, Henley posits an alternative thesis to explain Africa's digression in development by examining the necessary preconditions for developmental growth — as exhibited in post-independence Southeast Asia — and for it to be sustained in Africa. While the notion for comparing the two regions is certainly not a novel one, few in academia

have drawn insightful lessons from an in-depth comparative analysis of Africa and Southeast Asia quite like the “Tracking Development” project, in which Henley was involved. It is from the fruits of this five-year project by KITLV and the African Studies Centre Leiden, from which this book and the ambitious edited volume, *Asian Tigers, African Lions* (see Berendsen et al. 2013), were derived. As a follow-up to the monumental undertaking that preceded it, Henley's book does not attempt to rethread familiar ground but instead explores the societal and historical developments coupled with world views that ultimately shaped the policy decisions taken by African and Southeast Asian elites, which resulted in sharply different development trajectories in the two regions. It is no small feat then that Henley achieves this goal, quite convincingly, in a concise book that spans seven short chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of development history in Africa and Southeast Asia as well as introducing Henley's analytical framework, used in the book's comparative cases of Indonesia–Nigeria, Malaysia–Kenya and Vietnam–Tanzania. It is here where Henley outlines his proposed preconditions for developmental growth (economic freedom, macroeconomic stability, and pro-poor/pro rural public spending). In addition to the framework's preconditions, differences in the political elites' perception and prioritization of the development process, are treated by Henley as the linchpins to the divergence in development paths between Africa and Southeast Asia. Chapter 2 reviews the existing discourse on the development trajectories of Southeast Asia and Africa, while Chapter 3 delves into the first two of Henley's three preconditions for sustainable growth and poverty reduction, namely macroeconomic stability and economic freedom. It is here where Henley makes clear that the maintenance of low inflation rates and a fairly liberalized economy, combined with fiscal prudence, were key to enabling sustainable economic growth in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, which in turn secured sufficient levels of state revenue and investment in human capital to permit these countries to make the leap from a largely rural-agricultural economy to a

manufacturing-oriented and capital-intensive one. Unfortunately, the diametric opposite occurred in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania, and the consequent outcome was equally obverse. Henley provides persuasive evidence for his furtherance of macroeconomic stability and economic freedom as development fundamentals by drawing on the three comparative cases — although, disappointingly, with disproportionate emphasis given to Indonesia and Nigeria — and chronicling deftly the minute yet significant differences in fiscal, trade and industry policies taken in both regions that set these countries on vastly different development paths.

The final precondition in Henley's framework, the prioritizing of pro-poor/pro-rural public spending, is elaborated in Chapter 4 which advocates for the supersession of development of the rural economy over that of industry and manufacturing-oriented growth. A similar argument is extended to the comparative cases of Malaysia–Kenya, and Vietnam–Tanzania in Chapter 5. Of additional note in this chapter is Henley's intent on debunking the myth that developmental growth in Malaysia and Vietnam was enabled solely by export-oriented industrialization, which in so doing, invites the reader to scrutinize the much-disregarded role rural development policies played in enabling industrialization in these countries. In a similar vein, Henley contests common assumptions that Kenya and Tanzania had adopted predominantly pro-rural policies, showing instead that these countries had merely flirted with the notion of rural development ever so briefly.

Chapter 6 compares the stark contrasts in state expenditure for rural development between Asian and African states — or the lack thereof for the latter — particularly in the agriculture, transport, and communications sectors. Perhaps the most incisive contribution of the book, found in this chapter, is Henley's thesis that much of the efficacy witnessed in the development initiatives by Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam hinged on three guiding principles in policymaking; “Outreach” — the sheer magnitude of beneficiaries for a given policy; “Urgency” — the aim to stimulate pro-poor growth in the short term over longer termed

aspirations for capital-intensive industrialization; “Expediency” — the pragmatic improvement of living conditions for the majority of the populace, even at the expense of certain ethical considerations such as the toleration of corrupt practices in government.

Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, reinforces Henley's argument by examining the lesser explored, albeit debatable and speculative, socio-historical factors that influenced the development mindsets and agendas of Asian and African elites and, in turn, its translation into the adoption of pro-poor and pro-industry development policies responsible for the regional divergence in development trajectories. Undoubtedly, this chapter proves to be one of the book's more intriguing assertions as Henley sheds light on the varying conceptions of development held by political elites. By drawing on a biographical approach that divulges insights to the social, educational, and ideological milieus of Asian and African elites, Henley boldly attributes the development divergence between both regions to the varying conceptions of development held by their respective political leaders. It is, however, a shame that a similarly thorough analysis was not applied to the Malaysia–Kenya and Vietnam–Tanzania cases.

All said, the book is not without its flaws and the curious absence of potential case studies like Thailand and Cambodia remain a glaring omission in an otherwise comprehensive and insightful analysis. Despite providing infrequent snippets of Thailand's economic growth, Henley never ventures into a deeper assessment of the country's unique pathway to development. Likewise, the absence of a comparative case studies between Cambodia and Uganda is made all the more apparent considering its inclusion in the preceding “Tracking Development” publication, *Asian Tigers, African Lions* (Berendsen et al. 2013). While it is undeniable that Cambodia has been a laggard in development, relative to the Southeast Asian cases presented in detail by Henley, the country is nevertheless primed to embark on a development trajectory akin to its more developed regional neighbours. Hence its inclusion as a

fourth comparative case study would only lend further credence and weight to Henley's argument. Instead, Henley is remiss for its exclusion.

In spite of the book's minor faults, Henley makes an undeniably compelling case with his congruent and rational argument for the primacy of rural and pro-poor development, its precedence over industrialization, and ultimately, its instrumentalism in sustaining economic growth in Southeast Asia, which set it on a development path that has remained a suitable benchmark for African development. As Henley does not exhibit a propensity to rely extensively on quantitative data and statistical analyses, the book does not demand prior knowledge in general economics. Consequently, it is an accessible read for a wide audience ranging from students of development studies to industry practitioners in the development field, or anyone with a mild interest in seeking an alternative explanation for the contradistinction in development trajectories between Asia and Africa.

REFERENCE

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***Cultures of Development: Vietnam, Brazil and the Unsung Vanguard of Prosperity.* By Jonathan Warren.** New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 140.

Most research in development studies leaves culture at the margins, observes Jonathan Warren

in *Cultures of Development*. Where the significance of culture for developmental outcomes is acknowledged, it tends to be relegated to a black box. This under-conceptualization of culture's influence is especially notable in policy-oriented research. Critical development scholars, on the other hand, give attention directly to the ways developmental projects fail to anticipate how ideas and cultural practices may transform interventions. These scholars, though, resist commenting on the positive ways that culture can be used and refrain from making any policy prescriptions. Warren thus points to a hole in development thinking: while there are vague notions that culture shapes development, as well as a body of work offering culture-sensitive critiques of development projects, there is today little discussion of the ways that culture might be harnessed for collective developmental purposes.

The book sets out to make an initial contribution in this area through comparisons between Brazil and Vietnam. Warren makes it clear that his field of expertise is Brazil, and that he is a more recent arrival to the study of Vietnam. This background means he presents Vietnam through his knowledge of Brazil, just as he reflects back on Brazil in light of what he observes in Vietnam. To Southeast Asianists, this perspective should be fresh.

Vietnam is presented as a country with a more successful record of development compared with Brazil. This starting point may be peculiar given that Brazil's per capita income still towers over Vietnam's. Nonetheless, Warren points to the positives in the Southeast Asian nation's recent improvements in economic and social development, while growth and social progress has, on the whole, been disappointing in the last few decades in the South American country.

The association of poorer Vietnam with development and wealthier Brazil with stagnation may be further excused because Warren's aim is not to account for different levels of development. Rather, he seeks to find specific linkages between cultural factors and developmental logics. The main theme here, and the subject of core chapters, relates to how people think about external models of development. These models have to do with
