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Cheru, Fantu, and Renu Modi, eds. *Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa: The Impact of Chinese, Indian and Brazilian Investments*. New York: Zed Books, 2013. 263pp.

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Cheru, Fantu and Renu Modi, eds. *Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa: The Impact of Chinese, Indian, and Brazilian Investments*. New York: Zed Books, 2013, xiii + 263 pp.

Due to factors like climate change, population growth, and decreasing availability of fertile land and water, there has been a growing competition for land. These adversities have led to increasing debates, media attention, and research surrounding agricultural development, food security, and land use. The roles and actions of emerging powers, like China, India, and Brazil in international development, world economy, and influence in global governance are of particular interest. Thus, the collection of work provided by editors Fantu Cheru and Renu Modi is a needed and welcome addition to the growing research in this field.

Organized into twelve chapters and divided into four parts, Cheru and Modi introduce the work pragmatically, committing to a balanced analysis based on empirical evidence of the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) from Brazil, China, and India in Africa's development. This is partially an attempt to highlight the complexity of FDI, but also to illustrate that the development process is not simply a dichotomy split along the lines of Western Europe and the United States versus agricultural development focusing on small-scale farming and environmentalism. Cheru and Modi also emphasized that the work is an effort to prevent equating FDI with neocolonialism and land grabbing. However, while the emphasis is on FDI generally, the book does broadly examine investment, trade, and development assistance from China, India, and Brazil to Africa. Parts II, III, and IV respectively cover the experiences of India, Brazil, and China with African agriculture. Part II focuses on India's private and public sector involvement with African agriculture. Brazil's experience, including the Dialogue Forum with South Africa (IBSA), is covered in Part III, and focuses on biofuel production. Finally, Part IV focuses on China, highlighting its domestic successes in agricultural development and poverty reduction based on strong government incentives and how this translates into its foreign investments.

Cheru and Modi state that the goal of the book is to examine whether "private and sovereign investments from China, India and Brazil create new opportunities for the transfer of appropriate farm technology, build local capacity and know-how, reverse the persistent productivity decline in agriculture, generate local employment, improve local living standards and ensure food security" (xii). The overview in Part I begins this examination with a discussion of the potential of FDI from India, China, and Brazil and a historical perspective on the role of FDI in Africa's agricultural development. Sam Moyo's chapter provides critical

analysis and historical account of the risks of FDI and its tenuous record in Africa. Ultimately, Cheru and Modi argue that FDI can be a successful vehicle for development, social transformation, and poverty reduction if paired with a “strong and effective development-oriented state” (2).

Cheru and Modi succeed in their commitment to a balanced analysis of FDI from Brazil, China, and India, as there are a variety of perspectives given by the chapter authors, ranging from the avid supporter of FDI, cautious supporter, to the more critical perspective. This is best illustrated in Part II. For the most part, the views closely align with the Indian government and private sector – that India is committed to helping Africa overcome poverty and underdevelopment. To illustrate, Gurjit Singh asserts that “India’s engagement with Africa in the agricultural sector has largely met expectations” and that “Indian companies have been good about meeting their corporate social responsibilities by creating local employment, transferring technology and contributing to domestic and intra-African trade” (73-74). However, contributions from Dessalegn Rahmato and Rick Rowden in Part II critically examine India’s commitment by examining large-scale land acquisitions by Indian companies using a land rights framework. For instance, Rahmato argues that there has been “hardly any technology transfer” to the average Ethiopian farmer, and that these projects are often technologically “not transferable to or affordable for smallholders” (105).

The editors also succeed in highlighting how each of the emerging countries’ own domestic agricultural development experiences relates to their respective engagements in Africa. This is especially evident in the section on China, particularly the chapter by Xiuli Xu and Xiaoyun Li, but can also be found throughout the book in varying degrees. However, this brings to light the paradox of the potential success of such emerging countries’ investments when there may still be significant domestic struggles. For instance, how can India be considered a success in food self-sufficiency when a large part of its own population goes hungry? Or how does one reconcile China’s stance on civil liberties with that of a “strong, effective development state” (8)? Further, this also raises larger issues of transfer of success and whether it’s possible.

Despite Cheru and Modi’s claim to base the book on empirical evidence, Rahmato’s work on Indian investments in Ethiopia is the only piece that does so. However, this is tempered by their success in gathering diverse perspectives on this topic and highlights a broader role and function of narrative, discourse, and social construction in how the role of emerging countries’ involvement in international development is perceived and defined. Thus, with the evidence based largely in narrative form, Cheru and Modi offer the conclusion that “the overall impact of Chinese, Indian and Brazilian investments and technical assistance to African

agriculture has been positive.” However, given the large reliance on narrative, such conclusions fall short of rigorous evaluation.

Ultimately, this book advances the understanding of the subject of FDI investments in Africa by emerging countries. It is particularly helpful as it pulls together diverse accounts from Brazil, India, and China, and provides consideration of each of the emerging countries development trajectories and what it may mean for Africa. Finally, it offers a foundation upon which future work and evidence can build to help explain and understand the role of emerging countries in FDI.

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