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# Review

## Book Review of “East vs. West: Exploring International Development”

Authors: Hugh Dang *et al.*

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Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

September 2019, 261 pp.

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**“Don’t look back with regret, look forward with hope”**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The authors of the book have taken up a gigantic task of delving into the developmental patterns and approaches of the East and the West. Assuming the multipolarity of the world, it is the right time to highlight the differences in the need and demand of the developmental activities of the two strategic regions. The title of the book attracts the attention of the reader, but it is not about conflict between the East or West; rather, it is about the lessons to be drawn from the achievements of the East and the West.

The book under review fills the vacuum in the field of developmental economics (but not restricted to it) by dividing the whole world into the eastern part and western part. This division is not quite as common in the postcolonial constructivist world. The book is of great interest to those who are searching for bipolarity in a multipolar world. However, specifically speaking, it is of great worth for those in the area of agribusiness and agribiotech. It is quite difficult for the readers to get a comprehensive book on agribusiness and agribiotech, wherein six countries are exclusively considered as sample countries, namely China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), India, Japan, United States, Brazil, and Argentina.

An overview of the preface, introduction, and contents is giving an impression to the reader that the book is all about international development. However, as we read the book and the subsequent chapters, it becomes clear that the book is not only confined to international development and agribiotech but also touches upon other dimensions affecting or affected by agribiotech. Part I of the book focuses on “Development in Greater China” intentioned to capture China’s development model. The development model is a contentious issue when it comes to the philosophy of the East and the West. The authors argue that China’s development model is interesting, considering the demographic features and large land mass. In addition, as the model is not followed in developed countries of the West, it is sometimes partly accepted, but with skepticism. The question for the world remains as to whether China’s development model can be used by other countries. The section includes extensive discussions for Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, highlighting the symmetries and asymmetries.

Part II of the book concentrates on “Studies on the Eastern Region,” and the reading of the introduction indicates that the intention of authors is to bring to light the biotech challenges in the Eastern region. The authors analyze the sample countries (India, China, and Japan) for the practices and performances in the biotech sectors. The differences in the approaches and policies of biotech issues in all three countries are substantial, though the trajectory of the countries with respect to growth is quite similar. The biotech potential, which is different from the biotech operations, is also discussed in this section. The section meets the objective of authors, and interesting data sets are used to reach to evidence-based conclusions.

Part III of the book titled “Studies on the Western Region” is intentioned to cover the development issues of the West. The authors identify technology and innovation as key indicators of development in the Western region. The biotech contribution of the Western world is significant, and the role of civil society in promoting biotech is also examined by the authors. The sample countries selected are Brazil, the United States, and Argentina. Since 1996, there has been a 100-fold increase in the biotech crops, indicating the importance of the biotech activities in the Western region.

“International Policy and Development” is Part IV of the book that is global in nature and content. International development and integration are considered as the intention of the authors. China’s ascension

to World Trade Organisation (WTO) is taken as an important point of study to understand the development model of China. The authors argue that China's integration with the WTO is a contentious issue with respect to the developing/developed countries. China's home policies are also not in line with WTO in several instances. However, China has made substantial institutional changes in the trade model to fully integrate with the policies of the WTO. The section also includes the emerging development model of China under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which the authors argue is promising for the future of China and the rest of the world.

## 2. STRENGTHS OF THE BOOK

The basic notion deciphered from the title is a comparison or conflict between the East and the West. The authors have well met a gigantic task by selecting countries such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, India, United States, Brazil, and Argentina. The Introduction and opening of the book convince readers about the scholarly ideas and evidences that the authors are going to share in the subsequent chapters. It is well written, the jargons are appropriately used, and to the best possible extent, the writing style is epigrammatic. The division of the book into four parts (excluding the introduction and conclusion) makes it easy for the readers to decide from where they want to start. The parts are written in a manner that independent reading of the parts is also possible.

Readers looking for skimming have an opportunity to do so. The Overview (Chapter 1, Chapter 5, Chapter 9) at the beginning of each part aptly introduces the key ideas, arguments, and issues. Chapter 2 "Agri-Business in Mainland China" highlights the importance of agribusiness as highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations). Due consideration is given to the analytic assessment of township and village enterprises (TVEs) and how China's agribusiness output is an outcome of years of research and policies on TVEs. All the significant events related to China's policy reforms and TVE development from 1978 to 2008 have been deeply studied by the authors.

Chapter 3 "Agribusiness in Hong Kong" discusses the agribusiness and biotech trade potential of Hong Kong. The authors collect relevant agriculture data of Hong Kong and have then identified the trends. The authors clearly highlight the differences in the development model of Hong Kong and Mainland China. There is a bit of a missing link between Chapter 2 and Chapter 3; it would have been better to add a separate section "Comparison Between China and Hong Kong" in the same chapter. "Agribusiness in Taiwan" is the fourth chapter, aiming to discuss the agribusiness and biotech indicators along with other development indicators such as investment. Trade relations of Taiwan and the role of academic research have been important constraints for the authors. The conclusion of the chapter is epigrammatic, and proper generalizations are achieved by the authors.

Chapter 6 titled "Agri-Biotech China: Centralized Governance" is one of the most important chapters of the book. The reason being that China's model of development is captured with respect to agribiotech. The authors discuss the institutional factors and point out that China has already convinced the world that its model of development and growth is dynamic and not static. This chapter concludes with interesting evidence-based conclusions. The public expenditure and governance system has been discussed by the authors, highlighting that its integral role in the development of agribiotech in China is a significant value addition.

Chapter 7 deals with "Agri-Biotech India: Dual Governance", which is the third largest economy in Asia after Japan and China, with respect to agribiotech. Like China, India has a special place for being a developing country, a member of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and G-20, and sharing lots of concerns similar to China. The population size of India is also close to China, but contrast in the development model is clearly distinctive. A comprehensive review of the policies implemented in India is carried out, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the country's policies. One of the huge tasks that the authors have achieved in this chapter is the inclusion of the state-wise regulations pertaining to biotech. This will go a long way to fill the research gap, not even taken up by Indian authors. The missing part in this chapter are the biotech issues put up by India at the WTO round tables. Inclusion of the perceptions of India in biotech, particularly related to intellectual property rights (IPRs) would have been important.

"Agri-Biotech Japan: Polycentral Governance" is discussed in Chapter 8. In the words of the authors, "Japan remains the world's largest per capita importer of foods and feeds, including the use of modern biotech." Considering this fact in the Eastern region, Japan is a key player in agribusiness and biotech. Excluding Japan from the book would have been a blunder. The authors realized that before proceeding with the

book. The unique development model of Japan with a huge workforce in biotech, along with spending on research and development, has been identified by the authors as the strength.

Chapter 10 “Biotech Policy in The United States” captures the issues and policies of biotech in the United States. The subsections of the chapter are very important as they reflect the governance system of a developed country, a country that was the first to implement the genetically modified (GM) crops. Like India’s association with China, Brazil is another important country, sharing its membership in BRICS. The authors have meticulously discussed how Brazil became a leader in biotech. The innovative policies of Brazil with respect to biotech, in the view of authors, need appreciation. There should be a learning curve approach for other nations, in order to apply such innovative policies. The section “Application & Approvals” may have been in brief; instead, the approval ratio should be compared with other countries.

Chapter 11 is more descriptive in nature than analytical as compared to the other chapters of the book. Chapter 12 focusing on Argentina has a special section on intellectual property rights. This is one of the most important constraints in the biotech industry that has global implications. A special attention to the “mirror policy” of GM crops is discussed in this chapter, which is commendable.

Starting from Chapter 13 to the last (section IV) should have been at the beginning. The world scenario should be discussed first so as to have an approach of general to specific, rather from specific to general. This is because of the descriptive nature of the writing.

Chapter 13 captures the growing involvement of China in the world. China’s ascension to the WTO and its impact on policy and practice have been discussed. Here, the authors have discussed about the meaning of “developed” and “developing,” which should have been in the beginning. This chapter has the potential to become a separate section and would have been befitted if it were Chapter 1. The most promising initiative of China in the last decade is that of BRI; the authors have discussed this in Chapter 14. China’s focus to review the age-old silk route and to develop the maritime silk route is the important element in this book. The last chapter on transnational corporations (TNCs) vividly examines the changing role of TNCs in the East and West regions.

### **3. WEAKNESSES OF THE BOOK**

The selection of these countries is not fully convincing. The division of the world into the Western region and Eastern region is geographic, and it would have been outstanding if it had the notions of the global south and north being considered. The book has focused on the agribusiness and agribiotech issues pertaining to European countries and the Eurasian region the least. It would have been a holistic approach to include the European countries. The readers may expect more datasets and figures for The United States, which is a bit missing in the chapter. The authors could have added a separate chapter on IPRs or had it as an appendix to introduce the reader about the critical issues of IPR.

As BRI is argued as a game changer, it should have been analyzed from the point of view of Western countries as well. The images’ size and quality are average, and should have been of high quality. Chapter 15 is titled “Impact of The NAFTA on Canadian Agriculture,” but it appears to be an outlier in the book. Rather, the title and focus should have been on the United States because a chapter on the United States is present in the book. While discussing Brazil, it would be expected to present an overview of the Latin American economic region, which is missing. The issue of leaving out Mexico and Argentina has not been addressed in the book.

The book would have become a more comprehensive one if it had included a section on other emerging economies. Inclusion of southeast Asian countries (though briefly) would have made it exclusively relevant to the Asian region as well. The role of political hegemony and governance should have been added as an annexure. A section on directions for future research is also missing from the chapters. This would have helped the researchers to pick up research gaps. As the book is a compilation of research, future projections or forecasting should have made it a remarkable compilation.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

The book is well written and almost no typing errors are present. It is important for students, researchers, policy-makers, and academicians in the area of global business and economy. The book fills an important

research gap in understanding agribusiness and agribiotech. The arrangement of the sections is appropriate, but it would have been better to put the international development section at the beginning. The datasets used in the book are important for future research, and provide an opportunity for researchers to know the location of such datasets.

Lesson for other regions: the book concludes that the China's model of development needs attention and that other countries may learn from it. On the whole, the book is of light and fruit bearing in nature and content and provides an interesting reading to the reader. Do hope the reader of the book could enjoy its content. Let's conclude this review by indicating that "coming together is the beginning; staying together is progress and working together is the success."

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