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# Constructing the social democratic developmental state in Africa: lessons from the “Global South”

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## Abstract

Since the dawn of the post-colonial era in the various regions of the “Global South,” including Africa, the appropriate role of the state in the development process has been a frontier issue. The resulting debate has revolved around two major trajectories: the minimalist state and the maximalist state. The former, shaped by the liberal cum neo-liberal Weltanschauung, posits that the state should have a limited role in socio-economic development—basically the creation of propitious conditions for the private accumulation of capital. Essentially, the suzerainty over the development process should rest with the “market” and its associated forces, particularly businesses. On the other hand, the maximalist state perspective asserts that the state should have a prominent role in the development process, including serving as the engine. Importantly, the debate has gone through various cycles, each dominated by the minimalist state paradigm.

In spite of the hegemony of the minimalist state perspective, several states in the “Global South” have experimented with various models of state *dirigisme*—the “developmental state:” authoritarian (e.g. Singapore and South Korea) and democratic (e.g. Botswana and Mauritius). Against this backdrop, using the lessons learned from the experiences of some of the states in the “Global South” that have experimented with variants of the developmental state model, this article concluded that the social democratic developmental state is the best trajectory for promoting human-centered democracy and development in Africa.

## Introduction

The role of the state in socio-economic development has generated an intense debate both in the academy and in the corridors of policy-making. Two broad schools of thought have emerged. The liberal/neo-liberal school argues that the state should have a minimal role in the economy. Instead, control of the economy should rest with the “market” and “market forces” based on the overarching principles of competition and “supply and demand”. In contradistinction, the statist school (and its variants) posits that the state generally should play a greater role in the economy, and serve as an engine of socio-economic development. These two major theoretical cum policy frameworks have led to differing roles for the state in both the “Global North” and the “Global South”.

In the case of Africa, the constituent states adapted either the developmental state model or the liberal or “minimalist state” one. In the case of the former, during the initial phase of the post-colonial era, countries like Ghana, Tanzania and Botswana (and later Mauritius) adapted the developmental state trajectory as the pathway to development. This entailed the emergence of various forms of welfarism such as free education, free health services, and subsidies to the agricultural sector. On the other hand, an

appreciable amount of the African states embraced the liberal pathway. By the end of the 1960s, only Botswana and Mauritius retained the developmental state model. Ghana and Tanzania, two of the pioneers of the developmental state model on the African Continent, abandoned it. In the case of Ghana, the change in direction was brought by the removal of the Nkrumah regime from power by the military with the assistance of the United States and Britain (the two countries portrayed President Nkrumah as a “communist, “and hence a threat to their “national interests”) (Ray and Schaap, 1979; Blum, 2003). As for Tanzania, the confluence of domestic and external factors forced it to abandon the developmental state pathway to development. In the case of the other African states that had adapted the development state model, they were forced to abandon it for several reasons, including the vulnerability of their monocrop economic base, the central source of revenue for supporting socio-economic development, to price fluctuations in the world capitalist system. In other words, the prices of raw materials such as agricultural products began to experience cycles of decline. In turn, this affected the export earnings of African states. With their export earnings dwindling, it became increasingly difficult for these states that were pursuing the developmental state model to continue in such a direction. In addition, the large numbers of parastatals that were established as part of the accentuation of the state’s premier role in development become unproductive and unprofitable. Hence, they became liabilities for the state, by, among other things, draining money from the state’s coffers (money that was needed to continue funding development).

By the 1980s, with few exceptions, the states in Africa were experiencing major economic problems, including high unemployment and mass abject poverty. Both the scope and the severity of the crises led to this period being referred to as “Africa’s lost decade” (Shivji, 2006). Bereft of visionary and committed leadership, the crises-plagued African states turned to the United States, other countries in the “Global North,” and the Bretton Woods institutions—International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—for solutions. Accordingly, the neoliberal development model was imposed by the suzerains of the world capitalist system as the so-called panacea to Africa’s economic and social crises. Under the new development paradigm, the principal responsibility for the continent’s social and economic crises was laid at the doorstep of the state. As Mkandawire (2001:293) observes, “...the African state [became] the most demonized social institution in Africa, vilified for its weaknesses, its over-extension, its interference with the smooth functioning of markets, its repressive character, its dependence on foreign powers, its ubiquity, its absence, etc.” The alternative was the establishment of what White (2006:60) calls a “market-friendly state presiding over a predominantly capitalist economy”. The blueprint for the construction of the neo-liberal state in Africa found expression in the IMF and World Bank-imposed “structural adjustment program” (SAP)—a battery of economic conditionalities, including trade liberalization, an “open door policy” toward metropolitan-based multinational corporations and other businesses, currency devaluation, and the decimation of the “social safety net” (for those African states that had some welfare programs) (Payer, 1975; Mbaku, 1999, 2008).

Interestingly, after more than a decade, SAP failed to solve Africa’s economic and social problems. In fact, it made them worse (Mbaku, 1999, 2008). Unwilling to admit the failure of SAP, and its deleterious effects on various African states, the U.S.-led suzerains launched the “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) in 1996. The thrust of this initiative is “debt forgiveness” for states in the “Global South” that democratize and recommit to capitalism (Ali, 2011). Under this arrangement, several countries in “Global South” have received debt forgiveness. However, this has not translated into improvement in the material conditions of the subalterns in the affected African states.

With the failure of the neo-liberal development model, there is now a renewed interest among Africanist scholars and policy-makers in assessing the developmental state framework as a viable alternative to neo-liberalism. In this vein, the purpose of this article is

twofold. First, it will interrogate the experiences of some of the countries in the “Global South”—Singapore, South Korea, Botswana and Mauritius— that have experimented with the authoritarian and liberal democratic models of developmental state. The purpose is to identify some major lessons from these states’ experiences. Second and in turn, based on these lessons that are deciphered from the four case studies, the study will examine the ways in which a developmental state with a social democratic orientation can be constructed in Africa.

## Review

### Theoretical issues

White (2006:63) posits that “democracy, even in its procedural or minimalist form, is a massive developmental good in its own right”. In other words, democracy and development are interconnected. However, he argues that in order to be useful, democracy must be given substance. For example, democratic institutions must develop the capacity to address development challenges, by, among other things, enabling the state to contribute to economic growth, the making of social and physical investment and the redistribution of income and wealth (White, 2006:64).

Treading on the democracy-development nexus as stressed by White (2006), Edigheji (2005) interrogates the substantive contents of two of the major pillars of the democratic developmental state. In terms of the democratic dimension, he identifies several major elements, including the holding of regular, free and fair elections, the promotion of equity, accountability, transparency, the respect for human rights, the establishment of a multiparty system, the centrality of the rule of law, and citizens’ participation in governance (Edigheji, 2005:3). In terms of the development dimension, he accentuates several major issues. A key one is that the state must play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth. In turn, the dividends of economic growth should help transform the socio-economic conditions of the citizens. This would include addressing poverty and socio-economic inequities. Another major issue is the importance of the state developing institutional capacity, so that it can effectively and efficiently govern development. Moreover, he asserts that the state should have autonomy, so that it can be independent from the various forces that might attempt to capture it. As well, Edigheji accords importance to the need for the state to be embedded in the society. This would require that the state develops collaborative relationships with various domestic actors, so that they can become partners in the development process.

For his part, Mkandawire (2001:308) argues that the developmental state should operate within the context of ‘democratic politics’. This means that all of the activities of the state should be shaped by major democratic principles such as consultation, debate, pluralism and accountability. Importantly, the state’s *modus operandi* should be framed by a “development ideology” that prioritizes socio-economic development, and the resulting transformation of the lives of citizens.

Using Nigeria as a case study, Amuwo (2008) examines the ways in which Nigeria could be transformed from a negligent state to a democratic developmental one. He begins by probing the horrendous record of the Nigerian state in terms of human development—health care, education, etc. He blames the primacy of what he terms “predatory politics” for the Nigerian state’s neglect of the basic human needs of the majority of its citizens (Amuwo, 2008:24). In addition, he argues that the much touted market reforms that were undertaken during the Obasanjo regime failed to improve the material conditions of the subalterns. Against this background, he proffers the democratic developmental state as the best option for Nigeria. In addition to the imperative of the state being democratic, he emphasizes the need for a patriotic and committed leadership, the need for domestic investment as a way of aiding domestic capital formation, and the formulation of people-centered development strategies that are reflective of the objective local conditions.

Maphunye (2009:46) examines the important role of what he calls a “developmental public service and administration” in the operations of the democratic developmental

state. He argues that the effectiveness of the public service would be contingent upon several conditions: meritocratic recruitment, attractive compensation, a sense of dedication on the part of civil servants, civil servants' commitment to ethical standards, and the allocation of adequate resources to the various institutions that constitute the public service. In addition, at the macro-level, he draws attention to the importance of public servants forging collaborative relationships with various communities so that they can participate in the development process, and the fostering of co-operation between the central and local governments.

Similarly, Fakir (2007) emphasizes the important role of the public service in the development process. Specifically, he stresses the importance of development co-ordination, so as to ensure that the public service and other public institutions' operations are aligned with the national development agenda. Functionally, he identifies several broad major interlocking functions of the public service in development governance: regulating, administering, executing, mediating, and the delivery of "public goods" (Fakir, 2007:1).

### **Matters arising**

Based on the literature reviewed, three major foundational pillars of the democratic developmental state can be discerned. The first one concerns the fundamentals of the democratic developmental state: a vision, dedicated and committed leadership, a development ideology, autonomy, embeddedness, hegemony, the funding of development, and the importance of state capacity. The second pillar is the democratic one. And this is anchored on several major pillars: the respect for political human rights, "checks and balances," the "rule of law", the independence of the judiciary, a multiparty system, the holding of regular, free and fair elections, accountability, transparency, and a vibrant civil society. Third, the development axle consists of the structural transformation of the economic base, the imperative of industrialization, investing in the infrastructure, the development of strategies, the importance of a domestic entrepreneurial class, the centrality of development planning, and the importance of the state governing the "market".

Against this background, these three foundational pillars along with the lessons that are discerned from the experiences of the states in the "Global South" that have experimented with various models of the developmental state would be used to design the modalities for the social democratic development state in Africa. In other words, the three foundational pillars will provide the theoretical panoply, while the case studies will supply the empirical referents (the foundational pillars are used as the criteria for assessing the case studies).

### **Experiments with the developmental state in the "global south:" case studies**

#### ***Background***

Broadly, two models of the developmental state—the authoritarian and liberal democratic— have been used by various states in the "Global South." In the case of the authoritarian developmental state, it is polity that makes socio-economic development the centerpiece of the national agenda within the framework of a political system that is underpinned by the suppression of political rights and civil liberties such as the holding of free, fair and competitive elections, freedoms of association, assembly, press, as well as the lack of "checks and balances", and accountability, among others. As for the democratic developmental state, it is polity that makes socio-economic development the centerpiece of the national agenda within the context of a political system in which political rights and civil liberties are respected, and "checks and balances", and accountability, among others, are required.

Against this backdrop, this section of the article will examine the Singaporean and South Korean experiments with the authoritarian developmental state, and the Botswana, and Mauritian experiences with the democratic variant. Singapore and South Korea were chosen, because they are two of the best models of the authoritarian

developmental state in the ‘Global South’. Similarly, Botswana and Mauritius were selected as the sample of the democratic developmental state genre, because they are two of the best cases in both the “Global South”, and particularly in Africa.

### **The authoritarian developmental states**

#### ***South Korea***

State-building in South Korea began in earnest after World War two, when the country became independent in 1948. But the country entered the international system riveted by the similar constraints of socio-economic underdevelopment that colonialism and imperialism had bequeathed to the “global south”.

In spite of American dominance and the associated peddling of its liberal democratic cum capitalist development model, the emergent South Korean ruling class opted for the authoritarian developmental state model. The model combined two contradictory features: authoritarianism and development (Jensen, 2008). In the case of the former, the state, among other things, asphyxiated political rights and civil liberties. On the other hand (the latter), the state sought to improve the material conditions of its citizens. The authoritarian developmental state was hoisted on several pillars. At the core was an ideology that prioritized socio-economic development as the national project. One of the major strategies that was pursued in this vein was the undertaking of land reforms. The overarching purpose was to redistribute land so that the agricultural sector could become a central pillar of national development. Accordingly, the landed class, which had monopolized the land, was abolished (You, 2011). Thereafter, the vision was embodied in a development plan that served as the roadmap. In order to implement the plan, various public institutions were established. In order to make these institutions efficient and effective, the recruitment of personnel was based on merit as the pathway to mobilizing the requisite administrative, managerial and technical skills that were germane to the developmental process. Also, public servants were given excellent compensation packages, secured tenure and autonomy in decision-making. Collectively, these public institutions had several interlocking functions, including the formulation and implementation of development policies, and providing oversight of the private businesses in the various sectors of the economy. Another major element was the development of an industrial base. This created the conditions for the production of manufactured goods. In turn, this helped foster trade competitiveness. Also, the state established its suzerainty over the “market”, to ensure that the mechanism was aligned with the national development agenda. As for the financing of development, the state used an assortment of strategies, including public investment in various industries, and the development of stabilization policies, such as currency control, to help insulate the local economy from external shocks. Overall, the state was then well positioned to provide various “public goods” to the citizens, including health care and education.

Finally, the authoritarian developmental state model yielded both successes and problems. In terms of the successes, they included the positive role of the development ideology in framing and conditioning the process, the establishment of public institutions, whose efficiency and effectiveness were anchored on a culture that privileged merit, the security of tenure, and professional autonomy, the ability to discipline the “market”, so that it did not operate in ways that were deleterious to the state’s development agenda, bringing the importance of land reforms to the fore, formulating and implementing financial and economic strategies that helped strengthened the local economy, and the improvement of human welfare through the provision of various “public goods”. However, there are two major problems with the development model. The authoritarian political multiplex that it created adversely affected the support of the majority of the citizens, because of the resulting dialectical tension between political repression and human development. The related problem was the festering of conflicts, and their ultimate implosion. This was evidenced by the various military coups,

and the resultant establishment of military regimes that contributed to, and ultimately worsened the crisis of legitimacy.

### *Singapore*

When Singapore declared its independence in 1965, after breaking up with Malaysia, the country was plagued by the multidimensional crises of underdevelopment that characteristically bedeviled post-colonial states in the “Global South”. Accordingly, like South Korea, the first generation of Singaporean leaders made the determination that the liberal development model that was based on, among other things, the “minimalist state, was not the appropriate framework for guiding the Herculean task of addressing the country’s post-colonial challenges.

Alternatively, Singapore designed an authoritarian developmental state model. The rationale was that authoritarianism was the essential vehicle for shepherding the process of socio-economic development. Then Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew, who was the principal architect of the authoritarian developmental state, castigated democracy as an anathema to development. As Omoweh (2012:6) explains, “Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew had contended that Singapore did not need democracy to develop, as evident in his claim of having moved Singapore from the Third World to the First without democracy”. Operationally, the Singaporean authoritarian developmental state had several major features: It had a development ideology. That is, it made the undertaking of socio-economic development the central focus of the state. Another major element was the creation of effective and efficient public institutions. Some of these institutions had oversight responsibilities over various sectors of the economy, including telecommunication and real estate (Haque, 2004:229). Collectively, these public institutions’ role in development governance was to “enhance economic growth, generate employment and deliver various services” (Haque, 2004:229). Also, the state developed partnership with the private sector as an integral part of its strategy of what Evans (1995) refers to as “embeddedness”. As well, an industrial base was established as a way of enhancing trade competitiveness. In turn, the industrial base was used as the cornerstone for establishing import-substitution industries (Le Blanc, 2008: 16). Subsequently, these industries played pivotal roles in fostering trade competitiveness, and the resulting reaping of revenues. In order to help the establishment of these industries, the state, among other things, provided loans on concessional terms—comparatively low interest rates, longer grace period, and a longer time to repay the principal. At the base of development governance was the centrality of planning. The state emphasized the formulation of a development plan that embodied objectives, targets, and financing, among others. Ultimately, the revenues that were generated from the state’s various economic activities were then used to finance development—the delivery of “public goods” such as education to the populace.

In terms of an assessment, the Singaporean development state had both successes and challenges. In the case of the former, the major successes included the establishment of efficient and effective public institutions as the fulcrums of the development process, the importance of development planning, the formulation of effective strategies for financing development, the development of modalities for governing the “market”, and the provision of “public goods”. On the other hand, the major challenge was the authoritarian political system. This created a crisis of legitimacy that undermined the gains that were made in the areas of economic and social development.

### **The liberal democratic developmental states**

#### *Botswana*

When Botswana gained its independence from Britain in 1966, it entered the global system as one of the poorest states in the world (Taylor, 2002). The country’s crises of underdevelopment were exacerbated by its geography—semi-desert land and land-locked

(Meyns, 2010). In addition, like all countries in the “global south”, the country inherited a monocrop economy with its associated vulnerability to the vicissitudes in the prices of raw materials.

Hamstrung from the onset of the post-independence era, the country’s first generation of leaders chose to construct a liberal democratic developmental state. Under this arrangement, the state became committed to the simultaneous pursuance of the promotion of human rights and a modicum of human development. Specifically, the Batswana liberal democratic development state is anchored on several major pillars. At the core is the state’s commitment to human development. Also, a development ideology was developed that prioritized human development as a national project. Further, effective and efficient public institutions were designed. Operated by professional bureaucrats, the public institutions that are involved in development governance play critical roles in the formulation of the national development plan, the elaboration of the development ideology, the integration of development and financial planning, the management of conflicts, the management of natural resources, especially diamonds, and the delivery of public goods such as education (Taylor, 2002; Maipose, 2003). Development is funded by domestic capital, foreign aid and foreign direct investment.

In terms of the successes of the Batswana developmental state, there are several major ones. The development plan articulates the goals, the targets and the ways for achieving them. Moreover, the corps of professional civil servants underscores the importance of expertise, efficiency and effectiveness in development governance. Also, the country’s diamonds, the mainstay of its economy, are managed very well. This, among other things, has militated against the need to contract huge external debts from the core states and the Bretton Woods institutions—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The emphasis on inclusivity, including collaboration with the private sector, has helped galvanize both the citizenry at large and business as major stakeholders in the development process. As well, public goods are delivered quite well, as evidenced by the increased literacy rates and life span. On the other hand, there are three major challenges. The central one is that Botswana is dependent upon a monocrop economy based on diamonds. There are several resulting risks. The key one is that the prices of raw materials are vulnerable to fluctuations. In addition, by and large, raw materials are cheaper than manufactured goods. Hence, the former is comparatively less competitive than the latter. Similarly, the reliance on foreign aid as a major funding source of development makes the country vulnerable to the whims and caprices of aid donors. Also, in spite of the improvement in human development, poverty remains a major lacuna. Broadly, the vexing problem of poverty underscores one of the major weaknesses of the liberal democratic developmental state model: the central goal is not to eradicate poverty, but to make it manageable.

### ***Mauritius***

Conditioned by the vagaries of colonialism like other countries in the “global south”, Mauritius was confronted with the resultant economic and social problems (Meisenhelder, 1997). In addition, the first corps of leaders in the post-independence era was confronted with the major challenge of nation-building, amid the country’s multiracial tapestry.

Against this backdrop, Mauritius designed a liberal democratic developmental state to shepherd the interrelated processes of state-building, nation-building and socio-economic development. Anchored by a committed leadership, the Mauritian developmental state has several major elements. Like all developmental states, it has a development ideology that provides the compass for navigating the development terrain. Next, there are vibrant public institutions with a corps of public servants, who are stewards of efficiency and effectiveness. Another major element is the corporatist arrangement involving collaboration among the state, labor and business. This is a major bedrock of the country’s approach to embeddedness. Further, a modicum of an industrial base was developed to provide the technological panoply for the import-substitution strategy. As well,

export processing zones (EPZs) were created to serve as major sources for financing development. In addition, a liberal trade regime, competitive exchange rates and economic diversification were pursued to also help mobilize the financial resources that are needed to fund development (Zafar, 2011). Importantly, the thrust of the development process has been geared toward the provision of public goods such as education and health care.

Like the other developmental states, Mauritius' successes include the critical role that has been played by a committed and visionary leadership, the centrality of the development ideology in providing guidance, the important role that has been played by effective and efficient public institutions in providing the administrative, managerial and technical expertise that is indispensable to development, the development of an industrial base and the resulting benefits to the EPZs, among others, and the investment in human development. Also, like Botswana, the country avoided the need for huge external debts from the advanced development capitalist states, and therefore IMF's "structural adjustment programs" by prudently managing its financial and economic resources.

However, the Mauritian developmental state has faced some major challenges. Three major ones are: given its limited domestic resource base, the import-substitution industrialization strategy has therefore been vulnerable to the resource deficit, in the efforts to replace imports. Another major challenge is the increasing incidence of poverty, in spite of the commitment to eradicating it. Also, gender inequality has become a major conundrum (Bunwaree, 2005).

#### **Toward the establishment of the democratic developmental state in Africa**

##### ***The lessons from the "Global South"***

Several lessons—positive and negative— can be discerned from the experiences of the case studies—South Korea, Singapore, Botswana and Mauritius. In the case of the positive lessons, a committed, visionary and patriotic leadership that puts the interests of the country and its citizens above its own is at the vortex. The other positive lessons are: a development ideology, efficient and effective public institutions, industrialization and the resulting development of a technological base, the promotion of a collaborative relationship between the state and various groups in the society, state autonomy, the critical importance of funding sources, the imperative of formulating and implementing strategies that are designed to mobilize financial resources both internally and externally, a productive private sector, and the ultimate importance of the effective delivery of public goods to the citizens.

On the other hand, the negative lessons that need to be avoided by African states are: authoritarianism as the bedrock of the governance architecture, monocrop economy, the reliance on foreign aid and foreign direct investment as major cornerstones for funding development, gender inequality, and poverty.

The aforementioned lessons and others will be used in the design of a democratic developmental state model for Africa. However, cognizance is taken of the fact that the model would need to be nuanced, when it is applied to each African state. In other words, the elements of the model would need to be in conformity with the objective conditions that are prevailing in each African state.

##### **The state type**

In contradistinction to both the authoritarian (e.g. South Korea and Singapore), and liberal democratic developmental state (e.g. Botswana and Mauritius) models, the study suggests the social democratic development state model as the most appropriate trajectory for African states for several reasons. A major rationale is that the social democratic developmental model links democracy and development in mutually reinforcing ways: a sustainable democracy requires development and vice versa. As Sen (2000:3) contends, "Development can be seen...as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy...Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as



well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states". Another reason is that a central thrust of the model is the commitment to end both relative and absolute poverty. Also, the model makes the restructuring of power relationships at all levels—the state, society and civil society— and in all spheres—cultural, economic, political, religious, social, etc.—based on social justice a major priority. In essence, the ultimate goal of the model is to create what T.H. Mitchell (1950: 1) aptly calls "social citizenship"—the empowerment of citizens at all levels of the society through addressing their basic human needs—education, health care, etc.—so that they can be able to fully exercise their democratic freedoms.

Finally, the social democratic developmental state in Africa would consist of the trilogy of the fundamentals, the democracy dimension, and the development dimension. The fundamentals are the core elements that provide the foundational pillars of the model. The democracy dimension comprises the pantheon of political rights and civil liberties. As for the development dimension, it embodies the socio-economic and human development elements of the framework. These three major clusters are intertwined, and must hence work together in mutually reinforcing ways, in order for the model to succeed.

### **The fundamentals**

A visionary, committed and patriotic leadership is indispensable to the success of the social democratic developmental state in Africa. As Habisse (2010:1) argues, "the leadership must be strongly committed to the development goals, and [must place] national development ahead of personal enrichment and/or short-term political gains." This is because leaders serve as the fulcrum of the human agency in the development process, by, among other things, shepherding the process.

Another major fundament is a development ideology—"the ideological underpinnings of the state should be developmental" (Mkandawire, 1998:2). Specifically, this would entail the designing and articulation of a vision for national development. The vision should be "inspiring motivating and challenging" (Ilesami, 2011:18). The critical elements should include a clear delineation of the development objectives and projects to be pursued, the targets, the time frame and the associated costs. Importantly, the vision should be a reflection of the objective conditions of an African country, including the resource base for funding the development process. Also, an inclusive and participatory process should be used in crafting the vision, so that all of the major sectors of the state can be involved, and ultimately gain ownership.

Also, the state would need to be embedded in the society (Evans, 1995). This would entail, as has been discussed, building co-operative and collaborative relationships with various sectors of the society, including the citizens at large, civil society and other citizens-based groups and the private sector (Evans, 1995). Embeddedness is critical for two major reasons. The first one is that it promotes inclusivity in the various aspects of the development process. The other is that it establishes the foundation for the legitimacy of the development process by making the broad array of societal actors stakeholders.

Furthermore, the state should have autonomy. This would entail the freedom to formulate and implement policy decisions without being hamstrung by the particularistic interests of groups within the society. Seddon and Belton-James (1995) make the point quite poignantly: "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".

Linked to the autonomy of the state is its hegemony. This means that the state's ideas about development must be the dominant ones in what Antonio Gramsci refers to as

the “war of position” (Hoare and Smith, 1999:495). The state’s failure to establish its hegemony could lead to the proliferation of ideas about development, especially those with the neo-liberal orientation, and its associated privileging of profits over the material well-being of citizens.

The state’s institutional capacity is quite critical to the successful functioning of the social democratic developmental state. This is because administrative, managerial and technical skills are required for the development process. In this vein, there is the need for the establishment of a public bureaucracy consisting of various institutions that would be involved in development governance. Essentially, these public institutions must be run by professional public servants, who are recruited on the basis of merit with secure tenure and autonomy (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). This cadre of professionals would then bring their administrative, managerial and technical expertise to bear on the formulation and implementation of the various development projects.

Another major foundational pillar concerns the funding of development. In this vein, the state must develop ways in which it can generate the financial resources that are needed to fund various development projects, especially the delivery of public goods. Several funding sources are noteworthy. Taxes from various activities, including income, property and business, could generate substantial revenues. However, it is critical that these taxes be collected regularly and effectively. Also, the state could make investments in various revenue-generating activities. Further, the prudent management of natural resources (for African states that are natural resources-endowed) could yield revenues. As well, trading in industrial goods could generate funds. Domestic savings and the resulting capital formation could provide major revenue base. That is, by encouraging domestic savings, the state would help “boost financial market development, and stimulate economic growth” (Hammouda and Osakwe, 2006:4).

A productive private sector constitutes a major pre-requisite for the overall success of the social democratic state in Africa. This is because the private sector is pivotal to the production of goods and services that is germane to the development process. The state could engage the private sector in two major ways. At the broader level, the state should develop co-operative and collaborative relationships with the private sector and its constituent businesses, especially domestic firms. In terms of specifics, the state should help empower domestic businesses through the provision of various incentives such as tax holidays, tax breaks and concessional loans—what Musamba (2010:24) refers to as the “state’s [utilization of] a wide range of institutional instruments to poke and prod domestic firms to meet domestic and international business standards, productivity levels, and organizational and technical capacities.” In turn, domestic businesses could contribute to job creation and domestic capital formation.

### **Democracy**

The democracy pillar of the social democratic developmental state should be anchored on several major blocks. Political human rights constitute a major set of blocks. These revolve around the confluence of political rights and civil liberties. The former includes issues relating to an African country’s electoral process—the right to vote, the right to run for public office, etc. (Freedom House, 2014). The latter embodies the pantheon of freedoms—assembly, association, press, speech, and thought, among others (Freedom House, 2014).

Another major element is the imperative of establishing a system of “checks and balances”, as the centerpiece of a domestic “balance of power” arrangement between and among the various public institutions of the state that are lodged in the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The overarching purpose is to prevent one public institution from becoming hegemonic to the extent that it subordinates the others. Schematically, the system of “checks and balances” should be anchored on the allocation of appropriate and sufficient powers to each public institution. In this way, for example, as Persson et al.

(1997:1163) argue, “Checks and balances work by creating a conflict of interest between the executive and legislature, yet requiring both bodies to agree on policy. In this way, the two bodies discipline each other to the voters’ advantage”.

Also, the establishment of a functional multiparty system is critical. In order for this to occur, citizens should have, as part of their political human rights, the freedom to organize as many political parties as possible based on the legal requirements. In so doing, an enabling and democratic environment would be created in which “hundred flowers [can] bloom, and a hundred schools of thought [can] contend” (Prah, 1997:2). For their part, the various political parties should be encouraged to have, among other things, broad-based memberships that transcend such identities such as ethnicity and religion, and clearly articulated blueprints for promoting national development. In addition, a culture of tolerance and respect should be fostered so that the debates can focus on policies not personalities and groups. Importantly, there will be broad-based participation by citizens from the various socio-economic strata, because through “social citizenship” their basic human needs would be met. This would have two major resulting benefits. First, the citizens would become the principal owners of elections. Second, ‘social citizenship’ would help minimize the pernicious practice of “vote buying” that is quite widespread in Africa, due to the human needs deficits. Third, because of the investments in public education, the citizens would be well-informed about the various political issues.

Similarly, elections are central to democracy (Lindberg, 2004). These should be held for various public officials at the national and local levels consistent with the constitution of an African state. In terms of their nature, the elections should be held at regular time interval, and they should be free, fair and competitive. In addition, the political culture should discourage the framing of elections as “zero sum games” with the attendant acrimony and conflict. Instead, winning parties and candidates should be willing to work with losing parties and candidates in the promotion of the general welfare of the citizens.

Accountability is another major bedrock of democracy. Broadly, it entails the process of holding public officials and institutions responsible for their actions. And this can be done at two major levels. At the level of the public institutions, horizontal accountability provides the basis on which public officials and institutions can hold each other responsible for their actions. O’Donnell (1998:116) provides an excellent summation of the texture of horizontal accountability:

For [horizontal accountability] to be effective, there must exist state agencies that are authorized and willing to oversee, control, redress, and if need be sanction unlawful actions by other state agencies. The former agencies must have not only legal authority but also sufficient *de facto* autonomy vis-à-vis the latter.

The other level concerns citizens and civil society organizations holding public officials and institutions responsible for their actions through vertical accountability. This can take many forms, including “elections, media scrutiny, and the oversight role of civil society organizations” (Diamond, 1999:2).

Linked to accountability is transparency. The successful functioning of a democratic society requires openness in the conduct of the affairs of the state (Gurria, 2014). Besides classified information that is critical to national security, citizens should have access to information about the operation of their government, when so requested. And this should cover the broad gamut of the operations of the government at various levels. This is important to building trust between state managers, citizens and civil society.

The rule of law is central to the establishment of legitimacy and stability in a democratic society. In its broadest sense, as Rosenfeld (2001:1307) observes, “...the rule of law requires that the state only subject the citizenry to publicly promulgated laws, that the state’s legislative function be separate from the adjudicative function, and that no one within the polity be above the law”. One of the major requirements for the effectiveness of the rule of law is the existence of an independent judiciary. Under this

arrangement, the kernel of judicial independence is the unfettered ability of judges to render decisions devoid of external pressures (Carlton, 2002:839).

A vibrant and autonomous civil society is also a major requirement for a functioning democratic society. That is, by not being subjected to the control of the state, civil society can make invaluable contributions to democratic governance. Two major contributions are noteworthy: playing a pivotal role in helping to ensure vertical accountability, and working with the state to establish the legitimacy of the political system (Diamond, 1996:234).

### **Development**

The development sphere of the social democratic developmental state has several major dimensions. A major one is the imperative of the structural transformation of the economies of African states. This would entail two major measures. The first one is the shift from the monocrop base of the economies, and the associated overdependence on a single major raw material as the lifeblood of the economy to an industrial one. The development of an industrial base would help enhance exports, generate capital for development, and produce goods for domestic consumption (Githinji and Adesida 2011:11). The other is the need for economic diversification. This would involve bringing the benefits of technological development to bear on all of the sectors of the economy—agricultural, industrial, manufacturing and service. There are several resulting benefits, including decreasing the vulnerability of the raw materials, the export base, to the fluctuation in prices, increasing trade competitiveness through the production of manufactured goods, and technological spillover from one sector of the economy to the others.

Another major element is development planning. In order to be successful, the development planning must, among other things, map out the “core priorities,” and weave them together into three major phases: short-term, medium-term and long-term (Gumede, 2009:10). In addition, the plan must be the by-product of broad-based consultation among the various major actors in an African state. As well, the plan should include the beneficiaries of the various development projects, the costs, and the implementation roadmap.

Also, there must be a vibrant and productive domestic entrepreneurial class that would serve as the anchor of the private sector. It is critical for the members of this class to be patriotic and committed to helping advance the material well-being of all of the citizens of an African state. Among its many roles, the local entrepreneurial class would collaborate with the state in the formulation and implementation of the requisite economic, financial and industrial policies that are critical to the development of an industrial base, job creation, economic growth, and domestic capital formation, among others.

Central to the development process is the need for the state to invest in building of the infrastructure—roads, bridges, electrical grid, water supply, sanitation, and communications, among others. The resulting benefits would include the improvement of the standard of living of the citizens, the production of goods, the designing of various services, and the movement of goods from one part of the country to another, as well as for export.

Further, the state would need to formulate and implement various financial and industrial strategies that are ostensibly designed to generate revenues for the funding of the various development projects. Among them are strategic trade policies, strategic industrial policies, import controls, and export promotion. For example, the strategic industrial policies would entail the identification and provision of various kinds of support, including protection from external competition, to key industries that would power the production of manufactured goods both for domestic and external consumption.

Moreover, the role of the “market” is quite important in the development process. In this vein, the state would need to control the “market”, rather than the “market” controlling the state. In controlling the “market”, the state would ensure that the

“market” operates in ways that are in consonance with, and supportive of the national development agenda and its ideological underpinning. As Maphunye (2009: 2) asserts, “In such a state, the role of the market is not to wield its ‘invisible hand’ to resist pro-poor policies, but rather to play a developmental and supportive role to a democratically elected government administration to implement such policies”. Similarly, as Gumede (2009:4) argues, “[The state needs to] govern the market, so that the national development agenda is ascendant”.

Ultimately, the end product of the development process is the advancement of the material well-being of the citizens of an African state. And this can be done through the efficient and effective delivery of public goods such as education and health care (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2013:1). In essence, human development should be the kernel of the development process. As the United Nations Development Program (1990:1) notes,

[Human development] is about people—how development enlarges their choices. It is about more than GNP growth...more than producing commodities and accumulating capital...the most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.

## Conclusion

As the repository of evidence shows, the neoliberal development strategy in its various incantations—“structural adjustment programs” (SAPs), Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), among others— has failed to promote the material well-being of the peoples of Africa, especially the subaltern classes—the non-owning classes. Instead, the suzerainty of the “market” has benefitted the metropolitan-based multinational corporations and other businesses that have reaped huge profits by exploiting Africa’s natural resources and labor. In addition, the members of the local ruling classes in various African states have also benefitted by using their control over state power at various historical junctures to engage in the primitive accumulation of wealth. Hence, the time is ripe for African states to jettison the neoliberal development model.

Alternatively, the study suggests the social democratic developmental state as the best framework for promoting human-centered development and democracy on the continent. This is because the model, among other things, links real democracy—the empowerment of citizens so that they can meaningfully participate in the formulation of the policies that affect their lives, among others—with human-centered development—the investment in education, health care, job creation, decent housing, etc. (Ake, 1996).

## Competing interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

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