

Chinese Developmental State model: Alternative Strategy for Africa's Development

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Introduction

European powers did not establish colonial states to carry out a programme of political development or change but to erect efficient and effective administrative states for purposes of economic exploitation and this largely explains many of the problems faced by African nations after independence. Consequently, their reluctance or willingness to grant Africa independence never helped much to solve the prevailing problems and contradictions inherent in the colonial administration. This is succulently captured in the words of Offiong when he opines that:

Withdrawing in deep water, colonial powers left behind them far greater problems than any they had ever proposed to solve. This is not to suggest of course, that they would have done better to withdraw later, since there was never any sign that they would allow the real problems to be tackled on a realistic basis¹.

This preempted conclusion is borne out by the fact that the main solutions they "proposed" and also "promoted" are in themselves a large part of the troubles, difficulties and problems faced by Africans today².

And it is here in no small part, that the seat of the African development strategy problems over time has lain. Although generalization is always unfair, most development strategies advocated for African states by the capitalist industrialized nations have largely crumbled under the strain of several national and international militating factors, many of which are well known to us already.

Indeed, a number of scholars have invested time and resources into identification and a description of the continuities and breaks between colonialism and development tangentially or indirectly. Some of these efforts attribute current impediments to development in Africa, and in the South at large, to the colonial experience. Cooke, for example, asserts that "contemporary development owes to colonial administration, specifically to indirect rule, its recently adopted set of participatory method that promotes ownership of development intervention"³. Cooke, further argues that achieving "empowerment" through participation was subject to the colonial sovereign power and the seeming autonomy it granted was a way of reproducing that power⁴.

Also, Kothari explores how the professionalization of international development facilitates the expansion of a neo-liberal agenda in development agencies and how “alternative” approaches are coopted into this agenda. In relation to this, she draws attention to development “experts” and their role in the reproduction of systems of expertise and forms of authority⁵.

Her research on former UK Officers who worked in the post-colonial development industry is then drawn upon to illustrate the continuities and divergence of colonialism to the current discourse of development in Africa and the South at large. The colonialism/development interface suggests the existence of many more legacies, continuities overlap, shared rationale, and common practices than that is readily recognized or acknowledged.

As demonstrated by the above literature, it challenges us to adopt strategy that demands a “re-thinking” of development in a way that is much bolder than has been the case to date. Such a re-thinking requires that we deal with the underlying assumptions of development, its theories, concerns and processes. Re-thinking also takes us into the terrain of orientation and alternative to development in Africa, or the South in general. If years and voluminous documentations of critical development reflections have not displaced the hegemonic role of the Bretton Wood institutions and their development models, it is partly because much of development scholarship and policy continue on the assumption that the South (in our case Africa) will get to where the North (i.e. industrialized nations) is by following what the North does (or did). Also, such radical re-thinking as has happened has, for variety of reasons, largely remained marginal, producing alternatives that never quite make it into actual development policies and practices as expected.

Thus, taking the colonialism/development analogy further some few fundamental questions need to be asked. What can re-colonization and the after in Africa teach us about an after development that is dominated or determined by the supposed wealth and knowledge of Northern experience. How do we remedy the structural impediments to development in Africa and indeed the South at large. How do we extricate ourselves from the clutches of International Monetary Fund and World Bank development models and commit ourselves to the wealth of development re-thinking that is available to us? Or is it really available to us as possible practices.

What are the impediments to translating these alternatives into actual development strategic plans and policies? How could mainstream development theory and practice remain unaffected by critiques from inside and outside? The same question, must be asked of development alternatives, whether these are directed towards other ways of thinking about development or doing away entirely with the concept of development? What prevents the adoption or practice of these alternatives? It is these questions, among others, that have motivated this paper on Chinese Developmental State Model: Alternative Strategy for Africa’s Development. The main focus therefore is to evaluate the critical perspectives that have been deployed over the years against the development mainstream. In other words, the paper aims to re-think critical development thinking and inquires into the **how** and **why** of its marginal or peripheral location *visa vis* a development mainstream rooted in the neo-liberal and neo-classical economic assumptions.

However, for the purpose of clarity of analysis, the paper is structured into five main segments namely; introduction, conceptual clarifications, an overview of Africa's development attempts and articulation for adoption of Chinese Developmental State Model as alternative strategy for African development in the 21st century and then a conclusion is drawn.

Conceptual Clarifications

I. Development Towards an understanding

Some concepts have been considered important for clarifications in this paper mainly to further increase our understanding of the subject matter. These are concepts of development and the developmental state. As a widely discussed concept, the term development has many interpretations.

The technocrat focuses on policies, instruments and projects; the politician regards it as freedom from colonial rule, democratization and radically effecting dramatic changes; the economist interprets it as economic growth, rapid and sustained rise in real output per head, and the resultant shift in the technological, economic and demographic characteristics, particularly in developing nations; the sociologist sees it as a process of differentiation that characterizes modern societies while a political scientist focuses on problem of nation building as modernization occurs⁶. The concept of development therefore addresses issues such as economic growth, structural and technological advancement and socio-political change. In most instances, the term development is given the notion that some nations are extremely poor while others are prosperous economically. In this sense, development is only referred to as economic growth or growth in national income per capita. It has been argued that even in economic terms, economic development is much more than economic growth.

According to Kuznets, (1966)⁷ economic development refers to growth accompanied by quantitative changes in the structure of production and employment leading to structural changes. In effect, economic growth can take place without economic development. For instance, some oil-producing countries such as Nigeria with sharp increases in national income have not improved significantly in their economic structure or technological advancement or quality of life of the citizenry. Seers (1976)⁸ states that the term economic development should include the following namely;

- (i) Economic growth and changes in economic structure;
- (ii) A decrease in poverty and malnutrition;
- (iii) Decline in income inequality; and
- (iv) Improvement of the employment situation.

Sen (1999)⁹ also states that focusing on economic dimensions alone is not enough and that a country can even grow rapidly economically but yet not develop because they can still do so badly in terms of literacy, health, life expectancy and nutrition. For instance, it is seen that in Srilanka or the Indian State of Kerala, economic growth was not very rapid but welfare facilities and level of education were improving, while a country like Brazil had rapid economic growth but this has not affected poverty levels.

However, it is generally agreed that, particularly in poor nations, such as Africa, growth is a prerequisite to development which is viewed in economic terms as changes in family structures, attitude and mentalities, cultures, demographic development, political changes, nation building, the transformation of rural societies and processes of urbanization¹⁰.

Even arguing in a broader sense, Sen (1999)¹¹ opines that the concept of development should be viewed as an integrated process of the expansion of substantive freedoms, in this sense, economic growth, technological advancement and political change should all be judged by their contributions to expansion of human freedoms such as freedom from poverty, famine, malnutrition, premature mortality and access to health. All freedoms are strongly interconnected and they reinforce each other. Furthermore, Myrdal has acknowledged that discussions in development are to be concentrated on a series of modernization ideas. Even though opinions differ on how these ideas should be pursued, the broad concept of development involves changes in the entire society towards modernization ideas. The modernization ideas compiled by Myrdal (1968) are still very relevant and these include:

- (i) Rationality – in policy applications of technological knowledge in structural and social relations and in thinking objectives and means.
- (ii) Planning for searching for a coherent system of policy measures in order to change undesirable situations.
- (iii) Increase in production per capita and production per worker through industrialization and increased capital production.
- (iv) Improvements in the standards of living.
- (v) Decline in social and economic inequality.
- (vi) More efficient institutions and attitudes that is conducive to assure an increase in productivity and development in general. For instance, institutions that allow for mobility, initiative, entrepreneurship, effective competition and equal opportunities; attitudes like efficiency, diligence, functionality, economy, honesty, rationality, openness to change, solidarity and future orientedness.
- (vii) Consolidation of the state and national integration.

- (viii) National independence and political democratization.
- (ix) Increase in social discipline.¹²

From the above conceptualization of development, it is clear that a single unanimous definition of development appears very difficult because of the differences in opinions, including the very goal of freedom which may not be the ultimate goal of various religious perspectives but using the concept of freedom as a yardstick for measuring development is insightful. In summary;

- (i) Development is unavoidably a normative concept involving basic choices thus, our assumptions should be made explicit at this level.
- (ii) Although there are wide variations in practice, most authors come up with a set of similar development goals including reduction of poverty, increase economic welfare, improved health and education, and increased political and social freedoms.
- (iii) An increase in both productivity and production per head in poor countries.
- (iv) Finally, the fact that there are modernization ideas and development goals does not mean that all societies ought to develop in the same manner or that they converge to some common standard.

By and large, it is uncontested that the aspirations of developing countries is to attain modernization, material advancement industrialization, scientific and technological progress, the emergence of nuclear energy, electronic and biological revolution, new knowledge about man and the universe and horizontal mobility, employment opportunities, the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles, good health and the like. These aspirations definitely cover the area of national economic growth, modernization and substantial freedoms that the nation and the people desire.

II. The Developmental State: A definitional approach

Another concept that demands attention in this paper is the developmental state. There is of course a major problem in defining Developmental state". Most definitions of the developmental state" are often drawn deductively from the performance of the economy equating economic success to state strength¹³. In Africa, there have been many examples of states whose performance until the mid – 1970s would have qualified them as developmental states" in the sense conveyed by current definitions, but which now seem anti-developmental because the hard times and especially political turmoil's brought the economic expansion of these countries to a halt, for example Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana. Recognition of episodes and possibilities of failures have led to a definition of a developmental state as one whose ideological underpinning are developmental and one that seriously attempts to deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development¹⁴.

The four major components of a developmental state as advanced by Chalmers Johnson in his 1982 book entitled *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*¹⁵ include: the presence of a small but professional and efficient state bureaucracy; a political milieu where this bureaucracy has enough space to operate and take policy initiatives, independent of overly intrusive interventions by vested interests; the crafting of methods of state intervention in the economy without sabotaging the market principle (that is, the concept of market – conforming); a pilot organization such as Johnson found in (MITI). The notion of what market – conforming means is not simply where a government makes sure there is enough investment in people, fosters a competitive climate for the private sector or maintains an open economy.

Rather, Johnson saw the market as a device that could be utilized for advancing a developmental agenda whereby the state involved itself in "setting... substantive social and economic goals¹⁶. Thus, as Oni writes, "it is the synergy between the state and the market which provides the basis for outstanding development experience¹⁷. In other words, striking a balance between state influence and the relative flexibility for a fairly free but guided market. This understanding undoubtedly undermines those who see the state as being in opposition to the market but rather points in the direction of the successful developmental state.

Industrial policy is not an alternative to the market but is what the state does when it intentionally alters incentive to the markets in order to influence the behaviour of civilian producers, consumers and investors alike. Altering incentives, reducing risks and encouraging entrepreneurial visions and resolving conflicts are some of the functions of the developmental state¹⁸. More characteristics of a developmental State are also given by Leftwich,¹⁹ and these include:

- (i) Determined developmental elite;
- (ii) Relative autonomy
- (iii) Powerful competent and insulated bureaucracy
- (iv) A weak and subordinated civil society
- (v) The effective management of non-state economic interests; and
- (vi) Legitimacy and performance.

In our view, promoting a developmental state with characteristics as advanced by scholars from the foregoing conceptualization is very crucial for Africa's progress in this 21st century hence our advocacy for its adoption as it promises a much better future than the neo-liberal market strategy.

For Africa, the various international financial institutions have argued that African states lack the capacity to pursue policies similar to the developmental states of East Asia and the West, whilst being far too susceptible to vested interests in the political realm known as the 'impossibility thesis. As earlier stated, African countries can now borrow some of the experiences of the Chinese and/or the larger East Asian Model and contextualize these to Africa's realities.

Against this backdrop articulating the lessons of East Asian state model for Africa's development will be quite imperative. But before this is discussed, it is pertinent to have an over view of several attempts by African States at development.

An Overview of Africa's Previous Development Strategies

Since the end of colonialism in the 1950s and early 1960s, many African states have been grappling with the problems of socio-economic and even political development. One would have thought that the enthusiasm that greeted the acquisition of political independence would have equally spurred rapid economic and socio-political development.

But despite the initiation of several strategies and resolutions, these problems have remained endemic. Indeed, Africa remains the poorest of the world's various regions despite its enormous natural resources endowment. The continent, however, has a virile population and a huge potential for rapid development. To realize this, various reform measures have been undertaken in recent years by various countries in the region. However, the experience so far suggests that a change from its predominantly neo-colonial perspective of development would be a necessary step for the transformation of the region. Africa has been unable to break out of the circle of poverty and is certainly at present engulfed in a development crisis.

Many African countries particularly those of the sub-Saharan region are facing the stark reality of collapsing economies, deepening poverty, growing hunger, pervasive management and rising political and social tensions which are reflected in the tragic suffering, hardship and impoverishment of the vast majority of their people. Few African countries however, are presently among the fastest growing economies in the world – Botswana, Lesotho and Gabon and recently Ghana²⁰.

The explanations for this performance and the strategies to counter it vary from country to country although a consensus is beginning to emerge on the need for collective and common action to encourage sustainable development in the region. While countries in the various regions could be said to be at different stages of development, with different socio-cultural structures, the pattern of development, in the three regions is increasingly being determined by similar factors. Regional collective African effort at regional development is reflected in various international organizations and their outcomes, particularly since the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of Organization of African Unity member states (now African Union), and this passed a resolution on the Development Strategy for Africa for the Third United Nations Development Decade²¹.

The Sixth Ordinary Session of the defunct Assembly of OAU (now AU) Heads of States and Governments held in Monrovia 1979 adopted the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa and the associated Monrovia Declaration on Commitment on guidelines and measures used for National and Collective Self-Reliance in Social and Economic Development for the Establishment of a new International Economic Order.

The Second Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the defunct OAU (now AU) (Lagos, 1980) adopted the Plan of Action (generally known as the Lagos Plan of Action) and the Final Act of Lagos for the achievement of an African Common Market by the year 2000²².

It is crucial to stress here that the Lagos Plan of Action remains a reference point of the various efforts at articulating a development strategy for Africa. The reason for this is not farfetched. Firstly, the Plan contains a blueprint for transforming the African economy, Secondly, the Plan contains the basic perceptions and ideas of African development from which member-countries were expected to articulate their individual national policies. Thirdly, this plan contains valid analysis, and the right prescriptions for African countries but up to this day most countries have ignored it. Fourthly, Lagos Plan of Action advocates the establishment of an African Economic Community by the year 2000. Fifthly, the Lagos Plan of Action also represents a formal awareness of the crisis which transferred growth is going through. Sixthly, the Lagos Plan of Action advocates the philosophy of self-reliance and that African development cannot be an automatic by-product of the world-economic system. Seventhly, a Lagos Plan of Action articulates a clear perspective of development which has not been followed through²³.

In contrast to the Lagos Plan, is the world Bank sponsored report written by Professor Berg on the development of sub-Saharan Africa titled "Accelerated Development for Africa: Agenda for Action".²⁴ According to the basic argument underlying this Report which is completely at variance with the principles advocated in the Lagos Plan of Action, African development can only be a by-product of the World economic development and can only fully materialize through the free play of market forces.

It has generally argued that the Berg's Report advances an extroverted, primary raw material export-oriented development strategy heavily dependent upon foreign capital as against the Lagos Plan which seeks, among other things, to achieve greater regional cooperation through a regionally inward-looking strategy. Given the dependent nature of African economies and the magnitude of the economic crisis facing African economies, the World Bank was in a better position to force through its development strategy for Africa. In practice, however, the Lagos Plan of Action gave way to the orientation of the Berg's Report.

Other efforts such as that in the special paper, to reiterate, on the Economic Development problems of Africa, produced by the World Bank on request from the African Governors, titled, "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action", also demonstrates the determination to articulate African Strategies for the need for changes in the strategies for development.

The changing international environment has resulted in the need for changes in the strategy for development adopted by developing countries. Various countries had to adopt structural adjustment programmes in the face of worsening economic crisis and on the advice of the IMF and the World Bank. In 1989, the United Nations Commission for Africa prepared yet an alternative framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for socio-economic recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP which was consequently adopted in July 1989 by the former OAU Summit and by the United Nations General Assembly in September 1989²⁵.

Given its historical antecedents and the role of the Cold War, the region has been perpetually kept in disarray. With the end of the Cold War and the pace of globalization, a new opportunity has provided itself for Africa to articulate a regional strategy for development.

It is reasoned here that the continent and its peoples can easily appropriate the opportunities thrown up by the globalization process if they submit to the reform agenda of the new century.

Towards this end, the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU), the adoption of a 'home grown' development programme – the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)²⁶. In other words, the subsequent failures of these programmes have led to the realization that in order for her to step up on the development path, there is the need to institute an African initiated programme of development. It is these efforts that have given birth to what is now the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). NEPAD therefore came out as a result of the various initiatives to redeem Africa and its peoples from the ugly and unpalatable socio-economic and political conditions she has found herself in.

Such initiatives that coalesced into NEPAD included the African Renaissance Plan, the Millennium Action Plan for African Recovery and the Omega Plan. The birth of NEPAD is not only due to the African realization that it needed to be self-sufficient and self-reliant but it is a reflection of the dynamics of the emerging New World Order. As a development blueprint therefore, NEPAD would appear to represent African leaders' renewed commitment to put the continent on an accelerated path of social, technological and economic development²⁷. As a development strategy initiative, NEPAD has the following principles and objectives and these include:

- (i) Ensuring African ownership, responsibility and leadership
- (ii) Making Africa attractive to both domestic and foreign investors
- (iii) Unleashing the continent's vast economic potential

- (iv) Achieving and sustaining an average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 7% per annum for the next 15 years
- (v) Ensuring that the continent achieves the agreed International Development Goals (IDGs)
- (vi) Increasing investment in human resources development
- (vii) Promoting the role of women in all activities
- (viii) Promoting sub-regional and continental economic integration
- (ix) Developing a new partnership with industrialized countries and multilateral organizations on the basis of mutual commitments, obligations, interests, contributions and benefits
- (x) Ensuring that there is a capacity to accelerate the implementation of major regional development co-operation agreements and projects already approved or in the pipeline;
- (xi) Strengthening Africa's capacity to mobilize additional external resources for its development.

NEPAD also hopes to promote accelerated growth and sustainable development, eradicate widespread and severe poverty; and halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process. On the basis of the above set targets, NEPAD is expected to achieve:

- (i) Economic growth and development and increase employment
- (ii) Reduction in poverty and inequality
- (iii) Diversification of productive activities and enhanced international trade
- (iv) Competitiveness and increased exports
- (v) Increased African integration²⁸.

Thus, as a proposal for charting a new development path for the African countries, NEPAD appears to represent a noble idea.

That means the NEPAD from all indications does have some laudable positive aspects, particularly as it symbolizes a wake-up call to all Africans to resolutely and collectively confront the challenges posed by the African crises in the New Millennium.

Beyond all these however, some fears have since arisen as to whether or not NEPAD could succeed because as a development agenda, is said to be founded on certain myths, which have been partly responsible for the failure of several development policies in Africa. These myths, according to Okpeh are premised on two basic issues, namely, (i) their understanding of the root causes of the African crisis; and (ii) their perception of the new world order and the globalization process itself. Other myths associated with the NEPAD document arise from its neo-liberal praxis. The neo-liberal logic argues that the role of the state should be minimized to pave way for private capital and the market as the engine of economic development. Towards this end, NEPAD overtly supports the liberalization and deregulation of the economy to the extent that foreign investors would have an unfettered access to the wealth of a nation and its people. Neo-liberalism posits that wealth can be created through the establishments of an enabling environment for the private sector to make profits; and through the operations of market forces, wealth so created would ultimately trickle down to all citizens and social groups²⁹.

Then too, Neo-liberalism advocates reliance on foreign investments and development aids as well as loan from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, London and Paris Clubs, and many others. In fact, over the last three to five decades, experiences in Africa and other Third World Countries have shown the illusion inherent in the neo-liberal development path for Africa.

Therefore, it could be rightly expected that NEPAD and its advocates appear to deepen the Africa's dilemma. Another serious myth in the NEPAD agenda lies in its predication, by its initiators, on IMF and WB policies that have been applied in the African economies, societies and politics now for the past two decades with little positive results. These policies include the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs)³⁰.

However, it is already established that the havoc these policies have visited on the African countries and its people has been largely responsible for their underdevelopment. NEPAD's attempt to contradict this historical reality questions its genuineness as a development agenda intended to liberate the continent from its development woes.

More importantly too, is the fact that NEPAD's lacking in both grassroots orientation and gender sensitivity. Although acclaimed by its initiators as a development agenda 'by' and 'for' Africans, it is ironical that the continent's population does not know what the agenda is all about and what it would do to their socio-economic and political status. Consequently, under the aegis and close scrutiny of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in league with the G8 countries, the African ruling elites have adopted the *top-bottom approach* which has further deepened the gulf between the rich and the poor in the continent³¹.

It is from the above premise that NEPAD is viewed as a prescription based on flawed diagnosis of the history of the African crisis, its nature, character and pattern. Although a noble attempt to engage the globalizing world, NEPAD's conception of this world and the globalizing process as well as what Africa needs to do to be relevant in it are simplistic, naïve and unrealistic³².

NEPAD, however, has the potential of further deepening the crisis in the African continent and consequently weakening her quest for sustainable development. To avert this, the Developmental State Model of the Asian countries, especially as practiced in China and East Asian countries should be projected as an ideology and philosophy of African development. That is one positive way to engage the New World Order and the globalizing process. In our view, and as the analysis will show shortly, promoting a developmental State Model as experimented in China and East Asian countries, is very crucial for Africa's progress in this 21st century.

Articulating the Experiences of Chinese/East Asian Developmental State Model: Alternative for Africa's Development Strategy

Asia's economic performance in the 1970s and 1980s has been remarkable. This region has drawn the attention of development experts as their performance is being held as a proof that third world countries can develop within the global environment if they have the proper perspective on development. The region's overall growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about 5.0 percent in 1960s, increased by 6.5 percent in 1980s³³. The performance of big countries such as China, India and Indonesia which have become self-sufficient in food grains, has raised the possibility that many third world countries in Africa suffering from food crisis (hunger and starvation) can do the same if they learn from the experiences of the Asians, especially the Chinese.

Infact, one of the global economy's most significant post war developments has been the rise of East Asia. For a long time, Japan held envious fascinations, but in the 1990s, it came to be elipsed by China; by the four "little tigers" or "dragons": namely Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea and eventually by the South East Asian economies including Indonesia and Malaysia.

These economies have filled the top ranks of the world's economies in terms not only of their overall growth rates, but also of their industrial and export growth rates. Today, if they have not already done so, these economies are leaving the third world and entering the industrial age – a remarkable accomplishment when one considers that in 1960s South Korea was on a par with Ghana in terms of its GDP per capita³⁴.

This development for all intents and purposes, provokes two fundamental questions "Why/How? In accounting for success in East Asia, neo-classical theorists have argued that these governments employed market-based development strategies coupled with outward orientation, or essentially a non-interventionist trade strategy. However, the experiences of East Asia seem to have dealt critics of neo-classical theory a stronger hand. This is because an inescapable ingredients in the East Asian Development recipe has been an interventionist state, typically one that plays a more active role in the economy that ordinarily advocated by neo-classical theory. With the possible exception of Hong Kong intrusive states guided the development of these economies. In South Korea, for instance, the state protected selected industries through tariffs and quotas and nurtured them through export subsidies and subsidized credit, steered firms toward new forms of production, set export targets and rewarded those firms that met or surpassed them, owned and controlled all commercial banks and used them to direct funds toward favoured industries, limited the number of firms allowed to enter an industry, set controls on prices and capital outflows and distorted prices to favour certain industries³⁵.

Moreso, when hit by external shocks, the South Korean government did not use international monetary fund style adjustment policies, but borrowed its way out of crises, thereby is keeping its development strategy on tract.

Even the World Bank has admitted that state intervention was crucial to East Asian development. Added to this are the lessons of successful structural adjustment which appears to have followed long periods of sheltered industrialization. This has led many theorists to conclude that an initial (State led phase should precede the opening onto the market.³⁶ Other features of the developmental state include the following;

First, the state makes development its top priority, encourages the people to forgo the benefits of growth so as to maximize investment, and uses repression if need be to achieve this goal. Second, the state commits itself to private property and markets, even if only in the long or short run, as in China or Vietnam. Third, the state redistributes land, if necessary, to expand the national market and sweeps aside the potential opposition of landed oligarchies to industrialization, and represses labour to keep wages low and thereby attract investment. Fourth, the state insulates itself against society, giving a highly skilled, technocratic bureaucracy, the autonomy it needs from societal interest groups to impose discipline, at times harsh, on the private sector.

Fifth, and most important, the state guides the market extensively, exercising strict control over investment flows (developmental states can be ardently nationalistic in restricting foreign investment in preferred sectors), using multifaceted import restrictions, regulating the terms of interaction between industry and agriculture, altering the incentive structure of the economy (getting some prices wrong if this is seen to benefit an emerging sector), promoting technological change, and protecting selected infant industries.

At the same time, having chosen which industries it will protect and nurture, the developmental state opens the rest of the economy to foreign competition and penetration, even allowing poorly performing-firms within the favoured industries to wither on the vine. Finally, developmental states invest heavily in human-capital formation, in particular targeting the development of the technical and engineering corps necessary to modern industry.³⁷

The search for alternative paths for development in Africa today is much more entrenched than ever given the changes in the global economy of the twenty first century. If Africa is going to ensure that their economies play any significant role in the new millennium then there is need to initiate model of a prototype African democratic developmental state to guide the continent's progress.

The Structural Adjustment Programme of the last two decades has plainly not worked so did the purely strong state-led growth of the early decades. However, it is increasingly being realized that the state's role in Africa developmental programme and implementing any project hinging upon the involvement of individual homes, entrepreneurs and private – as well as public institutions (Mbabazi, 2005:53). State activism in the economy is very central and a few African countries like Botswana, Gabon and Mauritius have managed to make some strides offering lessons for the continent despite the many challenges they still face.³⁸

By most developmental parameters, Africa fares badly with the rest of the world. There is a persistent rise in poverty, unemployment and inequality across a majority of African states.

Yet, there is urgent need to promote social economic progress as the continent stands the danger of degenerating further into chaos if development is not promoted and the contradictions that appear to foster conflict in society, reduced or eliminated. Although at independence most African states appeared to be developmental and most states efforts were geared towards addressing issues of poverty, ignorance and diseases. Today, the performance of many African states leaves a lot to be desired. While other regions like South East Asia have managed to make a great leap forward, Africa seems to be very much retrogressing and the big question is why? Many critiques have given their explanations for Africa's failure to progress including such factors like unequal trading relationships with the Western World, corruption, neo-patrimonialism, debt peonage and failure to regionalize, among others. At the same time, however, Africa is known to be rich continent with vast resources from gold to diamonds to cheap labour supplies – all of which would offer the continent a sound industrial base.

It is African states and their leadership that have dismally failed to capitalize on these resources and today, in the 21st century, the continent continues to register the highest levels of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and consequently have experienced more intra-conflicts. The continent today is characterized by famines, civil wars, trade imbalances, low industrial and agricultural productivity and of recent the HIV/AIDS scourge.³⁹ It is no wonder that most African states are top on the list of the World Bank's most poor and heavily indebted nations. It is very unfortunate that at independence most countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Kenya were at the same level as the Asian tigers, they have now been left behind. For instance, our investigation shows that Ghana's income and exports are indicative that the per-capita they had were higher than Korea's in 1965.⁴⁰

However, by 1972, Korea had overtaken Ghana and by 1995 Korea's export had increased by 400 times while Ghana's experiences are indicative of Africa's general trend of slow export growth and failing per-capita incomes.⁴¹ In any event, while the Asian financial crisis did put a virtual end to the developmental state in some countries, notably South Korea, in other countries, governing elites, managed to restore their models fairly quickly. All the while, China has continued to thumb its 'nose' at much of the neo-classical model, picking and choosing those elements that suit it while sticking to a strong state in others (such as the management of its currency). The new challenges facing poor countries continue to multiply. Meanwhile, the sharp ending of the US boom at the end of the century drew its free market based approach back into question. The search for alternative development models with particular attention to an expanded state – role as practiced in China among other East Asian countries, thus goes on. Yet, even if one shies away from the developmental state model or infant industry protection, it seems clear that successful development demands a greater state role in the economy than neo-classical theory has foreseen.

If the market is to function effectively, it requires elaborate state guidance. Furthermore, if and when any kind of state retreat is made it appears it should be done gradually. Hard and fast cuts in the state may do more harm than good in the long run. State retrenchment in some domains should be accompanied by advances in others. One or two steps forward may make a step backward more effective. For example, government can enhance measures to liberalize domestic commodities markets by building roads to agricultural areas, providing credit and inputs to farmers and so on as seen in Nigeria. For example, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) during the military regime under Ibrahim Babangida was a major step in the direction of rural transformation.

Today, an active and effective state role seems critical in the least developed countries, mostly in Africa, in which poor infrastructure and market structure are causing producers to slide backwards. In this regard, only a greater state role will tackle such problems. Whether or not such an expanded state role can emerge in these African countries let alone whether the developmental state can emerge in many Third World Countries, is a different matter altogether. Indeed, China's more gradual move away from socialist central planning to developmental state model has yielded even greater success, and therefore, it is proposed that Africa's more gradual move away from neo-classical development strategies to a developmental state model will certainly usher her into the desired sustainable growth in this 21st century.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the experiences of the Chinese and generally the East Asian countries, they have responded differently to their emerging internal structures and external developments. But more crucially is the tacit involvement of the state in guiding economic growth in these countries. The building blocks for rapid and sustainable growth are clearly demonstrated by the fast growing economies of Asia. It is not surprising therefore that the High – Performing Asian Economies (HPAEs) accumulated both physical and human capital much more consistently than other economies and that accumulation accounts for a large portion of their superior performance. Africa must learn from this experience. African economies must mobilize and develop both human and material resources needed for sustainable development in the 21st century. It should be pointed out though that developmental states in Africa cannot be or will not be similar to those found in Asia. This would be ridiculous and empirically impossible.

Nor are we advancing the thesis that some countries like Botswana, Gabon in Africa are comparable in scope or practice to those found in the East Asia. The point being stressed here is simply that rubbishing the role of the state in today's Africa is defeatist and needs to be thoroughly challenged. In our view, promoting developmental state with characteristics as advanced by Leftwich is very crucial for Africa's progress. There is need to appreciate those few African countries that have demonstrated progress in these areas and learn lessons for replication elsewhere on the continent. In the context of Africa, a state that is purposefully driven to promote development and that utilizes the offices of the state in order to facilitate improvement, alongside other sectors such as the private sector and civil society can, in the particular circumstances it finds itself, be regarded as "developmental" and this is what needs to be promoted in Africa.

There is no country in the world that has been able to develop in the context of free markets alone. Development activism is no longer optimal but vital and desirable. The East Asian tigers practiced developmental state activism and nationalism (but not plain economic liberalism) enabling them to produce goods that have a potential to penetrate the global markets. This is what Africa needs to do much as the scenario is different today. Emphasis on high level bureaucratic competence and a conducive institutional framework for African countries, among other factors, is also very crucial in this proposed development strategy for African countries. Indeed, the role of the state in Africa in promoting development in this era of globalization is very central and there is need for a concerted effort by all stakeholders including academicians and development experts to assert this as the course best suited for Africa and inform the policy makers accordingly. There is a need for an activist role of the state in the economy to ensure Africa's recovery and successful development.

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