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China as Exemplar: Justin Lin, New Structural Economics, and the Unorthodox Orthodoxy of the China Model

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Despite vociferous disagreement by scholars and ambivalence by China over a "China Model" of development, China is still held up as an exemplar of development. Nowhere is this clearer than in the theory of New Structural Economics (NSE) promulgated by the former Chief Economist of the World Bank, Justin Lin. We seek to critically engage Lin's theory apropos of China and China's geopolitical and economic interests in Africa. Lin argues that developing countries can learn from China's development experience, and his theory, NSE, fills this experience with theoretical content. China, though often dismissive of a "China Model," gains a soft power advantage from its association with NSE as an exemplar and from Lin's own role in rationalizing China-Africa economic interests in purely analytical and intellectual terms. In Ethiopia, the regime actively heeded Lin's policy advice and implemented development policies in line with his theoretical model. Justin Lin's "China Model" is not an antagonistic model, but part of mainstream economic theorizing. It does not represent a competing counter-hegemonic model. It is complementary to the global capitalist system. This is the unorthodox orthodoxy of Justin Lin's "China Model."

Keywords: China Model, New Structural Economics, Justin Lin, China's Geopolitical Interests in Africa, Ethiopia, China-Africa, Development, World Bank, Washington Consensus, Beijing Consensus, Soft Power.

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China como ejemplo a seguir: Justin Lin, la nueva economía estructural y la ortodoxia heterodoxa del modelo de China

A pesar del enconado desacuerdo entre especialistas y de la ambivalencia de China en relación con su modelo de desarrollo, éste continúa siendo vigente como caso de demostración. En ningún lugar está mas claro que en la teoría de la nueva economía estructural (NSE, por sus siglas en inglés) promulgada por Justin Linn Jefe de Economistas del Banco Mundial de junio 2008 a mayo 2012. En este articulo buscamos entablar un debate crítico de la teoría de Lin a propósito de China y sus intereses geopolíticos y económicos en África. Lin argumenta que las naciones en desarrollo pueden aprender de la experiencia del desarrollo de China. Su teoría, la NSE dota esta experiencia de contenido teórico. Por su parte China, aunque a menudo parece contemplar con desdén a su propio "modelo chino" obtiene ventajas de poder suave tanto por su vinculación con la NSE, a la cual considera como un modelo a seguir, como por el rol mismo de Lin de racionalizar los intereses económicos de la relación de China con África en términos puramente analíticos e intelectuales. En Etiopía el régimen ha tomado en cuenta las políticas recomendadas por Lin y ha implementado políticas de desarrollo alineadas con su modelo teórico. La noción del "modelo chino" de Justin Lin no es un modelo antagónico sino parte integral del quehacer teórico económico dominante. No representa un modelo contra-hegemónico dado que es complementario al sistema capitalista El modelo chino de Justin Lin puede considerarse como una ortodoxia heterodoxa.

Palabras Clave: Modelo Chino de desarrollo, Nueva economía structural, Justin Lin, Banco Mundial, Etiopia, China-África.

以中国为典范：林毅夫、新结构经济学、中国模式正统观念的非正统解读

就"中国模式"的发展而言，尽管学者之间存在激烈争论，中国对其所持态度矛盾，但中国仍被视为一个发展典范。世界银行前首席经济学家林毅夫所宣扬的"新结构经济学"（*NSE*）理论对此的阐述最为清晰。本文中，我们试图批判分析林毅夫理论中对中国和中国在非洲的地缘政治利益及经济利益的描述。林认为发展中国家能从中国的发展经历中汲取经验，他的*NSE*理论将理论内容与中国发展经历相结合。尽管中国经常对"中国模式"不屑一顾，但鉴于*NSE*将其

作为典范，并且林用纯分析术语和智力术语对中非经济利益进行理性解释，因此中国从中获得软实力优势。埃塞俄比亚的政权积极地听取林的政策建议，并落实了与林所提出的理论模式相一致的发展政策。林的“中国模式”概念并非一个充满敌对情绪的模式，而是主流经济理论化的一部分。它并不代表一个竞争性的反霸权模式，而是对全球资本主义体系进行补充。这就是对林毅夫的“中国模式”正统观念的非正统解读。

关键词: 中国模式, 新结构经济学, 林毅夫, 埃塞俄比亚, 中国-非洲, 发展, 世界银行.

Despite earlier attempts to gift the world a vague notion of a “Beijing Consensus” and later a “China Model” of development, scholars and policy makers are nowhere nearer to any consensus on whether a China model exists or what it might look like. The pursuit of such a model can be explained by its earlier moniker as a form of rebuke to the Washington Consensus of market-led development. But however problematic the term may be, this has not stopped scholars from holding up China as an exemplar. Neither has it prevented China from at least tacitly promoting part of its development path as part of its economic diplomacy. This is especially evident in China’s economic engagement with Africa, and in Justin Lin’s theory of New Structural Economics (NSE). While China has been ambivalent about exporting an alternative development model to Africa, it has recognized the soft-power value of being seen as an example to other developing states. Following this lead, Lin’s own NSE not only holds up China as a specific example of how to develop, Lin himself has been deeply engaged in putting his thesis into practice in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia.

In what follows, we intend to critically engage Lin’s NSE thesis. We also wish to explore the value for China in its status, both theoretical and real, as an example of development, which is part of the state’s larger south-south cooperation strategy and deepening ties to Africa. We argue that Justin Lin views China as an exemplar for other states to follow, and that Lin, while serving as Chief Economist of the World Bank, disseminated a version of the “China Model” that elevates it by dint of his position at the Bank and its role as a knowledge producer. Though Lin’s endorsement of a “China Model” is neither straightforward nor clear, it is evident that Lin views China’s development trajectory as suitable for African governments. Indeed, much of his thinking comes in the form of a model, in the form of a neat theoretical framework; that is, NSE.

When Lin occupied the *orthodox* position as Chief Economist of the World Bank, he disseminated an *unorthodox* version of the “China Model” based on NSE. Instead of a statist, interventionist, and developmentalist model of economic development, as the “China Model” is usually known, Lin’s version of the China model is part of mainstream neoclassical economic theorizing. This notion of the China model is not an antagonistic model; instead, it emanates from the commanding heights of the international financial institutions. It does not represent a competing counter-hegemonic model, but is complementary to the global capitalist system. In other words, the "China Model" does not challenge the dominant neoliberal paradigm of global market integration. This is the *unorthodox orthodoxy* of Justin Lin's "China Model."

Tapping into the China Model Debate

The China model debate naturally starts with Joshua Cooper Ramo coining the term "Beijing Consensus" (Ramo 2004). In describing what the Beijing Consensus is, Ramo outlines three "simple" theorems "about how to organize the place of a developing country in the world"—innovation, self-determination, and chaos management—with a focus on quality-of-life, sustainability, and equality. Though partly at odds with China's economic development, where sustainability and equality were sacrificed at the altar of economic growth through low-value added assembly and deep integration in the global capitalist economy, Ramo nonetheless captured the world's imagination of China as an alternative by juxtaposing it with the established Washington Consensus. Apart from not accurately describing China's development model (see Kennedy 2010; Kroeber 2016; Naughton 2010), Ramo fails to take into account that Chinese scholars and policy makers disagree about what economic development should look like and how to achieve it, hence, there is no "Beijing Consensus" (Ferchen 2013).

Barry Naughton (2010) singles out a set of economic conditions unique to China, and of fundamental importance to understand China's economic development. These conditions are the size of the internal market, a labor-abundant economy with the productive potential of a "relatively healthy and well-trained labor force," and an authoritarian political system that actively intervened in the market as it transitioned from communism. Naughton then outlines six specific institutional features that he argues characterize China's specific industrial system.[1] Suisheng Zhao (2010) emphasizes that China has drawn from a wider East Asian development model that consists of three core features: policy pragmatism, a strong and pro-developmental state, and selective learning from other liberal capitalist models. This further connects to Arthur Kroeber (2016) who claims that China's approach to economic development resembles the East Asian developmental state model in that it consists of "land to the tiller" agricultural reform, export-oriented manufacturing, and financial

[1] The six features are the following: (1) public ownership can be reasonably efficient, and the "mixed economy" is a decent model of industrial organization; (2) competition is (still) more important than ownership; (3) public ownership can be used to exploit market power and generate revenues for investment and public goods' creation; (4) a strategy of investment-led growth is essential. Therefore, it is acceptable to invest out ahead of demand, creating capacity that is only gradually utilized; (5) for a growth-oriented polity, the state sector may be used aggressively to create growth (and revenue) opportunities outside the state sector; and (6) managers of publicly owned corporations can be motivated by tying their compensation to their company's performance in maximizing asset value.

repression. Even so, Kroeber highlights two central features of China's approach that makes China different from its East Asian neighbors; namely, heavy reliance on state-owned enterprises and extensive use of foreign direct investment (FDI) in special economic zones (SEZs) (Kroeber 2016, 11-5).

Chen and Naughton (2016) claim that there is no single China model but three China models; or rather, China's model of economic development has gone through three waves of change where the distinct institutional features co-evolve through its interaction with economic and political forces. Without detailing the specific political and economic institutional features of each model that Chen and Naughton (2016, 33) outline, we would like to highlight the following:

> While the economic system has generally evolved toward greater marketization, and the political system towards greater rationality, neither of these developments was linear, nor can either be understood in isolation. Each process is embedded in the other, and the coherence of the process, when it is visible, is visible only when the inter-dependent parts are considered together. Moreover, such coherence can only be realistically understood by separately and explicitly analyzing the CCP as the crucial actor, whose 'moves' shape the responses of all the other actors. It is the CCP's strategy to maintain legitimacy that gives coherent shape both to the political response to economic developments and to the policies that shape economic growth.

This connects to Kroeber's (2016, 16) observation, that:

> [I]n many respects China's economic policies (like those of other countries) have been driven by the need to react to crises or opportunities of the moment; decisions were often taken with incomplete information and no sense of what the long-term consequences might be. So while we may rightly discern, after the fact, some kind of underlying logic or coherence in the trajectory of economic strategy and policy, it would be a serious mistake to believe that this coherence arises from the working out of a grand plan that was conceived ahead of time and executed consistently.

Hence, the intentionality and premeditated coherence of the China model can be questioned. And while Naughton (2010) acknowledges that other states can learn from the institutional features that characterize China's development, he is wary of their universal applicability given that they are closely connected to initial economic conditions unique to China. Even so, China is often understood as "an example to others of what can be done, and an example of other ways of doing things (as well as an alternative economic partner)" (Breslin 2011, 1324). This emphasis on China as an exemplar is integral to notions of Chinese exceptionalism (Alden and Large 2011; Nymalm and Plagemann 2019). This further connects to Justin Lin who views China as an economic exemplar for other states to learn from as they endeavor to develop.

One cannot say that Lin's NSE is essentially a "China Model" of development, which—after all—is a vague term serving to replace the even vaguer and problematic "Beijing Consensus" discussed above. Yet, however problematic, China is held up as a model *of* development within NSE and Lin himself has sought to juxtapose his theory with a more neoliberal reading of the Washington Consensus (Lin 2015b). Further, he has sought to portray this approach as more appropriate for developing states in Africa. There are, however, some reasonable criticisms of Lin's Chinese exemplar. For one, the degree to which China itself has adhered to either NSE or its namesake model is questionable. Both Kennedy (2010) and Jilberto and Hogenboom (2007) argue that China's policies have skewed far more closely to—at least the original understanding of—the Washington Consensus (cf. Kroeber 2016; Naughton 2010). Lin's criticisms of the Washington Consensus are far more focused on the failed "shock therapy" applied in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Russia, leading him to quite understandably challenge it (Lin 2015b). But China spent decades gradually opening itself up to market forces—initially via its much-lauded SEZs—as laid out in the Washington Consensus. As Ikenberry (2008) notes, China has benefited from its participation in the global liberal economic order. China did not, of course, open itself up to global markets or privatize assets wholesale as called for in shock therapy. But, as we shall see, neither does China's economic development conform to Lin's NSE.

The China Model, NSE, and China-Africa Relations

In many ways, NSE is an emperor's new clothing consisting of three core pillars that echo modernization theory while bringing a "structural" flair to the neoclassical approach. At the center of NSE, we find an emphasis on a comparative advantage following approach where labor-intensive light manufacturing is seen as the starting point for structural transformation and development of the economy. The theory rests on a few core assumptions or axioms that development policy should follow. The first of which is a proper assessment of a state's factor endowment, which is endogenously determined and decides its relative comparative advantage. The second is as much a political axiom as an economic one: a rejection of the binaries of developed and developing. Instead, the theory recognizes development as a gradual and continual process that follows changes in comparative advantage as a state grows from an agrarian to an industrial economy. The last core assumption is the classical economic assumption of resource allocation via markets, but here there is also a recognition—albeit an ambiguous one—of the state's facilitating role. This role is primarily limited to coordination of industrial upgrading by providing infrastructure (both "soft" and "hard" infrastructure). The key for Lin is that the state should still let the market determine where resources go and not the state's preferred projects, as in earlier "structuralist" import substitution industrialization policies that he terms comparative advantage defying rather than comparative advantage following (Lin 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Lin and Chang 2009).

Lin's version of the "China Model" is situated within this orthodox theoretical framework. It includes a specific understanding of China's development trajectory and informs policy advice for African governments. The state should "facilitate" economic development by providing investment incentives, such as tax exemptions, and in particular, it should focus on two core aspects where China excelled: provision of infrastructure and construction of SEZs to attract FDIs (Dinh *et al*. 2012; Lin 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Lin and Wang, 2015). For Lin's NSE this is primarily about paying attention to market signals, learning from failed and successful businesses, with a facilitating and information-producing role for the state in line with the optimal industrial structure at each stage of economic development. NSE is, after all, embedded in classical assumptions of market efficiency. But this is not what China did. Neither were the policies it followed, particularly Chinese in origin. We side more with Naughton (2010) and Kroeber (2016) in their understanding of China, leaning closer to developmental state models and *dirigiste* policies pursued by Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, rather than the smaller facilitating state of NSE. Even though NSE's focus on SEZs and FDIs is largely correct in that it formed a crucial part of China's reform and opening policy and economic development (which Kroeber [2016] and Chen and Naughton [2016] highlight), the theory eschews the interventionist role of the state. At times, Lin does appear to acknowledge this broader interventionist role for the state, particularly in providing infrastructure. While an infrastructure-providing state does not necessarily call into question the neoclassical assumptions of NSE, the clearly more restricted role for the state in NSE goes beyond China's experience and departs from the East Asian developmental state model. This points to the ambiguous, contradictory, and underdeveloped place of the state within NSE (for a thorough critique of NSE, see Fine and Van Waeyenberge 2013).

This problematic conceptualization and understanding of the state underlines more than a purely theoretical problem. The state, particularly the African state as sovereign actor, is also central to China's foreign policy discourse of cooperation and partnership and its claims of noninterference is a defining feature of its policies in Africa. Sovereign, equal states are free to make their own decisions, pursuing their own interests as they see fit. But as Mohan and Power (2008) note, the absence of robust, organized, political debate in many African states should be acknowledged as a limiting factor over any real discussion of the appropriateness of development models—Chinese or otherwise. By extension, China's claims of noninterference in the affairs of African states belies the reality and extent of state power in much of Africa (Herbst 2014; Mohan and Power 2008, 25; cf. Mkandawire 2001). If we are to understand China's engagement and the effects that follow, generalized statements, theoretical or political, should give way to an analysis that includes local institutions, practices, and elite configurations (Hodzi 2018) as they actually are rather than their idealization. Yet in a sense, albeit a limited one, this is what NSE attempts to do in pushing for policies that are attentive to a state's particular factor endowment and comparative advantage.

We are left then with a puzzle. NSE does not apply to China's own development; and neither is China itself the origin of much of its own development strategies. Yet Lin holds NSE as a model and promotes it as such—as does China itself as part of its policies in Africa. China has a particular interest, politically, in convincing African states to follow its dictums and, more importantly, to engage with China. Take, for example, the proliferation of SEZs in Africa. China has taken the lead in promoting them and negotiating them as ideal spaces for FDI. SEZs are not new nor particularly Chinese in origin, though China has made significant use of them. But as Brautigam and Xiaoyang (2011, 30) note, "it is clear these zones [are] in part intended to fulfill soft-power political goals, in particular demonstrating the efficacy of some aspects of China's development model." Yet they do also serve the economic needs created by China's rising position in global value chains (Aberg and Becker 2019). If we look at the SEZs alone, a far more complex picture emerges of both China and NSE's theoretical relevance, analytically and as a policy guide.

SEZs are not the sole means of Chinese FDI in Africa but they do have a notable place in Chinese diplomacy and economic activity in Africa—though they remain largely under the management of local governments and Chinese corporations themselves. In Ethiopia, in particular, they reflect not only the influence of NSE with their focus on light manufacturing, but also the more direct role played by Justin Lin himself as he facilitated many meetings between officials and businesses in both countries. While the Ethiopian case certainly hews closely to NSE by focusing on the state's leather trade and cheap labor with a large role for light manufacturing and shoe production, Brautigam, Xiaoyang, and Xia's (2018) broader analysis of Chinese SEZs in Africa complicates our understanding of both Chinese investment and NSE. To the authors' credit, their work also challenges a common view in the West that China is simply out to exploit Africa's mineral wealth. Resource extraction does form a sizeable chunk of Chinese FDI, but Chinese companies are also actively investing in manufacturing, though at far lower levels in practice than on paper. China's investments in African infrastructure, from building roads to improving port facilities, are, however, quite substantial and form a significant part of its foreign policy in the region, a point we return to below. But contrary to the logic of NSE—which was not analyzed in their work—Brautigam, Xiaoyang, and Xia find that China is not shifting large amounts of manufacturing to Africa as its own comparative advantage and factor endowment develop and shift. What the authors' find is a growing number of small and medium-sized companies largely producing for local and regional markets. In effect, they are taking a small slice of China's growing exports to Africa and producing them locally. This is not quite the import substitution Lin decried in earlier "structuralist" theories and policies. But neither is it likely to produce development in line with NSE. Here Ethiopia may stand out again as it hews closely to NSE. Given Lin's direct involvement, this is not too shocking. The large role played by China, however, in developing Ethiopia's infrastructure begins to point us in a different direction if we are to understand both NSE and China's engagement with Africa.

China promotes its engagement with Africa as part of its broader "South-South" cooperation among equals—often noting their shared experience in being exploited at the hands of the developed states of the West (or North in this geopolitical rendering). It promotes its particular path to development as both unique and a means to grow free of the global yoke of the developed world. China has a long history of engagement with Africa, of course. Yet, where in the past this focused on aid and technical support, today it is primarily economic engagement. Cooperation may be the discourse within which this is framed, but China recognizes Africa as a market for its goods and as a source of much-needed raw materials for its own economy. A "South-South" discourse similarly elides China's rapidly changing geopolitical and economic position. While it may behave differently than a traditional, powerful core state, it is not equal in power or interests to alleged peers in the global south (see Lubieniecka 2014). Indeed, if we follow Mohan and Power's (2008) call for local context, China's proclaimed benevolent economic cooperation becomes highly varied upon inspection. Even how China and the Chinese themselves are perceived by Africans reveals a mix of popular ambivalence on one end of the spectrum, and a view of the Chinese as little different than the Western corporations on the other end (see Hanusch 2012; Harneit-Sievers, Marks, and Naidu 2010). As Lee's (2009) field work in Tanzania and Zambia demonstrates, Chinese corporations are in Africa in search of profit just like anyone else and, much like the exploitative Western states they dismiss, this profit is sought in the low wages and flexible labor practices they can use in Africa (Hardy and Hauge 2019; Mitta 2019). And while local sociopolitical conditions explain the uneven benefits (and costs) of Chinese investments for both African labor and businesses, the day-to-day language of many Chinese in Africa recalls the racist caricatures of the (white) colonial past too (Lee 2009).

It is clear that to understand the varying impact (even drivers) of China's presence in Africa requires being aware of the structures and processes across scales—from the hyper local to the global—within which all action occurs. That is, our analysis should recognize agents as embedded in context, webs of socio-material, cultural, political, and economic processes and institutions (Aberg and Becker 2019). This is not only important for understanding Chinese FDI, but so too NSE and even Lin himself as the (now former) chief economist of the World Bank—a position that greatly aided his efforts to develop and promote both NSE and China. In an earlier article, Mohan (1994) argued that to understand the global economy we should also understand the nexus of flows of capital and the intellectual rationale that shapes policies and institutions in a near recursive, nonlinear manner. In a similar vein, Fine and Van Waeyenberge (2013) argue that it is impossible to remove NSE from the broader ideology and practices of the World Bank and Lin's position within it. Much like Broad (2006) and Gilbert, Powell, and Vines (2000), who argue that the Bank is increasingly becoming less a source of financial resources than a source of knowledge production whose purpose is "paradigm maintenance," Lin's NSE contributes to an intellectual maintenance of the *status quo* or, at a minimum, to maintaining its position in defining orthodox economic paradigms. As the Bank's first chief economist from the developing world (albeit a Chicago trained one), Lin and NSE functionally coop challenges to its orthodoxy without truly challenging it. NSE is, after all, essentially wedded to classical market assumptions. But where the above scholars have looked inward at the Bank and its production of knowledge, we find value in also looking to Lin's activities and networks radiating *outward* from the Bank. That is, much of Lin's impact was not within the Bank itself, yet his activities were premised upon his Bank role.

As Fine and Van Waeyenberge (2013) dryly note, Lin never really succeeded in changing the Bank's policies and practices in line with his NSE. But from his position, and through networks of Chinese businesses and bureaucrats, Lin was able to put NSE into practice performatively (Aberg and Becker 2019). One does not have to accept the performativity thesis, however, to recognize the prestige of Lin's position and his plausible claim to intellectual authority in promoting both his theory and his Ethiopian test case. This alone can shift government policies in line with his theory. But Lin's success should also be seen socially via the networks of individuals and institutions through which policy knowledge and material resources were organized and flowed. From this perspective, Ethiopia proved less a test bed for NSE than as a site to organize inflows of capital, infrastructure development, and push policy reforms that produced the proliferating SEZs and the growth of light manufacturing there. Lin and NSE facilitated Chinese diplomatic engagement, helped secure infrastructure loans, and brought Chinese businesses together with Ethiopian government officials to coordinate the development and management of the SEZs. Even if we find no fault in the ostensible success of these projects, we cannot recognize any fundamental veracity of NSE in that success. A constellation of actors, including the governments of China and Ethiopia, were socially organized to produce the present outcome. What Lin's NSE theory did was to provide the intellectual substance for China's soft-power goal of promoting itself as an exemplar of development and to further its geopolitical goals of leadership in the Global South.

This does not imply a revolutionary challenge to international economic institutions. Rather, it exemplifies China's repositioning within them (Åberg 2016; Babones, Åberg, and Hodzi 2020; Bond 2016). Lin's version of the China model is very much part of mainstream neoclassical economic theorizing and has, to a large degree, emanated from the commanding heights of the international financial institutions. This is the *unorthodox orthodoxy* of Justin Lin's "China

Model." What follows is a brief overview of how Lin's NSE-based China model has been used in Ethiopia.

Justin Lin, NSE, and the "China Model" in Ethiopia

First of all, it is important to bear in mind that Justin Lin's connection to the "China Model" is ambiguous and contradictory. On the one hand, in both his theorizing and his public statements, Lin has sought to distance his work from the "oversimplified" notions of "Beijing Consensus" and the "China Model" (Osnos 2010). Lin has gone so far as to disavow China's status as a model for others arguing that states should carve their own developmental paths. In the prologue of *The Quest for Prosperity*, Lin urges policy makers to keep in mind Deng Xiaoping's advice to former Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings: "Please don't try to copy our model" (Lin 2012b, xxvii). This spirit of self-reliance and rejection of external models was also part of a recent set of debates initiated during China's 40th anniversary of reform and opening when Lin stated that, in "a hostile environment, it's better [for African governments] to follow [their] own economic development policies" (quoted in Mitchell and Yang 2018). Besides, Barry Naughton (2010, 439) has trenchantly argued that Lin's position is characteristic of a school of thought that, while emphasizing "flexibility and pragmatism," avoids discussion of the "fundamental features" of the economic model and "has little or no content."

On the other hand, while Lin's NSE is certainly distinct from a developmentalist "China Model," there is no doubt that Lin has sought to portray China as an example and NSE as an "approach" or a "roadmap" for other states to follow (Lin 2012b, x-xxvii). Chinese state media is also referring to China's economic development in terms of a "model," portraying it as an "alternative" that is "more relevant" for developing countries than Western models, citing Lin as the theoretical authority supporting this view (Xinhua 2018a). The question of whether China explicitly supports an alternative model to be intentionally exported was further reinvigorated after the 19th party congress when Xi Jinping stated that China "offers a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence; and it offers Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind" (Xi 2017). Even if Chinese officials still may overtly downplay China as an alternative economic role model, it receives considerable soft-power benefits when African leaders publicly state what China itself prefers to imply (China Daily 2013). Furthermore, the connection between Lin's NSE and China is not merely one of exemplar status, neither is it always clearly articulated, but Lin's actions and his theory provides a quasi-intellectual support for China's interests in the region. It provides an intellectual framework within which China's economic interests appear natural, logical, and mutually beneficial.

Bearing in mind this ambiguity, it is clear that Lin views Western policies and experiences as unsuitable for Africa while "almost all low-income countries [can] grow as dynamically as China and other East Asian countries have in the past decades" with one important caveat: if they adopt NSE policies (Lin 2012b, xv). Putting aside the very questionable ahistorical assumption in such claims, in Lin's view, such policies are not like the *dirigiste* policies of the East Asian developmental state. Indeed, as noted above, NSE's understanding of the state is woefully underdeveloped and contradictory (Fine and Van Waeyenberge 2013). But NSE does provide a plausible intellectual framework for developing economic policies that allows states to seize the opportunities provided by China's upward global value chain mobility and strike deals with both China and Chinese companies. NSE promotes economic policy that is clearly outward looking and export oriented as it focuses on developing the state for the needs of the global economy. But it does also elevate China's own status as an implicit and explicit model while providing a form of soft power for China. Nowhere is this more evident than in Ethiopia where we find an empirical nexus between the interests of China and Ethiopia, and NSE and Lin himself.

Ethiopian leaders have long voiced their desire to follow and learn from the wider East Asian and Chinese development experience. Indeed, former Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's master's thesis speaks approvingly of "South Korea and Taiwan [as] Meles' favourite examples of developmental states that succeeded by subverting neo-liberal dogma," while "China's rise provided something else: by challenging American dominance it made space for alternatives" (de Waal 2013, 152). Ethiopia then proved to be a welcoming place for Lin to disseminate his NSE derived policies and he became a close advisor to the late Zenawi as well as subsequent Ethiopian leaders. Following Zenawi's lead, Ethiopian leaders have stepped up Chinese-Ethiopian cooperation and praise for China's development. Ethiopian leaders have made no secret of their admiration for China, speaking favorably of the country on numerous occasions in Africa and China. For instance, in 2013, during the fifth BRICS Summit in South Africa where several African leaders were invited to the BRICS Leaders-Africa Dialogue Forum, former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn expressed that China is a "role model for development" and that he wished to "expand bilateral cooperation so as to improve the country's infrastructure and promote its socioeconomic development" (paraphrased in China Daily 2013). In January 2014, when Hailemariam met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, he said that "Ethiopia admires China's development" and that China "has set an example for Ethiopia" (paraphrased in MOFA 2014). Current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, when meeting Xi Jinping during the second Belt and Road forum in 2019, expressed that "China is the most reliable friend and the most cherished partner of Ethiopia" (paraphrased in Xinhua 2019).

These are but a few of the statements emanating from the highest political leadership in Ethiopia displaying the strong admiration of China and its economic development. Such praise is no doubt useful for China as Ethiopia is itself influential in African affairs and its booming economy is a testament to not only furthering cooperation with China, but also to the utility of Lin's NSE as well. Whatever the merits and demerits of the theory, Lin's efforts have overtly inserted himself and his theory in the developmental policies of Ethiopia and elevated China's status politically as an exemplar for other states.

As the intellectual impresario of NSE, Lin is not just providing the blueprint for structural transformation in Ethiopia, he is engaging in performances to enable its very materialization. Lin is commissioning reports, engaging in research, and editing books that apply NSE and that focus on the lessons Ethiopia and other African states can learn from China (see, for instance, Dinh *et al*. 2012; Lin 2012b; Oqubay and Lin 2019); he is leading visiting Chinese business delegations and guiding potential investors according to the coordinates of NSEs intellectual mapping (NSD News 2014); he is functioning as gatekeeper in contact with various African and Chinese political elites, to whom he is serving as advisor; he is engaging a vanguard of like-minded and centrally positioned Chinese directors within the multilateral development architecture, having direct connections to channels of development finance—both multilateral and Chinese—with the stated aim to "bring the manufacturing industry to the African continent" (Li 2014, 4). Lin is relentlessly performing the role of a global advocate for Africa's development. In an opinion piece on Project Syndicate, Lin outlines his bold vision to a global audience. He draws NSE on a large canvas with broad strokes of world history before he lands in the present age of economic development and uses Ethiopia as the illustrative example of contemporary progress. He finishes by revealing his bold dream: "My hope is that I can witness a third economic transformation in my lifetime, this time in Ethiopia and other countries in Africa. If they stay on the tried and tested path of those who have gone before, there is every chance that I will" (Lin 2015a).

As a result, the Ethiopian elite is now looking to China through the perspective of NSE focusing on building infrastructure and SEZs for the purpose of attracting FDI in light manufacturing. In 2010, Ethiopia launched its first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I), and, in 2015, the second plan (GTP II) was set in motion. Ethiopia aims to become a low-middle-income country by 2025, and the government envisions the establishment of around 20 SEZs throughout the country. Investments in infrastructure and SEZs are now central to Ethiopia's industrialization drive, and the main text of GTP II states that industrial parks are "necessary" to reach "Ethiopia's goal of becoming Africa's light manufacturing hub" (Ethiopian National Planning Commission 2016, 143). China and Lin are imperative to this process. While visiting the Chinese built Eastern Industry Zone, former President Mulatu Teshome stated that "Chinese investment plays an indispensable role in [Ethiopia's] industrialization drive" (paraphrased in Xinhua 2018b), and when visiting the country in 2014, Lin was awarded a commemorative silver plate for his contribution to the development of the Ethiopian economy (NSD News 2014).

A crucial component of NSE is investments in infrastructure, both "hard" and "soft" infrastructure. Ethiopia is now undertaking major investments in hard infrastructure, constructing everything from highways, electricity grids, airports, telecommunication systems, railways, dams, etc., with the goal of laying the tangible foundation for growth and development. NSE's concept of soft infrastructure includes institutions, social and economic arrangements, human capital, and value systems (Lin 2012a, 22), and here Ethiopia seems to be learning from China as well. One example is the Chinese model of labor management and work ethic. As Zhang Huarong, Chairman of Huajian Group and Vice Chairman of the China-Africa Business Council, puts it, "training [Ethiopian workers] in *the Chinese way* is in the public interest" (CGTN Africa 2016, emphasis added).

According to Lin, it was by adopting an approach that focuses on infrastructure and SEZs, as outlined by NSE, that China "became the world's factory"—a success story that Ethiopia now strives to replicate (Lin 2012b, xiv). As chief economist of the World Bank, Lin commissioned the *Light Manufacturing in Africa* study, which was the first research project from the Bank based on NSE and it used Ethiopia as a case study (Dinh *et al*. 2012). The study was officially released in Ethiopia and Lin stated that it was "central" to his legacy as chief economist and that it should be used as a "guide" for the transformation of Ethiopia's industrial structure (World Bank 2012). According to Lin, Meles Zenawi was informed by "China's approach to industrialization" and by the "findings" in the *Light Manufacturing in Africa* report when he traveled to Shenzhen in August 2011 to invite Chinese shoe manufacturers to invest in Ethiopia (Lin 2012b, xiv). Furthermore, Lin has developed the Growth Identification and Facilitation Framework (GIFF) as the methodology for the Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development program of UNIDO. Lin explicitly bases GIFF on NSE and its viability is tellingly demonstrated by the "excellent example" of Ethiopia, which served as one of the first three pilot countries in UNIDO's Programme for Country Partnership (UNIDO 2014, 11, 13).

In all, it is fair to say that Ethiopia is seen as a place where the NSE framework yields positive results and where China's economic development is providing valuable lessons for take-off. Much is certainly left to explore on the receiving end; namely, the specifics of how the Ethiopian government deploys NSE strategically and localizes it, which serve as crucial avenues for future research. And though we would emphasize the performative, networked, and social dimensions of how a constellation of actors are organized to produce the present outcome in Ethiopia without recognizing any veracity of NSE (Aberg and Becker 2019), it is clear that Ethiopia represents a case where China is seen as a model of economic development. Lin's "China Model"—that is, China's "approach" to economic development as understood by Lin from the perspective of NSE—is purportedly emulated by Ethiopia with great success.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have sought to unpack the sinewy ways in which China retains a prominent if under-theorized role in NSE. Much of this under-theorization stems from a failure within NSE to account for the role required of the state. However, as a matter of practice, as Lin's advisory role demonstrates, NSE provides a crucial means to harmonize African and Chinese politico-economic interests within an academic framework at one step removed from any one state's interests. Yet the soft power advantage to China is unambiguous. While rarely stated outright, and at times confusingly contradicted across different works, China remains an exemplar of development within NSE. Lin's version of the China model is part of neoclassical economic theorizing and does not represent a counter-hegemonic theoretical model. Instead, it provides an intellectual framework that urges developing countries to integrate into the global capitalist system by following China's example. As demonstrated, Ethiopia is the clearest example of a state where the elite now looks toward China through the perspective of NSE in a bid to become enmeshed in global production networks and redraw the map for capital accumulation and growth. This is the *unorthodox orthodoxy* of Justin Lin's "China Model."

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