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Challenging the Aid Paradigm

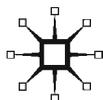
Western Currents and Asian Alternatives

Edited By

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Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	viii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	x
1 Introduction: Reinventing Development for the Twenty-First Century? <i>Jens Stilhoff Sørensen</i>	1
Part I Western Currents	
2 The Development-Security Nexus in Historical Perspective: Governing the World of Peoples <i>Mark Duffield</i>	25
3 From Materialism to Non-materialism in International Development: Revisiting Rostow's <i>Stages of Growth</i> and Schumacher's <i>Small is Beautiful</i> <i>Vanessa Pupavac</i>	47
4 Aid Policy, Civil Society and Ethnic Polarisation <i>Jens Stilhoff Sørensen</i>	78
Part II Asian Alternatives	
5 Challenges or Complements for the West: Is there an 'Asian' Model of Aid Emerging? <i>Marie Söderberg</i>	107
6 China's Aid to Africa: Policy Evolution, Characteristics and Its Role <i>He Wenping</i>	138
7 Chinese and African Views on Chinese Aid and Trade in Africa <i>Johan Lagerkvist</i>	166
8 Chinese Foreign Aid: The Tale of a Silent Enterprise <i>Yahia Mohamed Mahmoud</i>	186

9	China in Africa: Any Impact on Development and Aid? <i>Henning Melber</i>	214
10	Conclusion: The 'Bios' and 'Geo' of Contemporary Development-Security Policy <i>Jens Stilhoff Sørensen</i>	241
	<i>Index</i>	247

Tables

5.1	The top ten recipients of Japanese gross ODA 2005–2006 (US\$ million)	114
5.2	Regional distribution of Japanese ODA (percentage of net disbursement) (compared to DAC total average)	114
5.3	Distribution of Japanese ODA by income group (percentage of total aid)	115
5.4	Japanese aid by major purpose in 2006 (%)	115
5.5	Net disbursement of Korea's ODA (US\$ million)	119
5.6	The top ten recipients of Korea's ODA in 2006 (net disbursement) (US\$ million)	120
5.7	Sectoral distribution of South Korea's bilateral ODA (commitments) (US\$ million)	120
5.8	South Korea's bilateral ODA by income group (net disbursement) (US\$ million)	121
5.9	Characteristics of Asian and DAC development assistance	132
8.1	Chinese aid projects in Africa according to branches in the early 1970s	190
8.2	China's FDI outflows 1979–2002	191
8.3	Chinese enterprises' overseas investments	192
8.4	Chinese projects in Africa by the late 1980s	204

Preface

The fall of the Soviet and socialist development model in 1989/91 meant that there was no longer any alternative to the Western neoliberal model of development. In certain regards *globalisation*, with all its meanings, can be understood as the spread of a single model of development and shaping of state and society. The end of bipolarism obviously had a profound impact on development and aid. Gradually, however, it would appear that an Asian alternative model may be emerging and especially so with China's rapidly growing and expanding economy. The emergence of an *actually existing* alternative accentuates the urgency for critical scrutiny of Western currents in development and aid, on its own terms, together with an investigation into what an *actually existing* alternative could come to constitute. Challenging the Aid Paradigm, would thereby be both to critically engage with problems in Western or mainstream aid, and to explore to which extent there is an actually existing challenging model of aid. Such a simple dichotomy should, however, not be taken too categorically: First, although it is reasonable to claim that there is a single dominant model of aid and development, which is Western as well as mainstream, there are of course variations in policy preferences and programming among various countries and donors. Second, to speak of an emerging alternative Asian model, and pose it as a challenge, is partly to presuppose an issue that is to be investigated. Is there a single Asian model or are there many; and is it a challenge or a complement, or will there be a convergence? All these layers of questions lie beneath the posed dichotomy. The selections made here explore such issues, but the reader should be made aware that the approach is not a directly comparative one; rather the contributions offer a set of critical engagements with *some* major currents and issues in Western development theory and practice, as well as with a possible Asian alternative. On the latter, there is a particular focus on China, and especially on its expanding investment and activity in Africa. One chapter offers a comparative analysis of four major Asian donors, while four chapters explore aspects of Chinese aid including its reception in Africa, one of them juxtaposing it with Western aid. Needless to say, there are other currents worthy of exploration; this volume has nothing on India, which is becoming an important actor in for example Africa. The reader will find nothing on Latin America or the Middle

East; neither on Islamic or confessional-based aid, nor on the other BRIC countries besides China (that is Brazil, Russia, India). Important as these areas are, an engagement with them would have extended the project too far.

This volume has its origins in an idea to bring together a selected group of scholars working on Western as well as Asian aid, from several disciplines, including area specialists, and to explore and engage in dialogue on above-mentioned issues and the challenges facing development and aid in the twenty-first century. A workshop, the first in a series, was organised at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in November 2007 where initial drafts were presented. The editor wishes to thank all participants and especially the contributors to this volume for their engagement and commitment, which made for such fruitful, pleasant and stimulating discussions and collaborations across fields and disciplines. The editor also wishes to thank Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (RJ), the Special Research Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), the School of Global Studies at Gothenburg University, and all participants in subsequent workshops at SIIA. He has gained so much from you all.

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