

Last, because of its lack of a unified structure or an agreement on which social forces to concentrate on, the work carried out by the MS is wide-ranging and diverse. Consequently, it does not lend itself well to structured comparison and contrast across countries. Indeed, this seems to be less and less the focus of the MS, as they contend that social relations are no longer contained within national boundaries, rendering so-called “methodological nationalism” effete. This open-endedness also precluded the writing of a concluding chapter.

Consequently, the work of the MS should be seen as a complement, rather than a substitute, to orthodox economics or other political economy schools. This volume and the Murdoch School work in a wider sense should be consulted by all scholars of the region—as its analysis is bracing, occasionally unpalatable, but always enlightening.

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***Striving for Inclusive Development: From Pangkor to a Modern Malaysian State*, by Sultan Nazrin Shah.** Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 560.

Striving for Inclusive Development: From Pangkor to a Modern Malaysian State, as the title indicates, chronicles both a nation’s formation and its enduring socio-economic quest. Author Sultan Nazrin Shah, already distinguished for his contributions to Malaysia’s historical economic growth, from colonial times to the present, widens the scope of inquiry. This richly informative and deeply thoughtful book is about Malaysia’s development path across multiple dimensions.

The chapters follow a thematic outline, with chronological exploration within each theme. The 1874 Pangkor Agreement, which marked the start of organized and formalized indirect British rule in Malaya, coincides with the book’s timeframe of 150 years and is assuredly of special significance to the author’s home state of Perak. The colonial government imposed political structures and pursued economic interests in ways that left legacies of inequality and exclusion as well as various administrative institutions—notably, the legal system, civil service and a federal structure.

Various communities had long established a presence in present-day Malaysia, but the land also experienced rapid immigration. This book decidedly and positively frames its overview of these processes through the lens of inclusiveness, emphasizing the continuous multicultural, multilingual and multireligious composition over centuries. The author also helpfully avoids homogenization, notably by highlighting Javanese immigration as one subgroup within the Malay populace.

The book also commendably devotes the following section to Malaysia’s record in enhancing well-being, which precedes the chapters on growth. This is in line with the multi-dimensionality of inclusive development and may intentionally, if subtly, send a message that the human dimensions ultimately matter more than economic production and material prosperity. The overarching story is one of steady progress in education and health, although challenges persist in terms of quality of education and the amount of healthcare expenditures and of equity in access to higher education, especially among different ethnic groups.

However, while articulating well-being in this expansive manner, the analysis is rather narrowly limited to physical health. Some attention to other factors, including personal freedom, gender equality (or

lack thereof), cultural inclusion and subjective well-being, which have become increasingly recognized as important elements of development, would enrich the book's appraisal of inclusiveness.

Undoubtedly, economic growth and structural change are paramount; *Striving for Inclusive Development* devotes the bulk of its pages to Malaysia's experience in economic expansion and diversification. Sultan Nazrin charts Malaya's economy in the century after the Pangkor Agreement (1874–1969), showing an upward, but highly volatile trend in the pre-World War II decades. The commodity-heavy economy substantially followed the vicissitudes of the rubber and tin markets. In the first post-Independence decade (1957–69), Malaysia experienced more modest but steady growth, but did little to redress inequality.

The book then probes the sources of growth and drivers of development after the pivotal year of 1971, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was initiated. Malaysia's transformation under the NEP and through successive development plans pursued the NEP's overarching goals of poverty eradication and social restructuring to reduce ethnic imbalances. The book focuses first on economic growth and industrialization, and the facilitating role of investment, oil revenue, exports, human resource development and other ancillary factors. The setbacks along the way, due to economic crises largely beyond Malaysia's control or policy missteps directly under the government's watch, are also discussed with a welcome dose of candour.

The evidence shows Malaysia on a catch-up path with high-income economies, but the pace of change has diminished and the country continually lags behind its East Asian counterparts, fundamentally due to the slowdown in productivity growth and technological sophistication. The book offers pointed and reasonable explanations for Malaysia's growth and development record and its stalling progress in recent decades. Sustainability goes hand in hand with inclusiveness. On this note, the author does well to reference studies that measure national income and wealth more holistically by accounting for the negative effects of unsustainable development.

The last batch of chapters takes a more technical and quantitative turn. The author presents statistical analyses of the linkages between agriculture and poverty reduction. Notwithstanding Malaysia's tremendous success in uplifting low-income households, and the transformation of rural communities where poverty has been more pronounced, it remains pertinent to examine the effects of agricultural development on ameliorating livelihoods. This book makes an important contribution to a renewed conversation.

Appropriately, the penultimate chapter shines the spotlight on inequality. Drawing again on the national account series built by the author, the analysis shows inequality in Malaya rising over the 1900–39 period. Malaysia inherited marked segmentation and inequality in general and between ethnic groups from the colonial economy. Redressing ethnic imbalance—the NEP's "social restructuring"—has especially occupied Malaysia's development policy, but in the past decade aggregate inequality has also been a major objective. The book reports national survey data that plot this trajectory of declining household income inequality and presents econometric analyses of the determinants of income inequality on the effects of education, geography, ethnicity and gender on the probability of a household being in low- or high-income brackets. The exercise illustrates the complexity and fluidity of inclusion and exclusion.

The book concludes by proposing broad ideas for Malaysia to foster more inclusive and sustainable development. The discussion touches on the major points that recur in discourses on the country's future. However, the first set of recommendations, regarding "affirmative action", confines itself to mainstream dogmas that project the problems of rent-seeking and patronage onto the entire system. While these scourges have undoubtedly undermined development, their adverse effects apply predominantly to some—but emphatically not all—spheres of affirmative action. The system operates more vastly in spheres omitted in the book's analysis—saliently, higher education, employment, microfinance, public procurement and SME development. The most consequential shortfall of affirmative action, which Malaysia must address on its path towards inclusiveness, is the lack of capacity building in these programmes that extensively provide opportunity, on preferential terms, to the majority ethnic group.

On the whole, *Striving for Inclusive Development* is worth its heft. The book marries ambitious scope with clarity and eloquence of delivery. The author deftly presents data and vivid charts that help the reader grasp a plethora of information, and intersperses a generous portion of supplementary box articles. This is an immensely valuable reference book that students and scholars of Malaysian economy will enjoy.

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***The Political Economy of Growth in Vietnam: Between States and Markets*, by Guanie Lim.** New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. 97.

Ever since the economic reforms of 1986 (*Đổi Mới*), Vietnam has been transitioning from being a planned economy to a market economy. Until 2019, right before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, this transition had yielded positive results. Along with the structural transformation from an agrarian society to an economy characterized by growing industrialization and a modern services sectors, the country's average annual growth rate had reached as high as 6.5 per cent. Another noteworthy facet of Vietnam's development is the growing importance of foreign direct investment (FDI).

This book, as its title suggests, attempts to provide a closer look at the above-mentioned description by focusing on the role of the state in Vietnam's economic transition and overall development. The author employs a comparative analysis approach, comparing: first, two key industries of Vietnam; and then, Vietnam with early industrializers of East Asia. In addition to a general discussion on the transformation of the economy, the book sheds light on the role of the state, particularly underlining the manner in which it interacts and negotiates with transnational corporations (TNCs) to promote the development of the nation's motorcycle and banking industries.

On the relationship between state policy and the behaviour of TNCs, the author borrows the framework developed by Liu and Dicken (2006), which is conceptualized by two aspects—active embeddedness and obligated embeddedness. In the former, TNCs have stronger bargaining power, whereas in the latter, it is the state that enjoys more bargaining power. In the case of active embeddedness, local assets such as a large domestic market and a cheap labour pool are widely available to TNCs. On the contrary, obligated embeddedness takes place when TNCs are forced to comply with state-set criteria in order to access desired assets. While the conceptual framework is very interesting, its application to the two case studies of Vietnam is not clear. Yes, Vietnam does indeed have a large, populous domestic market and a cheap labour force, as noted by the author, but these assets are widely available to TNCs and are not really controlled by the state. However, according to Lim, obligated embeddedness is the case in Vietnam. He emphasizes that, due to Vietnam's weak state structure, the country has benefited only partially from TNCs in terms of transfer of technological and managerial know-how. My own empirical analysis also led to the same conclusion, but using a different and clearer framework (Tran 2006).

On the structure and nature of the state, the author borrows the conceptual framework put forth by Kenichi Ohno (2009). Unlike the super-ministry model of Japan (under the era of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, MITI) or South Korea (under the era of the Economic Planning Board) and the central coordination model of Thailand (during the Thaksin administration), according to Lim, Vietnam's state structure is fragmented and characterized by relatively egalitarian interministry relations.
