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Book Review of *The New Age of Development. The Geopolitical Assertion of Eurasia* by Paul Dobrescu and Flavia Durach, Springer, 2022, 201 pages

The book by Paul Dobrescu and Flavia Durach is a reflection and a meditation on how economic, social, cultural, and technological developments have shaped the world to the way in which it is today. The book is a collection of ideas on contemporary development, some of which have been previously published in various outlets (books and specialized journals) by the two authors together or separately. The volume reviewed here examines the most impactful global developments based on a detailed presentation and analysis of facts and situations. The authors do not intend to offer solutions to challenges and problems faced by countries from the Eurasian continent; however, their declared aim is “to formulate questions and to signal perspectives” (p. ix) that readers might use to build their own interpretation of the development affordances and of the unfolding crises of the contemporary world.

The book is structured in six chapters each tackling a significant aspect of the understanding of development and its impact on global economy and politics. The first chapter focuses on the star of technological development: artificial intelligence (AI). The authors reinforce the idea that AI has the power to transform the world. The “queen of the digital revolution”, artificial intelligence is a “political phenomenon of prime importance with a decisive impact on contemporary development” (p. 1). Paul Dobrescu and Flavia Durach conclude the first chapter of the book with a warning: technology (AI and digital revolution included) is not sensitive to rhetoric and narrative, it is “result-sensitive” (p. 38) and so is development.

The second chapter focuses on the agents of development in today’s world and discusses the increasing dependency of nation states on technological giants such as Microsoft, Apple, Google, Amazon or Facebook. The real promoters of development are those actors (e.g., states, private companies, Big Tech) that have managed to quickly (if not instantaneously) adapt to a technology-driven world changing very fast. The key players (also the winners) of contemporary evolution are those entities that have managed to integrate research into their development strategies, while capitalizing on new technological innovations.

The authors dedicate the third chapter of the book to an in-depth analysis of post-Cold War Western views of development. Drawing on Williamson’s (2010) idea that the financial crisis has played a crucial role in discrediting Western views of development, Paul Dobrescu and

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Flavia Durach identify and describe three major events taking place in the history of 30 years since the end of the Cold War that have eroded trust in the Western vision of development. These three events, which the authors dub as “successive discredits” (p.65) are: the minimization of the role played by the state as “an instrument of development” (p.72); the Great Recession of 2008-2009, and the recent SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, a real test for the West (p. 81). The authors suggest that all these events exposed structural weaknesses of advanced Western societies that were symptomatic of “the slow development disease”.

The fourth chapter looks at development in terms of “circulation and connectivity” (p. 95) and examines the interdependencies created in the globalized world by complex supply chains. The authors remark that the world is dominated by three supply chains: the monetary chain (in which the US dollar has a privileged status), the information chain (governed by Big Tech and the “sovereign private powers”), and the goods and technology chain (where we witness a shift in control from the US to China).

The recent geopolitical transformations taking place in the Eurasian continent are addressed in the fifth chapter of the book. The authors examine the challenges, the conflicts and the tensions that have marked the recent history of Eurasia. They discuss the “Eurasian strategic commotion” (p. 113), which seems to describe the regrouping of the significant powers of this supercontinent (e.g., China, Russia, Germany, Turkey, India or France) into new geopolitical combinations that will have a huge impact on global development.

Finally, in the sixth and last chapter of this volume, the authors discuss the implications that economic, social and political transformations have for Romania, a former socialist country seemingly poorly prepared for the fast pace of contemporary development. This is mainly a result of the lack of an assumed national development strategy, which is paramount to development. The authors bitterly acknowledge that the country has been undergoing a 30-year period of improvisation (p. 154) in which it has witnessed a series of collapses: economic, educational, demographic, institutional, and most important of all, a development collapse (p. 160). As stated from the very beginning, this book does not offer solutions but rather questions and challenges the way in which development is embraced by states and how it affects them and their future. However, in the case of Romania, the authors overtly state that development is crucial not only to the country’s modernization and prosperity but to its survival, pure and simple.

Paul Dobrescu and Flavia Durach’s book *The New Age of Development* provides a comprehensive overview of the particularities and the challenges that development strategies adopted by various global actors have shaped their role in world history and have consolidated their place in the race for global supremacy. The authors suggest that the Eurasian supercontinent may be considered as a geopolitical hotspot that will influence significantly global developments. The book is a useful resource for anyone interested in understanding how current trends in development shape the world we live in.