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The Developmental Roles of the State: Moving Beyond the Developmental State in Conceptualizing Asian Political Economies

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Abstract

This article examines the role the state has played in the development of a variety of Asian nations through a series of "paired comparisons" to evaluate the model of the developmental state that has become prevalent in the analysis of East Asian political economy. The cases included in the study indicate that neither the state nor the market (as argued by neoclassical economists) can explain developmental outcomes by itself. Too many strong and interventionist states succeeded to gainsay the idea that economic competitiveness can be manipulated. However, the statist faith in strong and autonomous developmental states does not fare very well either. Strong states failed as well as succeeded. In fact, the strongest and most autonomous states may well be in the greatest danger of degeneration because they can resist pressures for change and can use their powers to become a "predator" over society. In addition, quite a few of these mini case studies directly imply that the nature of society is an important variable in deter-mining how well a political economy operates. Thus, the case for "bringing society back in" appears to be a strong one.

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