

creation and dissemination of off-base threat narratives, but does not necessarily outline a way to repudiate these claims. Ultimately, Metelits' book provides an incisive first step towards a more effective, holistic, and nuanced understanding of security in sub-Saharan Africa. PRISM

Notes

¹ AfroBarometer. Online Data Analysis Tool, accessed January 2017, < <http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online>>. Gallup. Confidence in Institutions, 2016, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>>.

² Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, 2000). The book's argument is summarized by the publisher as "theories of international relations, assumed to be universally applicable, have failed to explain the creation of states in Africa. There, the interaction of power and space is dramatically different from what occurred in Europe. In *States and Power in Africa*, Jeffrey Herbst places the African state-building process in a truly comparative perspective. Herbst's bold contention—that the conditions now facing African state-builders existed long before European penetration of the continent—is sure to provoke controversy, for it runs counter to the prevailing assumption that colonialism changed everything."

³ There was concern in some Africanist policy circles that the 2016 elections in Ghana were characterized by an emphasis on 'peaceful,' rather than free and fair. Similarly, the preparations for the 2017 elections in Kenya seem to prioritize preventing electoral violence, rather than ensuring free polls.

⁴ Scott Atran, "Who Becomes A Terrorist Today?" *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 2.5 (2008).

The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World

By Steven Radelet
Simon & Schuster, First Edition
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368 pp., \$18.00
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REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE GARBER

In 1990, with the Cold War having just concluded, I delighted in reviewing analyses written during the previous decade, which confidently assumed that the bipolar world order was a permanent description of the global landscape. 2016 may represent another threshold year. The Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election require re-examination of critical assumptions that gained traction between the end of the Cold War and 2015 regarding the inevitability of economic and political progress in the developing world, including Africa.

Steve Radelet's *The Great Surge: the Ascent of the Developing World*, published at the end of 2015, provides an example of a book that deserves a serious reread in the context of the post-2016 reality. Indeed, 2015 can already be seen as a high point for consequential development diplomacy. Three major conferences demonstrated the international community's appreciation of specific

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development challenges and a determination to tackle these challenges in a collective fashion. In July of that year, world leaders meeting in Ethiopia adopted a global framework for financing international development. Two months later, the United Nations General Assembly approved a set of 17 ambitious global goals under the rubric of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And 2015 culminated with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, where 195 countries adopted the first universal, legally-binding, global climate deal.

Radelet's book, although not directed toward these conferences, reflects the bullish mindset of development professionals at the end of 2015. In a readable style with the inclusion of the occasional personal anecdote, he describes the tremendous progress that was made since 1990 in the developing world. The book builds on and expands his thesis presented in an earlier, well-received monograph—*Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way*, which was published in 2010 by the Center for Global Development—a leading Washington think tank.

Radelet focuses on four dimensions of development progress: poverty; income; health and education; and democracy and governance.¹ With respect to each dimension, the post-Cold War progress has been dramatic. Worldwide extreme poverty began to fall in 1993 and by 2011 had been reduced to fewer than one billion people, or an estimated 17 percent of global population; while China and India account for much of the decline, progress has been evident in vast majority of the 109 developing countries that Radelet uses as the basis for his empirical analysis. Simultaneously, incomes have risen,

and health and education indicators have improved. Significant progress was also achieved with respect to increased personal freedoms and more open political systems, with a concurrent reduction in the incidence of conflict.²

Radelet acknowledges that not all countries are making progress, as some countries remain stuck in conflict, dictatorship, and stagnation. However, by his count, in 2015 this group was “down to around twenty, accounting for less than one-fifth of the developing countries. They are the exception, while most of the countries are now on the move.”³ The book is a powerful argument against the widespread pessimism that has long dominated segments of the policy community who believe the developing world can be ignored or isolated, while more serious discussions about the fate of the globe take place among and about the more developed countries. Recognizing that foreign aid often dominates discussions about international development, he places this policy tool in a proper perspective: “Aid is not the most important driver of development, but it has played an important secondary in the development surge of the past two decades.”⁴

What explains the dramatic progress documented in *The Great Surge*? Radelet summarizes his argument as follows:

[B]eginning in the 1980s and 1990s, many of the ‘unfreedoms’ that had inhibited development began to be removed. The combination of huge geopolitical shifts, changing economic and political systems, deepening globalization, access to new technologies, stronger leadership, and courageous

*action created the conditions, opportunities and drivers necessary for progress. The result was the great surge.*⁵

Radelet emphatically argues that the progress he describes is good for the western world by enhancing global security, increasing global income growth and spreading “shared values of openness, prosperity and freedom.”⁶ However, he acknowledges:

*There are many dark clouds forming on the horizon that could impede further advances. The global economy has not recovered fully from the 2008 financial crisis, and there are growing concerns as to whether the world's leading economies and emerging markets can return to the pace of growth achieved before the crisis. Growth has slowed in both China and India. The global shift toward democracy has stalled, and some countries reversed, raising questions about a more widespread democratic recession. After a decade of unprecedented global peace, conflict is on the rise. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, several skirmishes along China's borders, Syria's implosion into civil war, and terrorist attacks around the world may signal the beginning of a new era of hostilities. Population growth, increased urbanization, greater resource demands and climate change are creating enormous risks and challenges, especially for many low-income countries.*⁷

The data on deaths through conflict exemplify one of the more troubling negative trends. Radelet relies on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program—one of the most accurate and well-used data sources on global armed conflicts—which reports fewer

civil wars and fewer people dying in war between 1990 and 2011. However, data for the period 2013–15, show significant increases in the number of deaths in war for both 2014 and 2015. The numbers are still well below those of the 1980–90 period, but the trend, reinforced by images from places like Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, and elsewhere, is worrisome. Thus, the closing chapters of *The Great Surge* include alternative scenarios, which describe what could happen if the wrong policies are adopted—we can expect either diminished progress as developing countries simply muddle through an uncertain global order, or derailed progress as climate and conflict halt development to the detriment of all.

Reading Radelet's book in the present context raises a number of questions: Will the populist challenges to globalization, free trade, and the cross-border exchange of ideas halt and potentially even reverse the progress described in the *Great Surge*? Is there sufficient institutional resilience to ensure that the global order—represented by the United Nations and other multilateral actors and by adherence to international legal norms that collectively have fostered *The Great Surge*—will remain intact? While the new Administration has yet to articulate policies on democracy promotion and African development, the implications of anticipated changes merit consideration in the context of whether they will further or hinder the progress described by Radelet.

Since the end of the Cold War, norms of democratic governance, the institutionalization of open government principles and the expansion and influence of civil society actors have been promoted by advocates of the liberal global order. However, backsliding in

influential countries like Russia, Turkey, and Venezuela during the past decade has raised questions regarding the universal acceptance of these norms. Equally significant, China is now projecting an alternative model of development, which is increasingly followed by other countries, including several of the most significant examples of development progress in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda. Moreover, the Chinese and other authoritarian governments have demonstrated, at least until now, that they can successfully contain the political import of advances in communications technology while growing their economies and interacting with the global community.

Two initiatives of the Obama Administration highlight the implications of projecting less concern about human rights and political freedoms through diplomacy and assistance programs: Launched in 2011 with eight governments, the Open Government Partnership (OGP)—a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance—has grown to 75 member countries. In December of last year, the OGP meeting culminated with a declaration that seeks to prioritize “efforts on Climate Change and Sustainable Development; Transparency, Integrity and Anti-Corruption, and Digital Commons.” Announced in 2013, President Obama’s Stand with Civil Society Initiative is a global call to action to support, defend, and sustain civil society amid a rising number of countries that adopted laws and practices to restrict the operations of civil societies. The Initiative involved a multi-prong effort to raise the

profile of the concern through bilateral diplomacy and in multilateral fora, and through targeted assistance programs.

In both his earlier monograph and *The Great Surge*, Radelet presented the optimists perspective on development in Africa and attributes the progress achieved to specific policy choices made by African leaders and the international community. Mozambique represents an example of a seeming success story. According to Radelet, beginning in the early 1990s government policies stabilized the economy, privatized state-owned enterprises, lowered import tariffs and improved incentives for farmers.⁸ Donor support helped reduce a crippling debt, rebuild roads, schools and clinics, and improve government operations. While Mozambique remains a poor country, “the turnaround since the end of the war has been remarkable, with much greater progress than most people could have imagined.”⁹

Is this progress now under threat? Even with the economic progress of the past 25 years, agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy, employing 80 percent of the labor force. Climate change represents an obvious danger; the threats posed by extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, and tropical cyclones, would be catastrophic for the country’s rapidly growing population. Recent reports also suggest a rise in civil conflict, which is reviving the sharp divides of the brutal 17-year post-independence civil war, and reflects the persistence of violent conflicts throughout Africa, and their dire consequences for development on the continent.

Clearly, Mozambique’s future will largely be determined by the policy choices made by its local political leaders, but continued

international community attention to the challenges facing the country is essential. Without concerted collaboration as mandated by the Paris Agreement to reduce climate change and mitigate its impacts, Mozambique and other poor countries will lose years of economic progress. Without assistance programs like those launched during the Obama Administration, including Food Security, Global Health, and Power Africa Initiatives, countries like Mozambique will struggle to provide the services that the population has come to expect. And without prodding by diplomats from the United States and other like-minded countries, and a willingness of key international institutions to mediate and, as circumstances warrant, to authorize the placement of on-the-ground monitors or peacekeepers, Mozambique risks falling into a recurring conflict trap, with devastating consequences for the entire region. Thus, new U.S. policies on climate, trade, and democracy, even if not intentionally directed at Africa, are likely to have geometric impacts in a largely negative direction.

Perhaps like many others, I have fallen into the pessimist's trap of assuming the worst for Africa and that Africa's fate is subject to events beyond its control. However, the global order has changed and African leaders can influence international community actions that will impact Africa's future. However, as Radelet emphasizes throughout *The Great Surge*, this will require wise leadership, which develops realistic policies, obtains internal and external consensus regarding them, and proves deft at countering the populist impulses that threaten the progress of the past quarter century. Rekindling the constructive and cooperative

spirit of 2015, rather than accepting the divisiveness and nativism exhibited last year, may provide a useful starting point for ensuring the maintenance of the great surge and the achievement by 2030 of the sustainable development goals articulated by the United Nations. PRISM

Notes

¹ Steven Radelet, *The Great Surge: the Ascent of the Developing World* (Simon and Schuster, 2015), 5.

² Radelet, 5-7.

³ Radelet, 8.

⁴ Radelet, 18-19.

⁵ Radelet, 19.

⁶ Radelet, 21.

⁷ Radelet, 23.

⁸ Radelet, 44.

⁹ Radelet, 45.