



The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World

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The untold story of the global poor today: A distinguished expert and advisor to developing nations reveals how we've reduced poverty, increased incomes, improved health, curbed violence, and spread democracy—and how to ensure the improvements continue.

We live today at a time of great progress for the global poor. Never before have so many people, in so many developing countries, made so much progress. Most people believe the opposite: that with a few exceptions like China and India, the majority of developing countries are hopelessly mired in deep poverty, led by inept dictators, and living with pervasive famine, widespread disease, constant violence, and little hope for change. But a major transformation is underway—and has been for two decades now. Since the early 1990s more than 700 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty, six million fewer children die every year from disease, tens of millions more girls are in school, millions more people have access to clean water, and democracy—often fragile and imperfect—has become the norm in developing countries around the world.

The Great Surge tells the remarkable story of this unprecedented economic, social, and political transformation. It shows how the end of the Cold War, the development of new technologies, globalization, courageous local leadership, and in some cases, good fortune, have combined to dramatically improve the fate of hundreds of millions of people in poor countries around the world. Most importantly, *The Great Surge* reveals how we can fight the changing tides of climate change, resource demand, economic and political mismanagement, and demographic pressures to accelerate the political, economic, and social development that has been helping the poorest of the poor around the world.

The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World Details

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From Reader Review The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World for online ebook

David says

A brilliant analysis of the data concerning developing nations as opposed to the fictionalized headlines from news sites around the world.

If readers are interested in learning how and why over 1 billion people in the developing world have been raised out of extreme poverty this book answers that question.

Highly Recommended

5 out of 5 stars.

Oogii Otgoo says

ohhhhh why so many statistics.

Bob Duke says

Well worth reading. People on the political right and the left seem completely unaware of the successes that have been achieved in African nations. The right seems stuck in the position that Africans are a hopeless lot and nothing can be done for them. The left seems stuck in thinking that Africans are doomed to be perpetual victims and will never be able to compete as equals with the developed world. This book reveals the falsity of both those views.

Andrew says

The Great Surge, by Steven Radelet is a book on the rise of the developing world. Radelet takes a triumphalist approach to developmental economics, and loudly praises the successes of foreign aid, World Bank/IMF restructuring and Green Revolution technology, among other things, as markers of success and growth in the developing world. Radelet's book, however, is not a mouthpiece for the World Bank. He offers critique with his praise, and writes a refreshingly upbeat take on developing nations.

Radelet explores a number of factors about economic growth in the developing world. He considers Green Revolution technology and land distribution as bases for successful development in many nations, including South Korea and Indonesia. This is a theory that I have seen in other books, including "How Asia Works" by Joe Studwell. Progression in combating diseases like Malaria and diarrhea are also praised in the book, with an emphasis on the involvement of US developmental agencies both government and privately run. Foreign aid itself is analyzed in some detail, and Radelet does quite a bit to praise foreign aid and discredit its more ideological criticisms. Democracy and Governance is also a major topic in "The Great Surge" with Radelet

praising countries with even the slightest democratic trends, and playing down the successes of countries like China and Vietnam due to their one-party systems.

I did enjoy Radelet's book, even though it has a clear ideological agenda. It is highly praiseworthy of many US aid programs and pro-democracy groups, and market-led growth and critical of centralized state planning. He heaps praise on companies like Safari-Com and the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, and often discredits the successes of nations like Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan and South Korea, as well as China, for developing in centralized, state led planning techniques. Even so, Radelet checks his own bias, and offers criticisms for many of the programs he praises, albeit in an upbeat way. This book was a fun read, as it doesn't subscribe to the doom and gloom outlook that many books on development often offer.

A few other small criticism relate to his charts and sources. Radelet uses World Bank data hand over fist, and only substitutes those data sets with sources from the likes of Jeffery Sachs, Francis Fukuyama and so on. The poor amount of varied sources is a detriment to this book, which often reads like the World Banks Wikipedia page. His graphs also seem suspect, as they show forecasting trendlines that are highly debatable throughout the text. He does preface this issue at the end of the book, where he offers three "future" scenarios, one where development continues on its current course (ie. market led, US funded etc.) a second where development slows due to backsliding on governance issues in developing nations, and a third where war and economic disaster loom. These forecasts seemed interesting, if a bit black and white.

All in all, I have mixed but overly positive feelings about "The Great Surge." It is an interesting and upbeat read, but is bogged down by ideological rhetoric and suspect sourcing and data. Even so, it is refreshing to read a book that isn't totally negative on foreign development, and Radelet seems to look at the world in a positive light. I would recommend this book for those looking for something refreshing to read about development economics, as this book is basic, easy to read and upbeat. However, it is not a defining text on this subject, and some of the issues in the book can be taken with a grain of salt.

Hadrian says

A generally optimistic book on the state of the world over the last few years. Cites definite improvements, such as the decline in child mortality (and maternal death for that matter), increased access education, communications, treatments for disease, higher-paying jobs, etc., etc. Almost a billion people have clawed their way up from absolute poverty over the last five decades.

The causes of this global upswing are a combination of effective political leadership, democratization, and favorable economic conditions leading to increased trade flows and further market access - from other developing countries. He also takes pains to contrast dictatorship and central planning with democracy and regulated markets, and takes the case of South Africa versus Zimbabwe.

Even with China as the \$11 trillion elephant in the room and a major counter example to the belief that democracy is associated with economic development, but the author can cite the relative improvements over large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

The book ends with a series of 'possible futures' - further improvement is always possible, but so is a recession due to political tensions, regional war, resource shortages, or climate change.

The book is a warning not to be complacent over the good things, but is also an exhortation to protect what

has done so much good.

Michael Tackett says

The author presents the case for optimism regarding the future of the world and developing countries. I think several of his points are sound, and he effectively covers several areas of development that need to continue. I was disappointed that many of the points seemed to be repeated several times. And while he touched on situations where growth may stagnate or fail, he doesn't offer any real prescriptive recommendations other than we shouldn't let this happen. Even in these more dire possibilities, the author seems to dismiss them with reasons this shouldn't happen, which usually seem more like denial than fully developed counter-arguments.

I would be interested in seeing an update from the author after the recent US elections. Many of the points championed by the author to continue growth do not seem like priorities of the Trump administration, including: free trade, focus on climate change, strengthening international organizations, and foreign aid.

Charlie Taylor says

Radelet's book is a useful corrective to the generally pessimistic state of development in the world's poorest countries. He finds that since the end of the Cold War, there has in fact been an impressive amount of progress in economic growth, democratization, health and education investments, and gender equality. However, the book lacks any real nuance and is written in only the most general terms, with aggregate indicators and broad outcomes rather than deep analysis. Too often it relies on broad truisms regarding the need for better policies, and thus it comes across as superficial. I did find the chapter on foreign aid useful as a counterpoint to Easterly, Moyo, and the others who tout the drawbacks and shortcomings of foreign aid. I also agree with his assessment of the need for GMO investment for agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa. Still, I was expecting more. It relies a little too much on an 'all good things go together' perspective rather than a look at the real tradeoffs involved in development policy choices.

Goran says

Interesting core; a good reality check based on solid data. Unfortunately, the book is crying for some more decisive editing, most of it is bone-dry repetition of central facts with little to chew on. It also glosses over some problems, such as the problems of financial integration and the 2008 global crisis. The anecdotes feel forced in to make the book more easily digestible, but end up too small in scale and disconnected from the larger point. Ultimately, my main problem with it is that these 300-ish pages feel as if they could be reduced to a few pages of bullet points.

Rosemary Yin says

An optimistic view of the direction of the world, backed by compelling data. Concludes by appealing to the promise of innovation by drawing on historic examples such as the Green Revolution

Norman Matos says

Dense in terms of the amount of statistics provided, but a good read to understand causes of the increased economic development, and how progress can continue.

Karel Baloun says

While published in 2015, this felt like a decades old book, in style, attitude and format. Almost exclusively the analysis relied on World Bank data, and IEA data on energy. Authors purpose was to celebrate democracy, open markets, and development aid (the "pro-growth" parts of it) on developing nations.

The graphs and charts were grievously simplistic and poorly described. Even with just World Bank data better charts could've replaced tens of pages of text, and told a better story.

Radelet doesn't know China, and a clear majority of poverty reduction over this time due to China, and even more if you include China's impact on Africa.

I'll author claims to of lived in developing countries for over 30 years, none of those personal stories are included in the book, which feels like a poor summary of many popular recent books. Not sure what the distinct purpose of this book was.

The last 20 years have indeed seen great progress in alleviating extreme poverty. Some book needs to be written truly explaining that. Part of these gains are from technology and open trade. Simply, more people are able to participate, in any way, in the global economy.

Even the focus on only extreme poverty is wrong. The greatest gains over the last 20 years have been in a more general empowerment of the growing global middle class.

Christina says

Liked the optimism in the voice of the book on the developing world, but some of the arguments were too simplistic and didn't uphold in the grand scheme of studies of developing countries.

Alasdair Reads says

Great overview book on just how amazing global progress since 1990 has been around the world following the defeat of communism. I little too introductory/slow for me but a great book to give to anyone moaning about the state of the world. Should be read with optimism by all effective altruists.

