

Research Report 105

May 2005



CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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A Democratic Developmental State in Africa?

A concept paper

By

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Research report

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Centre for Policy Studies

Johannesburg

May 2005

This paper forms part of the CPS 'State Series'

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The Ford Foundation generously provided the funding for this research work. However, the views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ford Foundation.

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ISBN 1-920030-21-2

This Concept Paper forms part of a larger project on 'The role of the State in Africa'. This project is funded by the Ford Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa, whose generous support and foresight we gratefully acknowledge.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history of the post-independent African state is that of monumental democratic and developmental failures. The few exceptions to this have been Botswana and Mauritius, and to a degree, democratic South Africa. After almost four and a half decades of independence, most countries on the continent are characterised by underdevelopment. The evidence for this state of underdevelopment can be found in any social and economic indicators one cares to examine.

At the economic level, Africa has been marked by:

- the dominance of the primary sector - agriculture, oil and minerals - partly as a result of the inability of the African state to foster an environment for high value-added economic activities
- low domestic capital formation and declining direct foreign investment
- foreign aid dependence
- heavy indebtedness
- high unemployment and the informalisation of the economies where the majority of its people live in poverty.

Consequently, at the beginning of the 21st century, Africa is unable to compete in the global economy. In fact, its marginalisation has been reinforced, particularly since the 1980s.

In the same vein, the majority of African countries lack basic social and physical infrastructure. As a result, most people on the continent have no access to basic services such as potable water, electricity, good sanitation, roads and healthcare. All of this is coupled with a high illiteracy rate, especially among women. The lack of access to basic medical care occurs against a backdrop of ravaging diseases; a situation which has become exacerbated with the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The continent accounts for about 70 % of all HIV-infected persons and AIDS-related deaths in the world. All of this is against the backdrop of the absence of a social safety net to cushion the effects of the harsh socio-economic realities experienced by most Africans.

The state of underdevelopment has been reinforced by authoritarianism, political instability, ethnic and religious conflicts and civil wars. Since attaining their independence, most African countries have been plagued by some form of political conflict. This has included the civil wars in Nigeria in the 1960s, Liberia in the 1990s, the Ivory Coast in the 2000s, Angola for most of its post-independence period, the crisis in the horn of Africa (including the current civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo) and the genocide in Rwanda. The list is endless.

Political crises have also manifested in what is now generally referred to as ‘failed states’ such as Liberia and Somalia. These crises have occurred in the context of mal-governance in the forms of one party autocracy, military rule, one person rule, etc. Included here are countries such as Malawi (for most of its post-independence period) and Zimbabwe since the late 1990s. Mal-governance is marked by exclusion of the people from governance, non-accountability of public officials, lack of transparency in decision-making and the colonialisation and personalisation of the state and national resources by the political elite.

In spite of these failures, the question of the democratic developmental state is not sufficiently on the agenda in Africa. It has also received little attention in academic discourse. Against this background, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), Johannesburg, South Africa and the Partners in Development for Research, Consulting and Training (PID), Cairo, Egypt are undertaking a research project on the democratic developmental state in Africa. It will address the following pertinent issues:

- Can African states be both democratic and developmental under conditions of globalisation?
- What are the indicators and mechanisms for democratic developmentalism?
- What are the prerequisites for the establishment of democratic developmental states and do these prerequisites exist in Africa?
- What are the prospects of introducing such democratic developmentalism under the present conditions of globalisation?

This is the concept paper for the project as it sets out to conceptualise the democratic developmental state in Africa. It begins by defining the concept of the democratic developmental state and then proceeds to briefly review the political and developmental trajectories of Africa since the 1960s. The concluding section summarises the key features of a democratic developmental state. On that basis it then highlights some issues for research on the democratic developmental state in Africa.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN AFRICA

At this juncture, it is important to clarify the concept of a democratic development state so that it can be applied to the African context. The concept of democracy has received extensive treatment in the social sciences literature. It is generally conceived as voters, through regular elections, choosing their leaders. A classical definition in this regard is that offered by Huntington who conceives a political system as being democratic, “to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and

periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote”.¹ This has become the dominant way in which democracy is conceived.

Despite the fact that scholars might have emphasised different aspects of it, there is a general consensus that liberal democracy has some basic principles, namely:

- citizen participation (meaning choosing their leaders)
- equality
- political tolerance
- accountability
- transparency
- regular, free and fair elections
- economic freedom
- control of the abuse of power
- a bill of rights
- the separation of the powers of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary
- accepting the result of elections
- human rights
- a multiparty system
- the rule of law.

What is clear is that electoral democracy advances social and political rights. But this concept tends to give greater premium to the ‘professionalisation of public policy’ (a technicist approach to public policy) with its strong emphasis on political parties and civil society. This approach loses sight of the fact that citizens make democracy. As a result, there is a global trend toward the replacement of citizen democracy by consumer democracy, with citizens conceived as consumers, clients and users, government services increasingly seen as commodities and access based on the ability to pay. Across the globe,

¹ Huntington, Samuel (1991: 7) *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the late Twentieth Century*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.

civic identity is being replaced by consumer identity, cooperation by sectarian conflict, the creation of commonwealth by conflicts over the distribution of private wealth, citizen participation by apathy and disengagement and everyday politics by career politics. Not surprisingly, there is a trend towards declining public interest in elections, increasing citizens' disengagement from public affairs and distrust of government. Divisions characterised along left-right political leanings exemplify present-day politics. The bitterness of this division limits the scope of citizens to work collaboratively, in partnerships with government, for common social goods. It fosters conflicts among citizens, communities and organised interests. Democracy is also conceived only in terms of a struggle over the distribution of wealth and private accumulation rather than the creation of commonwealth.

This is how one of the leading US political theorists, Harry Boyte, aptly captured the adverse implications for citizens. According to him:²

When politics becomes the property of professional elites, bureaucrats and consultants, most people are marginalised in the serious work of public affairs. Citizens are reduced to, at most, secondary roles as demanding consumers or altruistic volunteers. Moreover, with the transformation of mediating institutions..., such as civil society think-tanks, ...[which] became technical service providers - citizens lost all stake and standing in the public world.

Consequently, the question of democracy has largely neglected issues of economic justice - basic needs such as access to food, shelter, medical care and housing. In the absence of equal opportunity for all citizens to these essentials for human existence, the equality being stressed in liberal democracy is defeated. White poignantly captured that danger for democracy:³

...democratic citizenship is undermined if there is too great a contradiction between the egalitarian norms of a democratic polity and the inequalities of individuals and groups in civil society. Glaring inequalities undermine democracy in two basic ways; first, by fuelling social discontent and political instability and, second, through the persistence of poverty, by excluding more or less extensive sections of the population from access to the political process and its fruits.

It is in the light of this that some African scholars have critiqued liberal democracy. For example, Eme Awa⁴ averred that democracy must be made to deliver some economic empowerment and a higher state of living for the people. A democracy that cannot deliver on the basic needs of the people will be short-lived. Conceived this way, democracy and

² Boyte, Harry. 'Seeing Like A Democracy: South Africa's Prospects For Global Leadership.' *African Journal of Political Science* June 2004; Vol 9 No 1: 4. (emphasis added)

³ White, Gordon. 'Constructing a Democratic Developmental State.' in Robinson Mark and White Gordon (eds). *The Democratic Developmental State: Political and Institutional Design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998: 28.

⁴ Awa, Eme (1991) "Democracy and Governance in Africa: Preliminary Statement". In Aderinwale, A and Moshia, F. G. N (eds) *Democracy and Governance in Africa: Conclusions and Papers presented at a conference of the Africa leadership Forum*. Ota.

development must go hand in hand - in other words, they are mutually reinforcing. Thus in the view of some scholars, socio-economic justice is at the heart of democracy.⁵

In view of the above, these scholars observed that the quest and struggles of the African people for democratic governance are aimed not only at doing away with repressive and autocratic governments but also at improving their socio-economic conditions in a way that will lead to a qualitative improvement in their material conditions. This has important social and political value. Citizens are able to exercise real choice after they have overcome poverty, squalor or ignorance, as these constitute constraints on freedom and equality. In other words, social, economic and political empowerments are mutually inclusive. Embedded in such conception is citizens' active participation as a necessary requirement in the development and governance process. As will be shown later, this approach has important implications for the concept of a democratic developmental state. A democratic developmental state is one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizens' participation in the development and governance processes. Thus when questioning how the democratic developmental state can be placed in the African context, it is pertinent to bring citizenship back into politics. This means placing emphasis on cooperative work and deliberative traditions by bringing people together across party lines, racial backgrounds, class divides and other differences, for the common good. Conceiving the democratic developmental state in this way is not an attempt to do away with representative democracy but rather to recast the debate by placing greater premium on the how 'participatory democracy' compliments 'representative democracy'. To be effective, however, citizens will have to organise themselves to be able to participate in consultative arenas or networks of consultative decision-making. Because of the divergent interests in society, citizens organise themselves into various groups, which are at times in conflict and are at other times complementary. But to ensure the objectives of redistribution and the reduction of inequalities, the form of civil society that is most suitable for that task is associations of politically marginalised groups.⁶ Hence marginalised people have to form popular organisations that will advance their interests. This is because, across the globe, it has been shown that where elite groups dominate the consultative arena, it reinforces inequality.

It needs to be stressed that the democratic developmental state is one that can also foster economic growth and development. This means that not only is the state able to transform its economic base by promoting productive, income generating economic activities

⁵ Igbuzor, Otiye and Edigheji, Omano. '*Constitutions, Electoral Process and the future Of Democratic Governance in Africa.*' A paper presented at the African Conference on Elections, Democracy and Governance organised by the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), the African Union (AU) and the African Association of Electoral Administrators (AAEA) in Pretoria, South Africa, 7-10 April 2003.

⁶ White.

but must ensure that economic growth has the resultant effect of improving the living conditions of the majority of its population. White puts this succinctly: “development includes a process of economic change involving the construction of more complex and productive economies capable of generating higher material standards of living”.⁷

In line with the above, a democratic developmental state has to have clearly defined socio-economic objectives that require active state interventions. Some of the social objectives include:

(the) alleviation of absolute and relative poverty; the correction of glaring inequalities of social conditions (between genders, classes, regions, and ethnic groups); provision for personal safety and security; and the tackling of looming threats such as environmental degradation... Overall, to the extent that democratic polities are instrumental in organising socio-economic progress along these lines, they can be described as developmentally successful; their success depends on the existence and efficacy of the democratic developmental state.⁸

The African Charter for Popular Participation’ identified some of the characteristics of such people’s organisations⁹. The organisations should be, grassroots-based, voluntary, democratically administered, self-reliant and rooted in the tradition and culture of the society. As noted earlier, such organisations are community-embedded. This moves away from the anti-state conceptions of participation and developmentalism “that completely circumvent or marginalise the state as non-governmental organisations, the private sector and local communities proceed almost surreptitiously with addressing issues of poverty and development without the encumbrance of the state”.¹⁰

In discussing the democratic developmental state, a premium must be placed on its institutional or organisational attributes and its relations to surrounding social structures. It is the organisational structures that enable it to promote and achieve better economic performance. This emphasis moves away from conceptions of a developmental state only in terms of its objectives.

A starting point in conceiving the democratic developmental state should of necessity be the developmental state literature that gained currency following the wondrous economic performance of the East Asian developmental state from the 1970s. This literature has a number of variations but remains useful for researchers in distilling some of its basic

⁷ White 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). *African Charter for popular participation in development*. Addis Ababa. 1990

¹⁰ Mkandawire, Thandika ‘Crisis Management and the Making of ‘Choiceless Democracies’.’ in Joseph Richard (ed). *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*. Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1999: 2.

characteristics. One strand of the literature emphasises the developmental goals of the state, what Mkandawire¹¹ calls the ideological character of the developmental state. Prominent in this regard are Castells¹² and Pronk¹³. To Castells, a state is developmental when it establishes as its principle of legitimacy, its ability to promote and sustain development; understood as the combination of steady and high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship with the international economy.¹⁴

Pronk follows in Castells' footsteps by defining a developmental state only in terms of its objectives. In his view, a developmental state is one which is able and willing to create and sustain a policy climate that promotes development by fostering productive investment, exports, growth and human welfare.¹⁵

Useful as such conception might be it ignores the institutional characteristics, what Mkandawire¹⁶ refers to as the 'state-structure nexus' that enable one state to be able to achieve growth and development while others can not. As noted earlier, a premium has to be placed on the institutional/organisational configurations of the democratic developmental state. This is primarily because what sets a democratic developmental state apart from others is that not only is it able to clearly set its development objectives; it also establishes institutional structures in order to achieve the objectives. Hence, a democratic developmental state also has to be defined by its institutional attributes. This approach is located within the second strand of the developmental state literature. Taken this way, a developmental state can be defined "as one whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to **construct and** deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development".¹⁷ In other words, the democratic developmental state is defined by its objectives and its institutional characteristics.

¹¹ Mkandawire, Thandika. 'Thinking About the Developmental States in Africa.' *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 2001.

¹² Castells, Manuel. 'Four Asian Tigers with a Dragon Head: A Comparative Analysis of State, Economy and Society in the Asian Pacific Rim.' in Applebaum R, Henderson J (eds). *State and Development in the Asian Pacific*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992.

¹³ Pronk, J.P (1997) "Changing Relationships between State and Society and their implications for Development Policy". Public Lecture, Centre for Development Studies, University of Groningen, Netherlands. February 26.

¹⁴ Castells 56.

¹⁵ Pronk 5.

¹⁶ Mkandawire 2001.

¹⁷ Mkandawire, 2001: 3. (emphasis added)

The key organisational features of importance are 'autonomy' of state institutions, which enables it to define and promote its strategic developmental goals, and its 'embeddedness', which is the state forming alliances with key social groups in society that helps it to achieve its developmental goals.¹⁸ In this perspective, autonomy implies the presence of high degrees of coherent state agencies that are able to formulate and implement coherent developmental goals. Put differently, autonomy means the ability of the state to behave as a coherent collective actor that is able to identify and implement developmental goals.

Implicitly, the developmental state is not overwhelmed by particularistic interest groups. The point being stressed is that state bureaucratic coherence is achieved by, among others, meritocratic recruitment, which in turn engenders coherent networks within the state. This enhances its capability to identify and implement independent goals. Meritocratic recruitment is complemented by predictable career paths and long term rewards for bureaucrats both of which help to generate a sense of corporate coherence. Another significant feature of an autonomous state is greater coordination of industrial change and economic adjustment.

In the East Asian cases, autonomy was initially conceived in terms of the state imposing its will over society and suppressing civil society. As Johnson¹⁹ points out the "soft authoritarian character" of the state was the source of its autonomy. Wade's²⁰ conception of the developmental state also followed this logic. But the cooperative dynamism of the developmental state was stressed by Peter Evans²¹ through his concept of embeddedness, and by Weiss²² through the concept of 'Governed Interdependence' (GI). But a major weakness of these conceptual frameworks is that state-society relations are limited to government-business relations - an elite coalition. In addition, the earlier conception of the developmental state paid no heed to the democratic aspect of the developmental state. This is partly because some scholars regarded the repressive nature of the state as one of the factors that enhanced its developmental capacity. But as Weiss²³ reminds us, what is of central importance is the state's ability to use its autonomy to consult, negotiate and elicit consensus and cooperation from its social partners in the task of national economic reforms

¹⁸ Evans, Peter. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁹ Johnson, Chalmers. *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982.

²⁰ Wade, Robert. *Governing the Market*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

²¹ Evans.

²² Weiss, Linda. *The Myth of the Powerless State*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

²³ Ibid.

and adjustment. Cooperation is therefore a central element of the developmental state, although cooperation here is limited to the private sector.

The key point is that state autonomy is complemented by a concrete set of relationships with particular interest groups, while at the same time being insulated from direct political pressures. Stressing the importance of insulation and embeddedness, Seddon and Belton-Jones note:

Effective insulation from immediate pressures of special interests enables policy-makers to respond swiftly and effectively to new circumstances; but the capacity to identify and implement appropriate policies to promote effective medium - and longer-term development requires the maintenance of strategic relations with wider civil society.²⁴

The combination of autonomy and embeddedness by the developmental state is the basis of its efficaciousness. These seemingly paradoxical characteristics are mutually reinforcing and safeguard the state from piecemeal capture by particularistic interests, which is capable of destroying both the state's internal coherence and its ability to coherently interact with its economic partners. The cohesiveness of the state also enables interest groups with which it shares a transformative project to overcome their collective action problems. The networks between the state and its economic partners serve as platforms for information exchange, consensus building over policy and effective implementation. By extension these networks enhance the robustness of the state apparatus. Embedded autonomy also enables the state officials to strategically and selectively intervene in the economy (focusing on sectors, products, markets, technology, etc), which they perceive as crucial to the future of industrial growth and transformation. Embedded autonomy, it is argued, is the institutional foundation of the developmental state that enables it to respond swiftly and effectively to rapidly changing global economic conditions.

Most writers on the developmental state, including Johnson, Wade and Evans, have concluded that as capital becomes internationalised and autonomous, the state's capability will be reduced. The argument is as follows: the social actors that the developmental state brings forth become its nemesis. In other words, at maturation, the social groups that the state helps to create, develop interests distinct from that of the state; hence they undermine the state's capacity. If this assumption is correct, it poses significant challenges for Africa in its attempt to construct a democratic developmental state.

Our analysis of the challenges facing Africa in constructing a democratic developmental state would therefore also address the constraints and opportunities offered by globalisation. It is important to note that while Africa may not replicate the East Asian developmental

²⁴ Seddon, David, Belton-Jones, Tim. *'The political determinants of Economic Flexibility, with special reference to the East Asian NICs.'* in Killick Tony (ed). *The Flexible Economy: Causes and Consequences of the adaptability of national economies.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995: 326.

states, there are specific lessons to be learnt from that experience in terms of the objectives and institutional setup necessary to achieve those objectives.

Whatever way you look at it, the initial conception of the developmental state paid no attention to the nature of the political regime. Some even justified the undemocratic nature of the East Asian developmental state on the ground of its development performance. But if there is a positive correlation between undemocratic regimes and development, then African countries would have been among the most developed countries in the world. A succinct critique of the concept of the developmental state that did not incorporate the nature of the political regime is offered by Meredith Woo-Cummings²⁵ in her critical appraisal of Evan's 'Embedded Autonomy'.

In recognition of the limitations of the dominant conception of the developmental state, Robinson and White²⁶ came up with the notion of the democratic developmental state. The democratic developmental state retains the autonomous institutional attributes of the developmental state. But it moves beyond that as it emphasises an inclusive approach to public policy-making. In this regard, White has coined the concept of 'inclusive embeddedness', meaning that "the social basis and range of accountability goes beyond a narrow band of elites to embrace broader sections of society".²⁷ This becomes the basis of the state infrastructural capacity.²⁸ That is, to penetrate society to elicit cooperation and consensus from its social partners in its developmental endeavours.

The nature of the political system is an additional element or source of autonomy of the democratic developmental state. This is what White calls 'institutional coherence', which implies "the distribution and use of political power, in the relations between different sections of the bureaucratic apparatus, and in the nature of the party system in political society." This emphasis presupposes that political society creates "channels of political participation, particularly the structure and social base of the party system".²⁹ There are a number of developmental and democratic imperatives that flow from the nature of political society. The social base of a political party is likely to significantly determine its developmental agenda. A political party of the poor is more likely to be attuned to advancing a poverty reduction strategy than a party of the elite.

²⁵ Woo-Cummings Meredith. *'The Ties that Bind? Autonomy, Embeddedness, and Industrial Development.'* Northwestern University. (not dated and unpublished)

²⁶ Robinson, Mark and White, Gordon (eds). *The Democratic Developmental State: Political and Institutional Design.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 1998

²⁷ White 98.

²⁸ Mann, Michael. *States, War and Capitalism.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

²⁹ White 31.

Similarly, the type of relationships fostered by the political system is of crucial importance to both the developmental and democratic outcomes. Here two distinctions are in order. On the one hand are programmatic relationships between citizens and political parties. Programmatic politics are based on collective deliberation on public issues and are characterised by dense networks of civic associations. This helps to generate consensus and create stability in the political system. On the other hand is clientelistic politics, which is based on the award of personal favours; and at times coercion. Under such a dispensation, voters make their choices on the basis of primordial factors such as religion, ethnicity, race and personality, rather than alternative developmental programmes. Worse still, political parties are often organised around ethno-regional criteria rather than ideological lines.³⁰ Osia's incisive account of Nigerian politics is illustrative. According to him, much of Nigeria's politics

defer more to primordial instincts of ethnicity than to the urge for nationalism... Leaders seized on ethnic particularisms and lack of appropriate political education of followers to present an extractive view of politics which persuades the individuals to seek personal advantage from the government. The 'national cake' turned out to be the 'family cake'. The survival of personal and familial obligations superseded the survival of the nation. Leaders interpreted their discretionary authority as discretion to serve the interests of their family, friends and ethnic groups. Accountability became much more synonymous with the size of a leader's bank accounts, than a 'measure of responsibility' to one's constituency and the nation.³¹

Under such circumstances, voters rarely genuinely expressed their opinion since, for them, the ballot is essentially a token exchange in an immediate, highly personalised relationship of dependency.³² This situation induces conflicts and instabilities in the political system. These emanate from the conflicting needs of citizens to participate meaningfully in the democratic process and the need of the dominant political elite to entrench themselves. Citizens are included in the democratic process as subjects/clients. By so doing, the political system strips citizens of their citizenship. This is also the result of the competition between various primordial groups for access to power and national resources.

In such circumstances, the state has limited developmental capacity as the political leaders are unable to mobilise and foster mutually-interlocking relationships between the state and various social, political and economic interests. In addition, it is unable to mobilise

³⁰ Bratton, Michael, Van de Walle, Nicolas. *Democratic Experiments in Africa; regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

³¹ Osia, Kunirum (1991:11) "*Leadership and Fellowship: Nigeria's Problem of Governance*". Paper presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association. St. Louis, Missouri. 23 - 26 November.

³² Putman, Robert (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

national resources for national development. What is therefore being argued is that a democratic developmental state has to have a political system that promotes horizontal and programmatic relationships between political parties and their members, between elected officials and citizens and between the state and society.

In fact White emphasised the developmental and democratic importance of the nature of political society, especially the nature of parties and party systems, as follows:

it serves to determines the capacity to provide a stable and authoritative regulatory environment; to include large sections of the population and channel the views of diverse constituents; to implement programmes of social welfare and redistribution; to take the longer-term strategic perspectives necessary to tackle deep-rooted developmental problems; and to organised accountability through intra-party processes and inter-party competition.³³

In particular, when political parties are cohesive, inclusive, organise relative broad coalitions of social interests and are programmatic, they become effective inter-mediators in the political system. They are able to generate consensus and thereby reduce conflicts. The effectiveness of political parties as inter-mediators and aggregators of diverse socio-political interests depends on a number of factors which are important to the democratic developmental state project. These include “the nature of individual parties - the extent to which they are capable of including and organising relatively broad coalitions of social interests, as opposed to having narrow social bases which accentuate rather than alleviate conflict; the extent to which they can represent programmatic alternatives as opposed to cleintelistic or personalistic interests”.³⁴ This is likely to enhance the democratic and developmental potentials of the state.

It is our contention that what the democratic developmental state requires is a political system that is able to accommodate diverse political interests and not one that prescribes one party. This is in spite of the fact that some of the countries that can be said to be democratic developmental states, Botswana and Japan, have been dominated by one party in the last fifty years. The key point here is that the rights of citizens to form and join political parties of their choice should not be curtailed by the state. Of importance is therefore a climate that allows other political parties to thrive, and regularity of elections so that citizens can voice their concerns about the social, economic and political direction of the country. Where the outcome of an election is already predetermined due to the dominance of one party, it is likely to lead to voter apathy, although there is no empirical evidence in this regard. Therefore, a political system that encourages real contest among competing parties might be more desirable; especially as it forces the dominant party to be

³³ White 37.

³⁴ Ibid.

more accountable to citizens. An electoral system that promotes accountability becomes more important than the number of political parties involved in the election process.

Two other elements of the institutional coherence of the democratic developmental state that are important for our purposes are the constitutional systems of government: parliamentary versus presidential, and unitary versus federalist.³⁵ Although the debate around these has not been resolved among scholars and policy practitioners, of importance in our conception of the democratic developmental state is whether or not the system adopted is able to promote and engender coherent and authoritative governance. In this respect, the inclusiveness and stability of the system become important components in defining the democratic developmental state. One of the merits of this conceptual approach is that it allows for institutional differences or variations among democratic developmental states while the aims of their internal workings remain the same - that is, inclusiveness, accountability, stability and authoritative governance, as well as broad and grassroots participation in the democratic process.

3. THE POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES OF AFRICA SINCE 1960

At independence, most African governments set for themselves the task of pursuing vigorously the process of nation-building with the aim of uniting their multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious societies.³⁶ In fact nation building and national unity was the rallying cry of the immediate post-colonial African leaders. But this process was undertaken in typical top-down fashion with centralising tendencies. This had far-reaching adverse consequences for development and governance.

Just like with the nation-building process, African states also embarked on processes of economic and social modernisation. In the immediate post-independence era, many states followed a strategy of massive state interventions in all fields of the economy as part of their ideological commitment to development intended to eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease. Whether through the adoption of mixed economy policies or African socialism, there were massive state interventions in the social, economic and political life of the emerging societies. Because of developmental failures however, some scholars and development practitioners would *a priori* dismiss the African state as lacking developmental objectives, and would even argue for the impossibility of the developmental state in Africa. Such a view

³⁵ White.

³⁶ Laakso, Liisa & Olukoshi, Adebayo O. 'The Crisis of the Post-Colonial Nation-State Project in Africa.' in Olukoshi Adebayo O, Laakso Liisa (eds). *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 1996.

is a misreading of African political economy. Therefore, rather than deny the African state developmentalism, any scientific inquiry should examine the relevant policy materials to see if there were such objectives. Then on that basis, the enquiry should proceed to examine why the African state was unable to achieve its developmentalist goals. Mkandawire,³⁷ an African scholar that embarked on this path, demonstrated that the immediate post-independence African state sees developmentalism as a cornerstone of its efforts. But as will be shown later in this section, the adoption of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) led to the evaporation of the little capacity of the African state. In addition, it also constrained/limited the policy options available to the state, which made Mkandawire³⁸ succinctly describe African states as 'choiceless democracies'.

But by the 1980s both the mixed economy (marked by the Import Substitution (IS) approach to development and the establishment of arrays of public utilities) and 'African Socialism' had failed to deliver the desired developmental results. These developmental failures were not the result of lack of developmental ideology. As pointed out above, developmentalism was one of the major preoccupations of the first generation of African leaders. Be that as it may though, the African state at the initial period could be described as developmentalist but it certainly has been unable to foster a sustainable accumulation model to ensure sustained economic growth. The point is that the first generation of the African state conceived developmentalism only in terms of poverty reduction, welfare provision, etc and not in terms of economic growth. Hence, public enterprises were intended to provide basic services to the people. Unfortunately, however, the African state has been unable to both achieve its developmental objectives and foster sustained growth and industrialisation.

In the face of developmental failure, coupled with external and internal imperatives, African states began to rethink and embraced the IMF-World Bank induced SAPs. This policy privileged export led development, liberalisation, privatisation and cost recovery social policy, among others. This policy-orientation had another ramification for the African state - a preoccupation with economic growth. In fact, the policy thrust was to get the macro-economic fundamentals right in order to achieve a high economic growth rate. With the adoption of SAPs came an assault on the state that further constrained its capacity to foster a developmental agenda (partly because of the erosion of its autonomy and what Edigheji³⁹ refers to as its disembodiment); the dominance of technocrats in decision-making who are more accountable to bureaucrats in international development agencies than to their people or their political elite. Consequently, as from the 1980s, the African state has been unable to

³⁷ Mkandawire 2001.

³⁸ Mkandawire 1999.

³⁹ Edigheji Omano. 'The African State and Socio-Economic Development: An Institutional Perspective.' *African Journal of Political Science*. June 2004, Vol 9 No 1.

act as a coherent collective actor able to identify and implement developmental goals. One of the developmental implications of this is that the African state has been captured by particularistic interest groups, with the state becoming an arena for private capital accumulation. This has created a climate for contest for political power assuming illegal and violent forms including military coups and rigging of elections. Ironically, the 'good governance' aspect of the SAP package ignored the nature of the political regimes (which was said to be outside the ambit of the World Bank and IMF's work). This policy thrust finds sympathetic ears in certain academic circles that argue that emphasis in African countries should rather be on "improving the capacity, commitment and quality of government administration, of developing an effective developmental state",⁴⁰ rather than focusing on regime type.

On the continent, like elsewhere, SAPs failed to achieve their stated objectives. Therefore, the 1980s came to be dubbed Africa's lost decade. This was because Africans were worse off in the 1990s than at the time of their political independence, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, inflation and infrastructural decay prevailing in most countries. And even the few countries that experienced remarkable economic growth, such as Botswana, continued to be marked by high income and wealth inequalities. The World Bank in a study entitled 'Can Africa Claim the 21st Century', elegantly summed up the dire developmental situation in the continent thus:

Despite gains in the second half of the 1990s, Sub-Saharan Africa enters the 21st century with many of the world's poorest countries. Average per capita income is lower than at the end of the 1960s. Incomes, assets, and access to essential services are unequally distributed. And the region contains a growing share of the world's absolute poor, who have little power to influence the allocation.⁴¹

These prevailing situations provided fertile grounds for political and social unrest.

By the mid-1980s, a wave of democratisation began to sweep across the African continent. This development can be attributed to both internal and external factors. The domestic factors included the emergence of civil society organisations and pro-democracy movements in opposition to the authoritarian regimes. The external factors were partly because liberal democracy, with its strong emphasis on good governance, had become hegemonic both in policy and scholarly arenas. Hence international development agencies and donor countries exerted pressures on African countries to democratise. Development aid and loans to the continent were henceforth conditional on the willingness of African countries to embrace 'good governance', as encapsulated in the Berg report⁴² and was seen

⁴⁰ Jeffries, Richard. 'The State, Structural Adjustment and Good Government in Africa.' *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*. 31 March 1993: 28.

⁴¹ World Bank. 'Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?' Washington D C : World Bank, 2000:1.

⁴² World Bank (Berg Report) *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*. Washington D C : World Bank. 1981.

as a necessary foundation for the implementation of effective aid, sustainable social and economic development in Africa.⁴³ The internal imperatives coupled with external pressures became the drivers for African states to embrace multiparty democracy. This new wave of political liberalisation, referred to as Africa's 'second revolution' or 'second liberation', forced many African states to recognise the inevitability of political pluralism and majority rule.

Accordingly, in the last two decades, most African countries have embraced multipartyism. However, the democratisation process has failed to bring about fundamental and lasting changes in domestic power structures. In addition, the democratisation process has not fundamentally led to a qualitative improvement in the living standards of the majority of the African population who continue to be mired in poverty, squalor, hunger and disease. Rita Abrahamsen⁴⁴ poignantly captured this link between electoral democracy and development in Africa thus:

Although democracy may, at least initially, have expanded the room for political expression, particularly in terms of a more critical press and opportunities for social and industrial protest, the political influence of Africa's newly enfranchised citizens has been highly limited. In particular, demands for socio-economic improvements by the poorer sections of the population have been effectively ruled out a priori... In this sense, these are exclusionary democracies: they allow for political parties and elections but cannot respond to the demands of the majority or incorporate the masses in any meaningful way.

The SAP's prescriptions also limited the policy choices for Africa. Furthermore, in spite of the political liberalisation of African economies, foreign direct investment (FDI) and development aid flows to the continent have been on the decline. And just like in the 1960s, by the early 21st century, African economies continued to be primarily sector based with a growing informal sector.

The failure of SAPs and political liberalisation in the continent, forced a rethink of the development path in Africa. Consequently, a number of development proposals were put forward as alternatives to SAPs, driven mostly by African scholars and encapsulated in a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) policy framework for Africa's economic recovery. This development coincided with the resurgence of the new institutional economics that emphasised the central role of the state in development.

In this perspective, the developmental failure of the post-colonial African state is attributed to its undemocratic nature, weak internal institutions, and the repression and

⁴³ The collapse of the Soviet Union also played a major part as an external factor, allowing the liberal agenda to dominate in Africa.

⁴⁴ Abrahamsen, Rita. *Disciplining Democracy: Development and Good Governance in Africa*. London: Zed Books, 2000.

exclusion of domestic social partners from the governance process.⁴⁵ This is eloquently captured in the 'African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation' that asserts that:

The political context of socioeconomic development has been characterised, in many instances by an over-centralisation of power and impediments to the effective participation of the overwhelming majority of the people in social, political and economic development. As a result, the motivation of the majority of African people and their organisations to contribute their best to the development process... has been severely constrained and curtailed and their collective and individual creativity has been undervalued and underutilised.⁴⁶

The African state's weak internal institutional capacity as well as the lack of people's participation are therefore said to have accounted for its inability to forge and sustain a developmental agenda. As part of this rethink, there is an increasing emphasis on democratisation to include popular participation so as to include people and popular organisations in the developmental project and in the governance process. In addition, it is argued that democratic consolidation is dependent on people's participation. This has in some circles been erroneously equated to civil society participation in public policy-making and implementation. As a result, civil society organisations are being substituted for people's participation. The privileging of civil society in the governance and development processes is not by accident. It was part of the Washington Consensus to minimise the role of the state in development - the *destatisation* - and displacement of people and popular organisations. It is not that popular organisations are not part of civil society but that popularly rooted organisations, which are mostly associations of the poor, are being marginalised in the development and governance processes. Worse still, the main civil society organisations, especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs), that have been mainstreamed in the development and governance processes have become part of the market ideology to keep out citizens from the development process. In the policy arena, the public policy has become professionalised with NGOs acting as gatekeepers for ordinary citizens and at times for embedded community based organisations (CBOs). The argument is that these organisations by their nature are more likely to promote poverty reduction and equitable development

⁴⁵ Mengisteab Kidane. 'A partnership of the state and the market in Africa development: what is an appropriate strategy mix?' in Mengisteab, Kidane, Logan, Ikubolajeh B (eds). *Beyond Economic Liberalization in Africa: Structural Adjustment and the Alternatives*. London: Zed Books, 1995: 2.

Scholars, such as Kindane Mengisteab, erroneously blamed the inability of the African state to forge strong links with the business sector on the absence of domestic entrepreneurs and the domination of the private sector by foreign capitalists. This analysis cannot be valid because the East Asian Developmental State has shown that where there was a strong business class, the state helped to develop such a class and where it was weak, the state undertook activities that strengthened it. A more plausible explanation for the weak link between the African state and capital is that the former was unable to identify and promote a developmental project that would enhance capital accumulation. This is an important factor that set the African state apart from its East Asian counterpart.

⁴⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

strategies than NGOs and professional groups of middle class citizens. It is in this respect that popular organisations are being conceived as a crucial element of the democratic developmental state. Thus a democratic developmental state is conceived as one that builds its legitimacy on its capacity to contemporaneously foster productive economic activities and economic growth, and qualitatively improve the living conditions of its people and reduce poverty.

The inability of countries to address the latter, poses a great threat to national security. The argument is that nation-building and development must centre on human security with the involvement of an active citizenry. This paradigm of human security implies that conflicts arise from the inability of the socio-political system to satisfy the needs of the people. There is, therefore, a paradigm shift in the conception of Africa development and governance as it moves away from a narrow focus on macro-economic stability, military security and electoral democracy to that of the qualitative improvement of people's living standards and participatory or cooperative governance. The state is thus brought back into the development and governance process as a major player.

4. CONCLUSION

In the discussion above, we have provided a framework to understand the concept of a democratic developmental state. Though not exhaustive, we have defined the democratic developmental state based on its institutional attributes and objectives. It not only has the institutional attributes of the classical developmental state, that is, being autonomous and coherent, but also takes on board the attributes of procedural democracy. In addition, the democratic developmental state is one that forges broad-based alliances with society and ensures popular participation in the governance and transformation processes. Although the democratic developmental state may be federalist or unitary, a parliamentary or presidential system of government, it is guided by the goals of coherence and authoritative governance, accountability, inclusiveness, stability, ability to generate consensus and popular participation.

We have also defined the democratic developmental state in terms of its capacity to promote development and growth. These objectives as well as its institutional attributes are important yardsticks to judge whether or not a state is a democratic developmental state.

Although we have briefly sketched the background of Africa's political economy, the conceptual framework above serves as a useful starting point for scholars to interrogate the challenges that has constrained the continent in establishing democratic developmental states, and the prospects for attaining democratic developmental states in Africa.