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JOURNAL OF AFRICAN TRANSFORMATION
Reflections on Policy and Practice

REVUE DES MUTATIONS EN AFRIQUE
Réflexions sur les politiques et les pratiques

**Rethinking African Development
in the 21st Century**
(Special edition in honour of Thandika Mkandawire)

Vusi Gumedede, Guest Editor

Volume 7, Number 1, 2022



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Editorial

Vusi Gumede (Guest Editor)

The continent of Africa stands at a critical juncture. Almost 70 years after the end of colonial rule, the continent struggles to break the shackles of poverty and underdevelopment. More important, the task of building an inclusive and democratic society remains a work in progress, and often, democratic reversals have become a common phenomenon. At the global level, the continent plays a marginal role in shaping the rules governing international economic relations. To the contrary, bad rules, unjust trade agreements, conditional aid, and debt structures are the means by which African development is regulated. As a result, the ability of African countries to chart their own independent development path is severely restricted. Such externally imposed policies have produced multiple black holes of social exclusion and pockets of slums, and made disabled nation-States more accountable to external forces than to their own citizens.

To fully grasp the reasons behind Africa's underdevelopment and its marginal position in the twenty first century, one must take a retrospective view of the theoretical and political underpinnings of the aborted national project of the early 1960s. To do so, it is important to revisit as a starting point the development thinking of the late Malawian economist Thandika Mkandawire if Africans are to embark on alternative pathways for achieving structural transformation, long-term growth, and policy independence.

Development was the central or overarching theme in Mkandawire's publications and other materials, including his speeches and presentations. He published extensively on social policy (Mkandawire, 2001a), developmental states (2003), regional integration (2014), and economic development, as well as various macroeconomic and political economy issues (2002). He looked at all these themes from a developmentalist perspective (2005). Mkandawire was unusual among economists given his work on nation building, national and social questions (2009), social cohesion, social compacts and pacts,

and other phenomena, usually outside mainstream economic thinking. He challenged neoliberal perspectives and extensively critiqued structural adjustment programmes (Mkandawire and Soludu, 1999) and other schools of thought that have either oversimplified the African development challenge or misunderstood it (Mkandawire, 2010 and 2015).

Mkandawire was inspired by the political thinking of early nationalist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Sekou Touré and Nnamdi Azikiwe, among others. His essay “Thinking about developmental states in Africa” captures the full thrust of the nationalist project (Mkandawire, 2001b). The nationalist project, first and foremost, focused on nation-building and national development, overcoming the institutional legacies of colonialism, and bringing the fruits of social and economic growth to the population. In concrete terms, the national project was oriented towards achieving a more equitable appropriation of the productive forces at the local level, while playing a critical role within the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and the United Nations for a new international economic order. As a result of deliberate actions, African economies registered impressive growth rates during the 1960s and early 1970s, given the initial conditions at the time of independence. Physical infrastructure was greatly improved, in particular in the areas of health, education, and communications. Elaborate social programmes were developed that helped to diffuse social tensions.

As Africa entered the 1970s, however, the national project was being threatened from within and without. At the national level, the national project was undermined by poor political governance. Under the guise of nation-building and national development, post-independence African Governments pursued top-down development strategies that stifled the productivity of their own citizens. Policies came to be determined solely by concern with the means rather than the conditions for development. This gave rise to a preoccupation with structures, leading to centralization and a top-down approach to the management of public affairs. Thus, barely halfway into the second decade of independence, the vision of an independent Africa had started to fall apart, and the gulf between the State and society widened considerably in the process.

With the ascendance of neoliberalism in the early 1980s, a subject on which Mkandawire wrote extensively, African countries were forced by

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to implement harsh structural adjustment programmes to service outstanding debts and gain access to development finance from donor institutions. In exchange, they were obliged to open their markets, dismantle many aspects of the African State and institute minimal democratic procedures that were essential for the proper functioning of the market. The development welfarism of the 1960s, a central plank of the nationalist project, was completely erased from the neoliberal development package. Thus, policymaking, an important aspect of sovereignty, was wrenched from the hands of the African State.

It is, therefore, important to recognize that the development crisis in Africa is embedded in historical and structural circumstances. What is normally accepted as development in Africa is simply an imperial project designed to serve powerful western interests (Cheru, 2009). As the late Claude Ake (1996, p. 275) aptly put it: "... Because of exogeneity, Africa never had a development agenda, but a confusion of agendas." Moving forward, policy interventions, to be effective, must first address these contextual factors.

The collection of papers in this issue of the journal provides interesting insights on alternative development thinking in Africa, drawing heavily from the writings of Thandika Mkandawire. The contributors have covered five themes: democracy and development; the developmental State; social policy and development; the national project and Pan-Africanism; and neoliberalism and the unmaking of the African State.

The special issue opens with Yusuf Bangura's examination of Mkandawire's understanding of development. The central message from Mkandawire's works is that development has been the preoccupation of the founding fathers of the political independence of Africa, and that post-independence Africa, as a "late-comer", is urged to "run while others walk" to "catch up" with the so-called developed world (Mkandawire, 2003 and 2011). It is in this context that Mkandawire disagreed with various explanations put forward by other leading development scholars as far as economic development is concerned for Africa. This is followed by a detailed discussion of Mkandawire's key works under four themes: combatting Africa's maladjustment; developmental States and neopatrimonialism; advancing the development agenda in social policy; and grounding development in democratic processes.

Khabele Matlosa explores two important themes propounded by Thandika Mkandawire: (a) the democracy-development nexus; and (b) the question of the developmental State. The main thesis of the paper is that current electoral /liberal democracy in Africa is devoid of development and, therefore, socially hollow. Second, Africa's development trajectory has been influenced greatly by the externally imposed structural adjustment programmes that have weakened African States and their ability to pursue alternative strategies of development and social transformation. Considering these conclusions, Matlosa makes a case for Africa to transcend the liberal model and embrace developmental democracy. This will require building developmental States as key drivers of such a democracy. While Mkandawire acknowledged that authoritarian regimes, such as those governing the four Asian tigers, have promoted economic growth, he reminds us that such positive socioeconomic outcomes can only be sustained under democratic regimes.

Jomo Kwame, Anis Chowdhury and Michael T. Clark, inspired by Mkandawire's writings, question the relevance of the concept of good governance as a myth advocated by the World Bank as the prescription for Africa's underdevelopment. The authors outright reject the relevance of the concept by drawing on case studies where, despite poor governance indicators, growth has continued to be recorded in some fast-growing Asian countries. The authors argue that, while good governance reforms are necessary for development, they have not only created unrealistic expectations, but have also unnecessarily complicated the work of Governments. Good governance advocates have seldom been right about how best to improve governance. Drawing from Mkandawire's radical thinking, they conclude that good governance is certainly neither necessary nor sufficient for development. The overwhelming evidence is that development leads to improved governance, not the converse. The authors recommend that a pragmatic approach, which first identifies the major constraints to development and progress, is required. Such an approach should be able to empower Governments to analyze and formulate appropriate, pragmatic, and realistic strategies to address development challenges.

Siphamandla Zondi makes the argument that, while Mkandawire has been recognized for his incisive analysis on the idea of the developmental State in Africa or transformative social policy, his contribution to the larger debate about the conditions facing the national project after colonial rule

is perhaps the basis on which his later contributions to the debate on the developmental State were founded. Mkandawire's contribution to the debate on the national project is useful in connecting nationalist forces to global forces and connecting the democratic project to the pursuit of development. The post-colonial national project in Africa has been a subject of much debate, especially concerning such questions as the decolonization of the political machinery, the role of an inheritor State, the democratic transition, development imperatives, economic policies, and the project's relations with the peoples of Africa. Zondi clarifies for us what a comprehensive African epistemic lens for such a discussion might be.

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o revisits issues and debates on Mkandawire's thesis regarding a national, democratic, and developmental State. He argues that the thesis advanced by Mkandawire needs to inform Africa's political practice in democratic governance. To build democracy on the continent, it is critical that democracy be promoted so as to organize citizens politically to capture State power to promote social, economic, political, and cultural relations for the greater good of society. The opposite of these values constitutes what amounts to bad governance, oppression, and dictatorship. The task of building democracy in Africa cannot be accomplished without the active role of political parties, notwithstanding historical, cultural, and regional differences. Political parties will continue to play a central role in the process of democratization and development in Africa.

Emmanuel Ndhlovu revisits Mkandawire's critique of neoliberalism with the intention to demonstrate how his critique has now been confirmed by the unfolding global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic has exposed the ineptness of neoliberalism as a useful development ideology. Building on Mkandawire's critique, the Ndhlovu takes issue with the neoliberal doctrine of *laissez-faire* markets and its promotion of individualism over collectivism, which many African countries adopted in the 1980s and which led to the collapse of their public institutions. Neoliberalism promoted the reduction of public expenditure, privatization, and liberalization of public institutions with the hope of improving their effectiveness and efficiency. This has had calamitous effects on public health-care systems in Africa, which are now in a state of incredible dereliction, thereby increasing the vulnerability of the poor majority on the continent to the pandemic. Drawing from Mkandawire's archive on a critique of structural adjustment programmes,

Ndhlovu posits that, for Africa to weather the COVID-19 storm, an effective, efficient, and inclusive health-care system that is overseen by the State, as opposed to private actors, is critical to saving the lives of the poor majority who cannot afford private-sector health-care services.

Kagiso (TK) Pooe and David Mohale critically examine whether the Government of South Africa under the auspices of the African National Congress (ANC) in the post-1994 period can be considered a developmental State. The ANC-led Government has long desired to be considered and operate as a developmental State. Drawing on Mkandawire's (2001b) seminal paper "Thinking about developmental States in Africa", the authors argue that South Africa does not meet the prerequisites that Mkandawire identified for being considered a developmental State. Mkandawire demonstrated in that seminal piece that, for a country to become a developmental State, ideological and structural components have to be in place. ANC documents like "Ready to govern: ANC policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa" (1992), "The state, property relations and social transformation" (1998), "Economic transformation for a national democratic society" (2007), among many others, illustrate the predominance of the concept in ANC thinking and stated desire for how the State should operate. While in agreement with Mkandawire's contention that certain foundations or components need to be in place for a State to be considered a developmental State, Pooe and Mohale argue that a more empirical assessment now exists for finally deciding whether States like South Africa are developmental States. The COVID-19 pandemic is both a sophisticated and a rather crude means of finally determining South Africa's developmental State credentials.

Toyin Falola focuses on developmentalism to frame the contributions of Mkandawire to the subject as a theory for the transformation of Africa. To attempt a comprehensive discussion, Falola traces the genesis of developmentalism in the United States in the mid-1940s, as part and parcel of America's foreign policy to spread the virtues of American-style free-market capitalism as the way forward for newly independent countries, so as to lure them away from communist ideology. While foreign aid played an important role in that strategy, and a few developing countries did indeed register growth, the strategy did not bring the desired results across Africa and Latin America. By the early 1970s, American-style developmentalism was in decline, with the ascendance of more critical and radical southern perspectives

on developmentalism that attributed the global South's underdevelopment to imperialism. More important, the rise of newly industrializing countries of Asia that followed heterodox policies to engineer their spectacular development called into question the relevance of the neoliberal economic policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to Africa's development. Toyin Falola concludes that, without understanding the history of developmentalism, it is difficult to evaluate the place of Mkandawire in African scholarship.

In the concluding paper, I revisit the debate on economic and social development in Africa, drawing from the works of Thandika Mkandawire and Samir Amin. I start by arguing that African economies were advancing well prior to the advent of colonialism, in particular the pre-mercantilist period in Africa, until they were disrupted, distorted, and maimed. Since independence, attempts to revive their disrupted and distorted development trajectory have continued to be hampered by the negative effects of the global economy on Africa. The 2007/2008 global economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, among other factors, have further compromised well-being in Africa, even though the economic crisis originated in the United States while the pandemic originated in China. I propose that, if Africa is to reconnect with its glorious past and embark on a path of structural transformation to improve the well-being of its citizens, it is important to pursue some of the ideas propounded by Mkandawire and Amin.

Éditorial

Vusi Gumede (Rédacteur invité)

L'Afrique se trouve à un tournant décisif. Près de 70 ans après la fin du régime colonial, le continent lutte toujours pour briser les chaînes de la pauvreté et du sous-développement. Plus important encore, la construction d'une société inclusive et démocratique reste une œuvre inachevée, et les revirements démocratiques sont devenus un phénomène courant. Au niveau mondial, le continent joue un rôle marginal dans l'élaboration des règles qui régissent les relations économiques internationales. Au contraire, le développement de l'Afrique est gouverné par de mauvaises règles, des accords commerciaux injustes, l'aide liée et les structures de la dette. Il s'ensuit que la capacité des pays africains à tracer leur propre voie de développement indépendant est fort limitée. De telles politiques imposées de l'extérieur ont produit de multiples trous noirs d'exclusion sociale et des poches de bidonvilles, tout en rendant les États-nations handicapés plus comptables aux forces extérieures qu'à leurs propres citoyens.

Pour bien comprendre les raisons du sous-développement de l'Afrique et de sa position marginale au XXI^e siècle, il faut jeter un regard rétrospectif sur les fondements théoriques et politiques du projet national avorté du début des années 60. Pour ce faire, il est important de revisiter, comme point de départ, la pensée du développement de l'économiste malawite Thandika Mkandawire, aujourd'hui décédé, si les Africains doivent emprunter des voies alternatives pour parvenir à la transformation structurelle, à la croissance à long terme et à l'indépendance politique.

Le développement était le thème central ou primordial des publications et autres documents de Mkandawire, y compris ses discours et présentations. Il a publié de nombreux ouvrages sur la politique sociale (Mkandawire, 2001a), les États développementistes (2003), l'intégration régionale (2014) et le développement économique, ainsi que sur diverses questions de macroéconomie et d'économie politique (2002). Tous ces thèmes ont été examinés par l'auteur dans une perspective développementale (2005). Mkandawire était un économiste atypique compte tenu de son travail sur l'édification de la nation, les questions nationales et sociales (2009), la

cohésion sociale, les pactes et accords sociaux et d'autres phénomènes, effectué généralement en marge de la pensée économique dominante. Il a remis en question les perspectives néolibérales et largement critiqué les programmes d'ajustement structurel (Mkandawire et Soludu, 1999) et d'autres écoles de pensée qui ont soit simplifié à l'extrême le défi du développement africain, soit mal compris ce dernier (Mkandawire, 2010 et 2015).

Mkandawire a été inspiré par la pensée politique des premiers dirigeants nationalistes du continent tels que Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Sekou Touré et Nnamdi Azikiwe. Son essai intitulé «*Thinking about developmental states in Africa*» (Réflexion sur les États développementistes en Afrique) saisit toute la portée du projet nationaliste (Mkandawire, 2001b). Le projet nationaliste s'est avant tout concentré sur la construction et le développement de la nation, en surmontant les héritages institutionnels du colonialisme et en apportant les fruits de la croissance sociale et économique à la population. Concrètement, le projet national était orienté vers une appropriation plus équitable des forces productives au niveau local, tout en jouant un rôle critique au sein du Mouvement des non-alignés, du Groupe des 77 et de la Chine et des Nations Unies pour un nouvel ordre économique international. Grâce à des actions délibérées, les économies africaines ont enregistré des taux de croissance impressionnants au cours des années 60 et au début des années 70, au regard des conditions initiales au moment de l'indépendance. Les infrastructures physiques ont été grandement améliorées, en particulier dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation et des communications. Des programmes sociaux élaborés ont été mis en place afin d'atténuer les tensions sociales.

Cependant, à l'aube des années 70, le projet national était menacé de l'intérieur comme de l'extérieur. Au niveau national, il a été miné par une mauvaise gouvernance politique. Sous couvert de construction de la nation et de développement national, les gouvernements africains de l'après-indépendance ont poursuivi des stratégies de développement descendantes qui ont étouffé la productivité de leurs propres citoyens. Les politiques en sont venues à être déterminées uniquement par la préoccupation des moyens plutôt que par les conditions du développement. Cette situation a conduit les pays du continent à se préoccuper des structures et a débouché sur la centralisation et une approche descendante de la gestion des affaires publiques. Ainsi, à peine à mi-chemin de la deuxième décennie de l'indépendance, la

vision d'une Afrique indépendante avait commencé à s'effondrer et le fossé entre l'État et la société s'était au passage considérablement élargi.

Avec la montée en puissance du néolibéralisme au début des années 80, un sujet sur lequel Mkandawire a beaucoup écrit, les pays africains ont été contraints par le Fonds monétaire international (FMI) à mettre en œuvre de durs programmes d'ajustement structurel afin d'assurer le service de leurs dettes et d'avoir accès au financement du développement auprès des institutions donatrices. En échange, ils ont été obligés d'ouvrir leurs marchés, de démanteler de nombreux ressorts de l'État africain et d'instituer des procédures démocratiques minimales indispensables au bon fonctionnement du marché. Le welfarisme du développement des années 60, un élément central du projet nationaliste, a été complètement supprimé du paquet de développement néolibéral. Ainsi, l'élaboration des politiques, un aspect important de la souveraineté, a été arrachée des mains de l'État africain.

Il est donc important de reconnaître que la crise du développement en Afrique est ancrée dans des circonstances historiques et structurelles. Ce qui est normalement accepté comme le développement en Afrique est simplement un projet impérial conçu pour servir les puissants intérêts occidentaux (Cheru, 2009). Comme l'a si bien dit le regretté Claude Ake (1996, p. 275) : « ... En raison de sa situation exogène, l'Afrique n'a jamais eu de programme de développement, mais une confusion de programmes ». Pour être efficaces, les interventions de politique générale doivent d'abord s'attaquer à ces facteurs contextuels.

La collection d'articles de ce numéro de la revue offre un aperçu intéressant de la pensée de développement alternatif en Afrique, en faisant largement fond sur les écrits de Thandika Mkandawire. Les contributeurs ont abordé cinq thèmes : démocratie et développement ; l'État développementiste ; politiques sociales et développement social ; le projet national et le panafricanisme et le néolibéralisme et le démantèlement de l'État africain.

Le numéro spécial s'ouvre sur l'examen par Yusuf Bangura de la façon dont Mkandawire appréhende le développement. Le message central des travaux de Mkandawire est que le développement a été la préoccupation des pères de l'indépendance politique de l'Afrique et que l'Afrique post-indépendance, en tant que « retardataire », a été exhortée à « courir pendant que les autres

marchent » pour « rattraper » le monde dit développé (Mkandawire, 2003 et 2011). C'est à cet égard que Mkandawire s'est opposé aux diverses explications avancées par d'autres éminents spécialistes du développement concernant le développement économique de l'Afrique. Vient ensuite une discussion détaillée des principaux travaux de Mkandawire sous quatre thèmes : combattre l'inadaptation de l'Afrique ; État développementiste et néopatrimonialisme ; faire une place aux préoccupations de développement dans les politiques sociales et ancrer le développement dans des processus démocratiques.

Khabele Matlosa explore deux thèmes importants proposés par Mkandawire : a) le lien entre démocratie et développement et b) la question de l'État développementiste. La thèse principale de son article est que la démocratie électorale/libérale actuelle en Afrique est dépourvue de développement et, par conséquent, socialement creuse. Deuxièmement, que la trajectoire de développement de l'Afrique a été largement influencée par les programmes d'ajustement structurel imposés de l'extérieur, lesquels programmes ont affaibli les États africains et leur capacité à poursuivre des stratégies alternatives de développement et de transformation sociale. Partant de ces conclusions, Matlosa plaide pour que l'Afrique transcende le modèle libéral et adopte la démocratie de développement. Pour ce faire, il faudrait faire des États développementistes les principaux moteurs d'une telle démocratie. Si Mkandawire reconnaît que les régimes autoritaires, tels que ceux qui gouvernent les quatre tigres asiatiques, ont favorisé la croissance économique, il nous rappelle que ces résultats socioéconomiques positifs ne peuvent être maintenus que sous des régimes démocratiques.

Jomo Kwame, Anis Chowdhury et Michael T. Clark, inspirés par les écrits de Mkandawire, remettent en question la pertinence du concept de bonne gouvernance en tant que mythe prôné par la Banque mondiale comme remède au sous-développement de l'Afrique. Les auteurs rejettent carrément la pertinence du concept en s'appuyant sur des études de cas où, malgré des indicateurs de gouvernance médiocres, la croissance a continué d'être enregistrée dans certains pays asiatiques à croissance rapide. Les auteurs affirment que, si les réformes de bonne gouvernance sont nécessaires au développement, elles ont non seulement créé des attentes irréalistes, mais ont également compliqué inutilement le travail des gouvernements. Les défenseurs de la bonne gouvernance ont rarement eu raison sur la meilleure

façon d'améliorer la gouvernance. S'inspirant de la pensée radicale de Mkandawire, ils concluent que la bonne gouvernance n'est certainement ni nécessaire ni suffisante pour le développement. La preuve irréfutable est que c'est le développement qui conduit à une meilleure gouvernance, et non l'inverse. Les auteurs recommandent d'adopter une approche pragmatique, qui situe d'abord les principales entraves au développement et au progrès. Une telle approche devrait permettre aux gouvernements d'analyser et de formuler des stratégies appropriées, pragmatiques et réalistes pour relever les défis du développement.

Siphamandla Zondi fait valoir que, si Mkandawire a été reconnu pour son analyse incisive de l'idée de l'État développementiste en Afrique ou de la politique sociale transformatrice, sa contribution au débat plus large sur les difficultés auxquelles le projet national a fait face après la domination coloniale est peut-être la base sur laquelle ses contributions ultérieures au débat sur l'État développementiste ont été fondées. La contribution de Mkandawire au débat sur le projet national est utile pour relier les forces nationalistes aux forces mondiales et pour relier le projet démocratique à la poursuite du développement. Le projet national postcolonial en Afrique a fait l'objet de nombreux débats, notamment sur des questions telles que la décolonisation de l'appareil politique, le rôle d'un État héritier, la transition démocratique, les impératifs de développement, les politiques économiques et les relations du projet avec les peuples d'Afrique. Zondi clarifie pour nous ce que pourrait être l'objectif épistémique africain global pour une telle discussion.

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o revisite les questions et le débat sur la thèse de Mkandawire concernant un État national, démocratique et développementiste. Il soutient que la thèse avancée par Mkandawire doit informer la pratique politique de l'Afrique en matière de gouvernance démocratique. Pour construire la démocratie sur le continent, il est essentiel de promouvoir la démocratie afin d'organiser politiquement les citoyens pour qu'ils s'emparent du pouvoir de l'État afin de promouvoir les relations sociales, économiques, politiques et culturelles pour le plus grand bien de la société. Le contraire de ces valeurs représente ce qui constitue la mauvaise gouvernance, l'oppression et la dictature. La tâche de construire la démocratie en Afrique ne peut être accomplie sans la participation active des partis politiques, malgré les différences historiques, culturelles et régionales. Les partis politiques

continueront de jouer un rôle central dans le processus de démocratisation et de développement en Afrique.

Emmanuel Ndhlovu revisite la critique du néolibéralisme de Mkandawire en voulant démontrer comment sa critique a été confirmée par la pandémie mondiale de coronavirus (COVID-19). La pandémie a mis à nu l'ineptie du néolibéralisme en tant qu'idéologie de développement utile. S'appuyant sur la critique de Mkandawire, Ndhlovu s'inscrit en faux contre la doctrine néolibérale du laissez-faire des marchés et l'individualisme qu'elle prône au détriment du collectivisme, que de nombreux pays africains ont adopté dans les années 80 et qui a conduit à l'effondrement de leurs institutions publiques. Le néolibéralisme a encouragé la réduction des dépenses publiques, la privatisation et la libéralisation des institutions publiques dans l'espoir d'améliorer leur efficacité et leur efficience. Cette démarche a eu des effets calamiteux sur les systèmes de soins de santé publique en Afrique, qui sont maintenant dans un état de délabrement incroyable, augmentant ainsi la vulnérabilité de la majorité pauvre du continent à la pandémie. Se basant sur les archives de Mkandawire concernant la critique des programmes d'ajustement structurel, Ndhlovu affirme que, pour que l'Afrique résiste à la tempête de COVID-19, un système de soins de santé efficace, efficient et inclusif supervisé par l'État, par opposition aux acteurs privés, est essentiel pour sauver la vie de la majorité des pauvres qui ne peuvent pas se permettre les services de soins de santé du secteur privé.

Kagiso (TK) Pooe et David Mohale examinent de manière critique la question de savoir si le Gouvernement d'Afrique du Sud dirigé par le Congrès national africain (ANC) dans la période post-1994 peut être considéré comme un État développementaliste. Le gouvernement dirigé par l'ANC voulait depuis longtemps être considéré et fonctionner comme un État développementaliste. S'appuyant sur l'article fondateur de Mkandawire (2001b) intitulé « Thinking about developmental States in Africa », les auteurs soutiennent que l'Afrique du Sud ne répond pas aux conditions préalables que, d'après Mkandawire, un État doit remplir pour être qualifié de développementaliste. Mkandawire a démontré dans cet article fondateur que devenir un État développementaliste suppose la réunion de certaines conditions idéologiques et structurelles. Des documents de l'ANC comme «Ready to govern : ANC policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa» (1992), «The state, property relations and social transformation» (1998), «Economic transformation for a national democratic

society» (2007), parmi beaucoup d'autres, illustrent la prédominance du concept dans la pensée du parti et le désir déclaré de voir l'État fonctionner d'une certaine façon. Tout en étant d'accord avec l'affirmation de Mkandawire selon laquelle certaines fondations ou conditions doivent être en place pour qu'un État soit considéré comme développementiste, Pooe et Mohale soutiennent qu'il existe désormais une évaluation plus empirique permettant de décider définitivement si des États comme l'Afrique du Sud sont des États développementistes. La pandémie de COVID-19 est à la fois un moyen sophistiqué et plutôt rudimentaire de déterminer enfin si l'Afrique du Sud mérite le qualificatif d'État développementiste.

Toyin Falola se penche sur le développementisme pour cerner les contributions de Mkandawire à la réflexion sur le sujet en tant que théorie pour la transformation de l'Afrique. Procédant à un examen approfondi, Falola retrace la genèse du développementalisme aux États-Unis au milieu des années 40, dans le cadre de la politique étrangère américaine visant à diffuser les vertus du capitalisme de marché libre à l'américaine comme la voie à suivre pour les pays nouvellement indépendants, le but étant de les détourner de l'idéologie communiste. Si l'aide étrangère a joué un rôle important dans cette stratégie, et si un petit nombre de pays en développement ont effectivement enregistré une croissance, la stratégie n'a pas donné les résultats escomptés en Afrique et en Amérique latine. Au début des années 70, le développementalisme à l'américaine était en déclin, avec l'ascension de perspectives plus critiques et radicales du Sud sur le développementalisme, qui attribuaient le sous-développement du Sud à l'impérialisme. Plus important encore, la montée des pays asiatiques nouvellement industrialisés qui ont suivi des politiques hétérodoxes pour concevoir leur développement spectaculaire a remis en question la pertinence des politiques économiques néolibérales du Fonds monétaire international et de la Banque mondiale pour le développement de l'Afrique. Falola conclut que, sans comprendre l'histoire du développementalisme, il est difficile d'évaluer la place de Mkandawire dans la recherche africaine.

Dans le dernier chapitre, je revisite le débat sur le développement économique et social en Afrique, en m'appuyant sur les travaux de Thandika Mkandawire et de Samir Amin. Je commence par montrer que les économies africaines progressaient bien avant l'avènement du colonialisme, en particulier la période prémercantiliste en Afrique, jusqu'à ce qu'elles soient perturbées,

déformées et mutilées. Depuis l'indépendance, les tentatives de relance de leur trajectoire de développement perturbée et déformée n'ont cessé d'être entravées par les effets négatifs de l'économie mondiale sur l'Afrique. La crise économique mondiale de 2007-2008 et la pandémie de COVID-19, entre autres facteurs, ont encore compromis le bien-être en Afrique, même si la crise économique est née aux États-Unis et la pandémie en Chine. Je soutiens que, si l'Afrique doit renouer avec son passé glorieux et s'engager sur la voie de la transformation structurelle pour améliorer le bien-être de ses citoyens, il importe de poursuivre certaines des idées proposées par Mkandawire et Amin.

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Development discourse in Africa: thinking about Thandika Mkandawire

Yusuf Bangura

Abstract

This article discusses some of Thandika Mkandawire's major contributions to the study of development. The article starts by examining his understanding of development, which was at the heart of his scholarship. This is followed by a detailed discussion of his key works under four themes: combatting Africa's maladjustment; developmental States and neopatrimonialism; advancing the development agenda in social policy; and grounding development in democratic processes. In the last three sections, the paper discusses his role as an institution-builder in social science research, focusing on his leadership of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa; and his outsider status in the United Nations during his tenure at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. The article then concludes with an overview of his personal relations.

Key Words: Development, developmental States, good governance, political parties

JEL: H1, H11, H5.

Résumé

Cet article examine certaines des principales contributions de Thandika Mkandawire à l'étude du développement. Il s'ouvre par un examen de la manière dont Mkandawire appréhende le développement, un thème qui était au cœur de ses travaux de recherche. Cet examen est suivi d'une discussion détaillée de ses œuvres clés sous quatre thèmes : lutter contre l'inadaptation de l'Afrique ; les États de développement et le néopatrimonialisme ; faire une place au programme de développement dans les politiques sociales et enraciner le développement dans les processus démocratiques. Dans les trois derniers chapitres, l'article traite de la contribution de Mkandawire au renforcement des institutions dans la recherche en sciences sociales, en mettant l'accent sur sa direction du Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique ; et son statut de marginal à l'ONU pendant son mandat à la tête de l'Institut de recherche des Nations Unies pour le développement social. L'article se termine par un aperçu de ses relations personnelles.

Mots-clés : Développement, États développementistes, bonne gouvernance, partis politiques

JEL : H1, H11, H5.

Introduction

Thinking seriously and passionately about development, especially as it relates to Africa, was the defining feature of Thandika Mkandawire's scholarship. It is impossible to address all his work in this special issue, which is focused on rethinking African development theory in the twenty-first century. He wrote on a wide-range of issues—on macro-level economic development, structural adjustment programmes, economic policymaking, institutions and development, agriculture, industry, the State, social policy, democracy, conflict, nationalism, pan-Africanism, ethnicity, academic freedom, culture, and African intellectuals.

In this article, I start by examining his understanding of development, which was at the heart of his scholarship. I then discuss his key works under four themes: combatting Africa's maladjustment; developmental States and neopatrimonialism; advancing the development agenda in social policy; and grounding development in democratic processes. In the last three sections, I discuss his role as an institution builder in social science research, focusing on his leadership in the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.

Primacy of development

For Mkandawire, development was the filter or primary lens for assessing public policies and the human condition. His training in economics in the 1960s, when development economics was fashionable, and exposure to the classics in economic history and radical political economy, were the building blocks for his conceptualization of development. Development economics emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, enjoyed much respectability in the 1960s and 1970s, but was eclipsed in the 1980s by neoliberalism. Development economists focused on how late industrializing or poor countries could catch up or bridge the development gap with countries that were already industrialized.

As Mkandawire observed in summarizing the key ideas of this branch of economics in his paper for a conference of the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development on rethinking development economics in 2001, late industrialization required a “*big push* or *critical minimum effort*

or a *great spurt* to turn the process of cumulative causation into a virtuous cycle of positive feedback” (Mkandawire, 2001a). The aim is to aggressively move countries from a low-equilibrium trap or vicious circle of poverty that history, or in the case of Africa, colonialism, bequeathed them, towards a state of high equilibrium or self-sustained growth rates and transformation.

Some of the influential development economists that Mkandawire was attracted to were Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, Harvey Leibenstein, Gunnar Myrdal, Francois Perroux, Arthur Lewis, Albert Hirschman, and Alexander Gerschenkron. Gerschenkron, who wrote *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (1962), which Mkandawire often cited, had a strong impact on Mkandawire’s ideas on catching up and structural change. To Gerschenkron, late industrializing countries could leapfrog or skip stages traversed by developed countries by learning from prior mistakes. Countries that took catching up seriously were expected to have high growth spurts and rapid rates of industrial growth, and prioritize capital goods over consumer goods, in which the State and big banks would play an active role in driving development.

The key lessons Mkandawire drew from this literature were that development represents: (a) sustained levels of high growth, structural change, and economic diversification; (b) qualitative improvements in well-being, especially for those lower on the income scale or the social ladder; and (c) improvements in social relations and institutions.

In his inaugural lecture at the London School of Economics, which he titled “Running while others walk: Knowledge and the challenge of Africa’s development”, he argued that, as a late-industrializing continent, Africa should study the paths traversed not only by the front-runners of industrialization but the development experiences of countries in every part of the world. In this regard, leapfrogging in development called for “levels of education and learning that are far higher than those attained by the pioneers at similar levels of economic development.” (Mkandawire, 2011a, p. 18).

Mkandawire’s commitment to economic and social change made him reject the neoliberal turn in economics, which emphasized the importance of getting prices right, deregulation of economies, public expenditure cuts and dismantling development planning institutions. Under neoliberalism,

economics became a study of macro-economic stabilization and trade liberalization. Indeed, neoliberalism and the capture of Africa's policy space by multilateral financial agencies negated everything he had learned in development economics; it challenged his dream of rapid industrialization and his fierce sense of nationalism and anti-imperialist beliefs. In his insightful interview for *Development and Change* in 2019, he singled out development as the unfinished business in Africa. In his words, "pretty much every big dream I had about Africa, except for development, has come true" (Meagher, 2019, p. 540).

Mkandawire was also critical of development approaches that largely seek to manage poverty. These include studies that celebrate incremental changes in the lives of the poor, such as the literature on coping strategies of informal low-skilled individuals; micro-credit programmes that barely lift people above starvation income levels; and targeted handouts to the poor that fail to transform lives in meaningful ways. Where poverty is widespread, as he argued, it made little sense to target the poor, as this might be administratively costly, generate leakages, limit the poor to inferior services, and make it hard to build links to or solidarity with better-off groups in financing and providing higher-quality services. To him, low value-added informal income-generating activities were a manifestation of underdevelopment. While it was important to understand how the poor made a living, the goal of development should be to transform economies and the lives of the poor, not manage or glorify them.

He was also dissatisfied with the anti-growth positions of sections of the environment movement and much of the literature on environmental economics, which he believed did not pay sufficient attention to industrial catch up, including the need not only to transfer resources to poor countries as part of the much-discussed climate change-mitigation bargain, but also, and more importantly, to give poor countries policy space and tools to advance the industrialization project. As he often argued, poor people would be able to devise effective adaptation strategies to climate change, take the environment seriously, and contribute to universal mitigation targets only when they had seen substantial improvements in their lives. Unfortunately, his writing on the environment was very thin. It would have been useful to know what strategies for industrial catch up would look like in the context of environmental sustainability, especially as Africa is likely to pay a much

higher price than wealthy regions even though it is least responsible for the warming of the planet.

Combatting maladjustment in Africa

Mkandawire spent much of his time studying, analysing, debating, and campaigning against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's neoliberal adjustment programmes. Africa's maladjustment, as he described the continent's experience under adjustment, was the one issue that he consistently engaged with for over thirty years in his study of development. Whether at the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development or the London School of Economics, he was obsessed with what the multilateral financial institutions were doing to Africa. He read virtually everything the World Bank wrote on Africa and meticulously tracked the progression of that institution's adjustment policies and programmes. He organized several conferences, wrote many journal articles and edited several books, and published in 1999, with Charles Soludo (an economist who later headed the Central Bank of Nigeria), an influential two volume book entitled *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment* (1999); and *African Voices on Structural Adjustment: A companion to "Our Continent, Our Future"* (2003). *Our Continent, Our Future* was a succinct, well-argued, and evidence-backed synthesis of Africa's adjustment experience in the 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s. Gerhart (2014) described it as "a valuable primer on current development debates".

Mkandawire and Soludo made three important points in that study. First, they were among the first scholars to show that African countries were not the perennial failed States that the multilateral financial agencies and Africanist political scientists imagined them to be. In the logic of those agencies, the post-colonial African State was a captured, neo patrimonial institution that largely served coalitions of narrow urban interests. The multilateral agencies believed that those special interests extracted rents from Africa's State-directed development, leading to price distortions, system-wide inefficiencies, and economic backwardness. The historical record, however, showed something different. Mkandawire and Soludo demonstrated that Africa's annual GDP per capita growth between 1965 and 1974 was positive. At an average of 2.6 per cent, it was much higher than the GDP per-capita growth of the

1980s, which declined by 1.3 per cent per year, despite the administration of some 10 years of neoliberal adjustment medicine. Some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Nigeria were, in fact, growth miracles before their economies were plunged into crisis (Soludo and Mkandawire, 2003).

Second, Mkandawire and Soludo demonstrated that the focus on domestic policy failures deflected attention from efforts by African States to build the foundations for industrial development; the big push in social development, especially in the field of education, which produced a cadre of highly-qualified professionals and administrators; and nation-building strategies on a continent that hosts the largest number of ethnic groups in the world. The preoccupation with domestic policy failures also meant that the role of external factors, such as the volatility of global commodity prices, was ignored. In the eyes of the multilateral agencies, if the crisis were caused by domestic policy failures, it was justified to apply shock therapy or the full burden of adjustment on African countries. This distorted reading of the problem caused a rift between those agencies and African policymakers, who highlighted the significance of deteriorating terms of trade in explaining the crisis. It led to ruptures in policy dialogue and to what the agencies referred to as policy slippage.

Third, *Our Continent, Our Future* provided a useful overview of the economics literature that tracked the performance of African countries under structural adjustment, and the numerous, but often contradictory and ultimately failed efforts by the World Bank to present the adjustment programmes as successful (Mkandawire and Soludo, 2003). While there were positive results in terms of macroeconomic stabilization, the record on economic growth, industrialization, agricultural performance, foreign investment flows, domestic resource mobilization and poverty alleviation was shockingly poor. Many countries that the World Bank classified as success stories, including so-called strong adjusters, often found themselves downgraded as non-adjusters within very short periods. The lesson was unmistakable. The adjustment programmes were largely about macroeconomic stabilization; they failed to address issues of growth, structural change, and the well-being of the poor.

By the mid-1990s, it was obvious to most observers that adjustment was not working. There were strong calls, therefore, for a change of direction. The reform package that emerged added issues of growth, participatory

policymaking, national ownership of policies, poverty-reduction strategies, governance reform and institution-building, but did not dilute the fundamental demand for stabilization, liberalization, and privatization.

Faced with the stark reality of Africa's poor economic performance and pressures for change, the World Bank was forced to acknowledge many of the policy failures of adjustment but failed to change the way it engaged African economies. Mkandawire meticulously tracked those acknowledgments of failure, which he called *mea culpas*. He published four useful papers on those policy changes and the maladjustment of African economies (see Mkandawire, 2005, 2011 and 2014; Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999).

When African economies experienced growth spurts in the late 1990s and 2000s, the multilateral financial agencies quickly forgot about the *mea culpas*, and, as Mkandawire observed, touted the recovery as a delayed outcome of the structural adjustment programmes. However, the recovery has failed to transform African economies, and average per-capita incomes are still lower than in the 1970s. As he put it, "if you have that many *mea culpas*, you create an economy, and that economy behaves in a particular way" (Meagher, 2019, p. 522). Understanding the type of African economies that have emerged after more than 30 years of structural adjustment, along with the World Bank's large number of *mea culpas*, were the two issues he was working on as book projects before his illness. One hopes that the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa will collaborate with his family to finalize and publish those books, which would be a treasure in the study of African development.

Developmental States and neo-patrimonialism

Development economists recognized the critical role that States play in industrialization. States are useful for correcting market failures, devising catch-up strategies, mobilizing and allocating resources, and ensuring that firms comply with rules and development-enhancing targets. For much of the 1960s and 1970s, the development literature on catching up was theoretical and aspirational, and focused largely on Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. It had no clear-cut success stories to draw on apart from the historical experiences of Western societies. East Asia's rapid industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s was hardly part of the debate.

By the 1980s, however, East Asia's successful State-led industrialization could no longer be ignored. There was an explosion of scholarly interest in the 1990s in what came to be called the "East Asian miracle", despite the World Bank's attempt to downplay the State's role in that miracle (World Bank, 1993). The concept and literature of the developmental State gained wide currency and strongly challenged the assumptions of neoliberal theory. Mkandawire devoured that literature, which confirmed many of the ideas he was grappling with in his critique of Africa's adjustment programmes. His article, "Thinking about developmental States in Africa", set the tone for the African debate. It is his most widely read and cited work, having generated more than 1,000 scholarly citations.

The key value of "Thinking about developmental States in Africa" was the systematic way in which Mkandawire critiqued what he called the "impossibility arguments" for crafting developmental States in Africa. These arguments ranged from Africa's presumed lack of ideology, weak State capacity and external economic dependence, to the continent's alleged neo-patrimonial systems of governance and rent-seeking behaviour of special interest groups. As he argued, many African States in the first decade and half of independence had made serious attempts to deploy the State to the task of economic development (Mkandawire, 2001b).

Using taxation efforts and public expenditure patterns as proxies to measure seriousness, it was clear that many African States took development seriously before experiencing hard times in the mid-1970s. Some of these States were among the fastest growing economies in the world, registering growth rates of six per cent or higher. Indeed, as Mkandawire demonstrated, 10 of the 27 fastest-growing economies were in Africa. The savings rates of many countries were also high. The problem, as he argued, was that critics assessed the development potential of African States by focusing only on the crisis period, when the administrative, technical and coordination capacities of most States had been eroded by fiscal crisis and the anti-State policies of the IMF and World Bank (ibid).

The most popular thesis in the "impossibility arguments" on African developmental States was neo-patrimonialism, by which the African State is said to be mired in redistributive activities that are guided by patron-client and affective relations, rendering economic development impossible.

Mkandawire was highly critical of that literature, which he consistently challenged in many articles. However, because of the framework's appeal in the study of Africa, he decided to engage it more comprehensively in 2015. The result was his 50-page magisterial article, "Neopatrimonialism and the political economy of economic performance in Africa". This was a work of outstanding scholarship—rigorous, empirical, and a tour de force on the literature on neopatrimonialism. It unequivocally demolished the conceptual edifice on which much of the study of Africa had been constructed. It may well end up as the most important work for devising new ways of thinking about African States, economies, and societies.

Neo-patrimonialism was the default explanation for every bad outcome or pathology in Africa's development. Mkandawire identified the specific mechanisms and effects highlighted in neo-patrimonial literature, and used empirical data, alternative findings in the development literature, and logical reasoning to assess the concept's explanatory power. The pathological effects of neopatrimonialism ranged from bad governance, low savings, and lack of capitalist classes to hyperinflation, bloated State bureaucracies, low taxation, interest-group capture of industrial and trade policy, and misuse of foreign exchange.

The empirical evidence showed something different. As Mkandawire demonstrated, the governance performance of African States was not worse than what should be expected for their level of economic development; Africa's low savings was a recent development that was tied to fiscal crisis and almost 20 years of adjustment policies; clientelism was not confined to African capitalism—it was also a salient feature of East Asian developmental States; African countries did not have Latin American-levels of hyperinflation—indeed, inflation rates in the pre-crisis period were relatively low in Africa; African States employed fewer people per capita and spent less per GDP compared to other developing regions, suggesting that the continent did not have over-bloated bureaucracies, but was instead largely under-governed; while African countries varied greatly in their taxation efforts, on the average they collected a higher percentage of taxes than other countries, and their taxation efforts surpassed the IMF minimum recommendation of 15 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) for developing countries; and there was no evidence that special interest groups were the main drivers behind industrial and trade policies, even though they benefit from them.

Advancing the development agenda in social policy

Although Mkandawire took the social aspect of development seriously, it did not feature prominently in his work before he joined the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development. He often made brief remarks on post-colonial social contracts, and, in discussing social development, his focus was on education and health expenditures. His primary concern in the study of development was economic growth and structural change. This was to change when he arrived at the Institute, whose *raison d'être* was to examine development through a social lens.

Mkandawire was at the peak of his powers in advancing a developmentalist agenda in the study of Africa when he joined the Institute in 1998. How would he address the Institute's social concerns and remain faithful to his own agenda as a development economist? The work of the Institute covered a wide range of issues such as the social impact of economic reforms; environment, sustainable development and social change; gender and development; corporate social responsibility; new information and communications technologies; public-sector reform in developing countries; land reform; social integration in urban settings; the international trade in illicit drugs; ethnic conflict and development; political violence and social movements; war-torn societies; agriculture and food systems; social indicators; and participation. There were also a few studies on social welfare policies.

Mkandawire resolved the problem by injecting his concerns for economic growth and transformation into the study of social policy and narrowed the issues to be addressed in social policy to social protection and social services, while paying close attention to issues of equity, social pacts, cohesion, and democratic processes. The result was, what I believe was his most innovative contribution in development studies—the mega project he christened “Social policy in a development context”, which gave social policy the same power as economic policy in theories on development. There were tensions between this radical turn in conceptualizing social development and the Institute's other programmes that also addressed important social issues.

In the end, “Social policy in a development context” became hegemonic because Mkandawire was not only a great thinker; he was also a super-effective fundraiser with a wide network of friends in the donor world. The social

policy project became the Institute's biggest project in much of the 2000s, generating 18 books and numerous programme papers, journal articles and book chapters. At its peak, it had four or five resident research coordinators, seven external coordinators, and more than 150 researchers world-wide working on various dimensions of the project. Part of that work continues as part of the research programme of the coordinator of the Africa study, Jimi Adesina, who now organizes regular conferences on social policy in Africa, after a series of successful summer programmes he directed for senior African development policy makers in Dakar.

In rolling out the project at the Institute, insights on the development role of social policy were derived from the experiences of successful late industrializers, especially the developmental States of East Asia and the Nordic social democratic States. The project contended that, for social policy to play an effective role in development, it must do five basic things. It must stimulate economic development or enhance productive capacity; serve as a redistributive channel for narrowing economic and social inequality; protect people from income loss associated with unemployment, pregnancy, sickness, disability, and old age; reduce the burden of reproduction and care work; and act as an automatic stabilizer of the macro-economy in periods of crisis. The social policies of late industrializers used various combinations of those roles in transforming their economies.

It is important to note that the project affirmed that social policy could be transformative when it was universal rather than targeted to specific groups, and when it was linked to employment-centred growth strategies, which would allow more people to be incorporated into social insurance schemes that were redistributive across classes, groups, and generations. Mkandawire's paper "Targeting and universalism in poverty reduction", which influenced many United Nations agencies, systematically laid out the advantages of universalism over targeting when crafting social policies (Mkandawire, 2005).

Four of the five social policy roles discussed above were already well researched in the welfare State literature of advanced economies before the social policy project was launched. Mkandawire was particularly drawn to the fifth—the productive role, which he felt had been under-theorized. This addressed the issue of how social policy could spur innovation by creating conditions for

industrial peace; increasing human capital, skills, and savings rates; converting savings into productive investments; and deepening the financial sector.

The links among social policy, savings, and investment are best captured by the experiences of late industrializing countries in using pension funds to generate high savings rates and promote rapid industrialization. For instance, Singapore's Central Provident Fund accounted for about 40 per cent of its gross domestic savings in the 1980s, and South Korea's funds represented 30 per cent of its GDP in the mid-2000s. These funds were used to finance heavy and chemical industries in Korea and universal homeownership in Singapore. Finland, a late Nordic industrializer, used its own pension funds to industrialize through extensive electrification and the provision of public housing (Kangas, 2006).

Mkandawire wrote extensively on the development role of social policy (see, Mkandawire, 2001a and 2001b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014 and 2015). His succinct policy brief on the 16 lessons drawn from the project, entitled "Transformative social policy: Lessons from UNRISD research", is also highly recommended (Mkandawire, 2006a).

Grounding development in democratic processes

So far, I have presented Mkandawire as a committed, indeed unflagging, developmentalist. People with this mindset, including the pioneers of development economics, often privilege economic development over everything else, including democracy, or have a benign view of authoritarian rule if it delivers economic growth and transformation. It is very common to hear colleagues in economics and other disciplines in Africa arguing for a benevolent dictator or strong man to sort out the problems of the continent. Mkandawire was very different. He refused to accept a trade-off between economic development and democracy.

He strongly believed in both the intrinsic and instrumental value of democracy. In a popular debate in the *CODESRIA Bulletin* in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the Kenyan political scientist, Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Mkandawire defended the intrinsic value of democracy against attempts to instrumentalize it as a prerequisite for development. Throughout his writings and public interventions, he called upon democracy to deliver on

development, but did not reject it if it did not; instead, he often insisted that greater effort be made to get democracy to deliver good outcomes.

He was a great admirer of East Asia's developmental States, but detested, in equal measure, their authoritarian history. He always held up the rich tradition of democracy, industrialization, and equity in the Nordic countries as a counter to the authoritarian underpinnings of the East Asian miracles. In fact, to his delight, and as he often pointed out, many studies now view economic growth and democracy as mutually reinforcing. Mkandawire's dislike for authoritarian rule may have been influenced by the harsh treatment he received under Banda's despotic government in Malawi, which caused him to spend 30 years in exile. As head of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, he played a big role in defending academic freedom in Africa when, in the 1980s, university academics were under attack as governments tried to implement unpopular structural adjustment programmes.

For Mkandawire, development should be grounded in democratic values and processes. In this sense, he shared Amartya Sen's view of development as freedom—including political freedom. He identified with Sen's statement that "a country does not have to be deemed fit for democracy; rather, it has to become fit through democracy" (Sen, 1999, p. 4), which he quoted approvingly in one of his papers on democracy.

There were two sides to Mkandawire's treatment of democracy. The first was his defence of new or fledgling democracies against the technocratic style of policymaking associated with the IMF structural adjustment programmes. He coined the term "choiceless democracies" (Mkandawire, 2006b) to underscore the American political scientist Adam Przeworski's observation that IMF and World Bank conditionalities limited the choices of new democracies, producing, as Przeworski observed, "societies which can vote but cannot choose" (Przeworski, 1994, p. 84).

One of the first projects Mkandawire launched at the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development was entitled "Technocratic policymaking and democratic accountability". This examined the tensions between technocratic styles of policymaking and democratization in selected countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The adjustment programmes, we should recall,

narrowed policy options to a limited number of objectives that emphasized fiscal restraint, privatization, and liberalization. To meet these objectives, governments tried to insulate policymaking technocrats in finance ministries and central banks from public pressure. This approach to policymaking distorted accountability structures and made governments more answerable to multilateral agencies and investors than to emerging representative institutions and the wider public. It also downplayed the importance of employment, social protection and poverty eradication, given that policymakers were mainly concerned about stabilization and market-enhancing activities.

Mkandawire's second approach to democracy was instrumentalist. He downplayed, at least while at the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development, the study of democracy in its own right and insisted that it must be linked to development objectives. The difficulty with this position is that many countries that have held multiple elections and liberalized their political systems still have strong authoritarian reflexes and are not always responsive to the needs of voters. It may explain why studies on the link between democracy and economic or social development always produce poor or ambiguous results.

Linking democracy to social or economic outcomes may require, therefore, interrogating the quality of democracy itself. How institutionalized are social and political rights? How independent are State institutions, especially the judiciary, election management bodies and police, from governing parties and leaders? How competitive, fair, and credible is the electoral system? What are the social bases of political parties? How are the poor connected to the political process? Are political parties governed democratically? What is the quality and depth of civil society organizations and mass-based interest groups? And how responsive are governments to citizen demands? Answers to these questions, which fall in the domain of political science, require studying democracy as an issue if we are to understand democracy's role in advancing good or bad social and economic outcomes. These are issues that I enjoyed discussing with Mkandawire as we both tried to understand the links between democracy and development outcomes in Africa.

Institution-builder in social science research in Africa

Mkandawire was not just a great scholar; he was also an innovative institution-builder. He was central in the development of infrastructure for collaborative social science research in Africa at the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa when he headed that institution from 1986 to 1996. I am sure that his colleagues who worked closely with him at the Council could provide richer insights into that aspect of his work. But let me say a few things, based on my observation as a participant in the Council's work.

It was under Mkandawire's leadership that the Council's membership expanded beyond the limited circle of deans or heads of social and economic research institutes, to embrace all who teach and do research in the social sciences in Africa. The Council's triennial General Assembly has now become the largest gathering of social scientists in Africa, attracting more than 500 participants, who are mostly sponsored by the Council.

In promoting social science research in Africa, Mkandawire was concerned about many issues, which can be summed up in seven ways. First, he was critical of the tendency of many Western scholars to publish articles and books on Africa without citing African scholars or engaging in local African debates. Second, he strongly disapproved of debates on Africa that did not include African contributions. Third, he criticized the North-South intellectual division of labour in collaborative projects in which Northern scholars arrogated to themselves more intellectually challenging roles of theory building and delegated the less challenging roles of conducting case studies or supplying of primary data to African scholars.

Fourth, he bemoaned the crisis of African universities in the 1980s and 1990s, which was linked to the defunding of universities and the World Bank's myopic and destructive view that Africa did not need universities. Fifth, he worried about the future of young scholars who had been placed in highly under-resourced university environments. Sixth, he strongly believed that senior scholars should be empowered to inspire and mentor young scholars. And seventh, he was a firm advocate of inter-disciplinary research and breaking geographical and linguistic barriers in African social science research.

To build national and cross-national research capacity, the Council created two important tools: national working groups, which encouraged scholars in any country to organize teams and conduct research on any theme of their choice; and multinational working groups, which were headed by senior scholars, in which scholars from various subregions on the continent participated. The senior scholars were required to produce green books, which provided methodological guidance and comprehensive reviews of the literature on the subjects to be studied.

The Council also mounted a well-resourced, Rockefeller Foundation-funded programme that targeted established and promising young scholars. They were offered \$30,000 each to be seconded to reputable foreign universities or research centres to conduct research, then were given office space at the headquarters of the Council upon their return to conclude their research and produce book manuscripts. Some of the Council's best publications came out of that programme.

Another innovation was a small grants programme that targeted master's degree students by providing them with grants for their dissertations. This programme was launched in the 1980s when most universities were experiencing difficulties in funding postgraduate students because of cuts to university budgets. Grantees were required to send copies of their theses to the Council to be deposited in the institution's library, which, as a result, has become a rich source of knowledge on various aspects of development in African countries. Under Mkandawire, the Council also launched two summer institutes, one on gender and the other on governance, which exposed young academics to the literature and debates on these emerging topics of global concern. Summer institutes on a variety of issues have flourished since then. The popular *CODESRIA Bulletin*, which publishes think pieces, debates, and short articles on burning issues, was another of Mkandawire's innovations. The bulletin is now more widely read than the Council's lead journal, *Africa Development*. It published two famous debates during Mkandawire's tenure, one on democracy and the other on the Mazrui-Mafeje debate on recolonization.

Conclusion

This paper, drawing from Mkandawire's works and engagements, has examined the concept of development and discourse on development in Africa. Mkandawire believed that development was the filter for assessing public policies and the human condition. He rejected modernity as an appropriate form of development. Viewing development as the process by which people put themselves and their labour to productive use in the realization of greater levels of civilization, in line with their own choices and values. Mkandawire argued that development in Africa had been hampered by poor economic development, which emanated from lack of appropriate policies, overreliance on natural resources, an absence of an original economic development model, and poor implementation, among others.

Mkandawire placed transformative social policy at the centre of development, arguing that the realization of democratic developmental States was impossible in the absence of social policies. It is in this view that Mkandawire viewed development as representing: (a) sustained levels of high growth, structural change, and economic diversification; (b) qualitative improvements in well-being, especially for those on the lower rungs of the income and social status ladders; and (c), improvements in social relations and institutions. The above could be achieved only through an aggressive and sustained move from a low-equilibrium trap and a vicious circle of poverty, brought on by history and colonialism, towards a State of high equilibrium and self-sustained growth and transformation. Outside his intellectual engagements, the paper shows that Mkandawire was, above all, a human being who loved travelling, soccer, storytelling, and watching movies.

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Democracy devoid of development in Africa: what is to be done?

Khabele Matlosa

Abstract

This paper is written in honour of the rich legacy of the late Thandika Mkandawire: his is a legacy of critical thinking, evidence-based scholarship, and policy-relevant and development-oriented intellectual discourse, all spiced with a good measure of humour and laughter. Mkandawire has researched, written, and published widely on various social science themes, with a view to advancing African socioeconomic development and structural transformation. The author explores two of these, namely: (a) the democracy-development nexus; and (b) the quest for a developmental State in Africa. The main thesis of the paper is that the current electoral/liberal democracy in Africa is devoid of development, and is, therefore, socially and politically hollow. The author makes a case for Africa to transcend the liberal model and embrace developmental democracy. This requires building developmental States as key drivers of such a democracy. Africa already has the requisite policy and normative framework for achieving developmental democracy through developmental States in the form of Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Peer Review Mechanism.

Key Words: Africa, Agenda 2063, democracy, development, people, state, transformation.

JEL: I13, O1, H7.

Résumé

Cet article est écrit en l'honneur du riche héritage du regretté Thandika Mkandawire : un héritage fait de pensée critique, de recherche fondée sur des données probantes et de discours intellectuel axé sur les politiques et le développement, le tout agrémenté d'une bonne dose d'humour et de rire. Mkandawire a effectué des travaux de recherche, écrit et publié de nombreux articles sur divers thèmes des sciences sociales, avec pour objectif de faire avancer le développement socioéconomique et la transformation structurelle en Afrique. L'auteur explore deux d'entre eux, à savoir : a) le lien entre démocratie et développement ; b) la quête d'un État développementaliste en Afrique. La thèse principale de l'article est que la démocratie électorale/libérale actuelle en Afrique est dépourvue de développement, et est, par conséquent, socialement et politiquement vide. L'auteur plaide pour que l'Afrique transcende le modèle libéral et embrasse la démocratie développementaliste. Cela exige de construire des États développementalistes comme moteurs clés d'une telle démocratie. L'Afrique dispose déjà de la politique et du cadre normatif nécessaires pour parvenir à la démocratie développementale au moyen d'États développementalistes sous la forme de l'Agenda 2063, de la Charte africaine de la démocratie, des élections et de la gouvernance, et du Mécanisme africain d'examen par les pairs.

Mots clés : Afrique, Agenda 2063, démocratie, développement, peuples, État, transformation.

JEL : I13, O1, H7.

Introduction

The paper does not pretend to cover the full gamut of Mkandawire's intellectual foray across the social sciences themes. It is, therefore, modest in its ambition. The paper explores only two themes: (a) the nexus between democracy and development; and (b) the quest for the developmental State in Africa. The principal thrust of the paper is that current electoral and/or liberal democracy in Africa is devoid of development, and, therefore, socially and politically hollow. The paper goes further to make a case for Africa to transcend the electoral and liberal models and to focus instead on how to build democracy that is emancipatory and developmental. This requires building developmental States as key drivers of such a transformative democracy.

The paper is divided into four sections (including the present introduction section). Section two highlights the intrinsic and instrumental value of democracy. Section three makes a case for the entrenchment of developmental democracy. Section four discusses African agendas for building democratic developmental States, namely Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the African Peer Review Mechanism. The concluding section winds up the discussion and highlights key issues that resonate with the thoughts of Mkandawire on development.

Intrinsic and instrumental value of democracy

Democracy has both intrinsic and instrumental value. The intrinsic value of democracy essentially speaks to the stark reality that democracy is good in and of itself, as it opens the space for people to enjoy civil liberties and political rights. Mkandawire recognized that “democracy is good in and of itself, period; it does not have to be justified in terms of its developmental outcomes” (Anyang' Nyong'o, 2007, p.2). Edigheji concurs with this and argues that democracy needs to be pursued “for its normative values because, among others, civil and political rights are essential to upholding and enhancing human dignity” (Edigheji, 2020, p. 19).

But to confine democracy only to the enjoyment of civil liberties and political rights amounts to a minimalist-cum-proceduralist definition of the concept. Democracy is broader than its intrinsic value. While the enjoyment of civil liberties and political rights is good, the broader significance of democracy

extends to the enjoyment of socioeconomic and cultural rights. This is the fundamental and transformative aspect of democracy. Thus, a maximalist-cum-substantive definition of democracy is located within the framework of the democracy-development nexus. While Mkandawire recognized this symbiotic interface between democracy and development, he was quick to point out that “authoritarian regimes have done much better at achieving high rates of economic growth, and even development, than democratic ones” (Anyang’ Nyong’o, 2007, p.2). To back up his argument, Mkandawire referred to the experience of the four Asian tigers, namely Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan Province of China, which experienced remarkable economic growth during the 1970s and 1990s (Mkandawire, 2001). On the other hand, while acknowledging the economic success of the Asian tigers, Mkandawire believed that such positive socioeconomic outcomes could be sustained in the long term only under democratic regimes (ibid).

Case for developmental democracy in Africa

Democracy must mean more than elections; it must address people’s right to food, education, and better health. If democracy does not put bread on the table, it is hollow and soon people lose faith in democracy, and they lose trust in democratic institutions. By the same token, development is central to democratization. That is why Amartya Sen speaks of “development as freedom”. In his seminal treatise on the nexus between democracy and development, Sen persuasively argues that:

The connections are not only the real issues that have to be addressed ... involve taking note of the extensive interconnections between political freedoms instrumental (political freedoms can have a major role in providing incentives and information in the solution of acute economic needs), but also constructive. Our conceptualization of economic needs depends crucially on open debates and discussions, the guaranteeing of which requires insistence on basic political liberties and civil rights (Sen, 1999, pp. 147–148).

Thus, Sen presents a compelling case for a synergistic synthesis between political liberties and civil rights on one hand and economic rights and social justice on the other. In a nutshell, Sen reminds us of such a democracy

transcends by far mere political rights and civil liberties as defined by Freedom House. It encompasses other broad freedoms, especially economic, social, and cultural freedoms. This is a useful approach that helps us to distinguish the maximalist-cum-substantive democracy from a mere minimalist-cum-proceduralist democracy.

Corroborating this thesis, Edigheji argues that “it is important that democracy is analysed through the lens of developmentalism. Developmentalism means the structural transformation of the economy through industrialization and the enhancement of human capabilities, and that democracy is a means through which to achieve these noble objectives” (Edigheji, 2020, p. 17). It is within this democracy-development discourse that the instrumental value of democracy can be discovered.

Mkandawire forcefully propounded the idea that, while authoritarian States were able to propel economic growth, this was ephemeral (Mkandawire, 2001). Only democratic States were capable of sustainable, inclusive, and legitimate socioeconomic adjustment in the face of the disastrous outcomes of the structural adjustment programmes foisted on Africa by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In his own words, Mkandawire argued that:

Economic reform is more likely to be sustainable and effect fundamental economic restructuring over time, if the governments imposing the transitory pain of adjustment are viewed as legitimate by society, consult major social and interest groups and involve them in the design of policies... and educate the public about the need for reform. Democracies are advantaged in all these respects (Mkandawire, 2006, p. 5).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been publishing the annual Human Development Report since 1990. The report has consistently propounded the idea that development is quintessentially about people and goes beyond simple economic aggregates such as gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP). The report represent a breath of fresh air from the market-driven policy prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The report is grounded in the idea that economic growth without improvement of people’s livelihoods

is an exercise in futility. To back up this message, the report introduced the notion of sustainable human development, which is a process of enlarging people's choices by creating an enabling environment for long, healthy, and creative lives. Sustainable human development is measured through the Human Development Index. Clearly, UNDP is a proponent of the symbiotic nexus and mutually reinforcing interface between democracy and sustainable human development, which, by extension, forms the anchor for peace and political stability (UNDP, 2002).

The Human Development Report resonates with the World Happiness Report in more ways than one. The first edition of the latter was launched in 2012 (Helliwell, Layard and Sachs, 2012). Its major epistemological contribution is that people's happiness is not necessarily predicated merely on GDP growth. Besides income, six other key factors are crucial in ensuring people's happiness and social satisfaction: (a) health; (b) education; (c) social support; (d) freedom; (e) absence of corruption; and (f) family stability. According to the 2021 edition of the World Happiness Report, the top five countries where people were happiest and the most satisfied with their lives and livelihoods were Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Helliwell, and others, 2021). These same countries also belonged to the category of very high human development in the 2020 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2020).

It was the late Mwalimu Kambarage Julius Nyerere, the former president of the United Republic of Tanzania, who aptly argued that "freedom and development are as completely linked together as are chickens and eggs! Without chickens you get no eggs; and without eggs you soon have no chickens. Without freedom you get no development, and without development you very soon lose your freedom" (Nyerere, 1973, p. 1). The truism of these observations is further reinforced by the late Rolihlahla Madiba Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, as follows:

When we took on the project to transform society, one of our rallying cries was "freedom from want". Our goal was to banish hunger, illiteracy and homelessness and ensure that everyone had access to food, education, and housing. We saw freedom as inseparable from human dignity and equality... We are fully aware that our freedom and our rights will only gain their

meaning as we succeed together in overcoming the divisions and inequalities of our past and in improving the lives of all, especially the poor (UNDP, 2002, p. 43).

Along the same line of thinking, Claude Ake also made clear his conviction about the symbiotic causal linkages between democracy and development in Africa (Ake, 1996). He makes four interesting observations in this regard: (a) development is not economic growth, even though the latter to a large extent determines the former; (b) development is not a project, but a process; (c) development is a process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values; and (d) development is something that people must do for themselves, although it can be facilitated by the help of others. If people are the end of development, they are also necessarily its agents and its means.

The above observations by Amartya Sen, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Thandika Mkandawire, and Claude Ake are apt. Democracy lacks significance if it does not deliver positive socioeconomic outcomes in ordinary people's lives. Its value is denuded if it fails to help people put bread on the table. Conversely, development lacks value if it fails to promote people's fundamental freedoms and liberties. Democracy and development are, therefore, two sides of the same coin.

African agendas for building democratic developmental States

Africa already has the requisite policy and normative frameworks for developmental democracy in the form of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Peer Review Mechanism, which was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. These normative frameworks put at centre stage the significant role of the developmental State in guiding the social and economic transformation of the continent.

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want

To address the socioeconomic and political challenges facing the continent, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union

adopted Agenda 2063 in 2013. This is Africa's long-term development blueprint, in accordance with which States are required to tackle the three priorities (democratic and participatory governance; peace and security; and socioeconomic development and structural transformation) simultaneously, in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Agenda 2063 also identifies the creation of capable developmental States as one of the drivers for the continent's socioeconomic and political transformation.

Agenda 2063 has seven aspirations. Five aspirations commit African leaders to the promotion and advancement of socioeconomic development and structural transformation. Aspiration 3 (An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law) and aspiration 4 (A peaceful and secure Africa) speak directly to the advancement of democratic and participatory governance and peace and security (African Union, 2013).

The seven aspirations of Agenda 2063 resonate with the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Aspirations 3 and 4 of Agenda 2063 dovetail neatly with Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) (United Nations, 2015). All 17 Goals, like the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063, illustrate the inextricable link and mutually reinforcing interface among democracy, peace, and development.

According to 2014–15 Afro barometer study, the five most pressing problems facing Africa relate to employment, health, education, poverty and water supply (Gymah-Boadi, 2017). If these socioeconomic problems are to be tackled head-on, Africa's democracy cannot remain proceduralist or merely liberal, which is currently the case in most African countries. Africa must move its governance model towards developmental democracy. For this reason, Africa must balance political rights and civil liberties on the one hand with socio-cultural and economic rights on the other. At the very heart of developmental democracy is the right to development.

Ake (1996) concludes that Africa needs more than the crude variety of liberal democracy that is currently being foisted on the continent through external pressure in part linked to conditional aid from the powerful industrialized

powers. Mkandawire concurs with Ake that aid-propelled political liberalization has resulted in “choiceless democracies” in Africa. Ake boldly asserts that Africa needs a “social democracy that places emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights, as opposed to liberal democracy that emphasizes abstract political rights. It will be a social democracy that invests heavily in the improvement of people’s health, education, and capacity so that they can participate effectively” (Ake, 1996, p. 132).

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

Besides Agenda 2063, it is important to note the existence of two other instruments: the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the African Peer Review Mechanism. Both the Charter and the Mechanism provide a solid normative framework for the creation of developmental democracy in Africa.

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance draws from Africa’s commitment to democratic and participatory governance, enunciated in the 2000 Constitutive Act of the African Union. The Constitutive Act is the founding treaty of the Union. It commits the member States of the African Union to democratic, participatory, representative, and responsive governance under conditions of peace, security, and stability. Such governance also ensures inclusive and equitable socioeconomic development. The African Union upholds the basic democratic principle that elections are a legitimate method of transfer of power and the only democratic manner of expressing popular sovereignty in a representative democracy. The Constitutive Act also recognizes that sustainable democratic governance in Africa requires political stability, peace, and security, in conformity with the 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Without peace and democracy, inclusive socioeconomic development cannot be realized on a sustainable basis (Matlosa, 2019).

Table 1: Ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, by subregion

Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	West Africa
Cameroon	Comoros	Algeria	Lesotho	Benin
Chad	Djibouti	Mauritania	Malawi	Burkina Faso
Central African Republic	Ethiopia	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	Mozambique	Côte d'Ivoire
	Rwanda		Namibia	Gambia
	Madagascar		South Africa	Ghana
	Seychelles		Zambia	Guinea
	Sudan			Guinea Bissau
	South Sudan			Liberia
				Mali
				Niger
				Nigeria
				Sao Tome and Principe
				Sierra Leone
				Togo
3	8	3	6	14

Source: African Union Commission , 28 June 2019.

Note: The designations employed in the table do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

As shown in table 1, 34 member States of the African Union have ratified Charter. The record of ratification by region shows that West Africa remains the trailblazer in respect of normative commitment to the advancement of democracy as enshrined in Charter. Ratification in the other subregions has been very slow. The poor record of ratification in Central, East, North and Southern Africa suggests that a lot more needs to be done to popularize the Charter in those subregions by working with various stakeholders, including regional economic communities, civil society organizations and think tanks. However, the signing and ratification of Charter does not tell us much about democratization in Africa. It is more the mainstreaming and implementation of the provisions of the Charter that speak volumes. And the record clearly points to democratic backsliding and a serious autocratic upsurge in Africa, which has been accentuated by State responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Matlosa, 2021a; Matlosa 2021b).

African Peer Review Mechanism

During the 2002 ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Durban, South Africa, African leaders adopted the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. This Declaration paved the way for the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2003 in Abuja. The Mechanism was created to serve as Africa's means of self-assessment and peer review of the state of governance, covering four main thematic areas: (a) democracy and political governance; (b) economic governance and management; (c) corporate governance; and (d) socioeconomic development. While the Charter implores all African Union member States to accede to the Mechanism, it also forms a key part of the standards and codes used in the self-assessment and peer review itself. Thus, there is a symbiotic and inextricable relationship between the Charter and the Mechanism (Matlosa, 2019). Table 2 illustrates accession of member States to the Mechanism by subregion.

In total, 40 African Union member States have acceded to the Mechanism. As with the Charter, West Africa leads the way in terms of accession to the Mechanism with 12 member States having acceded to it. Both East Africa and Southern Africa share second place with 9 accessions each. Central Africa stands at 6 accessions while North Africa has only 4 accessions. It is still a mystery why not all member States have not acceded to the Mechanism. Perhaps this is a clear testament of the level of political commitment by African leaders to democratization. The other challenge is that several countries that have been peer-reviewed under the Mechanism have relapsed into political crisis years following their peer reviews. These include Algeria, Egypt, Lesotho, Kenya, Nigeria, the Sudan, and Tunisia. Ordinarily, the Mechanism would have undertaken crisis interventions in these countries in accordance with its basic instruments. This has not happened, however.

Table 2: Accession to the African Peer Review Mechanism, by subregion

Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	West Africa
Cameroon	Djibouti	Algeria	Angola	Benin
Chad	Ethiopia	Egypt	Botswana	Burkina Faso
Congo	Kenya	Mauritania	Lesotho	Côte d'Ivoire
Equatorial Guinea	Mauritius	Tunisia	Malawi	Gambia
Gabon	Rwanda		Mozambique	Ghana
Sao Tome and Principe	Seychelles		Namibia	Liberia
	Sudan		South Africa	Mali
	Uganda		Zambia	Niger
	United Republic of Tanzania		Zimbabwe	Nigeria
				Senegal
				Sierra Leone
				Togo
6	9	4	9	12

Source: Website of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

The Charter provides a solid platform for crafting the future of democracy in Africa. Chapter 9 of the Charter provides a solid platform for Africa to craft social democracy; it propounds the idea that democracy must be built hand-in-glove with the advancement of socioeconomic development. One of the provisions of therein that is relevant to the embrace of social democracy is the imperative to harness the democratic values of African traditional governance institutions, which are often denigrated under electoral and liberal forms of democracy. Another provision embraces the right to development as key to democratization, thereby ensuring that democracy's intrinsic and instrumental values are realized. The chapter reflects the call for a type of democracy that addresses poverty, inequality, unemployment, ill-health, illiteracy, marginalization, environmental degradation, exclusion, and underdevelopment (Matlosa, 2019).

While the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance is an entry point for crafting Africa's social democracy, the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides a more solid foundation for this project from the perspective of the preservation, protection, and promotion of human rights. The latter, like the former, creates room for civil liberties and political rights, much the same way as it lays emphasizes the economic, social, and cultural rights. Article 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples'

Rights provides that “all people shall have the right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind. States shall have the duty, individually and collectively, to ensure the exercise of the right to development” (Organization of African Unity, 1981, p. 4).

The above three important African Union-initiated instruments are very innovative and require a determined effort on the part of African Governments to implement them, since they serve as the foundation for renewing democracy and development in Africa. A journey of a thousand miles starts with one single step. Africa can take this single step only with visionary leadership, vibrant citizen engagement and effective, responsible, responsive, and accountable institutions (Matlosa, 2019). Balancing political rights and civil liberties on the one hand and sociocultural and economic rights (including the right to development) on the other hand, it is imperative that African countries deliberately strive to build democratic developmental States, a subject on which Mkandawire wrote extensively.

Conclusion

Of the various social science themes that Mkandawire has dealt with, the present article has focused on only two: (a) the democracy-development nexus; and (b) the quest for a developmental State in Africa. Both anecdotal and empirical evidence points to the conclusion that, while current electoral and/or liberal democracy in Africa is good in and of itself at advancing civil liberties and political rights, it is deficient and devoid of development. This has resulted in the minimalist-cum-proceduralist democracy.

Africa needs to make deliberate efforts to transcend the electoral and liberal models and embrace and entrench developmental democracy, which has a huge potential to lead to a transformation towards maximalist-cum-substantive democracy. Only then can democracy in Africa deliver concrete and tangible development outcomes. This transformation requires building developmental States as key drivers of democratic and participatory governance in Africa. It is imperative that the State be brought back into the driver's seat of development while allowing adequate space for the markets to play a meaningful role.

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Is good governance good for African development?

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Anis Chowdhury and Michael T. Clark¹

Abstract

This paper takes issue with the concept of “good governance” as the prescription for overcoming underdevelopment. It argues that, while good governance reforms are necessary for development, they have not only created unrealistic expectations, but have also unnecessarily complicated the work of governments. It posits that, even where governance needs to be improved, good governance advocates have seldom been right about how best to improve governance. Drawing on Mkandawire’s radical thinking, the paper concludes that good governance is certainly neither necessary nor sufficient for development. Instead, a pragmatic approach is required which, at the outset, identifies the major constraints to development and progress. This should be able to empower governments to analyse and formulate appropriate, pragmatic and realistic strategies to address development challenges, more than likely in an incremental and iterative fashion.

Key words: African development, good governance, Mkandawire, neoliberalism.

JEL: H1, H11, H5.

¹ This article draws on earlier work partly inspired by communications with Thandika Mkandawire. It draws in particular on Sundaram and Chowdhury (2013, 2015), two works that were encouraged by Mkandawire upon reading Sundaram and Chowdhury (2012) and Keita (2015), respectively. It concludes with material building upon Sundaram and Clark (2015).

Résumé

Cet article conteste le concept de « bonne gouvernance » comme solution au sous-développement. Il soutient que, si des réformes de bonne gouvernance sont nécessaires au développement, elles ont non seulement créé des attentes irréalistes, mais ont également compliqué inutilement le travail des gouvernements. Il affirme que, même là où la gouvernance doit être améliorée, les défenseurs de la bonne gouvernance ont rarement eu raison sur la meilleure façon d'améliorer la gouvernance. S'appuyant sur la pensée radicale de Mkandawire, l'auteur de l'article conclut qu'une bonne gouvernance n'est certainement ni nécessaire ni suffisante pour le développement. En revanche, une approche pragmatique est nécessaire qui, de prime abord, situe les principales contraintes au développement et au progrès. Elle devrait permettre aux gouvernements d'analyser la situation et de formuler des stratégies appropriées, pragmatiques et réalistes pour relever les défis du développement, probablement de manière progressive et itérative.

Mots clés : Développement africain, bonne gouvernance, Mkandawire, néolibéralisme.

JEL : H1, H11, H5.

Introduction

Drawing on the radical thinking of Thandika Mkandawire, the paper questions the usefulness of the concept of “good governance” to African development. It begins by exploring “good governance” and goes on to consider its relevance by drawing on case studies where despite ostensibly “bad” governance, or lack of “good” governance, growth has continued to be recorded, perhaps precisely because of what underlies the poor governance indicators. Lastly, the paper argues for a pragmatic approach which can identify the major constraints to development and progress, positing that such an approach should be able to empower governments to analyse and formulate appropriate, pragmatic and realistic strategies to address development challenges, more than likely in an incremental and iterative fashion.

Why good governance?

Many of those who wish to bring about inclusive economic and social development insist on promoting so-called “good governance” reforms. In fact, there is no clear – let alone systematic – evidence that “good governance” is either necessary or effective for development. There is a clear correlation between development and improved governance but the preponderance of evidence indicates that development leads to improved governance, not the converse.

Rejection of the “good governance” discourse and myth does not imply an acceptance of bad governance, whether this be in the form of corruption, cronyism, or other public malfeasance and incompetence. Governance does matter, but not in the way that is implied or claimed by most advocates of “good governance”. On the contrary, there are many reasons to press for governance that is capable, honest, effective, legitimate and responsive to the public will. “Good governance” is no more than a fashionable, but empty catch phrase. It emerged in the 1990s as a policy and political project by the World Bank in response to circumstances. Structural adjustment economic policy prescriptions were imposed as a quid pro quo for financial assistance during the developing country fiscal and debt crises of the 1980s. The new policies failed, however, to restore economic growth and development as promised. Hence, a credible alternative explanation for this failure had to be found to preserve the 1989 policy framework known as the Washington

Consensus. Thus, good governance reforms became the great new hope. Advising governments how to “govern less, but better”, became the new vocation for international development institutions, which soon developed new, supposedly technical, approaches to improving governance.

As neoliberal market liberalization was seen as the necessary complement of freedom and democracy, governance reforms were primarily targeted at reducing the scope, depth and impact of government. Reducing government intervention in the economy, through such measures as regulation, was considered necessary for neoliberal market reforms. Government ownership, for example, in the form of public or State-owned enterprises, was also to be eschewed, with privatization seen as a necessary part of the solution.

When the Washington Consensus policy prescriptions of the 1980s caused lost decades of economic stagnation in many developing countries, good governance reforms became the great hope for curing development failure and corruption, which were often simplistically attributed to big government. Thus, good governance became a convenient way to explain away the failure of the neoliberal economic orthodoxy of the last two decades of the twentieth century. Latin America lost more than a decade, and sub-Saharan Africa a quarter of a century to the Washington Consensus.

The statistical correlation between good governance indicators and economic performance has long fuelled hope that good governance would bring development. The World Bank introduced a composite and wide-ranging index of good governance based on perceptions of voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. The Bank insisted that there was a strong correlation between its indicators of good governance and economic performance, fuelling hope that the missing key to economic progress had been found.

The good governance approach was flawed from the outset. The indicators used were ahistorical and did not consider country-specific challenges and conditions. Cross-country statistical analyses typically suffered from selection bias in the choice of countries; and complex interlinkages among different variables were ignored, exaggerating the expected acceleration of economic growth due to better governance. Those flaws notwithstanding,

poor governance remained a convenient way to explain away the failure of the new Washington Consensus development orthodoxy of the last two decades of the twentieth century.

When good governance reforms are imposed as aid conditions, recipient developing country governments often end up mimicking donor expectations instead of addressing problems that the countries need to solve. With well over a hundred governance indicators, reforms become so wide-ranging and costly, often beyond the means of most developing countries, and worse, a major distraction from needed development efforts.

In practice, the results were often dispiriting: expected outcomes from large and expensive governance programmes failed to materialize and the economically best performing countries often scored low on governance indicators. The historical record offers many examples of countries which have developed despite “bad” governance, or lack of “good” governance, especially in East Asia, but also some countries in South-East Asia, Bangladesh and others. Ethiopia and certain other African countries are also growing rapidly despite – or perhaps precisely because of – what underlies their poor governance indicators.

Poor governance, in general, may be the overriding constraint in some countries, but obviously not in the countries growing rapidly despite poor governance. Thus, broad good governance reform is neither necessary nor sufficient for growth. It is not necessary, as the examples of Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia and Viet Nam suggest, and certainly not sufficient, as it is difficult to sustain governance improvements without growth. In many cases, governance reforms have had unexpected – even perverse – outcomes, as when decentralization and devolution have enabled the rise of powerful local political patrons. All too often, while ostensibly neutral, good governance solutions, such as the formalization of property rights and rule of law, have been implemented in ways that favour powerful vested interests, sometimes with grossly unequal consequences.

Is good governance a prerequisite for African development?

The World Bank and the donor community, in particular some member governments of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), have been telling Africans to improve “governance” since the 1980s (African Development Bank, 2012, p. 7). The good governance agenda seeks, broadly speaking, to reform institutional arrangements that have supposedly impressed influential policymakers from OECD countries. Contrary to this view, leading development experts on Africa believe that “African countries badly need to embark on processes of economic transformation, not just growth, and they are not helped to do so by insistence on prior achievement of Good Governance, meaning adoption of the institutional ‘best practices’ that have emerged in much richer countries.”²

Governance and growth: conceptual, methodological and measurement misuse

Effective government or good governance matters, but it is not obvious or clear what these terms really mean. The World Bank project on worldwide governance indicators defines indicators in accordance with what may be considered “fundamental governance concepts” (Kaufmann, Kraay and Zoido-Lobaton, 1999, p. 1). The chosen key indicators and their definitions have changed over time, however, since they were first identified and introduced. In its *1997 World Development Report* the World Bank advised developing countries to pay attention to 45 aspects of good governance. By 2002, the list had grown to 116 items, and to still more since then. Countries adopting this approach to accelerate their development by improving their governance must thus undertake more and more to do so; and the longer they wait, the more they will need to do. When they fail to develop and fall short on making progress on some of the increasing number of indicators, shortfalls on any or all of them can always be blamed for their failure to progress.

Unsurprisingly, the World Bank’s widely used worldwide growth indicators have come under severe criticism on methodological and conceptual grounds. For example, the changing definitions have been criticized (Thomas, 2010). Changes in the definitions should lead to discontinuation of the previous series of governance indicators, but, confusingly, many of the new indicators

2 David Booth and Ole Therkildsen, “The political economy of development in Africa: A joint statement from five research programmes, on behalf of Africa Power and Politics Programme; Developmental Leadership Programme; Elites, Production and Poverty: A Comparative Analysis; Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa; and Tracking Development” (April 2012). Available at /2012/04/joint-statement.pdf.

bear the same labels or names as those that they have replaced, with no explanation to justify the changes in definitions, implying their continuity.

Thomas (2010) also points out that the methodology followed by the worldwide growth indicators dataset assumes that its perception variables are merely noisy signals of actual governance. She questions why variables measuring perceptions should be interpreted as noisy signals of something else. Typically, when direct measurement of observable variables is impractical, social scientists often use proxies instead. A proxy measure of any construct needs however to be validated – first, by showing that it correctly represents the theoretical definition of the construct, and then, by ascertaining whether the proposed measure has the same relations with observable variables as those that the theory predicts. For Thomas, the worldwide growth indicators fail on all counts, and hence, they do not measure what they claim to measure.

Research at the World Bank itself has also raised similar doubts about the indicators. For example, Langbein and Knack (2008) have challenged their measurement validity. An indicator that claims to measure an abstract concept should systematically and reliably relate to that concept, and not to other, different, concepts. This should be the case regardless of how convincing the measurement may seem in logical or conceptual terms.

In other words, an indicator should measure the hypothesized abstract concept with minimal systematic (non-random) and random error. Langbein and Knack (2008, p. 3) conclude that “there is little if any evidence on the concept validity of the six WGI indexes”. They tested whether the six governance indicators measure a broad underlying concept of “effective governance”, or whether they are separate, causally related concepts. In other words, the six indicators say pretty much the same thing in various ways, with different words. Hence, they are redundant, and possibly tautological when statistically misused or misinterpreted.

Andrews (2008) argues that the good governance approach was flawed from the outset. The indicators used were ahistorical and did not consider country-specific challenges and conditions, which could be very different, not only among developing countries, but also in contrast with developed countries when considered collectively. Essentially, the indicators combine various measures drawn from many distinct underlying theories, normative

perspectives, and viewpoints. Hence, this eclectic mix simply combines the personal ideas of governance, often little more than prejudices, of those developing the indicators.

Andrews also notes that the creators of the worldwide growth indicators identify the foundations of their good governance work as “the norms of limited government that protect private property from predation by the state” (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2007, p. 2). The creators also assert that governments should be limited to responsibility for producing key inputs to growth and development – such as education, health care and transport infrastructure. Their arguments on how such inputs should be supplied have also changed, by later invoking both Weberian bureaucracy and new public management arguments.

Critics of the worldwide growth indicators have raised other issues, such as the limits and biases of perception-based subjective measures. For example, Kurtz and Schrank (2007a, 2007b) point out that the indicators’ reliance on perception surveys assumes that the interests of investors and those of countries are the same, similar, or at least not contradictory. Moreover, these surveys typically contain substantial biases, for example, that investor-friendly liberalization, deregulation, or privatization will improve governance, even though these policies generally reduce and weaken the effectiveness of governments.

Rothstein and Teorell (2008) criticized earlier literature on “good governance” and the quality of government for inadequately addressing the issue of what constitutes quality of government in the first place. They identify at least three problems with existing definitions. First, most are extremely broad, often too ambiguous to be used meaningfully. The problem with broad definitions is that, if good governance or quality of government “is everything, then maybe it is nothing” (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008, p.168). Rothstein and Teorell (2008) also argue that the literature fails to distinguish between issues that concern access to power and those relating to the exercise of power.

Second, many existing good governance or quality of government definitions tend to be functionalist, for example, that “good governance” is “good-for-economic-development” governance. Functionalist definitions raise two problems. First, many important non-economic attributes of good

governance, such as trust and subjective measures of well-being, are left out. Second, a country's quality of government level cannot be defined without first measuring its effects. Such definitions also do not distinguish between the content of specific policy programs on the one hand, and governing procedures or processes on the other. Thus, the functionalist approach borders on tautology. As *The Economist* (4 June 2005) noted, defining "good governance" as "good for economic development" generates tautological explanations and meaningless policy implications: "What is required for growth? Good governance. And what counts as good governance? Whatever promotes growth? And what is required for growth?"

Huther and Shah (2005, p. 40) attempt to define governance as "a multifaceted concept encompassing all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions in the management of the resource endowments of a state. The quality of governance is thus determined by the impact of this exercise of power on the quality of life enjoyed by its citizens." This seemingly different definition of quality of governance, however, is also somewhat tautological: "What is required for the quality of life enjoyed by citizens? Quality of governance. What is quality of governance? That which promotes the quality of life." (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008, p. 169).

Third, many existing good governance definitions focus exclusively on corruption. Definitions of governance or quality of governance that focus exclusively or even mainly on corruption, or its absence, often presume that government policy discretion and interventions lead to corruption and abuse. According to Rothstein and Teorell (2008), however, there is no empirical support beyond convenient anecdotes for this presumption. More important, small governments are not synonymous with the absence of corruption, while countries with very low levels of corruption have relatively large governments, as in Scandinavia and the Netherlands.

In any case, defining good governance simply in terms of the absence of corruption is not very useful. While considerable corruption is clearly antithetical to good governance, good governance implies much more than merely the absence of corruption, even if corruption is broadly considered to include clientelism, nepotism, cronyism, patronage, discrimination and regulatory or policy capture. Rothstein and Teorell reject the view

that evidence of corruption or government failures means that minimalist government is best for development or for eliminating corruption.

Is good governance necessary for development?

Meisel and Ould-Aoudia (2007) note that there are no theories of economic development which support the claims of “good governance” advocates. Nevertheless, the good governance agenda has defined policy reform goals for developing countries that were supported and adopted in some developing countries, in particular by foreign financiers and donors. Such goals have included strengthening property rights, tackling some obvious types of corruption, more accountable and democratic government, and imposing the rule of law.

The evidence conclusively shows, however, that countries have only improved governance through development and that what is termed “good governance” is not a necessary precondition for development (Khan, 2009, 2010; Kurtz and Schrank, 2007a). All developing countries do poorly on good governance indicators, but some have performed much better than others in terms of economic development. This underscores the need to identify key governance capabilities that help developing countries to accelerate economic development, and thus improve governance on a sustainable basis.

For Sachs and others (2004), many African countries are actually well governed once governance indicators are adjusted for income level. Poorer African countries do more poorly on governance measures than richer countries; after all, resources are required to improve governance. After adjusting for income, this conclusion holds when countries are ranked on the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International or in terms of their access to political rights and civil liberties by Freedom House. Their study also found a weak relationship between growth and governance improvements when all countries were considered. It also challenged the common claim that the development problems of Africa were due to poor governance. While poor African countries undoubtedly suffer adverse effects of poor governance, the authors do not believe that poor governance is responsible for low growth, and instead point to well-governed African countries which remained stuck in poverty.

The evidence that improved or good governance accelerates growth is unconvincing. Instead, statistical analysis using good governance measures suggest that growth and development improve governance, rather than vice versa. Kurtz and Schrank (2007a) note that several developing countries that have performed well in terms of growth, equity and structural transformation fell short on the most widely used World Bank good governance benchmarks. Their development experiences suggest that State capacity and what might be termed “market governance” better explain their unusually high growth rates and their higher levels of education, social equality and investment rates despite their modest, compromised or even corrupt governance record.

The apparently high correlation between low human development and inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) has been invoked to claim that “the truth is that the populaces of all countries have a fairly accurate idea on whether their governments operate on the principles of ‘good governance’” (Keita 2015). The correlation suggests relations which are circular or dialectical, however, rather than unilinear and unidirectional. But it is not clear when and how people know if a country is well governed. Undoubtedly, many people are often aware of certain types of abuse and corruption, yet this does not mean that people are aware of all types of abusive or corrupt practices, let alone their implications, systemic or otherwise, especially in seemingly well-governed societies. Nevertheless, rankings of corruption such as those prepared by OECD, the World Bank, Transparency International and other institutions are rarely based on popular perceptions but, more typically, on foreign investors’ perceptions.

Thus, the undeniable long-term association between good governance and high incomes provides very little guidance for appropriate strategies to induce high growth (Rodrik, 2008). The large-scale institutional transformation envisaged by the good governance agenda is rarely, if ever, a prerequisite for getting growth going. Poor countries suffer from many constraints and effective growth-accelerating interventions address those which are most exacting. According to Andrews (2010), countries with more effective governments grew at average annual rates of less than 2 per cent between 2000 and 2006, whereas countries with so-called “ineffective” governments (scoring below zero) grew by an average rate of about 4 per cent annually, despite facing much more daunting challenges, such as higher population growth.

For Fukuyama (2008), even if economic growth is not underpinned by a strong developmental State, growth accelerations require “just enough” development-accelerating governance capacity. He thus disagreed with the good governance orthodoxy of the World Bank and other donors which continued to presume that good governance accelerates growth, and that comprehensive institutional reform is a prerequisite for development. Instead, growth accelerations can and have occurred under a wide variety of institutional and policy regimes (Hausmann, Pritchett and Rodrik, 2004). Hence, Fukuyama noted that virtually every country and region in the world had experienced higher growth during the period 2003–2007.

Corruption and economic growth

Corruption adversely affects development in many ways, especially if it diverts resources that would otherwise be invested productively, or if, for various reasons, it deters truly productive investments. Historical evidence does not, however, show that anti-corruption measures accelerate economic growth. Large differences in growth rates between fast and slow growing developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s were not associated with significant differences in corruption indicators (Khan, 2006). The median corruption indices for both fast and slow growing developing countries were similar in the 1980s and 1990s, with both groups scoring significantly worse than advanced countries.

There are many perspectives on the causes of corruption in developing countries. First, the most influential view is that corruption is principally due to the greed of public officials who abuse their discretionary powers in their own self-interest, namely, self-seeking bureaucrats or politicians. Second, weaknesses in enforcing legal rights, including property and contractual rights, result in higher costs for negotiating, enforcing, and protecting contracts. Weakly protected property rights or poorly enforced contractual rights – and associated corruption – seem widespread in developing countries, including those in Africa. Anti-corruption strategies therefore require strengthening government enforcement capacities.

Third, rents can provide important incentives for innovative behaviour, often deemed essential for economic progress. Such rent creation was also important in many African development strategies before economic liberalization began

in the 1980s (Mkandawire, 2001). But often, State-created rents mainly served to augment incomes for State functionaries and politicians rather than bring about desirable innovations. The major policy challenge then is to better motivate innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour, while limiting related rent-seeking. Nevertheless, efforts to reduce, if not eliminate, all State-created rents have reduced the institutional capacities of many African governments, such as those needed to remedy market failures (Gray and Khan, 2010).

Fourth, patron-client relations are often associated with political corruption involving efforts by politicians and others to retain or gain power. Governments, political parties, factions, movements, business interests and politicians in many developing countries may use such measures, often because factors conducive to clientelism cannot be addressed by more conventional measures, owing, among other factors, to fiscal constraints. Clientelism needs to be regulated to limit its most damaging consequences. Meanwhile, the ability of governments to budget and spend according to their own priorities – rather than according to imposed aid or debt conditions – should be enhanced.

During economic transformation, low productivity assets and resources should be reallocated to emerging productive sectors through non-market processes, as property titles are often either missing, poorly defined or much contested. These non-market processes may be legal (such as privatization or land redistribution), quasi-legal (politically influenced market transfers) or even illegal (asset grabbing). Accordingly, the relevant governance policy question for many African countries is why illicit and dysfunctional accumulation persists without the emergence and consolidation of a much more productive asset distribution. Would registering property titles or other more well-defined property rights make it possible to minimize and eliminate such contestation? The outcomes of such property-consolidating exercises can be ineffective or worse, considering the very mixed experiences of legal titling campaigns in many African countries (Nyamu-Musembi, 2007).

While all corruption is damaging in some way, and hence correspondingly undesirable, some types are much more damaging than others. Claiming to fight corruption in developing countries generally, and in Africa in particular, by implementing a laundry list of desired governance reforms, sounds desirable and deserving of support. Such efforts, however, often ignore more

feasible and focused policies that can improve economic performance. As it is not feasible to address all types of corruption simultaneously, policies should focus on the types of corruption most damaging to development, such as those that waste precious investment resources. Reform priorities should respond pragmatically and effectively to actual challenges and circumstances. Otherwise, governance reform efforts can set unattainable targets, inadvertently causing disillusionment and reform fatigue as failure becomes apparent.

Reform implications and priorities for Africa

Many donors have instrumentalized good governance indicators as key criteria for the disbursement of development aid. Having become central to donor conditionality, the governance reform agenda has become the conventional wisdom in much of the African development discourse. “It taps into the popular aspirations of millions across the continent who face the burden of poor governance on a daily basis and who want their leaders to be held to account through genuinely democratic political systems” (Gray and Khan, 2010). The good governance agenda is now firmly ingrained in the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development.

Unfortunately, there is typically little guidance on feasibility and what can be achieved in the short term and what can only be achieved over the longer term, which should, in turn, guide judgements and planning, by reflecting appropriate sequencing and prioritization (Grindle, 2004). The good governance agenda is particularly demanding for African governments that are poor, inadequately organized, politically unstable or lacking in legitimacy and public support. Reluctance to pursue any prescribed reform for whatever reason would, however, result in poor performance scores, likely to have adverse effects on donor support (Grindle, 2004).

African policymakers receive confusing signals as policymakers in donor States condition aid allocations on such performance standards. Compliant African governments are rewarded for good behaviour with more generous aid, while non-compliant governments are punished. But what constitutes good behaviour for donor governments, and if inappropriate, what should the criteria be? What policies will improve governance effectiveness scores? And will such policies foster development?

Unsurprisingly, the answers are far from clear. Aid recipients are rewarded for pursuing policies that are not coherent, including stabilizing polities, deregulating markets, lowering tax rates, ensuring citizens' health and well-being, maintaining macroeconomic stability, providing reliable infrastructure and guaranteeing civil servants' capabilities and integrity. What, then, should aid-receiving governments do? Raise taxes to enhance fiscal space and provide better health care and education? Risk social and political stability by cutting spending? Raise living costs by liberalizing prices and eliminating subsidies? Almost every seeming solution aggravates another problem, just as many supposed good governance measures may also adversely affect economic development.

Instead, the notion of "good-enough governance" implies a more realistic, pragmatic, nuanced and better prioritized and sequenced understanding of the evolution of governance capabilities. Hence, "good-enough governance" may be more realistic for countries seeking to accelerate development. Such an approach necessarily recognizes priorities, preconditions and trade-offs in a context which recognizes that not everything desirable can be pursued at once. This implies acting on the knowledge of what is most important and achievable, rather than trying to fill all supposed governance shortfalls or gaps at the same time, besides designing and implementing public policy reforms while remaining mindful of conditions and context (Grindle, 2004).

Similarly, Meisel and Ould-Aoudia recommend what they term "governance for development", a new, broader concept of governance, including various institutional arrangements that inspire confidence and which, they suggest, vary with the country's income and other factors. Reform priorities should be determined by accountable country governments, not donor requirements, while reforms should always take account of context and realities. Unsworth (2003) suggests that better understanding of context would help policymakers to avoid making superficial judgments about development performance and its determinants, which aid donors rely upon in allocating concessional finance.

Donors need to avoid being overly influenced by short-term trends, or to equate the idea of "good" performance with implementation of a favoured policy priority. The desirability of a more realistic approach has also been recognized by the African Governance Initiative. Hence, many now agree

that institutional reforms in Africa should not simply aim to comply with global best practices, but instead seek to serve countries' needs and realize their potential.

Conclusion

The presumption that good governance reforms are necessary for development has not only created unrealistic expectations but also unnecessarily complicated the work of governments. Even where governance needs to be improved, good governance advocates have seldom been right about how best to improve governance. Furthermore, good governance is certainly neither necessary nor sufficient for development.

The record of recent decades shows that good governance advocates have provided little useful guidance on how to tackle technically, socially and politically complex real-world development challenges. Knowing that governance improves with development, one instead prioritize development-enhancing governance reforms, or what may be called “developmental governance”. A pragmatic approach to improving governance cannot be dogmatic and preconceived, offering one-size-fits-all guidance, where the solution is prescribed even without specifying, let alone understanding the nature of the problem to be addressed.

Instead, a pragmatic approach should, first, identify the major constraints to development and progress, then analyse and formulate appropriate and realistic strategies to address them, more than likely in an incremental and iterative fashion. Some elements of the good governance agenda – empowerment, inclusion, participation, integrity, transparency and accountability – may become workable parts of solutions, not because outsiders demand them, but because stakeholders themselves find them useful and develop effective strategies for collective action to realize them. So, we should draw on relevant experiences to learn lessons. Let us not presume, however, that there are best practices, applicable regardless of context. We need to be humble, not presumptuous, and that is never easy for those who are deemed experts.

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Democracy, development and the national project in Africa: breaking bread with Thandika Mkandawire

Siphamandla Zondi

Abstract

The postcolonial national project in Africa has been a subject of much debate, especially concerning such questions as the decolonization of the political sphere, the role of an inheritor State, the democratic transition, development imperatives, economic policies, and its relations with the peoples of Africa. Thandika Mkandawire's contribution to this discussion is illuminating and insightful, being consistent in its theoretical and methodological framework and focused on the twin challenge of equity and the improvement of the material well-being of the peoples of Africa. While Mkandawire has been written about a lot in relation to his incisive analysis of the idea of the developmental State in Africa and transformative social policy, his contribution to the larger debate about the conditions facing the national project after colonial rule is perhaps the basis on which his later interjections to the developmental State debates were founded. The author argues that Mkandawire's contribution to the debate about the national project is useful in connecting usually unconnected discussions, which helps to place the debate in a broader context than is often the case. Mkandawire connects the role of nationalists to global forces as well as the democratic project to development pursuits, and he does that while clarifying for us what a comprehensive African epistemic lens for such a discussion might be.

Key Words: Democracy, development, neo-colonialism.

JEL: I38, J18, O19.

Résumé

Le projet national postcolonial en Afrique a fait l'objet de nombreux débats, notamment sur des questions telles que la décolonisation de la sphère politique, le rôle d'un État héritier, la transition démocratique, les impératifs de développement, les politiques économiques et les rapports de ce projet aux populations africaines. La contribution de Thandika Mkandawire à cette discussion est éclairante et perspicace, cohérente dans son cadre théorique et méthodologique et centrée sur le double défi de l'équité et de l'amélioration du bien-être matériel des peuples d'Afrique. Bien que Mkandawire ait beaucoup écrit en relation avec son analyse incisive de l'idée de l'État développementiste en Afrique et de la politique sociale transformatrice, sa contribution au débat plus large sur les difficultés auxquelles le projet national se trouve confronté après la domination coloniale est peut-être la base sur laquelle ses interventions ultérieures aux débats sur le développement de l'État ont été fondées. L'auteur soutient que la contribution de Mkandawire au débat sur le projet national sert à relier des discussions habituellement non reliées, ce qui aide à placer le débat dans un contexte plus large que ce n'est souvent le cas. Mkandawire relie le rôle des nationalistes aux forces mondiales ainsi que le projet démocratique aux activités de développement, et il le fait tout en clarifiant pour nous ce que pourrait être un objectif épistémique africain global d'une telle discussion.

Mots clés : Démocratie, développement, néo-colonialisme.

JEL : I38, J18, O19.

Introduction

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o has advanced the view that Mkandawire belongs among the radical scholars working in or on Africa who were sceptical about the limits of the early critical scholarship on postcolonial Africa (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2016, p. 16). This early scholarship was influenced by the Marxist analysis of African development, along with other forms of revolutionary thought inspired by the desire to contribute to the Uhuru (freedom) moment. Mkandawire is in that cohort of radical scholars who sought a comprehensive view of the problem of Africa's development and statehood, seeking to determine whether capitalist development was possible or even desirable in the African setting and the role played by the State in this process: how it might play a critical role in development and transformation of the material conditions in society.

Concerns about the transformation of postcolonial Africa prompted Mkandawire to critically examine the ideas of democracy and development based on observed African realities throughout his time. This led to his much-discussed creative thinking on what he referred to, among other terms, as "choiceless democracies" and "disempowered democracies" (*ibid.*, p. 12). In this collection of tributes, Jimi Adesina suggests that these concepts, plus those of a transformational social policy and democratic developmental state, are key to understanding Mkandawire's broad intellectual legacy and the need for further reflection on his thought (*ibid.*). The first two of these ideas critique liberal democracy as an idea foisted on Africa as a panacea for the continent's combined governance, political and economic challenges, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Mkandawire's contribution was to enliven what had become stale discussions on democracy and development, debates that often mimicked voices from the West concerned about the plight of western democratic theory in the world. The present paper responds to this call for further reflection on specific aspects of Mkandawire's far-reaching ideas.

Mkandawire's epistemic lens

Mkandawire belonged to a school of thinkers who – at least, in his view – made two basic assumptions: the first that the scourges of poverty and exploitation could be defeated by social action and the second, that such action could be facilitated by social science developing new systematic

knowledge of society as it is (Mkandawire, 1999, p. 28). He posits that “good social science can cast light on these issues, especially if research is conducted on the fundamental questions and not tethered to some fashionable and transient concern of funders or self-appointed intellectual mentors (*ibid.*, p. 28; Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2016, p. 16). Unlike many others of his generation though, Mkandawire was not willing to confine himself to any of the narrow ideological and theoretical boxes within which some of his peers were confined. Perhaps this is why, for so many years, Mkandawire consistently focused on themes of democracy and development without much attachment to a single theoretical lens on this question.

Mkandawire lived through and witnessed many turns in the evolution of critical perspectives and, in each case, he was unable to commit himself blindly to a received set of views about development and democracy, and their associated underlying assumptions. He rejected the cultural nativism that divided African scholars based in Africa from those working in the global North. He joined those who also rejected an isolationist nativism harbouring narrow nationalist views that could easily descend into a sort of tribalism and promote navel-gazing. He also rejected the practice of creating enclaves of globally well-connected but locally disconnected scholars. For him, the cause that every African intellectual should pursue involved redefining the relationship between Africa and the world because of the deleterious effects of this relationship on the liberation of Africa, including in the economic and intellectual sphere (Mkandawire, 1999, pp. 29 and 30).

Seen from the perspective of current African debates about the decolonization of being, of knowledge and of power, one of the most important and repeated observations made by Mkandawire was that the plight of African intellectuals was tied to the nationalist project (Mkandawire, 2005). By looking through his wide-ranging analytical lens, Mkandawire was able to see the connection between developments in the domain of political power and its exercise, which included global power dynamics, on the one hand, and the evolution of debates and ideas among African intellectuals about African conditions, on the other. He sought to understand both intellectual and political developments in their dialectical relationship and interface with one another.

Nationalists and the post-colonial national project

Just as it does now, in Mkandawire's time, African nationalism and its projects including nation-building, national sovereignty, national economy, and others ran into major problems. It experienced a variety of failures that are well documented in the literature (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Understanding this helps us to understand Mkandawire (2005) when he says: "both nationalism and its main projects have fallen on hard times – betrayed by some of its heroes, undercut by international institutions and the forces of globalization, reviled and caricatured by academics, and alien to a whole new generation of Africans born after independence." African intellectuals and activists alike blamed African nationalism for the litany of ills that had bedevilled Africa. They caricatured and reviled it along with the legacies of colonialism for many things that went wrong.

Key among these setbacks, according to the literature, was the failure to delink from the global imperial and colonial logic and orders, resulting in the birth of what Nkrumah called "neo-colonialism" (Nkrumah, 1965). African nationalism also failed to redefine the relationship between African countries and the colonial and imperial order, with the result that Africa became ever more integrated with the world economy while remaining marginalized in that economy (Amin, 2002). This happened in a manner conducive to the underdevelopment of Africa, while the continent provided a sound basis for industrial development in the former colonial empires (Rodney, 1983). Africa became enmeshed in the malformed development engendered by the world system and infected with the virus of neoliberalism, which was manifested internally with devastating consequences for those who aspired for a good life after independence (Amin and Girvant, 1973). This failure to decolonize relations between Africa and the world threatened to perpetuate the continent's dependence on Western ideas, policy prescripts, grants and loans, a dependence that created more problems for its development than it solved (Moyo, 2009). Another manifestation of this failure is the debt trap, the abiding hope in the West for rescue and other such ghosts of the empire that continue to haunt Africa (Kwarteng, 2012).

Another much discussed pitfall of the African nationalist project was the failure to transform the African State into a capable, efficient, effective and trusted tool for delivering on the aspirations of African people (Mkandawire,

2012; Mukandala, 2001). This failure was particularly hurtful for African people as their countries tried a wide variety of solutions but the State was simply unable to deliver the results that were needed. Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987) puts it this way: ‘the general failure of the post-colonial state to deliver on the promises of independence has had a negative effect on the national liberation in Africa.’ He goes on to say: “In this context, the struggle for genuine liberation involves the transformation of the inherited structures of the state and the economy in order to make them capable of serving the interests of the African workers and peasants” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1987). In his view, the African governments sought to respond to the demands and aspirations of the independence era using institutional instruments and regimes that were ill-suited for the purpose. In this way, the postcolonial period became a zone of shattered aspirations and deferred dreams (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Yet, many maintained their hopes for Uhuru, the social liberation of Africa that remained so elusive (Nyong’o, 1995; Shivji, 2003a). The hopes placed in the emergent democratic governance were partly fed by a lingering dream of freedom that had been put in abeyance by the postcolonial period of hopes and impediments, to use Chinua Achebe’s phrase (Achebe, 2012).

One of the greatest challenges of liberal democracy in history is its inability to create conditions in the global South for reversing the legacies of colonialism and slavery that remain evident in high levels of poverty and underdevelopment, inequalities and despair. For Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987), the problem is the failure to fundamentally transform the State and the socioeconomic framework inherited from colonialism. Democratizing a colonial State leads not to a developmental State, but to a corrupt, alienated, incompetent and autocratic political system with the mere appearance of democracy (Forje, 2011; Nyong’o, 1987). For Claude Ake (1996), the imposed democratic system was by design not suited to solve developmental problems. This led to the calls for a democratic developmental State simply because it became evident that it was not sufficient to have a democratic State if it was not at the same time capable of bringing about development (Edigheji 2010; Mkandawire, 2005).

Mkandawire argued that “nationalism in Africa and elsewhere has displayed a remarkably enduring resonance, although in the eyes of some incongruously and regretfully so” (ibid.). Some of the metamorphoses that nationalism has undergone, however, have placed it at a far remove from the original version.

One key reason why African nationalism as an idea and a project remained in vogue despite the many failures for which it is blamed is that it remained a potent and coherent framework for the continued struggle for a second decolonization (Shivji, 2003a; Sithole, 1968) . No comparably persuasive and unifying ideas and projects had emerged among Africans in the period since the 1960s which could replace African nationalism as an all-embracing framework for various struggles for freedom. Decolonization was what Mkandawire (2005) describes as a “strong moral cause” that neither political activists nor intellectuals could avoid, and African nationalism recognized this sense of obligation to rid Africa of all the vestiges of colonialism.

Part of the problem for him is the manner in which those nationalists understood their historical duty to liberate the continent from colonial rule. For Mkandawire (*ibid.*), the way in which those who had become the dominant nationalists understood African nationalist struggles after independence explains a lot about the failures of postcolonial Africa. African nationalists understood the building of united nations and strong States in ways that built personality cults and that oversimplified the struggles to be waged after independence. This is an interpretation that underestimated the global designs and the intentions of former colonial empires. As a consequence, they built inheritor States that kept the colonial legacy alive. They became the kind of bourgeoisie in the colonies that Frantz Fanon had suggested would want to emulate the colonial bourgeoisie from the metropole (Fanon, 1990).

These nationalists took the decision not just to accept colonial borders, but to use them actively to reinforce what Ali Mazrui has called the “curse of Berlin”, the colonial geography from which colonial psychology, colonial culture, colonial political economy and so forth had arisen (Mazrui, 2010). “The problem is not so much that the nationalists accepted existing colonial borders,” Mkandawire argues, “but rather that this acceptance gave individual states *carte blanche* in terms of what they could do to their citizens within these borders” (2005, p. 12). This understanding by nationalists of the nationalist project made possible the situation which Berman describes as follows:

On the one hand, there are the relationships within African states between the centers of economic and political power

and the peripheral hinterlands; on the other hand, there are the relations of these states, as peripheral nations in the world capitalist system, to metropolitan centers of power in Western Europe and North America. These internal and external dimensions of center-periphery relations are structurally similar, interlocked and mutually consistent (Berman, 1974).

It also enabled African States to become rentier States dependent on unethical economic relations with major economies in the world, all of this without lifting the poor out of poverty.

In the name of African nationalism, murderous regimes, crude dictatorships and authoritarian governments not only continued to participate in the body which acted as the principal driving force of African nationalism, the Organization of African Unity and later the African Union, but they were also allowed to influence decisions and to be elected to positions at the head of the Union or regional economic communities. The principle of non-interference were intended to preclude actions that undermined the integrity of national territories and the sovereignty of States while they were being built, but it actually morphed into a form of protection for authoritarian leaders and governments by the rest of African countries. This *carte blanche* accorded to dictators, enabling them to do as they willed, turned African nationalism into a rhetorical cover for unfreedom, violence and authoritarianism.

For Mkandawire, African nationalism, together with the continent's modernization, development and governance, was confronted by a social pluralism that had not been anticipated (Mkandawire, 2005). The division of societies in former colonies into ethnic groups and clans, which varied in size, but still constituted significant social formations, posed a major challenge for nation-building. African nationalists had to make up their minds about what was needed to build a nation out of this plurality of formations. Views on this question represented a crucial point of departure since many already saw the recognition of these divisions and differences as inherently counter-revolutionary and a sort of divide-and-rule stratagem. In Mkandawire's analysis, African nationalists nursed the view that recognizing this reality and finding sound solutions to it without suppressing pluralism would deprive their state of independence and self-government of its meaning. Since social cleavages were associated with the colonial strategy of divide and rule, African

nationalists saw themselves as involved in struggles against tribalism seen as an outgrowth of imperialism. Mkandawire recalls the role of ethnic divisions in the fall of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo as a case in point (Mkandawire, 2005). This framed the attitude of African nationalists for decades thereafter. This attitude shifted in some cases from mere neglect of the issue, ignoring its existence, so to speak, to determined action to eliminate ethnicity and banish tribalism and clannism.

For Marxists, the clan, the tribe and race were considered part of the false consciousness inherited from the capitalist colonial system and, for that reason, the indigenous roots of some of these identities were erased from the story. Those who were committed to the liberal and modernist school of thought saw social pluralism as inimical to the development and modernization of postcolonial society. Commitment to a cosmopolitan outlook meant that any tribal and clan-based world view must be jettisoned. In this process, the personalities of government leaders came to be seen as those that had transcended this primordial world view and gained a status that needed to be emulated by the rest of society. The charisma of political personalities in charge of regimes became central to messages about the nation (*ibid.*).

The notion of development meant a strong State running a coherent nation and diverse economy. “Ethnicity was seen as inimical to both,” says Mkandawire (*ibid.*). Accordingly, social pluralism was not only a threat to nation-building, but to development too. African nationalists had thus accepted a European image of the nation and nation-State, one in which the ideal was to have one nation, one country, one race, one language and one culture. In this way, African nationalists accepted the logic of universalism that suggests that there are universal forms and ways of doing power, that power was hierarchical and that it is resident in a nation-state. The legacy of the Westphalian idea of a nation-State in Africa has been widely explored as part of the so-called “curse of Berlin”. The common narrative of Africa is that, even where federalism has been tried, as in Ethiopia, attempts have still been made to strengthen the centre to the point of rendering devolution purely cosmetic. The idea of a centre holding its strength has been used to concentrate power and stifle centrifugal forces so that the effects of devolution, decentralization or autonomy do not result in the end of the nation as an entity.

Mkandawire on democracy and the national project

Mkandawire viewed the debate on democracy through the lens of the connection between development and democracy. This approach comes in tandem with a concern with developmentalism and with African nationalism (Mkandawire, 1999), as part of a generalized desire to achieve both development and nation-building in Africa. Like other African intellectuals working on political questions, such as Claude Ake, Mkandawire approached these two subjects from a critical standpoint. While scholars were committed to them as ideals of importance to the transformation of postcolonial Africa, these ideas had many pitfalls and limitations in the manner in which they were being pursued in the 1980s and 1990s, which were a source of considerable discomfort for these scholars. Like others, Mkandawire understood that African nationalism was not nationalism in the generally understood sense, as it also included the transformation of States inherited from colonialism so that they could participate in the decolonization of the continent. These nations would then demonstrate their value by helping to transform relations between Africa and the world, and turn African countries into agents of change. These nations would pursue the pan-African integration agenda including through regional economic integration schemes. For Mkandawire (*ibid.*), African nationalism was meant to be a project for the transformation of Africa and the living circumstances of Africans for the better. This belief was strengthened by the visible failure of independence by itself to deliver a better life for Africans.

On the question of development and democracy

For Mkandawire's generation, the need to break African countries free of the chains of dependence on others for development was a critical goal to be pursued (*ibid.*, p. 29). The goal was development of another sort, development in a different way, one that would enhance freedom rather than diminish it. It was an idea of development that would enrich sovereignty, rather than reduce it to the mere waving of flags and singing of national anthems as countries lost the sovereign power to think for themselves what development meant and how it could be pursued. Yet, these efforts ran into major challenges even before the major economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s, decades of major developments in Africa's political economy. It was in this period that Africa really failed to join the trajectory of Asian economies that were fellow

postcolonial States: while they grew, Africa stagnated. It was in the 1970s that Africa slid from being a net producer of food into being a net consumer and importer of food (Zondi, 2004).

The nationalist project encountered setbacks as it failed to deliver on the dreams of Uhuru, better lives and stronger economics and as problems caused by the adverse international environment and the deleterious interventions of donors deepened. In this context, Africa saw the rise of demagogues and mavericks of a new kind, issuing promises to fulfil popular aspirations. These were big men with military backgrounds or backing who came to power in military coups, the instigators of which blamed the failure of civilian (nationalist) governments to meet the basic needs of the people (Mkandawire, 2005). Yet, the governments resulting from these coups deepened rather than ameliorated the crises facing the peoples of Africa. This crop of leaders abandoned nation-building and economic self-reliance projects in favour of structural adjustment and economic dependence. These post-nationalist leaders, as Mkandawire calls them, were more concerned with being well regarded internationally than fulfilling the popular aspirations of independence.

For Mkandawire, there is an indisputable and dynamic link between the adoption of economic policies designed to end poverty and ensure economic inclusion and the political empowerment of people through the deepening of democracy. He understood that democracy took a back seat quite early in the life of independent African States, amidst all manner of justifications, including the need to complete the process of decolonization. Democracy was also displaced by the rise of military dictatorships. There was a further view that democracy was a luxury that the poor did not see as a priority. Economic empowerment was thought to be a more urgent need than democracy. The structural adjustment programmes of the 1970s and 1980s also displaced the focus on democracy. Yet, ordinary Africans continued to dream of democracy and freedom. As a result, the wave of democratization movements after the end of the cold war was driven by the popular demands for change. While Mkandawire marvelled at the way democracy had emerged, in defiance of all the theories, under conditions of poverty, he conceded that “unfortunately, however, it has also led to a view on democratic consolidation that assumes an extremely voluntaristic character, over-emphasizing the role of political

leadership, strategic choices about basic institutional arrangements or economic policy and other contingent process variables” (Mkandawire, 2004).

It is from this standpoint that Mkandawire enters the debate on democratic consolidation dominated by the likes of Larry Diamond (Diamond, 1994), which formed part of more general debates on democracy in Africa (Akin and Ade, 2018; Genyi, 2019; Oko, 2008). His contribution to the debate was to underline the conceptual and structural impediments to consolidating democracy in unfavourable contexts. For him, one such stumbling block is the predominance of economic policies and developmental approaches that hamper rather than enable such democratic consolidation. While procedural problems occupied much of the democracy debate (presidentialism, authoritarian enclaves, exclusionary democracy, gumboots democracy), behind these procedural issues with African democracy, Mkandawire argued, lay substantive matters of equity and material well-being. The persistence of adverse socioeconomic conditions created a sense of what Mkandawire calls the disempowering democracy (Mkandawire, 2004). The observation that it was authoritarian democracies that have a positive record on eliminating or reducing poverty did not mean that we need authoritarian democracy; it meant, rather, that we need its development strategies.

For Mkandawire, this suggests that the fate of many democracies in Africa is tied to the manner in which they handle the task of improving the material well-being of the people. This means that it is their poverty strategies, their economic policies and their development paradigm that will determine whether democracy is consolidated or not. For that reason, the role of the State, its potential to catalyse development in society including through economic policies that promote equity and well-being and also through transformational social policies, runs as a golden thread through Mkandawire’s writings. It is at this point that he firms up the discussion of the idea of a development State in Africa and sets forward the positions that we have described above. But that is an entire discussion for another paper.

Conclusion

This article responds to the need for critical reflection on Mkandawire’s epistemic contribution to stale debates about democracy and governance in Africa, including the role of the State in development. Discussions about

democracy as a panacea stimulated discussions in response that set the compass for a new direction in democracy debates generally. For his part, Mkandawire made a profound contribution to the charting of this new direction in the literature on democracy or development in Africa, thanks to his astute intellectual position at the crossroads of many divergent and intersecting trends in African scholarship and his steadfast commitment to understanding the fundamental questions facing Africa after independence.

The concept of disempowering democracy opens up space for understanding the political, economic, and social conditions that make democracy work. Disempowerment happens in all these spheres of a country's life. For Mkandawire, the failure by democracies to fashion or choose policies and programmes that economically, socially and politically empowered their people posed a major threat to the survival of democracy in Africa. This condition also exacerbated the procedural weakness of these democracies. The nationalist project, which Mkandawire analysed in great depth, failed because it failed to deliver an empowering democracy.

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Rethinking African politics: the new age of political parties

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o

Abstract

This paper sustains Thandika Mkandawire's thesis regarding a national, democratic, and developmental State. It argues that the thesis advanced by Mkandawire needs to inform African political practice in democratic governance. To build democracy on the continent, it is critical that democracy be promoted to be able to organize citizens politically to capture state power to promote social, economic, political, and cultural relations for the "greater good" of society, which is quite often couched in terms of democracy, freedom, equity, fairness, social justice and so on. The opposite of these values constitutes what amounts to bad governance, oppression, dictatorship, and so on. This task cannot be accomplished without the active role of political parties, notwithstanding historical, cultural, and regional differences. The paper consistently maintains that, notwithstanding their disappointing records, weaknesses as institutions, and deficiency in values and goals, political parties will continue to play a central role in the process of democratization and development in Africa.

Key Words: African politics, democracy, development, developmental State.

JEL: Q2, Q38, P1.

Résumé

Cet article défend la thèse de Thandika Mkandawire sur l'État national, démocratique et développementiste. Il soutient que la thèse avancée par Mkandawire doit éclairer la pratique politique africaine en matière de gouvernance démocratique. Pour construire la démocratie sur le continent, il est essentiel de promouvoir la démocratie de manière à préparer politiquement les citoyens à s'approprier le pouvoir de l'État, le but étant de favoriser les relations sociales, économiques, politiques et culturelles pour le « plus grand bien » de la société, qui est très souvent exprimé en termes de démocratie, de liberté, d'équité, de justice sociale, etc. Aux antipodes de ces valeurs se placent la mauvaise gouvernance, l'oppression, la dictature, etc. Cette tâche de promotion de la démocratie ne peut être accomplie sans la participation active des partis politiques, malgré les différences historiques, culturelles et régionales. L'article soutient avec cohérence que, malgré leurs résultats décevants, leurs faiblesses en tant qu'institutions et leurs lacunes en matière de valeurs et d'objectifs, les partis politiques continueront de jouer un rôle central dans le processus de démocratisation et de développement en Afrique.

Mots clés : Politique africaine, démocratie, développement, État développeur.

JEL : Q2, Q38, P1.

Introduction

In the 1980s, disillusioned with the failed attempts by the Bretton Woods institutions to revive African economies and pressurize African governments to respect good governance, African social scientists launched a serious discourse about what might be termed “an alternative Africa”, later captured by the African Social Forum under the slogan “another Africa is possible” (Baxter, 2002) or what Samir Amin called “a genuinely African political economy” (Lawrence, 2018). African-founded institutions of research and critical social science met in Harare and later in Addis Ababa to deliberate on the African condition, largely within the conceptual framework laid out by Samir Amin, not to mimic him ad nauseam, but in an endeavour to unmask the African condition without the prevailing theories and assumptions handed down to them by behavioural and anthropological scholarship.

In subsequent periods, intellectuals, civil society organizers and leaders of social movements discussed and published together in journals founded by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, in Dakar; the Southern Africa Political Economy Series Trust, in Harare; and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, in Addis Ababa. This renaissance of radical social science discourse and praxis produced various individuals who, in their different political settings, joined political movements and parties to campaign for the realization of this “alternative Africa” during the last two decades of the twentieth century. I was one such individual.

My decision to leave the academic and research world and to enter politics did not mean that I had concluded that my own wisdom was worthless, but I had realized that I would make better use of this wisdom were I to engage more practically in what we started calling the “second liberation struggle” in Kenya. This, after all, was very much in keeping with Karl Marx’s Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, which noted that “the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways: the point, however, *is to change it*” (Engels, 1976, p. 65).

Very much in keeping as well with Cornel West’s understanding of this thesis in its contemporary context, in terms of applying Marxist theories to political and social practice, I decided, as a young idealist, that the time had come to

go beyond our Marxist critique of our African politics to a Marxist attempt to change the situation for a much more humane future for our people,¹ namely, to mount a struggle against the post-independence authoritarian regimes in Africa in favour of democratic regimes. Indeed, what distinguishes African politics from 1975 onwards as a period of political defiance is the pronounced involvement of university academics in day-to-day political life in various African countries, either as active party organizers or even organizers of subversive political movements against authoritarianism and anti-democratic regimes (see Anyang' Nyong'o, 1987).

Origins of the breakdown in democratic politics in Africa

In an article published in 1989 in *African Affairs*, I argued that the origin of the breakdown in democratic politics in Kenya, and hence the rise of presidential authoritarianism, could be traced to the disintegration of the nationalist coalition that ushered in independence in 1963. This could apply to many other African countries in various ways. This breakdown occurred in the period 1963–1966, and Kenya has not recovered from it since (Anyang' Nyong'o, 1989). My interest in presidential authoritarian regimes has persisted, and I do believe that the instability, the fragility, the continuous fractioning and the pronounced tendency to personalize the leadership of political parties is not simply the outcome, or function, of tribal politics as the popular narrative would have it (I would hesitate to say “explains it”), but more a function of the culture of authoritarian presidential politics that easily survives by weakening political elites so as to institutionalize that authoritarian hegemony. Presidential authoritarianism is antithetical to the institutionalization of political party politics. The questions must be asked: are political parties essential to the building of a democratic political culture in Africa? Can political parties survive in predominantly authoritarian regimes, particularly of the presidential type, in Africa?

My recent book, *Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy in Kenya? Choices to be Made*, (ibid., 2019) is a collection of a series of essays that I had published over time in Kenyan newspapers on this very issue. Faced with a national debate aimed at reviewing our 2010 Constitution to reinforce a democratic

1 For an analysis and interpretation of Cornel West's writing and thinking on philosophy, Marxism, and humanism, see Christian Fuchs, “Cornel West and Marxist humanism,” *Critical Sociology*, Sage Journals, January 2021.

political culture, the politics of inclusivity and, in short, the nurturing of what Thandika Mkandawire (2001) appropriately called a “national, democratic, and developmental state”, I put forward the view that the thesis propounded by Mkandawire should inform African political praxis in democratic governance, and this process cannot ignore the role of political parties in building any modern democracy, notwithstanding historical, cultural, and regional differences. I will advance this thesis later on in the present essay.

Democratization and the re-emergence of multi-party politics

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 changed both Western approaches to African politics and the position taken by African social scientists to the study of our own African reality. By that time a good number of African intellectuals had moved into active politics and remained there as the years passed, some even becoming heads of State.² Given the tremendous Western and donor interests in promoting and defending democracy and good governance in Africa, public scholarly discourse seemed to have moved more towards focusing on good governance rather than on democracy as such. At times the issue in question was formulated in a nuanced manner as “democratic good governance”, without a clear distinction between the three elements: good governance, democratic governance and democratic good governance.

Why, we may ask, was this conceptual conundrum so prevalent? Quite often this was due to the way in which the donors defined or conceptualized conditions for foreign aid or the types of social science research that they were ready to fund. Likewise, support for political parties by Western foundations, or so-called “institutes of democracy”, very often laid emphasis on their aim as the promotion of good governance (as defined by them) and not necessarily the building of democracy and democratic political systems.

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, however, sought to depart from this donor and foreign aid-driven agenda for social science research, problem formulation and prescriptive answers to the political question of “what is to be done in Africa”. Hence the shift in focus by Mkandawire, the long-time executive director of the institution, that we have referred to earlier. That brings us to why the focus on studying, thinking

2 Such as Amos Sawyer In Liberia (1990–1994).

about and writing on African politics and African political developments needs to be maintained: not only on democracy and democratization in the African context, but also on the principal agents for this democracy and democratization: social movements, political parties and the State.

Thesis

My thesis will, therefore, be very simple. To build democracy in Africa, we need political parties which believe in democracy, “in and of itself”, as once stated by Mkandawire (1988), and in organizing citizens politically to capture State power so as to promote social, economic, political and cultural relations for the greater good of society, quite often couched in terms of democracy, freedom, equity, fairness, social justice and so on (Anyang’ Nyong’o, 1988). The opposite of these values constitutes what amounts to bad governance, oppression, dictatorship and the like. The processes through which people get persuaded to bestow political or State power on political parties to pursue these values are called “democratic elections”.

There has always been contention regarding the extent to which elections are or can be democratic in various African countries and, even if they are, what measures or indicators are acceptable as evidence of a democratic election, or democratic electoral outcomes. One simple test that I have often advocated is that an electoral outcome can be judged as democratic when the winners celebrate victory and the losers accept the outcome as legitimate in accordance with certain constitutional principles or, as it were, “rules of the game”, freely consented to before the actual electoral contest.

Modern democracies are largely constitutionally governed. In other words, they are founded on constitutions which are accepted by most of the people through plebiscite, referendum, or convention (see Sahle, 2017). To have a democratic process of producing a democratic government, people (the citizens) must first and foremost wrangle over the rules of the game (the constitution) and accept them either by consensus, or through yet another preambular process of consensus whereby the majority preference (determined through a free and fair vote, or some other acceptable choice-making mechanism) takes precedence over the minority dissent.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, constitutions and constitution-making became a major arena for political struggles in Africa for building democracy. All of a sudden political parties were crafted overnight to discuss constitutions, agree on them, or have them imposed on society by some constellation of politicians, and then governments were formed through ostensibly “democratic elections” in which the party or parties with the majority of votes were the victors.

Majoritarian principle does not always lead to Canaan: quite often to Nineveh!

Application of the majoritarian principle to establish what are assumed to be democratic governments was first put to the test long ago, however, even as early as the making of the United States Constitution in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century. James Madison was sceptical about the majoritarian principle when he pointed out the discrepancy between the assumptions about majority parties in government serving the public good and their tendency to get consumed in factional fights with little regard for the public good. In Federalist Paper No. 10, Madison wrote the following:

Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority.³

Madison forgot to add that the power of “the overbearing majority” can, in certain cases, be usurped by an authoritarian presidency. Had Madison lived during the time of Donald Trump, he would most likely have added

³ James Madison, “The same subject continued: The Union as a safeguard against domestic faction and insurrection”, Federalist Paper No. 10, published in *The New York Packet*, 27 November 1787. Cited by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, “Political parties in Kenyan general election(s): the 2013 presidential and general elections”, in Kimani Njogu and Peter W. Wekesa (eds.), *Kenya's 2013 General Election: Stakes, Practices and Outcomes* (Nairobi: Twaweza Communications, 2015), pp. 80–95.

this phenomenon to his observation. We in Africa have had plenty of such usurpations: from Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (1980–2017) to Gnassingbe Ayadema of Togo (1967–2005); the list is long. Hence, notwithstanding many well-written constitutions in Africa – Kenya’s 2010 constitution being one of them – periodic elections seem unable to produce legitimate or stable governments. This is a trend that should not be merely deplored – or worse, ignored – but should be properly researched with a view to understanding its genesis and its evolution, so as to chart a durable path towards the consolidation and institutionalization of the national democratic and developmental State in Africa.

Centrality of political parties

Notwithstanding their disappointing records, weaknesses as institutions, deficiency in values and goals, tendency towards what Ali Mazrui (1967) called “the politics of hero worship”, political parties will continue to play a central role in the process of democratization in Africa and the role of the State in this process as well as in development. The myth that development can be left to the so-called private sector is, by its very nature, a myth. The private sector itself needs the State to superintend the rules of the game of succeeding in private sectoring!

Vicky Randall and Lars Svasand (2001) and Giovanni M. Carbone (2007) have proposed useful themes covering key issues that could be investigated with a view to understanding the dynamics of African political parties, their weaknesses and potentialities, in promoting and consolidating democracy. Whatever problems may we have with the political party as a key player in the political process in Africa, the party is an entity and a key actor in electoral politics with which we can hardly dispense if we are intent on achieving national democratic and developmental States in Africa today.

There is a dilemma here, however. We also observe that very often parties are simply creatures that appear at elections and then disappear while so-called “individual strongmen” remain, bestriding the political stage like some colossus. What are identified as the background weaknesses of African political parties should not be taken at their face value, meaning that there is something missing in Africa as a prerequisite to democratic politics. And this thing is civil society – in other words, a society where economic and social relations

are so advanced because of capitalist development that the very substance of politics is the struggle of such individuals within their economic categories or social classes. But the question is: must we wait for capitalism to develop before we experience democracy? Not really: at any rate, things have never happened like that in history. So, we come back to dealing with our reality as it is and to consciously building national democratic and development States with the raw material that we have.

In an observation commonly attributed to Edmund Burke, “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”⁴ In his 1770 essay, *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents*, Burke asseverates the importance of good men associating with one another and, as he puts it, “concerting” in their thoughts and actions, especially when faced with a dangerous situation in politics or business. Hence the importance of political parties in building and sustaining democratic politics. He writes: “Whilst men are linked together, they easily and speedily communicate the alarm of any evil design. They are enabled to fathom it with common counsel, and to oppose it with united strength. Whereas, when they lie dispersed, without concert, order, or discipline, communication is uncertain, counsel difficult, and resistance impracticable” (Canavan, 1999, p. 146).

Conclusion

This essay by Burke is perhaps the most powerful argument advanced in English political theory at the time that bourgeois political parties were beginning to emerge in England. It is indeed very much akin to the view put forward by Vladimir Lenin in his 1902 essay, *What is to Be Done*, in which he argues that the working class in Russia was not going to be able to become political, in other words, to promote, achieve and defend their rights simply by fighting economic battles with their employers over wages, working hours and the like. What mattered was to be masters of that instrument that determines and regulates these wages and creates the environment for so-called “dispute resolution.” And that instrument was the State.

Without dwelling overmuch on Lenin’s theory of the State, it is important to note that almost all African nationalist political parties were Leninist in many

4 Edmund Burke, in a letter addressed to Thomas Mercer.

respects. Kwame Nkrumah's slogan: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all these things shall be added unto you" was very much a Leninist dictum. It was not therefore that most nationalist African political parties, once they achieved state power after independence, became highly centrist, advocating a one-party State akin to Lenin's Russia. It took Julius Nyerere almost his entire lifetime in politics to realize that the one-party State was antithetical to democratic politics.

But after three decades of the second epoch of multi-party politics in Africa, there is a need for African political scientists to take time off, examine, reflect on and analyse where they have come from, where they might be going and what they have achieved to date in terms of laying the foundation for, and perhaps building, the national democratic and developmental State so extensively championed by Mkandawire as the preferable alternative for Africa.

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Neoliberalism, the coronavirus disease pandemic, and the public health-care crisis in Africa

Emmanuel Ndhlovu

Abstract

This paper revisits Thandika Mkandawire's critique of neoliberalism with the intention to demonstrate how his critique has now been confirmed by the unfolding coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Building on Mkandawire, the article takes issue with the neoliberal doctrine of *laissez-faire* markets and its promotion of individualism over collectivism, which many African countries adopted in the 1980s and which contributed to the collapse of their public institutions. Neoliberalism promotes the reduction of public expenditure, along with the privatization and liberalization of public institutions, with the hope of improving their effectiveness and efficiency. This has had calamitous effects for African institutions, in particular the public health-care system, which is now in a state of incredible dereliction that has increased the vulnerability of the poor majorities on the continent to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exposed the ineptness of neoliberalism as a useful development ideology. Drawing from Mkandawire's archive, the article posits that for Africa to weather the COVID-19 storm, an effective, efficient, and inclusive health-care system that is overseen by the State, as opposed to private actors, is critical to save the lives of the poor majorities who cannot afford private-sector health-care services.

Key Words: COVID-19, development, neoliberalism, public health, social policy.

JEL: D6, D73, H41.

Abstract

Cet article reprend la critique de Thandika Mkandawire sur le néolibéralisme dans le but de démontrer comment cette critique est maintenant confirmée par la pandémie de coronavirus (COVID-19). S'appuyant sur Mkandawire, l'article s'oppose à la doctrine néolibérale des marchés de laissez-faire, qui prône de l'individualisme au détriment du collectivisme, doctrine que de nombreux pays africains ont adoptée dans les années 80 et qui a contribué à l'effondrement de leurs institutions publiques. Le néolibéralisme favorise la réduction des dépenses publiques, ainsi que la privatisation et la libéralisation des institutions publiques, dans l'espoir d'améliorer leur efficacité et leur efficience. Cela a eu des effets désastreux sur les institutions africaines, en particulier sur le système public de soins de santé, qui est maintenant dans un état d'abandon incroyable qui a accru la vulnérabilité de la majorité des pauvres du continent à la pandémie de COVID-19. La pandémie a mis en évidence l'ineptie du néolibéralisme comme idéologie de développement utile. En s'appuyant sur les archives de Mkandawire, l'article postule que pour surmonter la tempête de la COVID-19 et sauver la vie d'une population majoritairement pauvre et dépourvue de moyens pour se payer des services de santé du secteur privé, l'Afrique doit disposer d'un système de santé efficace, efficient et inclusif qui est supervisé par l'État, par opposition aux acteurs privés.

Mots clés : COVID-19, développement, néolibéralisme, santé publique, politique sociale.

JEL : D6, D73, H41.

Introduction

The present paper revisits the critique of neoliberalism by Thandika Mkandawire with the aim of demonstrating how his views have now been confirmed by the arrival of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic. Mkandawire unswervingly flagged how neoliberal policies would not only shatter social and development institutions in Africa, but would also open the continent to exploitation by former colonies. Drawing from secondary and tertiary sources, the paper examines Mkandawire's views on social protection, social policy and development with a focus on the public health-care system. In the following sections, the paper discusses the African public health-care system and Mkandawire's critique of neoliberalism, in which he presciently foresees the utter dereliction of the system. Lastly, the paper draws conclusions from these observations.

Neoliberalism and social policy

Mkandawire (2004, 2010) links Africa's development challenges and the collapse of its public institutions, including the health-care system, to the adoption of inappropriate policies, the absence of social policy, the use of improper socioeconomic development approaches and the continued interference by former colonizers and their imperialistic tendencies, including structural adjustment programmes and globalization, which open Africa up to further exploitation. These challenges, which have forced countries to cut short their sovereign revamping and development of public institutions, have rendered Africa more vulnerable to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, than would otherwise have been the case.

As a means of extricating the continent from the challenges frustrating development, Mkandawire (2001) advances forward the concept of social policy for developmental States and the need for regional developmentalism. A developmental State, according to Mkandawire (2001, p. 296), is one that is competent to establish developmental objectives and keen to create and sustain a policy climate and an institutional structure that supports development. Two key aspects for the realization of a developmental State are ideology and structure. Mkandawire's understanding of developmental States includes all such key aspects, including those which could enable it to withstand crises such as pandemics. These include a developmental ideology

and the institutional capacity – defined as the capacity to implement policies – to promote infrastructure development, in the public health-care system, for example, along with other preparedness and response mechanisms, and health awareness campaigns as part of an agenda to build an inclusive health-care system.

Mkandawire links the debate on developmental States with the diagnostic potential of social policy in the realization of African development. He posits (2009, p. 141) that social policy is critical for development and is “important in the nation-building project”, noting that it can be used to achieve multiple objectives in developmental contexts (Mkandawire 2005). Mkandawire also discusses what he refers to as the “transformative social policy”, which, as he sees it, combines the three roles of social policy, namely, productive, redistributive and protective functions, as critical in transforming social relations and institutions. Mkandawire argues that African transformation can be realized when there is a link between social and economic policies. He argues that: “social policy [needs to] work in tandem with economic policy to lead to socioeconomic development” (Mkandawire 2009, p. 22). He shares these views with other scholars, such as Adésinà (2015, p. 99), who argues that the role of the transformative social policy “stretches from the economy to social relations and social institutions... [and] involves a wide range of instruments to raise human well-being, transform social institutions, social relations, and the economy.”

Mazwi, Muchetu and Chibwana (2017, p. 3) posit that, at the centre of the transformative social policy, “is the need to guarantee that every citizen lives a life of dignity regardless of status, ethnicity, age, gender, and any other distinctive feature.” This condition does not merely comprise protection, vulnerability, destitution and short-term risk analysis, but also caters for production, protection, reproduction, redistribution and social cohesion. As a result, it is linked to politics. Thus, Mkandawire (2001, p. 25) writes: “Social policy is a highly political process, touching upon power relations, access to resources and ideological predilections about the role of state and markets.” As a political process, the transformative social policy can therefore be used to respond to neoliberalism and its deleterious effects, as exposed and aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These range from growing domestic and income inequalities; the elimination of protection for workers, instability in economic life, and the adoption of fiscal austerity policies that

dismantle livelihoods and dispossess ordinary citizens of their economic rights. By nature, social policy rejects neoliberalism and its pursuit of accumulation through dispossession and monopoly – tendencies that have posed serious challenges for the African public health-care system, which is now being ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby justifying Mkandawire’s protests about the abandonment of public institutions in response to profit-seeking market forces, as detailed in the next section.

Public health system and neoliberalism in Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has essentially been a health calamity, although it has also provoked drastic changes to other sectors – economic, transport, social and education systems. The focus of response efforts, therefore, is on health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the concept of “health” as a condition of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2009). Public health concerns the health of a given nation or people which is pursued as part of a national or public institutions agenda to improve the lives of their people. In consistency with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of WHO declares health as one of the basic rights of every human being regardless of race, religious belief, political affiliation or economic or social condition.

Likewise, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2014) advocates the prioritization of human health through universal health coverage and pro-health policies in all sectors as part of the collective effort to achieve sustainable development. Universal health coverage is defined by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (*ibid.*) as equitable accessibility to affordable, accountable, appropriate health services of guaranteed class by all people, including promotive, preventive, curative, palliative, and rehabilitative services. The aim of universal health coverage is to promote people’s access to health services, eliminate financial barriers, achieve national and internationally approved health goals and eventually contribute to development through poverty alleviation (Carrin and James, 2005).

The 2008 Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Care and Health Systems in Africa acknowledges the health challenges on the continent. It further sketches out general interventions that countries could undertake in tackling

the persistent regional challenges facing their health systems (WHO, 2008). Opposing the neoliberal notions of privatization, the declaration encourages States to align their health policies with the needs of the primary health-care approach to achieve universal health coverage. Scholars and policy institutions widely concur that Africa is one of the regions experiencing massive public health sector challenges (Kirigia and others, 2004; Marschall and Flessa, 2010; Sebastian and Lemma, 2010; WHO, Regional Office for Africa, 2000). These studies have attempted to examine the condition of distinct aspects of health systems such as financing, human resources, information and information systems, and national research systems. Except for work by Mkandawire and a few other scholars, however, none of these studies link the challenges faced by the African health-care system to the adoption of neoliberal policies by African leaders, thereby causing the collapse of the system, as detailed below.

The dereliction of the health-care system in Africa comes under the spotlight with every new health crisis. For instance, the 2013–2015 Ebola outbreak in West Africa resulted in an estimated \$2.2 billion loss to the economies of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, demonstrating the vulnerability and unpreparedness of those countries. For a very long time, the health-care system in Africa has been neglected, exacerbating the vulnerability of the population even to preventable diseases (Harding, 2009). Thus, the World Bank (2015) shows that health-care system spending in Africa (both public and private), as a percentage of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), declined from 6.1 to 5.5 per cent between 1995 and 2015, while that of other regions such increased: South Asia from 3.8 to 4.3 per cent and South-East Asia and the Pacific from 1.6 to 3 per cent. This statistical evidence shows that, while other regions have improved the percentage of national income designated for the health sector, the public health-care system in Africa continues to suffer from underinvestment.

Most governments across the African continent embraced neoliberal and capitalist development policies in the 1980s, with the hope of eventually extricating their people from poverty. Neoliberalism typically refers to the withdrawal of State intervention, “laissez-faire market policies, and individualism over collectivism [which] has been adopted by – and pressed upon – the majority of national governments and global development institutions” (Hartmann, 2016, p. 2145). Neoliberal policies promote the privatization and individualization of public institutions in the belief

that private institutions are more effective and efficient in providing social services than their public counterparts. In Africa, the result of the adoption of neoliberal policies has been a plethora of disastrous socioeconomic outcomes, including increased poverty, job loss and the weakening of income distribution. The 1980s in Africa saw the genesis of the collapse of public health-care institutions as neoliberal and capitalist development policies placed their focus on production and rarely on the health and well-being of those actually providing the labour. The decline in public spending and State involvement saw the rapid collapse of health institutions, thereby aggravating the vulnerability of the ordinary citizens.

Since the key focus of structural adjustment programmes was to cut back and ration expenditure, in the context of the health-care sector, the programmes slashed public spending and promoted the privatization of health systems and services. Following this trend, structural adjustment policies led to an irregular medical landscape. In Kenya, Chuma, Maina and Ataguba (2012) find that health-care services remain pro-rich and anti-poor. The same is reported for South Africa (Mhlanga and Ndhlovu, 2021) and for Ethiopia (Sebastian and Lemma, 2010). These studies exhibit a shift towards the privatization of health care in most African countries, where accessibility to good health care is mostly determined by people's financial capability. In turn, the collapse of public health institutions has seen the thriving of the private health institutions, which many Africans simply cannot afford. The burgeoning of private health-care outlets operating for profit has had a severe impact on people's well-being. As Rotarou and Sakellariou (2017, p. 497) argue, private institutions, "with their focus on increasing profits, and not on providing affordable and good-quality health care, have led to the deterioration of public health systems, increase in urban-rural divide, as well as increase in inequality of access to health-care services."

With the privatization of health care, most people in need of such care find the services unaffordable and inaccessible. This has caused life expectancy in most countries to stagnate, while mortality from preventable infections continues to rise. For example, South Africa, Zambia, and Kenya are the three most industrialized and urbanized countries in their subregions, yet they have life expectancies of 64, 63, and 58 years respectively. African life expectancy is 10 per cent lower than the world average. This may be attributed to the effect of contagious diseases, in particular on the elderly (UNICEF, 2015). In

addition, some 82 per cent of health loss and the ensuing economic labour loss in Africa are the result of preventable diseases which thrive because of the inadequate health infrastructure.

The seizure of the African health-care system by monopoly capital through structural adjustment policies seeking, ostensibly, to “improve” effectiveness and efficiency is nothing but a capitalist response that is layered with exploitation, disempowerment and the exclusion of the ordinary people, who cannot afford private health care. This is how Mkandawire relentlessly viewed access to health services, considering this as both a political and a human rights issue which is inexorably tied to nationalism and development and, therefore, one which require social policy interventions. Rotarou and Sakellariou (2017, p. 498) concur with Mkandawire’s views when they point out that:

While it is argued that a well-functioning health system aims at: (1) improving the health of individuals, families, and communities; (2) defending the population against threats to its health; (3) protecting individuals against the financial costs of bad health; (4) providing equitable access to care that has people at its centre; and (5) enabling people to participate in decisions that affect their health and health system, neoliberalism does not share the same goals. It can be argued that neoliberal practices in the field of health, especially with regards to points three and four, go exactly in the opposite direction.

Mkandawire (2001) argues that African development cannot merely be attained through a focus on economic policy without the social policy component. Social policy needs be linked with economic policy to enable public institutions such as the health-care sector to be functional and relevant in the African context. It is in this way that development can be attained and the African social question addressed. This question, according to Mkandawire (2009, p. 132), “addresses problems engendered by social differentiation along class, ethnicity, gender and other social cleavages that arise or are unresolved within a nation.”

In no sector have these disparities been more evident than in the health-care sector during the current COVID-19 crisis. Mkandawire’s work shows that

if Africa is to save the lives of its people from pandemics such as COVID-19, countries should play a leading role in building robust and inclusive public institutions, in particular their health-care delivery systems. The overriding message is that, for African countries to weather pandemics, a holistic approach to health is needed, which focuses on the overall links between the African health-care system and the social, political, cultural and economic environment.

The view of health care as a social policy is supported by de la Porte (2016), who insists that health care must be contextual. By contextuality, he means that responses to health care must first understand people's beliefs and philosophies of life, and how cultural, political, social, and economic contexts influence "attitudes, values, customs, and rituals" that in turn influence health-care decision-making (ibid., p. 1). In the health-care context, the concept of *contextuality, coupled with social policy*, takes due account of the fact that the continent of Africa has generally been laid waste and marginalized by colonialism and neo-colonialism. As a result, its health outcomes are deeply entrenched in its past, and yet neoliberalism does not inspire abstract thinking about health problems emerging from the past. Instead, neoliberalism posits health care as an individual rather than as a social, political or economic issue. The irony is that, when people get sick, they become less productive and consequently less beneficial to the neoliberal project of maximizing profits through their labour. It is from this standpoint that scholars such as Mkandawire reject the neoliberal dogma and push forward discourses on the need for inward-looking policies that can lead to tangible development. They reject the hegemonic neoliberal development prescriptions promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions and insist on the need to reconsider economic and development approaches in Africa from the standpoint that neoliberalism has not only shattered the public health-care sector, but has also left Africa wide open to exploitation by the global North.

Studies by the first generation of African development scholars emphasized the need for the continent to design its own unique socioeconomic, political and development models that address the specific challenges that it faced in pursuit of its dreams and aspirations, and to abandon cutting and pasting approaches (see Amin, 1972, 1973; Johnston and Mellor 1961; Mafeje 1976, 1978; Palmer 1977). The development of African public institutions, including those in the health sector, is contingent on the capacity and

readiness of its leaders to play a leading role in the prioritization of continental needs. Mkandawire belongs to a cohort of scholars that reject the concepts, theories, and models of uncritical embrace in resolving African problems. Most African leaders believe in the superiority of European and Western-based health institutions and, thus, prefer to seek health care abroad. The result has been the allocation of meagre resources to the local public health sector as the State has abandoned its obligation of providing public health services.

With the allocation of meagre resources to the health-care sector, working conditions and incomes have deteriorated. Critical shortages of basic equipment and supplies have also ensued, as witnessed in the lack of beds, respirators, personal protective equipment and so forth during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Disgruntled with salaries and working conditions, significant proportions of health workers have left the continent (Price, Khubchandani and Webb, 2018), and have resettled in the global North, where they are now playing frontline roles in the battle against the pandemic. With national lockdowns and the restriction on movements, African leaders have swiftly mobilized resources to prepare private health-care systems for their own use when infected. This situation fully supports Mkandawire's view that neoliberalism is to blame for the total dereliction of African public institutions, including the health-care sector, and his warnings to the continent of the perils of neoliberal policies of privatization and limited State involvement in the provision of public goods like health. Mkandawire (2015) points out the value of understanding the factors which underpin development, underdevelopment and the recovery of economies as central to any efforts designed to improve the lives African people.

Mkandawire (2015) also promotes the important role of institutions and history in the development of effective and context-specific policies and programmes in improving the living standards of Africans. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the ineptness of neoliberalism by demonstrating that leaving public health in the hands of private entities aggravates the vulnerability of the poor majorities. African States should therefore play an active and strong interventionist role in public institutions if the continent is to withstand pandemics such as COVID-19.

On the basis of this logic, Mkandawire preferred the deployment of social equality policies as the best development tools in the African context, as

opposed to the adoption of structural adjustment programmes. Across the continent of Africa, people live as interlinked communities and, therefore, the individualistic nature of neoliberalism is not consistent with the African way of life, predicated on communalism, collectivism and the spirit of Ubuntu. Now that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the permanent crisis of neoliberal capitalism, Africa would do well to draw on the work of Mkandawire and construct a future which is not influenced by the West, but built by Africans and African research institutions. This future should be one that is based on the context of culture and context of situation, distinct for every nation and people who share a common vision of development and welfare for all. It was in this conviction that Mkandawire also devoted so much time to debates on African regional integration (developmental regionalism) as one of the building blocks of development.

Mkandawire teaches us therefore that, for Africa to achieve inclusive development and to weather the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic, another trajectory of development is needed which is relevant to the cultural context and situations of the peoples of the continent. This development trajectory should be opposed to the neoliberal free market notions and should thereby enable Africa to renew its commitment to roll out a development approach which is inclusive and which can empower the continent to develop its public health-care sector and thus, give shelter to its vulnerable population in the COVID-19 storm. The State should be at centre stage in building a strong, inclusive – and not privatized – health-care delivery system based on the cultures, needs and realities of the people of Africa.

Conclusion

The present paper has revisited Mkandawire's critique on neoliberalism with the aim of drawing lessons about how the crisis of neoliberalism has been incredibly exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The article posits that, for Africa to weather the COVID-19 storm, an effective, efficient and inclusive health-care sector is critical. Considering the socioeconomic challenges faced by the continent, the private sector does not represent an option in the fight against the pandemic, given that its prevention and cure equipment is not readily available to and accessible by the poor majorities of its population. As a result, the public health-care system is the only hope for Africa. Owing, however, to the adoption of inappropriate policies, including the structural

adjustment programmes espoused under neoliberalism in the 1980s, the public health system in Africa today is seriously dilapidated. Most African countries cut public expenditure and abandoned the public health sector to the messy array of market forces, in the hope of improving their effectiveness and efficiency. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has demonstrated that this has been one of the biggest mistakes by African governments as most of their people cannot afford the services of the private sector.

One important lesson to be learned from pandemics is that neoliberal policies have destroyed the Africa health-care system. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the ineptness of neoliberalism by showing that the decision to leave public health in the hands of private entities only aggravates the vulnerability of the poor majorities, a consequence often foreseen and warned against by Mkandawire. He urged African governments not to endorse laissez-faire market policies or to promote individualism over collectivism. He argued that the African State should always play an active and strong interventionist role in public institutions to ensure that they remained inclusive and consequently could withstand crises such as COVID-19. From this standpoint, Mkandawire favoured the deployment of social equality policies as the best development tools in the African context as opposed to the adoption of structural adjustment programmes. Vehemently rejecting neoliberalism and its emphasis on individualism through the privatization and liberalization of public institutions in the pursuit of profit, Mkandawire argued for the deployment of an indigenous approach based on the collective social existence of the African people. This approach will enable the continent to grapple with the needs of its people and thus effectively respond to crises.

Mkandawire was therefore, right when he encouraged Africa to “rethink the attributes of a nation-state in Africa – in terms of cultural basis and territorial exclusivity – in order to give greater authority to regional arrangements and strengthen regional self-policing” (1999, p. 101). Mkandawire died at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had just arrived in Africa and would eventually prove the validity of his ideas: he therefore died as a man who had accomplished his mission on his continent.

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Developmental State ambition of South Africa

TK Poee and David Mohale

Abstract

The Government of South Africa, under the auspices of the African National Congress (ANC) in the post-1994 period, has long desired to be considered and operate as a developmental State. A quick reading of key documents of the African National Congress illustrates the predominance of the concept in its thinking and stated desire in respect of how the State should operate. However, as indicated by the late Thandika Mkandawire in his 2001 publication “Thinking about developmental states in Africa” the desire to be developmental, while noble, does not occur by simply wishing it so. Rather, the corresponding ideological and structural components must be present. This article, while in agreement with Mkandawire’s contention that there needs to be established foundations or components for a State to be considered developmental State, argues that a more empirical assessment now exists for finally deciding whether States like South Africa can or were ever developmental States. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, is both a sophisticated and rather crude means of finally determining whether South Africa was ever an actual developmental State.

Key Words: COVID-19, development, developmental State, Mkandawire, South Africa.

JEL: G2, H1, I18.

Résumé

Le Gouvernement de l'Afrique du Sud, sous les auspices du Congrès national africain (ANC) dans la période après 1994, a longtemps désiré être considéré et fonctionner comme un État développementiste. Une lecture rapide des documents clés du Congrès national africain illustre la prédominance du concept dans sa pensée et son désir déclaré quant à la façon dont l'État devrait fonctionner. Cependant, comme l'a indiqué le regretté Thandika Mkandawire dans sa publication de 2001 intitulée « Thinking about developmental states in Africa », le désir d'être un développeur, bien que noble, ne se manifeste pas simplement en le souhaitant. Au contraire, les composantes idéologiques et structurelles correspondantes doivent être présentes. Cet article, tout en étant d'accord avec l'affirmation de Mkandawire selon laquelle il doit y avoir des fondations ou des conditions établies pour qu'un État soit considéré comme développementiste, fait valoir qu'il existe maintenant une évaluation plus empirique pour décider enfin si des États comme l'Afrique du Sud peuvent être, ou ont jamais été, des États développementistes. La pandémie de coronavirus (COVID-19) est à la fois un moyen sophistiqué et plutôt rudimentaire de déterminer enfin si l'Afrique du Sud n'a jamais été un État développementiste.

Mots clés : COVID-19, développement, État développementiste, Mkandawire, Afrique du Sud.

JEL : G2, H1, I18.

Introduction

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has laid bare the failure of the decades-old call by the African National Congress to make South Africa a developmental State. Although the outbreak of the pandemic has accelerated and perhaps confirmed the weakening of the State (Congressional Research Service, 2021), some industry-based research (Eunomix Research, 2020) has suggested that the quest by South Africa to create a developmental State was a dream deferred.

Traditional developmental States such as China, Singapore and Japan have clearly illustrated that what makes a developmental State is not only a dynamic economy that creates jobs, but also one that reinvests those dividends to create hard social infrastructure that can withstand black swan events (unexpected events with major consequences) such as COVID-19. Rather than lament the loss of its aspiration to create a developmental State, the South African Government and the ruling party can jointly use the obvious weaknesses highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic to become a model capable State. The Japanese developmental State emerged in the context of a huge crisis, albeit one that is markedly different from the current global malaise.

Aspiration for a developmental State

It should come as no surprise to those that have observed international development trends that the governing party in South Africa, the African National Congress, has aspired to operationalize various developmental policies and ideologies over the past two decades, key among them being the concept of a developmental State (Gumede, 2019). A developmental State is one in which the Government leads the country's social and economic development and the highly technocratic State authorities use policy to achieve economic prosperity (Chang, 2010). Gumede (2015) incorrectly contends that this is the only definition of a developmental State. In reality, all definitions relating to a developmental State are characterized by high economic development; a highly technocratic civil service; and a Government that plays an active role in the private sector, strategically using the sector and involving experts in the implementation of public policy.

Although Edigheji (2010) expertly argues that South Africa should be considered a unique case study because of its overtly or unique liberal democratic Constitution and human rights ethos, the discussion as to whether that is the case is beyond the scope of this paper, which follows the traditional interpretation of the ethos of the developmental State.

The concept of the developmental State found much favour during the highly publicized rise of Asian economies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan Province of China in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Some scholars, such as Mkandawire (2001), argue that early post-colonial African States such as Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia could be described as generic types of developmental States. This is one of the reasons why the concept would have appealed to the African National Congress, which wanted to use the growing world economy of the early 2000s (Kowalski, Lattimore and Bottini, 2009) to reduce the social and economic challenges in South Africa (African National Congress, 2012). The revered late scholar and former leader of the African National Congress in parliament, Ben Turok, argued that “it seems that a return to a developmental discourse under the rubric of the ‘developmental state’ may be attributed to a certain desperation that the model used over the past decade has not produced the required benefits for a large section of the population” (Turok, 2008).

This article argues that the move try to make South Africa a developmental State was more of an aspiration than an empirical policy and planning process. Among the key factors that drove the aspiration of the Government led by the African National Congress to create a developmental State were early policy decisions (errors) taken after the first multiracial election in 1994, such as placing too much trust in the private sector (big business conglomerates) and failing to manage the inherent contradictions of liberal democratic capitalism (Turok, 2008). Although the Government’s intentions were good, its desire to create a developmental State did not translate into policies because of several factors, including the lack of technical capacity in local government, poor leadership by the dominant political class (Holdt, 2010), a lack of policy coherence (South Africa, Department of National Treasury, 2019), and the absence of a clear vision of how a South African developmental State might function (Ukwandu, 2019). The prevailing problems mentioned here can be argued to be a practical and theoretical symptom of what Mkandawire (2001)

said required “ideological” and “structural” components for a successful developmental State.

Mkandawire (2001, p. 290) expands on these critical components for a successful developmental State:

It is this ideology-structure nexus that distinguishes developmental states from other forms of states. In terms of ideology, such a state is essentially one whose ideological underpinning is “developmentalist” in that it conceives its mission as that of ensuring economic development, usually interpreted to mean high rates of accumulation and industrialization. ... At this ideational level, the elite must be able to establish an “ideological hegemony”, so that its developmental project becomes, in a Gramscian sense, a “hegemonic” project to which key actors in the nation adhere voluntarily. The state-structure side of the definition of the developmental state emphasizes capacity to implement economic policies sagaciously and effectively. Such a capacity is determined by various others – institutional, technical, administrative and political.

Given that, as argued in this paper, the South African Government has been plagued by a lack of proper forward development in the two components mentioned by Mkandawire, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic seems to have truly laid to rest the Government’s desire to be a developmental State. The aforementioned problems already support this assertion, but further evidence is provided by the way the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the local government structure’s ability to generate economic development in strategic metropolises.

Coronavirus disease judges all

The recent debates and various views surrounding how best to control, move past and even analyse a crisis of this magnitude have clearly illustrated how complex and sometimes frustrating it is for Governments and States to handle black swan events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Arndt, and others, 2020; Deloitte, 2020). In the context of COVID-19, even the notion that traditional western liberal democracy – as characterized by States such as

Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America – is still the desired mode of development for developing States has been questioned (Norrlöf, 2020), given that Asian developmental States such as China, Japan and Singapore have performed better in three key areas: operating responsive public health systems (Wong, 2020), finding the right balance between keeping the economy afloat and protecting citizens (Cao, and others, 2020; Tanjangco, and others, 2021), and using expert civil servants (technocrats) to manage the complex systems of government and the economy (An, 2020).

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss whether developmental States (including authoritarian ones) such as China currently tackle black swan events like COVID-19 better than liberal democracies such as the United States, and whether developing States such as South Africa, other African countries and South American countries should follow the economic development model of China. Rather, it is to consider why and how China, Japan and Singapore have been agile in addressing COVID-19 thanks to their use of state planning and apparatus models. It is perhaps thanks to pre-existing governmental and economic development planning models that these countries and other countries and areas, such as New Zealand, Taiwan Province of China and Germany (World Health Organization, 2020), have coped well with the economic and social impact of COVID-19.

The critical question to consider, therefore, is not whether States like China, Germany and Singapore escaped the impact of COVID-19, but whether they will be able to recover from it and, if so, how they will do so using their pre-existing institutional and policy strengths. It is important to consider just how complex and challenging the crisis has been for government leaders and society, but a proper post-analysis will take place only decades later. In this paper, however, it is argued that four important indicators can be used to describe the scale of the impact that COVID-19 has had globally, regionally and in South Africa.

The World Bank produced one of the early reports that attempted to quantify and understand the global impact of the report. The report (Maliszewska, Mattoo and van der Mensbrugge, 2020, p. 4) noted: “The effects of COVID-19 in the tourism, hospitality and recreation sectors have been unprecedented. In the accommodation and lodging sectors, quarterly

revenues are down 75 per cent. ... Airlines worldwide are expected to lose \$113 billion in revenues for 2020". An earlier UNCTAD report looking at the pandemic's impact on the African continent estimated that "COVID-19 will drag African economies into a fall of about 1.4% in GDP, with smaller economies facing contraction of up to 7.8%" (Gondwe, 2020). This will then have the cascading effect of hampering how numerous African States address the economic and health fallout in the future.

An early report by the National Treasury of South Africa, one of the largest economies on the continent, described the economic outlook as "highly uncertain", forecasting that economic growth would "fall by 7.2 per cent in 2020 as a result of the crisis, the March and April 2020 credit rating downgrades, and the compounding effects of weak investor confidence". (South Africa, Department of National Treasury, 2020). However, the National Treasury correctly points out that it would be incorrect to blame all of the country's economic woes on COVID-19. This is because the South African economic environment has been poorly managed by the African National Congress for the last two decades. In particular, Governments have failed to create sustainable and geographically diverse jobs at scale. For instance, it is estimated that in 2020 there were 11.1 million unemployed citizens (Gqubula, 2020). It would be disingenuous and historically inaccurate to blame the COVID-19 pandemic for these long-term high unemployment numbers, which have been poorly managed for a variety of reasons linked to the management of the economy by the African National Congress Governments. Further analysis of these unemployment numbers also reveals that unemployment is discriminatory, since it mostly affects young black and coloured citizens in townships and in rural areas (World Bank, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic has merely confirmed the underperformance and ineffectuality of post-apartheid economic policy. The perpetuation and consolidation of the apartheid-skewed settlement pattern and its attendant symptoms of congested squatter camps, over-populated townships and undeveloped rural areas shows how difficult it is for black people in particular to follow some of the measures recommended to flatten the curve of infections, such as self-isolation or quarantine.

The African National Congress can correctly point to extenuating circumstances to explain its poor performance, namely, the major global

recessions in 1991 and 2009 (Kose, Sugawara and Terrones, 2020), centuries-old British colonial and Afrikaner nationalist-inspired apartheid-related legacies (Pooe, 2018), and neighbours countries that have questionable governments and desperate economies (International Monetary Fund, 2020). It would be disingenuous for anyone to deny or undermine the impact of the staggering economic and social inequalities in South Africa, which were engineered through centuries of dispossession of most black people.

Notwithstanding these extenuating circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the policy choices of the African National Congress over the last two decades have been poor, if not ineffectual. Moreover, it has brought to the fore critical questions about whether the current developmental (particularly economic) trajectory is what is required to address high unemployment and other related problems by 2030. While we assert that there can be no dispute about the excellent work that the African National Congress – unlike its predecessor – has done in reorienting the democratic State and building it to serve the majority, the uncomfortable question that needs to be raised (but can be dealt with in detail elsewhere) is whether the African National Congress remains the correct vehicle to take South Africa out of its current crises.

One of the strong criticisms often labelled against the African National Congress is the loosely defined concept of cadre deployment, which is attributed to the State's perpetually weakening capacity because of the preponderance of ill-equipped personnel in the public service. It is against this backdrop that this paper suggests that the African National Congress should drop its aspiration for a developmental State and focus instead on building a capable State.

A capable, rather than developmental, State

Unlike a developmental State, a capable State is one that focuses simply on being a responsive and sound State that can carry out the most basic government functions and duties. It does not aspire to carry out the intricate, singularly focused form of economic development, public policies and institutions espoused by developmental States.

The concept or notion of a capable State is relatively new and, as such, is quite broad in its theoretical exposition. Nevertheless, a straightforward explanation states that a capable State is:

one that is able to maintain peace, stability, and security and to ensure the economic well-being of its citizens and effectively and efficiently deliver basic services to the people. It was further defined as one with a clear mission and vision translated into good policies and programmes, possessing adequate and capable human resources and capable institutions to carry them out. This state should have a committed and visionary leadership, able to deliver good governance and justice in an inclusive, transparent and accountable manner (Rwanda, Ministry of Public Service and Labour, 2007).

Using this rather direct definition of the concept, it can be easily argued that a capable State is one that is focused on ensuring the right mechanics, such as sound governance, basic services and the right personnel to lead the State. This brief overview of what a capable State is shows why the authors of this paper argue that this model is a more realistic possibility for the ANC-led Government to operationalize, despite the obvious criticisms that will emanate from some thinkers and cadres aligned with the African National Congress and the Government.

Agreement with the present article's contention would seem to be supported unwittingly by the Government's stated developmental plan, the National Development Plan 2030 (South Africa, National Planning Commission, 2012). Chapter 13 of the document, in particular its opening section, indicates seven qualifying goals for a capable State, including stabilizing the political-administrative interface, making the public service and local government careers of choice, and developing technical and specialist professional skills. Based on these criteria, we contend that South Africa is disqualified from being considered a functional developmental State. The developmental path of a capable State, which is discussed only briefly in the National Development Plan, is the path that the current Government should work towards. Unless – unbeknown to the authors of the present paper – the traditional concepts of a developmental State have been reinterpreted, the meshing of the two concepts – capable and developmental State – in the

National Development Plan should be seen as a theoretical oversight by the authors of the Plan, who perhaps did not appreciate the finer intricacies and nuances of either concept.

Aspiration for a developmental State ended by the coronavirus disease pandemic

The call for the African National Congress to end its aspiration of making South Africa a developmental State should not be seen simply as a rebuke of the party's numerous mistakes and its poor planning in advancing its aspiration for or perceived advancement of a developmental State. Indeed, we acknowledge some of the party's valiant attempts to be developmental in its policies and programmes, such as the policy document on its readiness to govern, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the growth, employment and redistribution strategy, and countless others. We contend, however, that by ending its aspiration to create a developmental State, the African National Congress will free itself from the heavy burden of trying to emulate far more technocratic and decisive counterparts such as the Chinese Community Party.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has highlighted just how ineffectual many of the post-apartheid policies have been in attempting to address long-standing historical social and economic problems. This is especially true in terms of the failure of the African National Congress to craft and implement economic development such as proper business and social infrastructure and education for human capital development, and in terms of its failure to move development beyond Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. COVID-19, like no other phenomenon, has illustrated that no policies of the South African Government and the African National Congress have been able to bring much-needed economic development to places like Evaton, Mahikeng, Bethlehem and Mthatha.

The local government practitioner and scholar Dr. Mohale has spoken often about this "non-metro-based development" being a problematic part of the post-1994 development discourse and policy failure. In his empirical work published in 2018, Mohale wrote the following:

The legacy of the apartheid skewed spatial development continues to be the explanatory factor behind the consequent problem of economic dualism in the country.

This reality perpetuates the inequality in terms of access to opportunities and services. Metropolitan and urban municipalities have the benefit of larger tax bases and attendant high standard of living and services for their citizens. ... This coexists with the different picture of small and rural municipalities which are interlinked to the developed first economy but are marginalised on the basis of their geographic location (Mohale, 2018, p. 120).

The impact of COVID-19, based on what Mohale has described, should therefore come as no surprise to those familiar with his “non-metro-based development” insights. The impact is most apparent in three critical areas: education, public transport and local government.

Education system

The education sector in South Africa has been plagued by various problems and policy shortfalls for many decades. COVID-19 has brutally shown that there has been a lack of good-quality thinking about how best to ensure that the education sector can be productive and operate at an equal level for all South Africans. During the pandemic, it has become quite clear that the public education system is woefully underprepared for operating a digital-based education system (Mhlanga and Moloi, 2020). Moreover, a digital education system only works in the mainly affluent urban areas that have the requisite infrastructure and trained personnel, not in rural or township areas (Dube, 2020). Reports that only five public higher-education universities completed their academic year in 2020 further confirm the extent to which the entire public education system in South Africa has been ill-prepared for digitalization. This is somewhat understandable, as some of the problems faced, such as inadequate telecommunications infrastructure and the cost of data, fall outside the education institutions’ control.

Public transport

COVID-19 has unequivocally revealed that, despite two decades of transport policies and efforts such as the 2003 National Household Travel Survey by Statistics South Africa and the 2018 Integrated Public Transport Network Plan (version 4), the notion of a public transport system in South Africa is decades away – if not a lifetime away – from being a reality. During the planning around COVID-19, it became apparent that private industry in the form of minibuses (colloquially known as taxis) are the only true mode of public transport, given the hopelessly inadequate network of buses and trains. Despite the remarkable capacity of minibus taxis, they are not safe for commuters and they often fail to take commuters to their destination on time. The minibus taxi operators do not comply with government standards or commuter desires and have no desire to do so.

Local government

Discussing municipalities and apartheid spatial planning, Mohale (2018) categorically stated that rural and township areas are usually the areas most affected by the lack of planning. Rural areas and municipalities have been worst affected by COVID-19 (South Africa, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2020). For example, water infrastructure is severely lacking in rural areas, and in places it is non-existent.

It is not uncommon for the Government to use short-term solutions such as water tanks (which are sometimes mobile) to provide water to rural citizens (South Africa, Department of Water and Sanitation, 2020), and the Government sometimes even hails the success of such initiatives. However, the Chief Executive Officer for Infrastructure Delivery of the South African Local Government Association, Mthobeli Kolisa, expressed concern as to whether the Government would be able to meet the expectations that had been created and that went far beyond COVID-19, given that the costs of these services were estimated at R100 billion a month (South Africa, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2020).

Further research is required on the impact of COVID-19 in South African townships. However, thanks to data from the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (2020) that states that 70 per cent of households in

townships usually source food from informal vendors, we can deduce the following possibilities about what happened during the lockdown period:

- (a) Out of a desperate need to ensure their families could obtain food, breadwinners had to risk their lives and even break lockdown rules to purchase food from informal operators, who themselves had to operate illegally;
- (b) These informal vendors who exposed themselves to COVID-19 were harassed by law enforcement officers for making an income to feed themselves and their families;
- (c) Customers and vendors obediently followed the lockdown rules, even to the point of death.

The first two possibilities are the most likely to have occurred and the results will only be properly understood in the coming months and years. What we do know, however, is that, more than two decades after the first multiracial elections, townships are still poorly equipped with the economic and social infrastructure needed to combat pandemics and generate economic mobility (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

In listing some of the key attributes that allow COVID-19 to thrive, the Statistics South Africa report explains the following:

COVID-19 disproportionately affects the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, and the population at risk includes those exposed to increased health and social vulnerability. For example those who:

- are poor or live in deprived conditions which impacts on health and sanitation;
- live in crowded areas or informal settlements which impacts on social distancing; and
- live in multi-generational households and large extended families in a single dwelling. (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

While this description can be used to describe many other types of places in South Africa, such as urban slums, it is a good description of townships. The way COVID-19 has so adversely affected rural areas and townships in South Africa highlights the central argument of this article: the South African Government and State under the African National Congress was never a developmental State, even though they produced seminal policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the Ready to Govern policy document, and even though there were gifted developmental State theoreticians and practitioners, such as the former President Thabo Mbeki (Mbeki, 2006) and Joel Netshitenzhe (Netshitenzhe, 2011).

As pointed out earlier, countless scholars and government practitioners such as Qobo (2014) have argued that the concept of the developmental State was always an aspiration rather than an empirical fact. This is so because the concept is historically derived from actual policy performance, whereas in South Africa, the authorities bizarrely declared it an ambition. COVID-19, therefore, has illustrated the weaknesses of this noble aspiration. The Government should now focus instead on something more achievable, such as being a capable State.

Reality checks and catharsis

The transition to becoming a capable State is not a ground-breaking idea. Rather, it needs to be seen as a nuanced call to fully sever ties with the idea of being a developmental State and embracing what COVID-19 has shown us, namely, that being a developmental State means nothing more than attaining public policy goals and objectives in the realm of economic development planning. In addition to this, it hinges on too many elements that are missing in the current South African political, policy and leadership realm. Authentic developmental States have been able to stave off an economic and social disaster despite the COVID-19 crisis. The following detailed experiences of China, Singapore and even Viet Nam show why those countries have proven themselves to be authentic developmental States.

The response of China to COVID-19 has involved various tools and approaches, but two are particularly prominent. First, it has adopted an active and agile approach to rethinking how the economy might be operated. An article in the *Washington Post* – known for being critical of China – stated

that “China is trying to address these risks by dialing back on state-backed industrial stimulus and refocusing the economy under a ‘dual circulation’ strategy centered on domestic demand and self-sufficiency” (Crawshaw and Berger, 2020). Second, it adopted a targeted regional, provincial or city approach to containing the pandemic at source (where it is most pronounced) combined with the use of technology. An article in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* expanded on this, explaining how “Wuhan was placed under a strict lockdown that lasted 76 days. Public transport was suspended. ... Drones equipped with echoing loudspeakers rebuked Chinese citizens who were not following the rules” (Burki, 2020). The reason why these two approaches are cited is not to call for an authoritarian Government but merely to illustrate that China has built up many years of equity, allowing it to use these types of policy interventions.

The strength of the COVID-19 response by Singapore hinged on the Government having invested in its public health-care system over many decades. As Wang and others (2021) wrote, “Singapore has steadily built up its infectious disease preparedness since the 2003 SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] outbreak. Infrastructure for outbreak management was significantly augmented” (Wang, and others, 2021). The preparedness of the Government of Singapore can be said to have employed the management method used by the Biblical character Joseph when he was vizier (the highest official to the Egyptian pharaoh). Joseph’s method emphasizes heavy investment in public goods such as health and education during times of prosperity in order to prepare for potential black swan events like COVID-19.

Finally, in Viet Nam, the economist Le Thanh Tung (2021) details the remarkably low levels of COVID-19 mortality and the little impact that the pandemic had on the country, which he attributed to the public policy of the ruling party, which was swift and forward-thinking. The party’s COVID-19 policies rested on six central ideas:

- (a) Direct and multidimensional communication of pandemic information to people;
- (b) Using short and clear slogans to send out urgent anti-epidemic directions;

- (c) Centralized isolation of infected cases and monitor suspected cases;
- (d) Quickly locking down, disinfecting and mass testing;
- (e) Closely monitoring compliance with anti-epidemic solutions and strictly punishing the spread of fake news;
- (f) Urgently prevent price manipulation and speculation in essential products. (Tung, 2021).

Among other differences with South Africa, the three countries cited here are not paragons of democratic liberal values and might not have the historical problems that the African National Congress inherited. Nevertheless, all former colonial States, including Singapore, South Africa and Viet Nam, have had to contend with their own complex historical problems. However, given their approaches to economic development over the last three decades and their handling of COVID-19, the Government led by the African National Congress should admit that it needs to abandon the idea of being or becoming a developmental State.

If anything, the desire to become a developmental State was nothing more than a noble aspiration that has not taken root since the African National Congress published the discussion document on state transformation in the mid-1990s. The Presidency under Mbeki also released a discussion document in 2003 suggesting an ideological shift towards developmentalism. The notable mismatch between the policy intentions and the actual performance suggests that the dream has remained elusive. For this reason, we propose that the African National Congress and the Government need to operationalize and think through becoming a capable State, as indirectly advised by the nascent National Development Plan.

Conclusion

It is argued in this paper that it has become clear that the interest that the Government led by the African National Congress has had in the notion of a developmental State has been nothing more than a noble aspiration, not an empirical reality. The argument presented in this paper is even clearer in light of the two “ideological” and “structural” components presented by Mkandawire (2001). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed any

lingering doubt about the potential of the Government to ever be considered a developmental State. Therefore, the developmental approach that should be adopted after COVID-19 is one hinged on the idea of being a capable State, which the African National Congress has the capacity and space to refine and implement.

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Developmentalism and the transformation of Africa

Toyin Falola

Abstract

This paper focuses on developmentalism to frame the contributions of Thandika Mkandawire to the subject as a theory for the transformation of Africa. As the foundation for a comprehensive discussion, the application of the concept in the development of Asia and Africa will be examined with emphasis on its performance in Africa. Discussing the topic of development in Africa constitutes an examination of events that began on the continent with political independence movements in the 1950s, when the direction of African interests and political energies converged on the achievement of independence. It covers the debates that developed around the determination of which economic theory and development model were most suitable for African socioeconomic advancement. The assumption that guides the paper is that without understanding developmentalism, it is difficult to cumulate and evaluate the place of Mkandawire in African scholarship.

Key Words: Developmentalism, developmental states, democracy, transformation.

JEL: H1, H11, H5.

Résumé

Cet article porte sur le développementalisme et a pour objectif de cerner les contributions du professeur Thandika Mkandawire à ce thème qui sous-tend la théorie sur la transformation de l'Afrique. En tant que fondement d'une discussion approfondie, l'application du concept dans le développement de l'Asie et de l'Afrique sera examinée en mettant l'accent sur ses résultats en Afrique. Discuter du thème du développement en Afrique revient à examiner des événements qui ont commencé sur le continent avec les mouvements d'indépendance politiques dans les années 50, lorsque la direction des intérêts africains et les énergies politiques ont convergé vers la réalisation de l'indépendance. Cela couvre les débats engagés autour de la question de savoir quels étaient la théorie économique et le modèle de développement qui convenaient le mieux au progrès socioéconomique africain. L'hypothèse qui guide l'essai est que sans comprendre le développement, il est difficile d'évaluer la place de Mkandawire dans le débat d'idées en Afrique.

Mots clés : Développement, États développementalistes, démocratie, transformation.

JEL : H1, H11, H5.

Introduction

Three central issues dominate debates on developmentalism (Binns, Lynch and Nel, 2018; Wiarda, 2010; Yü and Chung, 1996). The first concerns whether to adopt the economic theories and development models paraded by the international community and what other alternatives there are for a different development path. The second concerns how European contacts and conquest were responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa. The third concerns attempts by various development agencies to apply African thought and perspectives to resolving the continent's development challenges and achieving a set of goals.

Development in “modern” expressions took its form from the post-Second World War intellectual preoccupations of academics in the United States of America. Post-war development studies was dominated by scholars and institutions in the United States of America. In response to the country's post-war foreign-policy priorities, which included containing the Soviet Union and its communist influence while closely monitoring national liberation movements in Africa and Asia, development studies scholars and institutions worked cooperatively, whether formally through mechanisms such as the Social Science Research Council or informally through their knowledge of each other's work, thanks to their associations in the country's foremost tertiary institutions (Smith, 1985).

The period was officially introduced by the inaugural address of the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, in 1949, in which he announced that international development was an important aspect of United States foreign policy “to extend the benefits of America's scientific and industrial progress to all of the poorer nations of the world” (Binns, Lynch and Nel, 2018, p. 10). Previously, international assistance had been reserved for Latin American countries. In a broader sense, there was therefore a conscious attempt by academics in the United States, in collaboration with the State, to produce material that contributed towards a common goal, that is, a theory with which to “transform” the archaic Third World into a “modern” one (in other words, to tie the development of the Third World to Western capitalist systems and stem the expansion of communism) (Rostow, 1960).

According to Johnson (2010):

Developmentalism's core assumptions are that economic development is necessary and that economics drives social and political progress. More specifically, economic development (via capitalism) should propel a society away from its "traditional" (i.e., tribal or clan-based) structure toward a more "modern" configuration. As society is transformed it will, according to developmentalism, create movements in the political sphere that will eventually coalesce as democracy. Developmentalist scholars argue that this progression is good, that it should be encouraged, and that this sequence will be observed across cultures.

Prominence

As a theory of social and economic advancement, developmental studies enjoyed prominence between 1945 and the late 1960s. For economists, the so-called "golden decade" was during the 1950s, whereas for political scientists it lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1960s. The theory favoured the spread of capitalist ideas to counter and suppress the influence of communism on the global politico-economic stage, especially in the newly independent States. The brief success in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay) in the 1950s had translated into a growing middle class in Argentina and an increase in the literacy rate and the introduction of free health care in Uruguay. These social and economic changes were presented as proof that the capitalist development model worked and that newly independent countries should follow that model.

Moreover, the theory posits that development follows a linear progression from the traditional to the industrial, and that this ideal path for human social and economic advancement is followed by all countries. In other words, newly independent countries would have the same opportunities to grow and prosper as Western countries, but they needed to be patient and follow the model prescribed to them (Rostow, 1960).

Like other developing countries, African countries also tried to mimic the development experience of the West unquestionably. Two decades later, however, it was evident that development (the social and economic conditions) in Africa, as articulated with modernization theory, had achieved only meagre returns. The consensus in most of the literature on African

developmental States was that African economies were either in stagnation or in decline (regression),¹ as democracy was being replaced by authoritarianism and military dictatorships. For most Africans, this resulted in lower incomes than two decades earlier, worse health prospects, more prevalent malnutrition, decaying infrastructure, the deterioration of social institutions and other human rights deprivations (Ake, 1996). Claude Ake, a leading voice on development and democracy in Africa, argues that development “was never really on the agenda in the first place” (Ake, 1996, p. 10).

Rise and decline of development theory

By the early 1970s, developmental studies was a discipline in decline (Smith, 1985) and, in Latin America and Africa, it was being replaced by dependency theory, which was a direct rejection of Truman’s perception of development, which had dominated developmental studies for two decades following his inaugural address. According to dependency theory, which is credited to Hans Singer and Raul Prebisch, underdevelopment in the global South was the outcome of how the South was integrated into the global world system rather than a result of any inherent qualities of societies in the South.

Two basic factors contributed to the decline of development theory. First, as a system, it was said to be overly formal and structured and was criticized for suggesting Eurocentric, unilateral and unilinear methods for transforming the Third World. Second, it was said by some that its models lacked cohesion and that there was an absence of consistency among the academics involved in determining its parameters. Although it had been portrayed as a grand (universal) theory based on the assumption that its Western-style tenets would resonate throughout the global South, it eventually revealed itself to lack the flexibility needed to be applied in varying regions of the world with a wide range of different cultural experiences. As such, the discipline was too incoherent and loose to provide an accurate depiction of the circumstances for the transformation of the Third World.

This effectively marked the decline of developmentalism as a tool for the articulation of social and economic advancement in the Third World. More

1 This forms part of the “levelling” of the African experience to which Thandika Mkandawire objected. Mkandawire insisted that some African States performed well for a time, even outperforming some East Asian economies that now serve as models for developmental States.

important, however, the emergence in the 1970s of a handful of newly industrializing Asian countries that followed “heterodox” policies discredited the relevance of the so-called “modernization” approach propounded by the Government of the United States and its academic allies. The combination of these factors effectively marked the decline of developmentalism as a tool for the articulation of social and economic advancement in the Third World.

The remarkable growth and economic performance in the 1980s and 1990s by the developmental “Asian Tigers” of North-East Asia (China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China) and, to some extent, the “Tiger Cubs” of South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) are considered the jewel in the crown of developmentalism. The Asian Tigers and Tiger Cubs have industrialized their economies, improved their gross domestic products and become effective competitors in the global market. As such, they have become the development model for many so-called developing countries, which are seeking to identify and adopt successes from those economic blueprints and avoid repeating their mistakes. The successes in East Asia provided developmental studies with a sturdy platform to fight back against neoliberal, *laissez-faire* economic models.

Learning from Asia: the role of the developmental State

In the heydays of development theory (the 1950s and 1960s), Asia (except for Japan) was industrially backward compared with Europe and North America and was therefore listed as part of the Third World alongside Africa and Latin America. By the 1990s, however, East Asian economies like Japan, the Asian Tigers such as Singapore and South Korea, and China had experienced exceptional economic growth, emerging as part of the world’s leading industrialized economies. China had even become a major world power.

The successes recorded by these East Asian countries, which became the subject of study for the Tiger Cubs and for developing countries in Africa and Latin America, have been attributed to their success at “getting the basics of economic policy right” (Booth, 2007, p. 196). The Tiger Cubs changed their economic structures from ones based around subsistence agricultural to advanced, industrial, high-income economies that were leaders in the technological market.

These countries achieved industrialization by revising state economic policies, social organization patterns, property laws, business/trade regulation and funding and social intervention regimes. The successful mechanization of production activities was followed by a shift from dependence on external investment to regional investment and growth. The countries also accumulated capital to acquire technological patents to improve local technology production and had a measured social-welfare intervention system. Increased production options and capacity led to more job opportunities, which were taken by people from both rural and urban areas, who became skilled and semi-skilled factory workers and post-production service providers. As skills improved, so did export and external revenues, leading to higher salaries for workers, which in turn fuelled a dynamic domestic market. This created a virtuous circle with ever-increasing capacities and an extensive global economic reach.

Although Japan, South Korea and the other East Asian economies did not follow a single strategy in achieving their socioeconomic feats, it has been argued that the central principle of their approach symbolizes an East Asian model. The model shared a pervasive economic nationalism (Booth, 2007, p. 201), notwithstanding the different state predilections to foreign capital and multinational firms. It also emphasized subregional cooperation (investment) and growth. Moreover, these developmental economies possess “cohesive structures and strong commitments to growth-conducive policies” (Vu, 2010, p. 2). If the aforementioned organized structures and strong commitments to growth-conducive policies were responsible for the success of these South-East Asian economies, how were those policies achieved and how were they used to produce the outcome that is now the goal of many developmental States?

Other attempts by scholars and policymakers to find the secrets behind the success of these Asian economic miracles identified government involvement as critical.² By analysing the nature of government intervention, they developed hypotheses around three vital concepts: state roles, state capacities and state structures.

2 Neoliberals held a contrary position on the issue of the State's role in the success of the East Asian developmental economies. They insisted that state intervention was harmful to economic development because it emphasized the risks associated with it while glorifying the benefits of market-driven development. For a time, *laissez-faire* policies were considered the secret to the success of the four Asian Tigers. This led to the infamous Berg report, which was used to sell the “Adjustment in Africa”.

The idea of state roles refers to the fact that governments, through insistent intervention in two central policy areas – industrial policies and, to a lesser extent, social programmes – encouraged industrialization and production. Governments in East Asia promoted exports, subsidized inputs, determined the standards of performance of industries benefiting directly from government financing and established industrial groups in vital sectors. The (limited) social programmes, land reform and investment in education were the determinants of government involvement. It is therefore suggested that growth is the product of policies that permit the State to “play the developmental roles of the custodian, demiurge, midwife, and shepherd in the economy” (Vu, 2010, p. 3).

State roles are said to be closely tied to state capacities, since the State cannot intervene in ways that are outside its abilities. State intervention in economic activities is not a new or particularly peculiar practice, as it has been known to be applied in most countries (sometimes in a similar fashion), yet it is only successful occasionally, and rarely in the expected sectors or to the extent hoped for, hence the critical role of state capacities. State capacities are the determinants of a State’s ability to drive development efficiently.

Mkandawire on developmentalism and African developmental States

Thandika Mkandawire was a scholar actively involved in the development discourse and a believer in the possibility of successful developmental States in Africa. He offered recommendations to improve the development chances of Africa and proffered alternative approaches to the conception of developmental States (developmentalism) in Africa (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 310).

Central to Mkandawire’s argument on developmentalism and the possibility of African developmental States was the idea that Africa had not been given a fair chance. He explained that most of the conclusions made on the viability and performance of developmental States in Africa were derived not from experiential analysis, but from second-hand and mostly prejudiced viewpoints. Mkandawire (2001) submitted that there were two central opinions in the argument/literature: the diagnostic and the prescriptive. According to

Mkandawire, these two opinions have come to influence perceptions of the performance of developmental States in Africa: the diagnostic insists on the impossibility of developmental States in Africa, while the prescriptive premises the possibility of developmental States on unworkable state concessions.

Contradictory as these conclusions appeared, they played a somewhat symbiotic role in promoting the idea that Africa is a hopeless developmental case. Theoretical diagnoses denied the existence of state capacity; prescriptive diagnoses suggested that, for States to be successful, they needed to take on roles that were “beyond their capacity, character or political will . . . to reduce themselves, to stabilize the economy, to privatize the economy, to engage in ‘good governance’, to democratize themselves and society [and] to create an ‘enabling environment’ for the private sector” (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 289). It became apparent that some middle ground was necessary. Mkandawire therefore proposed to take another look at the diagnosis that had promoted unfounded claims about the reality of development in Africa.

In proving that there was a disconnect between most of the claims in the (diagnostic) literature on the performance of developmental States in Africa and the chances of their success, Mkandawire argued that neither the postcolonial experiences of Africa nor the practices of the successful East Asian developmental economies eliminated “the possibility of African ‘developmental states’ capable of playing a more dynamic role” than in the past (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 289). He began by critiquing the very idea of a developmental State as deployed in the literature.

Mkandawire posited that the conception of development from an erroneous basis had wrongfully stripped some African economies of their developmental status. In delivering the argument, he first clarified the core components of a developmental State: the ideological and the structural. This “ideology-structure nexus” (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 290) was the differentiator between developmental States and other types of States.

In *ideological* terms, the State is viewed as one whose ideological foundation is developmental, that is, its central agenda is to ensure economic development, which is explained in terms of high levels of accumulation and industrialization. Therefore, such a State derives its legitimacy from its ability to deliver sustained development. In this arrangement, the elite must set up

a hegemonic ideological base to transform their developmental project into a nationalistic ideology that can command the adherence of key players in the country, who will comply voluntarily.

The *state structure*, on the other hand, is the aspect of a developmental State that accentuates capacity, that is, the capacity to implement and enforce economic policies efficiently and effectively. This capacity is determined by political, institutional, technical and administrative factors facilitated by State autonomy from social forces, providing the State with the ability to devise and implement long-term economic plans so that the observed continuity inspires some trust in the commitment to the agenda that has been set.

Regarding African developmental States and the lessons learned from the East Asian model, the experience was assessed using the prevailing neoliberal analytic lens (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 291). The assessments downplayed the role of the State in the developmental success of Asia. Contrary to suggestions that these States were shining examples of laissez-faire approaches, they were shown to be exceedingly dirigiste economies where the State presided over the markets, accumulated large amounts of capital and used technology to soak up and take over foreign markets. This revisionist literature concluded that market failures were widespread in developed economies and therefore required frequent government interventions. The level of government interventions required depended on the magnitude of such market failures, which varied from one location to another. In other words, there was no uniform intervention template that could be used for all developmental economies.

In Africa, it took the failure of the adjustment programmes for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to acknowledge the significant role of the State in organizing development and social change. Following that acknowledgement, the World Bank redesigned its agenda for Africa, with States playing active roles. This time, however, the World Bank used a different set of premises and proposals that did not show real commitment. Prominent among these was “good governance”. The posture of the World Bank during that period was reported in two books: *Adjustment in Africa* (World Bank, 1994) and *Bureaucrats in Business* (World Bank, 1995).

Developmentalism and the transformation of Africa

Performance

Developmentalism in Africa has not fared well. From the earliest adoption of development paradigms in articulating the social and economic progress of Africa, there has been speculation about the suitability and adaptability of developmentalism in Africa, where it has performed abysmally, especially in comparison with its success in the Asian Tiger countries. The poor performance of developmentalism in Africa generated more debates over whether, as a neoclassical theory, it was capable of adapting to the specific economic characteristics of Africa and kickstarting the continent's development processes. It was concluded that Africa lacked the state structures and ideological underpinnings necessary to ensure that the requirements for development propounded by the theory were implemented effectively.

The contrasting views – neoliberal and laissez-faire – on the role of the State and market forces in the success of the “Asian Tigers” led to a period dominated by market-driven, laissez-faire policies and an emphasis on less state involvement. However, following the devastating impacts that the so-called structural adjustment programmes led by the World Bank had on African economies and the discovery by revisionist literature of high rates of State intervention in the East Asian model, state-driven developmental strategies for Africa were revisited, but this time with less emphasis on industrialization. The conclusion was that African economies could not correct market failures – big or small – without making things even worse, and that market failures were bound to occur, as they were an inherent feature of developmental States. Therefore, what had worked for other late industrializers was not remotely replicable in Africa for reasons such as “dependency, lack of ideology, the softness of the African state and its proneness to capture by special interests, lack of technical and analytical capacity, the changing international environment that did not permit protection of industrial policy and poor record of past performances” Mkandawire, 2001, p. 294).

Prospects and possibilities

Mkandawire (2011, p. 11) submitted that, even after the philosophical questions on the meaning of development and the question of agency and the urgency of rapid economic development had been answered, the question

remained as to whether Africa could run. Citing an article from the *Economist*, he noted some of the monikers used for Africa – “hobbled giant”, “a continent in chains”, “a doomed continent”, the “Hopeless Continent” – by those who saw the chances of Africa walking, let alone running to “catch up”, as unrealistic. Such monikers suggested that development in Africa was a futile pursuit. The dominant perspective from reportage, and increasingly from academic production, was one of wrong forecasts. School enrolment levels, ethno-linguistic diversity, political instability, the quality of the judiciary, government consumption levels, distressing images from conflicts – (as seen in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan) and other identified sources of the African growth tragedy had all contributed to presenting a hopeless situation. Mkandawire argued that African countries could turn their situations around and could “catch up” if they:

- (a) Attached importance to knowledge and learning;
- (b) Removed barriers to knowledge acquisition;
- (c) Ended anti-tertiary education bias;
- (d) Ended anti-elite bias;
- (e) Stopped producing and listening to knowledge that is of little use (Mkandawire, 2011, pp. 11–17).

Mkandawire (2011, p. 13) posited that, if African countries do the above, they would not just borrow ideas from abroad, but would know their own strengths and weaknesses. They would encourage knowledge of African history and of how that history had set initial conditions for future progress. They would also help bring about in-depth knowledge of their culture, not just for self-reaffirmation, but also to utilize their cultural strengths for rapid social change. Ending tertiary education bias would equip universities to contribute efficaciously (through critical research) to national development.

According to Mkandawire (2011, pp. 13), if Africa utilized its position as a late industrializer to learn from the pioneers and to avoid using the same harmful instruments as its predecessors, such as slave labour and concentration

camps, it could chart a better and more morally appropriate path to improving the lives of its people.

Therefore, with an enabling environment (a democratic atmosphere) where education is made a top priority, Africa can utilize its most significant asset (its human resources) to create a glorious future that is yet within its grasp.

Conclusion

The issue of the conception of development has encouraged numerous debates and sparked what could be called false starts. As countries have attempted to adhere as strictly as possible to the tenets of some foreign economic development paradigm, they have generally been convinced to abandon vital developmental state models that could have turned them into success stories. This hindrance to the success of developmental States in Africa has been the result of bad publicity arising from prejudiced analysis, unpredictable market forces, inconsistency in ideological paradigms and widespread disbelief in the possibility of developmental States in Africa.

Thandika Mkandawire believed firmly in the potential of developmental States in Africa. He successfully argued that development needed to be redefined to fit specific social characteristics and that this would ensure that the economic paradigm derived from those characteristics was both applicable and useful as a tool for transformation. By setting the record straight on some widely held misconceptions on the performance and prospects of African development that have had the effect of disparaging the progress of developmental States in Africa, Mkandawire defended his claim that effective developing States were possible in Africa. The political economy of development in Africa has continued to manifest different outcomes and trajectories. The latest *Palgrave Handbook of African Political Economy* (Oloruntoba and Falola, 2020) offers divergent perspectives on development discourses in Africa, which either validate or dispute the key contributions that Mkandawire made to development on the continent.

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Thandika Mkandawire and Samir Amin on socioeconomic development in Africa

Vusi Gumede

Abstract

Drawing from the works of Thandika Mkandawire and Samir Amin, the paper revisits the debate on economic and social development in Africa. Positing economic development as good economic performance resulting in the betterment of livelihoods (i.e., social development), the paper starts by arguing that, prior to the advent of colonialism, in particular in the pre-mercantilist period in Africa, the continent's economy was advancing well until it was disrupted, distorted, and maimed by colonialism. After independence, attempts to revive the disrupted and distorted development trajectory have been hampered by the so-called global economy. Having examined the performance levels of the various countries in Africa in terms of social and economic development, the author proposes that, if Africa is to reconnect with its glorious past and advance, it is essential to pursue some of the ideas propounded by Mkandawire and Amin as part of a sustained commitment to get the continent's house in order and ensure inclusive development and human well-being.

Key Words: Delinking, development discourse, developmental states, social policy.

JEL: H7, H75, I18.

Résumé

Faisant fond sur les travaux de Thandika Mkandawire et de Samir Amin, l'article revient sur le débat concernant le développement économique et social en Afrique. Affirmant que le développement économique consiste en une bonne performance économique qui se traduit par l'amélioration des moyens de subsistance (c.-à-d. le développement social), l'article commence par soutenir qu'avant l'avènement du colonialisme, en particulier pendant la période prémercantiliste en Afrique, l'économie du continent avançait bien jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit perturbée, déformée et mutilée par le colonialisme. Après l'indépendance, les tentatives de relancer la trajectoire de développement perturbée et déformée ont été entravées par la soi-disant économie mondiale. Après avoir examiné les niveaux de performance des différents pays d'Afrique en termes de développement social et économique, l'auteur soutient que, si l'Afrique doit renouer avec son passé glorieux et progresser, il est essentiel de poursuivre certaines des idées avancées par Mkandawire et Amin dans le cadre d'un engagement soutenu pour mettre de l'ordre dans la maison continentale et assurer un développement inclusif et le bien-être humain.

Mots clés : Délimitation, discours sur le développement, États développementaux, politique sociale.

JEL : H7, H75, I18.

Introduction

Development has been elusive in Africa irrespective of how the concept is defined. Economic development has been weak, which may be one of the reasons why well-being has not sufficiently improved in Africa. Drawing on the works of Thandika Mkandawire and Samir Amin, in this paper I analyse economic and social development in Africa. Economic development in this paper refers to good economic performance that results in improved livelihoods (in other words, social development). As analysed later, even in instances where economic performance has been good, well-being has improved little in Africa. Consequently, it is important to understand why economic development has been weak in Africa.

Both Mkandawire and Amin provided various insights regarding the economic performances and makeup of African economies. Such is the importance of their work that an analysis of the poor socioeconomic development in Africa should begin by referring to the writings of these two economists on development in Africa. Other authors are mentioned too (Claude Ake, Guy Mhone and others), but the focus of this paper is on Mkandawire and Amin. Although many of the explanations given as reasons why economic and social development are low in Africa have merit, many of the analyses have not gone deep enough. Similarly, the question of why relatively impressive gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates have not improved people's well-being has not been satisfactorily addressed.

The fundamental challenge for the African economy as a whole and for individual economies in Africa is the lack of structural transformation. In other words, the structures of many economies in Africa have changed little since colonial times. The question that needs to be addressed, therefore, is what needs to be done for African economies to perform better and improve people's well-being.

Economic and social development in Africa

Some argue that African economists have not fully understood what has constrained development in Africa, especially economic development. Mkandawire (2015, p. 2) argues that it is problematic to attribute the slow economic performance of African economies to neopatrimonialism: "while

neopatrimonialism can be used to describe different styles of exercising authority, idiosyncratic mannerisms of certain individual leaders, and social practices within States, the concept offers little analytical content and has no predictive value with respect to economic policy and performance”. The assertion under the logic of neopatrimonialism that the African economy has not performed well is factually incorrect, as suggested in table 1.

Table 1: GDP growth, 1961–1970

Country	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Botswana	6.3	6.7	5.9	6.8	5.8	6.3	5.9	10.6	15.1	17.1
Ghana	3.4	4.1	4.4	2.2	1.4	-4.2	3.0	0.4	6.0	9.7
Kenya	-7.7	9.4	8.8	5.0	2.0	14.7	3.4	8.0	7.9	-4.6
Malawi	7.6	0.7	-1.4	2.7	13.6	13.2	7.3	-1.9	5.9	0.5
Nigeria	0.2	4.1	8.6	4.9	4.9	-4.2	-15.7	-1.2	24.2	25.0
Rwanda	-4.3	11.3	-9.8	-12.5	7.0	7.0	6.9	7.0	11.0	6.0
South Africa	3.8	6.2	7.4	7.9	6.1	4.4	7.2	4.1	4.7	5.2
Zimbabwe	6.3	1.4	6.2	-1.1	4.9	1.5	8.3	2.0	12.4	22.6

Source: World Bank data (various issues).

GDP growth data indicate that many of the selected countries performed relatively well in the 1960s. Ghana, which gained independence in 1957, had relatively good GDP growth in the 1960s (except in 1966). Kenya and Botswana gained independence in the mid-1960s and performed well throughout the 1960s. Nigeria became independent in 1960 and Malawi in 1964, and both performed well for most of 1960s. Rwanda, having become independent in 1962, did not perform well in the early 1960s, but performed relatively well during the 1965–1970 period. Countries that remained under colonial rule until many years later – South Africa and Zimbabwe in the selected list of countries above – still had economic growth, but the growth was not as strong as that of the independent countries. It is therefore inaccurate to say African economies have not performed well.

The key questions are why economic development has not been fast enough and, related to this, why economic development has not resulted in effective human development. As argued and shown in Gumede (2016), human development in Africa remains very low. Since 1980, the human development

index of sub-Saharan Africa has remained comparatively low, even compared with that of South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The pursuit of development on the continent has generally followed a pattern defined by the West in which a unilinear process advocated by modernization theorists is deemed sacrosanct (Rostow, 1960). Having pursued this strategy for many decades since independence, African countries remain poor and underdeveloped. Given the disappointing results, one must question the appropriateness of using this approach to guide development in Africa.

Critical theorists such as Amin have challenged conventional Western assumptions about development. Amin (1990, p. 62) explained the following:

Underdevelopment is the observer of “development”, that is, the one and the other are two sides of the – naturally unequal – expansion of capital. Development of the countries on the periphery of the world capitalist system can only come through an essential rupture with that system.

For Amin, the end of the global capitalist order should be the main answer to bringing about development in so-called underdeveloped countries. In other words, for African countries to pursue an independent development path, the means by which an unequal relationship is maintained by the dominant Western capitalist countries must be broken (Rodney, 1973).

How well have African economies performed?

One of the questions that naturally arise is whether African countries are performing optimally in economic terms and whether well-being is improving in Africa. The question becomes even more critical in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Using data published by the African Development Bank and the World Bank since 2000, the analysis in this paper addresses Africa as a whole and sub-Saharan Africa on its own. The selection of countries is informed by development debates: some of the countries under discussion are viewed as advancing faster than the rest of the African economies; some are facing major social and economic challenges; some are not usually discussed in

studies that deal with social and economic development in Africa. Nigeria and South Africa are included because they are the two largest economies in Africa. The period examined is from 2010 to 2017. African economies were still recovering from the global economic crisis that started in 2007 when the coronavirus disease pandemic erupted in 2020, so the final date of analysis is 2017.

The African Development Bank estimates that real output growth increased from 3.6 per cent in 2017 to 4.1 per cent in 2018 (and 2019) (African Development Bank, 2018). Although this economic performance was respectable in the global context, it is still low. This low-growth trap points to the need for a robust economic transformation agenda for Africa. It is encouraging that countries that experienced good GDP growth reduced poverty and inequality more than countries that experienced no growth. However, growth in employment has not been able to keep pace with the growing size of the labour force, leaving large segments of the population unemployed and underemployed in many African countries.

Table 2 shows several countries that achieved rapid output growth between 2002 and 2017. Among the top performers were Ethiopia, whose GDP rose by 937.4 per cent during the period, and Nigeria, whose GDP rose by 535.6 per cent. The corresponding figures for the rest of the countries in the table were: Kenya (471.9 per cent), Rwanda (429.9 per cent), Ghana (399.1 per cent), Zimbabwe (255.3 per cent), Liberia (255.2 per cent), South Africa (214.0 per cent), Malawi (137.8 per cent), and Botswana (115.2 per cent). Africa as a whole has seen its growth output rise by 293.2 per cent and sub-Saharan Africa by 377.3 per cent.

Table 2: GDP at current prices, 2002–2017
(Millions of United States dollars)

Country	2002	2007	2012	2017
Botswana	8,086.8	10,939.0	14,420.3	17,406.5
Ethiopia	7,793.5	19,182.5	42,210.5	80,873.5
Ghana	9,482.1	24,757.6	40,647.3	47,329.7
Kenya	13,103.0	31,958.2	60,497.6	74,938.0
Liberia	535.7	949.0	1,374.6	1,903.0
Malawi	2,665.2	4,432.9	5,721.4	6,339.3
Nigeria	59,116.9	265,697.3	460,951.7	375,745.5
Rwanda	1,723.9	3,775.4	7,336.9	9,136.2
South Africa	111,101.4	299,417.2	396,329.4	348,872.1
Zimbabwe	6,202.5	5,646.0	17,115.0	22,041.0
Africa	579 430.1	1 485 348.4	2 358 692.7	2 278 848.94
Sub-Saharan Africa	352 315.2	1 032 735.3	1 650 208.2	1 681 497.9

Source: African Development Bank data (various issues).

According to the African Development Bank, growth in 2016 was held back by global and domestic factors. By 2017, however, there were already signs of recovery. Output growth is estimated to have accelerated from 2.2 per cent in 2016 to 3.6 per cent in 2017, and was expected to accelerate further to 4.1 per cent in 2018 and 2019. The growth recovery was faster than predicted, especially among non-resource-intensive countries, thus showing that Africa has been resilient in recent years. Nevertheless, the end of the commodity price super-cycle has cut earnings from primary exports in resource-intensive economies, undermining exports and planned investments.

Considering the many external and internal constraints, the growth momentum of Africa in the past two decades has been remarkable by historical standards. In at least two thirds of the countries that publish data, per capita incomes rose by at least 3.5 per cent for at least eight consecutive years between 1950 and 2016 (World Bank, 2018). This is not surprising, as some African countries have high-demand resources such as diamonds, sugar, gold, coal, uranium, platinum, silver, oil and petroleum. Oil, for instance, is such a highly sought-after commodity in the world that oil-producing countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Gabon have the highest GDPs per capita. However, high GDP per capita does not necessarily translate into better living conditions for all people in such countries.

As table 3 shows, GDP per capita is high not only in Africa as a whole, but also in sub-Saharan Africa on its own. As was the case with total GDP growth, Ethiopia had the highest percentage improvement among the selected countries. Between 2002 and 2017, its per capita GDP grew by 598.2 per cent, albeit from a very low base – even by African standards – of \$ 111. Nigeria also achieved spectacular gains of 328.7 per cent during the same period. Since it rebased its GDP in 2013, Nigeria has surpassed South Africa as the largest economy in Africa. The oil industry has propelled the Nigerian economy to commendable growth levels over the past two decades.

Table 3: GDP per capita at 2018 prices, 2002–2017
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Country	2002	2007	2012	2017
Botswana	3,409	5,667	6,761	7,426
Ethiopia	111	237	458	775
Ghana	479	1,099	1,591	1,652
Kenya	401	858	1,422	1,546
Liberia	174	269	328	402
Malawi	226	328	364	346
Nigeria	457	1,806	2,740	1,959
Rwanda	202	398	678	751
South Africa	2,401	6,025	7,501	6,293
Zimbabwe	489	425	1,175	1,349
Africa	679	1,538	2,149	1,831
Sub-Saharan Africa	499	1,280	1,786	1,593

Source: African Development Bank data (various issues).

Besides Ethiopia and Nigeria, other countries also achieved significant growth in per capita income, including Kenya (+285.5 per cent), Rwanda (+271.7 per cent), Ghana (+244.9 per cent), Zimbabwe (+175.8 per cent), South Africa (+162.1 per cent), Liberia (+131.0 per cent), Botswana (+117.8 per cent) and Malawi (+53.1 per cent). However, ensuring that economic growth benefits the whole population is a major concern in the continent. Huge income inequality in Africa has the potential to cause economic and social unrest and hinder further economic growth in the future.

In terms of overall GDP growth between 2010 and 2017, table 4 shows that many of the selected African countries performed relatively well, although arguably not as well as they should have.

Table 4: GDP growth, 2010–2017 (Percentage)

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Botswana	8.6	6.0	4.4	11.3	4.1	-1.7	4.3	2.4
Ethiopia	12.5	11.2	8.6	10.6	10.2	10.4	7.6	10.2
Ghana	7.9	14.0	9.3	7.3	2.9	2.2	3.4	8.1
Kenya	8.4	6.1	4.6	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.9	4.9
Liberia	6.1	8.2	8.0	8.7	0.7	0.0	-1.6	2.5
Malawi	6.9	4.8	1.9	5.2	5.7	2.8	2.5	4.0
Nigeria	8.0	5.3	4.2	6.7	6.3	2.6	-1.6	0.8
Rwanda	7.3	7.8	8.8	4.7	7.6	8.9	6.0	6.1
South Africa	3.0	3.3	2.2	2.5	1.8	1.3	0.7	1.3
Zimbabwe	19.7	14.2	16.7	2.0	2.4	1.8	0.7	4.7

Source: World Bank data (various issues).

It is worth highlighting that growth in some of these economies happened because of the commodities super-cycle and that many of them remain fragile. The period between 2014 and the time of the latest available data suggests that many African economies are in decline.

Examining human development in Africa confirms that economic performance has been mediocre. Where economic performance is said to have been good, social development has not improved. Africa has always lagged behind other regions in terms of human development indicators. Over the past few decades, however, good progress has been made in areas such as net primary school enrolment, gender parity in education, women's representation in decision-making, poverty reduction, immunization coverage and the curtailing of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Despite the improvements, much progress is still needed. Malaria, for instance, is one of the areas that have been neglected when they should have been prioritized. Malaria has long been the number one cause of infant mortality in sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the recent Ebola virus disease crisis in some parts of Africa is a reminder that new problems can emerge very suddenly.

Table 5 shows human development index trends in selected African countries. Many countries in the “low” category are improving rapidly, including Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. Life expectancy and incomes are rising rapidly in these countries but various factors

are holding many of them back. Some other African countries, including Algeria, Libya, Mauritius and Tunisia, were designated in the “high” group. Another 10 African countries were in the “medium” group. The remaining 37 were in the “low” human development category. In many of these countries, GDP growth has not translated into better human development.

Table 5: Human development index, 2000–2017 (selected countries)

Country	2000	2010	2017
Botswana	0.565	0.660	0.717
Ethiopia	0.283	0.417	0.463
Ghana	0.455	0.484	0.592
Kenya	0.451	0.543	0.590
Liberia	0.387	0.407	0.435
Malawi	0.399	0.441	0.477
Nigeria	..	0.484	0.532
Rwanda	0.335	0.485	0.524
South Africa	0.630	0.649	0.699
Zimbabwe	0.440	0.467	0.535

Source: African Development Bank data (various issues).

Advancing economic and social development in Africa

As indicated earlier, many of the explanations given as to why economic and social development remain low in Africa are shallow and fail to critically address the fundamental constraints. They often focus on internal factors and ignore the influence of external factors. The current structures of African economies are very much an outcome of the colonial political economy.

In this regard, the categorization of African economies by Amin (1972) might help us understand why the continent’s economies remain extroverted. Amin’s categories are the “Africa of labour reserves” (East and Southern Africa), the “Africa of the colonial economy” (western parts of Africa) and the “Africa of the concession-owning companies” (the countries of the Congo River Basin). These typologies shed light on the character of African economies, the evolution of social formations, the way surplus is generated and distributed between the social formations and the ruling European classes, and what African countries must do to transform their economies for the benefit of the population (Amin, 1976, p. 15).

Complementing Amin's work, Mkandawire (2002) introduced the concepts of rentier and merchant States. He explained that a rentier State was an economy that relied on "substantial external rent", noting that "an external rent can, if substantial, sustain the economy without a strong productive domestic sector" while the merchant State relies heavily on domestic taxes and on export and import taxes. Mkandawire viewed the enclave economy as characterized by an export sector with very weak linkages with other productive sectors of the economy. As Mhone (2000) argues, the enclave economy system is based on the exploitation of most of the labour force as a source of cheap labour.

The categorizations provided by Amin and Mkandawire help us understand the fundamental challenges that prevent African economies from performing robustly. The inherited colonial economy is distorted and certain features of the inherited colonial system work in a manner that undermines the autonomy of African States to plan and implement home-grown development policies and strategies.

It is therefore imperative for practical, home-grown interventions to structurally transform African economies. The key building blocks to achieve this objective are: building an effective and competent developmental State, promoting regional economic integration (Gumede, 2019) and kickstarting an agricultural revolution that will lift millions of rural peasants out of poverty (Moyo, 1995; Moyo and Yeros, 2004). Central to achieving the three goals is the presence of a developmental State that can organize society around a common pre-determined goal, manage the market strategically (rather than being managed by it) and pursue egalitarian social policies (Mkandawire, 2002). In this regard, Amin's long-held view on "delinking" is irrelevant and not in keeping with the prevailing system of capitalist globalization. In today's global context, neither delinking nor the uncritical embrace of neoliberalism can help African countries to embark on a path of structural transformation and long-term growth. As happened to the economies in the successful Asian Tigers, economic policies that are more pragmatic and heterodox might produce the desired result of robust economic growth and equitable social policy.

Conclusion

The paper is an attempt to rethink the African economy based on the works of Mkandawire and Amin. If Africa is to improve its social and economic development, it should pursue some of the ideas proposed by some of the leading thinkers on African development.

To transform the structures of African economies, it is important not only to limit the continent's dependence on economic links with the West, but also to design home-grown economic policies that are focused on raising the productivity and creativity of Africans. Like the successful East Asian countries, African States must lead the way in steering their own development. There is no reason why African countries cannot replicate the successful experiences of East Asia. In the meantime, it is important that developmental regional integration and South-South cooperation be rigorously pursued. Ultimately, the federation of African countries should culminate in a political union that can better relate with other continents and regions.

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Thandika Mkandawire: a short profile

Fantu Cheru

Thandika Mkandawire (10 October 1940–27 March 2020) was a Malawian citizen born in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) on the 10 October 1940 to a Zimbabwean mother and Malawian father. He attended school at Mzimba Primary School and Zomba Catholic Secondary School. He spent his early years in Zimbabwe and Zambia, and then moved to Malawi as an adolescent. First trained as a journalist, Mkandawire later studied economics at Ohio State University, where he graduated with Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degree, and later earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Mkandawire's birth, life, experiences, and career had an important and lasting effect on his worldview and how he approached research on many topics. The first was the oppressive and racist nature of the colonial enterprise; the second was his early realization that independence did not necessarily mean freedom from despotism; and the third was the social democratic character of the Swedish State, which granted him asylum and citizenship, as well as an opportunity to further his studies.

As a secondary school student and later a journalist, Mkandawire was active in Malawi's anti-colonial struggles. The colonial government arrested him at the age of 21, and six of his colleagues were sent to jail on allegations of sedition and inciting violence. His Malawian passport was revoked in 1965 by the new Kamuzu Banda government after the radical wing of the nationalist movement, with which Mkandawire identified, were driven out of the seat of power. The revocation of his passport cost him 30 years of exile in Sweden, where he would also die. Banda's despotism instilled in Mkandawire a visceral hatred for authoritarian rule and belief in the need to ground development in democratic processes.

In the early 1980s, Mkandawire joined the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa as a researcher. He rose to the level of Executive Secretary, in which he served from 1986 to 1996. From 1996 to

1998, he served as a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Development Research, in Copenhagen. Following that, he became the Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, a role in which he served until 2009. In 2010, he was appointed as the first Chair of African Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Mkandawire was one of the greatest thinkers in the field of development studies of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Africa. His ideas, writings and policy interventions were quite phenomenal, which influenced development discourse and policy direction in Africa in many ways. His work is both cumulative and exhaustive. He wrote on a wide range of issues in the social sciences, with particular focus on development in Africa. Among his many groundbreaking works, his writings in four areas stand out: his critical writings on Africa's adjustment and maladjustment; the role of the developmental State; social policy and development; and the urgency of grounding development in democratic processes. One of the most significant contributions that Mkandawire made was in exposing empirically the negative and harmful effects of the policies of structural adjustment programmes that were being implemented across Africa under the watchful eyes of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Not only did Thandika view these policies as being anti-development, but he considered them to be a coordinated political project aimed at undermining the capacity of African States to determine their development path independently. His cumulative reflection on the subject resulted in two-volume books, *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment* (1999); and *African Voices on Structural Adjustment* (2003).

Growing out of his groundbreaking work on structural adjustment programmes and on the possibility of developmental States in Africa, Mkandawire embarked on research into the transformative role of social policy in development. His groundbreaking work *Social Policy in a Development Context* was to become the biggest research project during his tenure as Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. He argued that, for social policy to be developmental, it must stimulate economic development; serve as a redistributive channel for narrowing inequality; protect people from adverse shocks; and act as automatic stabilizer of the macroeconomy in periods of crisis. He noted that social policy must

be connected to the democratic project, the developmental State and the growth trajectory of countries.

While showing his distaste for the authoritarian character of the East Asian developmental States, Mkandawire believed that there were lessons to be learned from those successful industrializing countries on how to promote economic development and implement egalitarian social policies with the active guidance of a strong and autonomous developmental State. In his article, "Thinking about developmental States in Africa", which was published in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics* in 2001, he challenged the "impossibility arguments" in respect of African developmental States. Mkandawire believed that for a market economy to function effectively and benefit the society at large, it requires elaborate state guidance. He strongly believed that development was meaningless if it was not grounded in democratic practices.

Throughout his career, Mkandawire was singularly focused on building strong social science research capacity in Africa. While he resented the exploitation of African researchers and universities in North-South collaborative projects, he dedicated his time to building Africa's own research capacity by establishing national and multinational research working groups during his tenure as Executive Secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. These two initiatives still remain the core research programmes of the Council, providing the resources needed by young and senior scholars to engage in collaborative research. He initiated critical research on academic freedom in African universities and on the role of African intellectuals in development and the production of knowledge. He believed in the importance of intergenerational dialogue to knowledge generation and in the need to create a conducive environment for striving young African scholars to contribute to the development of the continent.

In sum, Mkandawire was a public intellectual who achieved global stature. Not only was he a great scholar with deep commitment to Africa's development, but he was also a great pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist. He was an institutional builder and an organic intellectual, who combined ideas with practice. He loved his family and his friends and maintained a fine sense of humor until the final moments of his life.

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