

The Developmental State and the Asian Miracles: An Introduction to the Debate.

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“Unlike many other Governments that intervened extensively, those in East Asia did so not to constrain the business sector as a whole in the interest of other classes (“populism”), and still less to replace private enterprise (“real socialism”); nor did they seek simply to extend favours to certain individual interests (“crony capitalism”). In the East Asian economies, the primary purpose of government intervention in the development process was to promote the interests of the business sector as a whole, and - most important- to do so by creating new wealth through capital accumulation and productivity improvement rather than by redistributing a given national income away from workers, farmers and other social classes.” (UNCTAD 1994, 50).

During the 1980s, it became increasingly obvious that high and sustained economic growth rates and structural transformation in East Asia could not be explained by reference to neither the autonomous working of private local firms in domestic and international markets, nor to the global or regional restructuring of industrial production. Many scholars began stressing that state intervention was critical to the economic success of Japan and the East Asian NICs, and became interested in the institutional and political bases of effective state intervention in East Asia.

Neo-classical Intervention - a Weaker Version of the Developmental State.

In the broader developmental state debate one can identify a stronger and a weaker version (Islam 1992). *The weaker version* extends the neo-classical explanation of the East Asian economic miracles by suggesting that the state in the East Asian NICs was endowed with an unusual capacity to pursue efficient policies in the form of prudent macro-economic policies and export-oriented policies.

In its 1991 World Development Report, "The Challenge to Development", the World Bank emphasised the role of market friendly interventions. States intervene market friendly when they do so reluctantly and non-distortingly; when they put interventions to the discipline of the international and domestic markets; and when they make interventions simple, transparent and subject to rules rather than official discretion. Governments were advised to focus their activities on: investing in people, providing a competitive climate for enterprise, keeping the economies open to trade and investment, and finally maintaining a stable macro-economy (World Bank 1991).

Precision and market friendly intervention is still the core message in the East Asian Miracle report from 1993, but the proposed "Functional Approach to Growth" leaves more room for interventionist policies. The main focus is still the fundamental policies of the kind mentioned above but the report argues that selective policies promoting export (export-push strategies) are beneficial, that selective financial policies in the form of mild financial repression and directed credits can be so under very restricted conditions, while promotion of specific industries generally did not work in the High-Performing Asian Economies and hold little promise of doing it elsewhere. This kind of market conforming interventions in the HPAEs were made possible by *specific institutional arrangements*. The Miracle report specifically mentions the following institutional mechanisms: a) wealth-sharing programs designed to include non-elites in economic growth; b) a cadre of economic technocrats insulated from narrow political pressures; and c) institutions and mechanisms to share and win the support of business elites (World Bank 1993).

Developmental State - The Strong Version.

In contrast, dirigism and strategic industrial policies are emphasised in the stronger version of the developmental state, as are the set of institutional and political arrangements which make such intervention possible. The East Asian states have been endowed with an unusual capacity to master and shape the market forces by means of dirigist policies. More specifically, they have guided or governed the market process of resource allocation so as to produce a level of and a composition of investment which was different from what both free trade/simulated free trade policies and ordinary 'interventionist policies' would have produced.

The 'visible hand' of the state to a considerable extent stimulated and pushed economic development in East Asia:

- by stimulating very high level of productive investments, making for fast transfer of newer technology into actual production,
- by directing more investments in certain key industries than would have occurred without state intervention,
- by spreading and socialising investment risks,
- by taming the international market forces to domestic needs,
- by stimulating the "animal spirits" of investors through "state-created rents",
- by imposing discipline on the private business sector through specified performance requirements
- and by exposing many industries to international competition in foreign markets if not at home.

(Johnson 1982, White 1988, Amsden 1989, Wade 1990, UNCTAD 1994 and Weiss 1995 in this volume).

Thus strategic industrial and trade policies were of crucial importance and the main point was not about the quantity but the quality of state intervention. Four main features of such intervention are often referred to: selectivity, flexibility, coherence and

competitive orientation. *Selectivity*, in that the state creates progressively shifting competitive advantages instead of just adapting to existing comparative advantages. *Flexibility*, in the sense that adaptation to the shifting international economic conjunctures and the shifting 'windows of opportunity' in the world market requires a high degree of flexibility. *Coherence*, in that the different policies must be part of an overall cumulative and co-ordinated policy. *Competitiveness*, in the sense that policy intervention must be oriented towards development of a competitive production in (predominantly) private enterprises.

Strategic industrial policies constitute a central element in the strong developmental state model but the model has also certain *political, organisational and institutional characteristics* affecting the formulation and implementation of these policies:

- a high degree of state autonomy
- a close collaboration between the state elites and business elites,
- a high level of administrative and technical capacity, and
- a developmentally-oriented state elite.

The precise content of and the relation between these characteristics as well as their presence in the East Asian NICs has been debated extensively.

Thus the issue of *autonomy* is far from simple. What is meant by autonomy? Is it some kind of absolute autonomy? Autonomy from whom: from the landed oligarchy; from peasants and workers; from industrial capitalists; or from foreign economic and political actors?. The developmental state perspective implies a high degree of 'absolute' autonomy from classes and groups which derive their wealth from unproductive activities or are otherwise inimical to long term national industrial development, i.e. an absolute autonomy. Moreover, a high level of relative autonomy of the state elite from the national industrial capitalist is considered as vital. The early statist writers tended to give particular attention to bureaucratic autonomy - to the presence of a powerful and insulated economic bureaucracy organised in a "pilot agency" - while more recent neo-statist contributions put more emphasis on the combined effect of bureaucratic autonomy

and close co-operation between bureaucrats and the entrepreneurial elites.

The Developmental State - The Soft Version (Strong State cum Strong Business)

The soft version will be presented here by referring to three neo-statist writers, who have tried to develop and advance the connectedness or the network aspect of the developmental state.

Peter Evans (1989, 1995) has invented the term "*embedded autonomy*" to describe a fusion of bureaucratic insulation from particularistic societal pressures and networks of concrete social ties "that link the state intimately and aggressively to particular social groups with whom the state shares a joint project of transformation" (Evans 1995, 59). For Evans embeddedness provides "sources of intelligence" "institutionalized channels for continual negotiation and re negotiation of goals and policies" and "channels of implementation that enhance the competence of the state". Therefore, embeddedness is considered as important as autonomy (Evans 1995, 59, 248). A certain degree of autonomy, however, complements embeddedness by protecting the state from the process of being piecemeal captured by individual private interests which could undermine the state's corporate coherence and robustness. The mutual reinforcement of state and society also stems from the fact that "internal bureaucratic coherence should be seen as an essential precondition for the state's effective participation in external networks" (Evans 1995, 50).

The mutual reinforcement of a strong state and a strong society is elaborated much more explicitly in the contributions by Ziya Önis (Önis 1991) and in particular by Linda Weiss (Weiss and Hobson 1995 and Weiss 1995 in this volume). The starting point of both authors is the distinction between 'despotic state power' *over* the society, which in fact turn out to be a characteristic of countries with weak states, and 'the infrastructural power' *through* society which characterises states with a high transformative and coordinative capacity. The *governed interdependence model* of Linda Weiss puts particular emphasis on the formal and institutionalised channels of co-operation and communication between on the one hand a highly motivated, competent and coherent economic bureaucracy and on the other hand encompassing industrial organisations.

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'Bringing business back in' and co-operative co-ordination between state and industry is also present in Daniel Okimoto's "network state" concept, in which the state obtains its strength through the convergence of private and public goals, and exercises its power through its networks ties with the private sector. In analysing MITI (Ministry of Trade and Industry) and industrial policies in Japan, Okimoto stresses the way government-private industry co-ordination has been facilitated by the fusion of market and organisation which provides MITI with a wide range and variety of access points. (Okimoto 1989, 149). Moreover, he emphasises how industrial policies has been shaped by the wide range of intermediate organisation between the state and private industry: advisory councils, public corporations, foundations, industrial promotion associations, business federations research associations etc. (Ibid., 160). Furthermore, such formal policy networks have been complemented by informal policy networks of a long-term and trust-based kind (Ibid., 155f). The latter and the practice of physical exchange of personnel between the public, semi-public and private sector has played a crucial role in the day-to-day muddling through process of consultation, negotiation, conflict resolution and consensus formation around industrial policy issues. Consequently, a network state does not rule by coercion and unilateral imposition of its will on society but on consensus and habits of compliance allowing for government-led co-ordination and for selective intervention when necessary. (Ibid., 144-145, 175, 226).

The Developmental State - The Softer Version (Strong State cum Strong Society).

The three approaches presented above are all concerned with the interaction and interdependence between the state and the private sector, and they are all critical to the "insulation and command" thesis in the strong "statist" approaches. Consequently, they also provide the developmental state with a softer and less authoritarian 'face' but the embeddedness and networking is still an exclusive arrangement confined to industrial capital. That still leaves us with the issue of the state's links to other social groups, as part of an overall discussion of the developmental state in relation to *accountability and democracy*. Some recent contributions tend to consider soft authoritarianism and a weak and subordinated civil society as a constituent part of

the developmental state (Leftwich 1995), while others are concerned with the democratisation of the developmental state. "The challenge for the political economist is to devise forms of industrial policy which are consistent with the norms of democratic accountability and with more limited concentration of public and private power than has been the case in the East Asian context" (Önis 1991, 123).

In his latest book, Peter Evans argues that embeddedness autonomy is not and should not be restricted to exclusionary ties with industrial capital and that an encompassing embeddedness in which the state is connected to all major social groups may improve the flexibility of state response to a changing international environment and thus constitute a more robust institutional arrangement in the long run. More specifically, Evans argues that mobilisation of subordinate groups may serve to balance against too strong social elites, and that party organisations with a long-term agenda may be important in this process of mobilisation and of creating support for a collective aim - 'a joint product' - of some type (Evans 1995, 227-247).

Similarly, Gordon White has recently warned against the idea of "rational authoritarianism" by arguing on the one hand that this mode of governance has had considerable political and human costs, and on the other hand that liberal democracies are endowed with core features that are essential 'for creating a state which is responsive, efficient and accountable.' (White 1995, 29-30), while at the same time suggesting that "the future of both development and democracy depends on the ability of a society to construct an effective developmental state" (White 1995, 31). The construction of a developmental state which have at least the basic socio-economic functions (regulative, infrastructural and redistributive) entails the search of a state with sufficient authority and administrative capacity as well as sound political institutions, encompassing the institutional design of the state, the character of the political society and the character and the role of civil society.

Therefore, both Evans and White contend that processes of democratisation are compatible with retaining sufficient strategic leadership and sufficient capacity to co-ordinate economic processes as well as resolve social and political conflicts. Moreover, they look at the formation of encompassing embeddedness/developmental democracy as a process of institutional adaptation which contains considerable scope for indigenous

'innovation', which may lead nationally distinct forms of institutional arrangements.

The Demise of Developmental State?

The challenge to the developmental state paradigm do not exclusively stem from the effects of democratisation on developmentalism or the compatibility of the two. The thesis of the demise of the developmental state in the East Asian NICs has been advanced with reference to 'the irony of state strength argument', to the argument that selective and complex industrial policies become more inefficient as the economy grows and matures, and to the assertion that the scope for and the effect of state intervention is severely circumscribed by the growing international interdependence and in particular by processes of economic globalisation.

"The irony of state strength" argument has been advanced by several scholars in relation to the South Korean experience. (Moon 1988 and Kim and Huang 1991) Strategic state intervention has generated powerful societal interests which in turn have undermined the strong state. The self-induced loss of state power is presented by Kim and Huang in the following manner: "The very "strength" of the Korean State in transforming economy by favoring large conglomerates through investment in strategic industries, however, created stagflation and economic concentration that had to be dealt with by the regime of the 1980s with a radical contractionary policy and gradual weakening of state strength vis-à-vis big business" (ibid., 108).

Generally, there can be little doubt that the Korean (and other East Asian) state(s) has been challenged by both private industrialists and by technocrats within the state itself; that some of the more "heavy-handed" instruments partly have lost their efficiency; and that state-business relations has been partly remodelled during the last decade or so. The demise thesis, however, rest on the assumption that a developmental state rely on its ability to force its own will upon non-state groups. Consequently, this thesis tends to undermine just the strong developmental state arguments, while the softer state power through society or embeddedness versions are left untouched or even strengthened (Weiss 1995, 193-95). Therefore, a networking type of the developmental state with strategic industrial policies of a more consensual kind similar to today's MITI is not ruled

out. "MITI's influence today rests less on control of credit allocation or possession of formal authority than on its powers of persuasion and co-ordination vis-à-vis the private sector, its capacity to gather and process information, set directions and priorities, promote private-sector and collective interests, and serve as an intermediary between domestic and international economies." (Okimoto 1989,144).

The thesis that *more complex economies make industrial policies more inefficient* and that the price mechanisms therefore need to be allowed to work more freely, has been opposed by Amsden and Eoh who argue that industrial policy-making becomes easier as the economy grows more complex, because the number of industries that must be promoted becomes smaller in relation to already existing mature industries that can be left alone. (Amsden and Eoh 1993, 380).

On a more general scale, the above two East Asian specific and primarily national oriented arguments have been supplemented by writings on "the irrelevance of developmental states" which take their point of departure in the international context and link the demise of the developmental state to processes of growing international interdependence.

Developmental states - it is argued - belong to the past for two reasons. First, because it is naive to believe that the major economic powers in the present more liberalised world economy will allow newcomers to protect and subsidise their economies as the East Asian countries were allowed to do in the 1970s and 1980s. Secondly, interventionist initiatives are in the process of being eroded by the trend towards *economic globalisation*. In the following, I will confine myself to the latter point.

The globalisation argument takes it for granted that we are living in a world economy in which national and local economic processes are subsumed under transborder processes and transactions. The global economy is the principal entity and dominating. Markets and production have become truly global and a hyper-mobile capital search for marginal better production conditions and profits. Transnational companies are considered as the main players in the world economy, they produce world products in world market factories for world markets; they have no home base any more; and they are genuinely footloose in relation to any location. As a consequence, nations and regions have become less important economic entities and the role and significance of nation states declined considerably.

However, the economic significance of the nation state in general and industrial policies in particular, looks different if we consider globalisation in the context of a world-wide international economy, in which the national economies still is the principal entity; in which capital is highly rooted both in a territorial and sectoral sense; in which most TNCs are highly dependent on their home base and in which they need backing from mother governments. In this case global companies are few, and although exploitation of technology is now a global phenomenon, production of technology remains a national phenomenon as it is dependent on the particular national systems of innovation. From this latter perspective, international competition is not just competition between individual globalised companies but between historically rooted and deeply entrenched national institutional systems. The competitive advantage is increasingly organised around territorial rooted immobile assets related to skill-, innovation- and quality-intensive production which means that there are considerable scope for supply-side state interventions (strategic industrial policies) promoting, supporting, organising, guaranteeing and underwriting the conditions of 'the new competition'. (Best 1990, Hirst & Thomson 1992, Dicken 1992, Zysman 1994, Amin & Thrift 1995, Wade 1995).

Bringing Society and Politics More in - Beyond the Developmental State?

So far we have demonstrated how it has been and is possible either to refuse or to integrate many of the empirical and theoretical challenges by modifying the statist approach to the developmental state. In recent years "beyond the developmental state" contributions, which question the existence ever of an developmental state, have flourished in the writings on both East- and Southeast Asia. In this final section of the introduction, I will refer to selected parts of this post-statist debate.

One strand of writings is concerned with "*bringing society back in*" and argues that the statist provides an insufficient or even misleading explanation of the rapid processes of economic growth in the Far East, and that one ought to focus much more on the dynamic interactions within the private sector and the socio-cultural roots of these interactions ('big society small state' arguments).

The developmental state and the Asian miracles

Referring to Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan analysts have highlighted the role of 'maverick' and 'guerrilla' firms outside the reach of the state (Noble 1989, Lam and Clark 1994, Clark and Chan 1994). In the case of Taiwan, Lam and Clark, describe the important role of so-called 'guerrilla capitalism' strategies followed by small and medium sized enterprises in Taiwan. The strategies include "extreme flexibility in rapidly filling even small orders, attention to quality and design, audacious bidding, participation in complex networks of subcontracting, and only partial observation at best of government regulations and international laws, such as those regarding intellectual property rights." (Lam and Clark 1994, 416).

In an Southeast Asian context Richard Doner has criticised the statist arguments and suggested an inclusionary (rather than statist) institutionalism which focuses on collective action problems and non-market solutions. It takes as its starting point specific collective action dilemmas and look at the demand and supply of institutional solutions acknowledging the importance of private and public-private institutional arrangements such as business groups, networks, business-interest associations and public-private sector consultation. Although starting from a problem-specific rather than an institution-specific analysis Doner's inclusive institutionalism ends up in an analysis not far from Okimoto's relational or network state approach mentioned above (Doner 1991, Doner 1992).

Another strand of the post-statist "beyond the developmental state" contributions is more concerned with "*getting politics back in*". Both the developmental state paradigm and the more network-oriented neo-statist contributions are criticised for being too concerned with policy efficiency and successful economic outcomes and for either not dealing with or having reductionist assumptions of the organisational dynamics of the state and of "real politics" (Moon 1990, Moon and Prasad 1994 and Kang 1995). Referring to Chalmers Johnson's capitalist developmental state, David Kang asserts that Johnson "has assumed away all the problems that plague both practitioners and theorists of politics. In Johnson's works, an enlightened and selfless political elite is fully cognizant of economic imperatives and lacks any political exigencies that might inhibit the pursuit of those imperatives. This elite is further able to design an institutional structure that will costlessly and efficiently meet those goals. Problems of bureaucratic control and discretion, rent seeking by economic

actors, legitimacy, and political power do not come into play.” (Kang 1995, 567).

More specifically, this strand of the post-statist analysis questions firstly the way the statist treats the state as an internally coherent, unitary and dominant entity. In reality, it is argued, the state must be considered much more as an arena and as a multi-dimensional entity with a complex and dynamic internal working. The executive leadership has not always been dominant in East Asia and has certainly not confined itself to just protecting the bureaucracy from outside disturbances. Moreover, bureaucrats have seldom enjoyed a high level of autonomy in countries where top-down policy processes prevailed (South Korea and Taiwan), i.e. “penetration from above” has been more the norm than the exception. It is also considered unrealistic to assume that “bureaucratic polity” is absent in East Asia as if inter-agency rivalries and segmentation were not normal phenomena, even there, just as “penetration from below” through formal and informal channels and not always takes the form of encompassing organisations (Kang 1995, 573-75; Moon 1994, 364-366).

This leads to the second area of critique. “The insulation and dominance thesis” is criticised for overlooking that social actors control strategic resources and engage in negotiations of reciprocal exchange. This kind of critique is in turn linked to the third which centres around the claim that a strong state results in rational interventionist industrial policies of a coherent, consistent and flexible kind. Apart from referring to cases policy failures, the wisdom of the rational choice and implementation of industrial policies is blamed for overlooking that there is no de politicised economic policies and that technical rationality is bounded by the political calculus of legitimacy building, power consolidation and regime survival (Moon 1995, 368, 377). Policy choices, including industrial policy choices, are “strategic actions to reward the friendly, to exclude the hostile, and to disorganise the dangerous”. (Moon 1990, 26).

Consequently, it is argued that the politics of industrial policies involves not just exchange of information between public and private actors but also resources through patron-client ties of various kinds in which the private actors in East Asia typically have contributed by financing parties and elections.

The issues of patronage and clientelism have been included in the developmental state paradigm but normally been discussed under the heading of “who disciplines the state”. If the state are supposed to discipline business and the market - who are then

disciplining state actors? Some writers have stressed the disciplining role played by civil society groups such as students? Others have emphasised discipline stemming from the business community as channelled through business associations, while yet others have pointed at structural factors such as the revenue orientation of the state elite, leading to a strategy of maximising revenue through economic performance, or to the discipline stemming from the working of the international markets and international competition.

The co-existence of patron-client relationships and bureaucratic coherence in Japan and the East Asian NICs has also been explained with reference to "the bifurcated bureaucracy" phenomena in which many ministries are organised along an internal agenda of retaining political power and organising political support through patron-client practices, while a few economic core ministries and agencies are organised along an external agenda with an extraordinary scope for autonomous action aiming at economic growth and increasing economic independence and thus legitimacy (Okimoto 1989, 177; Kang 1995, 575).

A final area of "the bringing politics back" argument relates to the survival and legitimacy issues mentioned above and deals with the insufficient treatment of security concerns in explaining development commitment in East Asia and in particular with the lack of emphasis on how the East Asian states themselves acted to protect themselves from hostile neighbours. "Most studies either have viewed the NICs as passive or have been concerned only with the international economic effects. I have argued not only that the NICs actively sought to control their destiny relative to other nations but that security threats played a significant role in Korea and Taiwan by creating incentives for efficiency, by influencing economic planning, and by giving the state a rationale for continued intervention into both political and economic arenas." (Kang 1995, 587).

However, the crucial importance of "the imperative for survival" for commitment to industrial transformation and deepening, and the active role played by the Taiwanese and South Korean states can fairly easily be integrated in the developmental state paradigm as shown by among others Linda Weiss and John M. Hobson (Weiss & Hobson 1995, 183).

All in all, however, the "bringing back politics" arguments demonstrates that the developmental state thesis tends to rest on a too narrow notion of political processes. The "thin politics" of

bureaucratic rationality must be replaced by “thick politics” which encompasses political interests, power struggles, patronage, legitimacy building and security considerations and which allow for “ex post” rationality being the result of unintended consequences.

Concluding Remarks

It has been the aim of the present chapter to give a short introduction to various contributions and positions in the so-called developmental state debate. What started in the 1980s as “bringing the state back in” has developed into a much more complex analytical framework which also “bring business, society, democracy and politics, including international policy, back in” to such an extent that it becomes increasingly difficult to exactly decide when we are still inside the developmental state paradigm and when we have actually left and moved beyond this paradigm.

The developmental state approaches of the strong or soft kind have for more than a decade opened a new arena for choice and intervention between the fatalism of dependency theory and the market fetishism of neo-classical economics. It has survived as a powerful paradigm during the last decade or so by introducing modifications which take into account ‘the differences and diversities among developmental states’ and allow for ‘variations in strength and autonomy over time and across sectors within each country’.

Although being challenged by paradigms advancing “the first invisible hand” of the market and the “third hand of civic community and networking” in explaining processes of industrial transformation and economic performance, it is too early to write off the “second and visible hand of the state” in analysing the dynamics of late-comers and late-late-comers in Asia and elsewhere. So far history tells us that successful developers to a considerable extent have relied on state governance of their economies and of their relations to the other national economies.

A state-centred approach to this state governance has proven useful when analysing past developments in the East Asian NICs, in particular when including “thick politics”, when allowing for diversities among developmental states and when specifying the sphere of validity of the theory. Although, we are living in a world marked by processes of democratisation and globalisation

which result in a changed framework for national political and economic processes, the nation state is still a core actor and the developmental state paradigm has still a role to play in development studies.

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