

Conclusion

Developmental States and Africa in the Twenty-first Century

Pamela Mbabazi and Ian Taylor

The ability or otherwise of both Botswana and Uganda—as well as the rest of the continent—to pursue policies outlined in this book are of course both contingent and, to a large degree, influenced by the global milieu. Since the early 1980s a philosophical approach to economics and development, one that is broadly in alignment with the neo-liberal mantra of liberalisation, privatisation and the ‘free market’ has become hegemonic, and this invariably informs the debate on what constitutes ‘development’. We use the term hegemonic in the Gramscian sense whereby the ideological, moral and cultural values of neo-liberalism have become broadly accepted as ‘common sense’ and largely unquestionable. Whilst we cannot overlook the coercive disciplinary aspect of this hegemony, in general the values and norms associated with neo-liberalism have become largely accepted as the consensus.

It is against this ‘standard’ that all are judged and ‘development’ itself must square with the familiar neo-liberal package if it is to receive the stamp of approval from the important powers-that-be within the global economy. The idea of a ‘developmental state’ obviously tends to jar against such prescriptions. Of major importance is the scenario whereby ‘mono-economics’, i.e. the belief that there exists a universal set of economic laws that apply across the board has emerged as a means of informing and shaping development practice. This is however highly dubious if not dangerous if we are to advance a developmental agenda, not least if Africa is to advance *democratic* developmental states.

State administrations in the developing world are held hostage to a Janus-faced dilemma with regard to the pursuit of development. On the one hand they are now supposedly beholden to their (increasingly dissatisfied) domestic constituencies whilst on the other, and probably much more so, they are accountable to unelected external

creditors and donors. This has resulted in the creation of highly fragile 'democracies', which remain unable to satisfy the demands and aspirations of the poor majority whilst socio-economic improvements and development plays second fiddle to the requirements of the IFIs and donors. In the light of shifting definitions of what constitutes development we can say that this very powerful term is evidently a historically contingent form of knowledge, closely tied to dominant structures and global power relations. It is not some sort of ahistorical set of universally applicable goals. The type of neo-liberal precepts that underpin the contemporary development discourse associated with good governance and particular notions of democracy helps contribute to a continuation of a profoundly undemocratic world order, despite the claims made by its promoters. Navigating this precarious situation is something which state administrations throughout the developing world have to perform—some better than others.

Yet at the same time globalisation brings opportunities and agency. Improved technologies and greater interaction between peoples can be empowering and uplifting. Virtual solidarity across the internet cannot be waved away as irrelevant and lessons from other parts of the developing world on strategies to cope with—and perhaps transform—impulses associated with globalisation can be disseminated at a speed previously unthinkable. Whilst the neo-liberal aspects of globalisation are profoundly questionable, especially the reification of the 'free market', other elements associated with globalisation such as intensified communication, human interaction and improved access to such technologies as the mobile phone can have positive developmental spin-offs. The question is, how is globalisation managed and how can its positive aspects be directed towards development so as to maximise its benefits. In essence, whilst globalisation is mostly about the reconfiguration of power on a global scale, it is also about epoch-making changes regarding economic *as well as* social, gender, and cultural relations. These changes provide opportunities for developmental thinking as well as problems and barriers. In this sense the notion and potentiality of 'development' should not be seen as closed off under the conditions of globalisation, but rather demands a rethinking of what exactly it constitutes in the modern era. Much of the pessimistic readings regarding globalisation may after all, be simply failures in the imagination. Thus in the context of this volume, how and in what ways states plot a course in constructing a 'developmental state' within the globalising confines of the contemporary period is absolutely vital and is perhaps one of the foremost tasks before Africa's leadership. Yet there is the danger that if left unchecked the state in Africa (or what is left of it) may become a 'transmission belt' for economic globalisation, rather than a mediating influence seeking to craft beneficial partnerships that promote development.

In essence, the dominant line on how development might be 'factored in' to globalisation, but which neglects major structural issues in the global economy, is

likely to be counter-productive. It is simply not good enough to predicate such calls around 'growth' and hope that development will somehow occur. In this light, the current debate between the North and the South is likely to fail to address developmental aspirations as it fails to advance any concrete agenda regarding the asymmetric power relations between the two, and in many ways undermines the potency of constructing developmental states. It is this inequality that is a significant cause of maldevelopment and a huge hurdle for any developmental project to get off the ground.

So where does all this leave countries such as Botswana and Uganda? It is surely axiomatic that economies at different levels of development have different requirements when it comes to regulation and social values. After all, there are qualitative differences between Northern Europe's social corporatism and Thatcherism; between Asia's diverse communitarianism and hyper-liberalism; and between South Europe's co-operative ventures and the ruthless 'free market'. Any economic historian would admit that policies that spurred development in the North were not based on neo-liberal ideas which fetishised the market beyond all—quite the opposite. In fact, all late industrialisers, as well as earlier ones, deployed various forms of economic nationalism and protected themselves—the total opposite of what the one-world neo-liberal globalists assure is the way forward to growth and development. Surely, it not unreasonable for states in Africa to be afforded the same kind of space?

A developmental project on the continent might be expected to allow countries to maintain national differences in areas where it was felt that the intrusion of international competitors would erode or destroy local activities that have broad backing. A more nuanced acceptance and understanding that if practices run counter to the developmental or social aspirations of the populace then caution and restraint should be exercised and part of any developmental project.

This book has been critical of the inequality within both countries under review and is certainly not enamoured by the two states, for varying reasons. But, the context of these problems must be understood and despite all the problems, the states in both countries have achieved respectable accomplishments in various fields. Botswana's strategy in particular has shown that 'a disciplined activist African state that governs the market is essential for industrial development and recovery' (Owusu and Samatar 1997: 270). Indeed, we might concur with the assessment that 'Botswana [has] defied the thrust of prevailing development orthodoxy, which claims that African states cannot enhance industrial development through interventionist strategy. Botswana's state-governed industrial strategy supports aspects of recent research on the 'East Asian miracle', which underscores the fundamental importance of state intervention in industrial transformation' (ibid.: 289). Equally, the 'primacy of politics' in the complex process of development has been fundamental and decisive, inferring that it is not *how much* state intervention should take place, but rather *what kind and why* (Leftwich 2000).

Contra the neo-liberals, as Crawford Young wrote, 'there is no conceivable alternative to the state as prime organiser of change. Escape from poverty is impossible without collective societal intervention through the state' (1982: 19). This is not to be naïve and ignore the fact that the elites in both countries seek to run a comprehensive and basically authoritarian (i.e. statist) conception of development and that this has taken place in a climate where opposition was muted and/or impotent, even if there was a formal competitive framework, as in Botswana. But the reproduction of the ruling elites domination is not simply based on force but is grounded in varying ways on the success of the economic project to 'develop' Botswana and 'rehabilitate' Uganda. In both cases this is cast as being through the construction of a developmental state.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this book, there is a problem in defining a developmental state simply from its economic performance—clearly not all countries with good growth rates are developmental states. Indeed, up until the mid-1970s many African states would have qualified as 'developmental'. In our definition, a developmental state is one whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that *earnestly seeks* to deploy its resources to the *job* of economic development. As Leftwich (1995: 401) notes, 'Developmental states may be defined as states whose politics have concentrated sufficient power, autonomy and capacity at the centre to shape, pursue and encourage the achievement of explicit developmental objectives, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions and direction of economic growth, or by organising it directly, or a varying combination of both'.

Clearly, there are degrees of success and if one was going to 'measure' Botswana and Uganda then different results would be produced, obviously. But, we would assert that a state that is purposefully-driven to promote development and that utilises the offices of the state in order to facilitate improvement, alongside other actors such as the private sector and civil society can, in the particular circumstances the content finds itself, be regarded as 'developmental'. Certainly, the growth record of independent Botswana has been impressive and despite its problems, its developmental trajectory has been relatively impressive. Uganda has similarly made great strides in recent years and may well be seen as an emerging economy. Though controversial, Uganda is largely seen by the international community at least to be doing the right things vis-à-vis tax collection, the struggle against AIDS, women's empowerment etc.

We would argue that the book has shown that the differences between 'successful' states and the experiences of others, is seen as the effective construction of a 'developmental state', as opposed to the development of a predatory state which holds back development.

But overall, the fundamental conclusion that we would draw with regards to developmental states in Africa is that the orthodox approach to the role of the state is misplaced and has seen the construction of minimalist states which lack

any real prospective to promote or guide development, leaving it all to the 'market'. We believe this to be a mistake if taken to its extreme. Both Botswana and Uganda demonstrate that there is a role for the state in advancing development and in ensuring a balanced approach to the relationship between the public and private sector. They may not always get it right, but the attempt to promote development and ideologies this has guided the institutions and organisations that existed within both countries to encourage growth.

The challenges are immense and there can be no willy-nilly of the 'lessons' of Botswana and Uganda to the rest of the continent. But there are things that we feel others can reflect upon. First and foremost of these would be the need for a disciplined leadership that is not rapacious nor overly predatory. Perhaps the historical circumstances in both Botswana and Uganda are unique—but we do not believe so. There are many countries that have had to start from Ground Zero and seek to reconstruct an economy. Uganda is but one. What the country built was not necessarily a strong state, but rather a capable one that has been able to varying degrees to chart a path forwards. Yet whilst the commitment to development by both the political and bureaucratic elites has been central, this has been put into practice in Uganda, as well as in Botswana, by the stratagem of putting into place institutions which have helped sustain long-term growth as part of a broader national developmental vision.

In both countries, the state has sought to act as an entrepreneurial agent in varying ways and has sought to co-ordinate private and the public sectors cooperation. The developmental state project in both states is thus based on a foundation of capitalism but in which the government, through a wide variety of incentives, energetically promotes investment. This is assisted by a bureaucracy that has in the main withstood the plunge into predation that has been the fate of other parts of the continent. Capable state intervention *can* play a vital role in creating conditions for sustained trade growth and that this can be channelled into a variety of development strategies that can produce results. But for a developmental state to 'succeed' or even exist, the importance—if not the primacy—of politics in the multifaceted course of development is essential and key. In other words, it is not how much state intervention should take place, but rather what kind. Finding the right mix and maintaining the balance in any country will remain one of the greatest challenges for Africa. Whilst the way in which this is achieved and how it is upheld will be contingent and different in each country, this is not to say it is impossible nor that it should be attempted. If what Botswana and Uganda at least offer up is an alternative to the Afro-pessimism that many observers seem to have these days regarding the continent's future.

Notes

- 1 The Department of Women's Affairs is advised by the Botswana National Council of Women (BNCW). This Council draws its membership from civil society

organisations and government. While being touted as the 'highest advisory board to the Government on all matters relating to women and development' (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs 1995: 37), the Council's work remains at the level of awareness-raising (among Politicians and Traditional Leaders)—efforts that have brought little success.

- 2 Emang Basadi was established by a group of female academics and activists. The organisation originally mobilised around amending the Citizenship Act of 1984 – later activities include political mobilisation as well as sensitisation with respect to violence against women.
- 3 The Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project is a regional network based in Harare, Zimbabwe. The member groups of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Mocambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe have conducted research on Maintenance Laws and Practices, Family Forms, Inheritance Practices and Violence Against Women since 1992.
- 4 Despite the small numbers overall, never before in Uganda's history had there been these many women involved in politics and higher levels of decision-making.
- 5 Electoral Commission Report 2001 and Parliamentary Archives.
- 6 Wife beating is one of the most common forms of domestic violence in Uganda. It is often due to burning food, arguing with husband, going out without informing husband, neglecting children and refusing sexual relations with the husband. For detailed information see: Uganda's Demographic and Health Survey: 2000–2001, UBOS, Entebbe.
- 7 A recent parliamentary enquiry into the operations and status of the factory revealed that government heavily subsidised the factory. The government had granted loans worth more than Shs 10 billion to Apparels Tri-Star Factory. This was on top of the Shs 5.8 billion that government made available in cash and subsidies to the firm and this raised a lot of eyebrows amongst the legislators. (*The Monitor*, 3rd November 2003).
- 8 The trend instead seems to emphasise recruiting people based on 'technical know-who' rather than 'technical know-how'.