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New Directions in the Political Economy of Development

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This article underlines the changing balance of paradigms over the last decade and argues that the critique of neo-classical theory is gaining new life. What is emerging, though, is a subtler and more sophisticated view of the state than the traditional state-market dichotomy allowed for. It situates the recent African experience within a wider international context and reviews the different roles played by the state in encouraging or discouraging development.

To say that we live in a liberal age, in that neo-classical liberalism dominates contemporary discourse in the social sciences and practice in politics, might seem a truism. Yet it is only half-true, for the neo-classical victory was made possible by the left's inability to provide a sufficient defence against its assault.

The collapse of the left in both the political and academic realms did not result from the rise of the right, but preceded it, though the full extent of its debilitation did not become apparent until the 1980s. Yet by the 1970s, political scientists had uncovered a long-term erosion of the support bases for Western socialist parties, while experts on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were pointing to a stagnation in these economies that showed no way of being relieved. Yet leftist theorists and politicians clung doggedly to old orthodoxies. When the neo-classical assault began to accumulate political victories, they spluttered critiques and condemnations, yet seldom offered practical alternatives.

Nevertheless, certainly in development studies, the critique of neo-classical theory is gaining new life. But whether or not leftist theories can rehabilitate themselves in academic circles, it seems difficult at present to conceive of a revived socialism in practice. On the surface, socialism seems well and truly dead. Journalists and right-wing ideologues have seized upon the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as the failures of and retreat from state control in Africa, Latin America and much of Asia — not to mention the irremediable cleavage between the old socialism of the working class and the new socialism of new social movements like environmentalism and feminism — as evidence that socialism is defunct.

Yet despite what seems to be overwhelming evidence, the conclusion may be premature. The continuing economic success of China, where reform has yet to alter the fundamentals of public ownership and central control, is the strongest reason against rushing into this conclusion. Using China as a model, the descent into anarchy of the former Soviet Union as a contrast, some theorists argue that the reform of socialism may yield more fruit than its abolition (see Nolan 1993). Meantime the collapse of socialism has purged Western socialist theory of its orthodoxies. This has injected an invigorating breath of fresh air into academic debate on the left, even if it has weakened the left politically, at least for the time being. While it may be years before the left reconstitutes itself as a vigorous political force, neo-classical theory does not stand unchallenged.

One of the common themes that has arisen from critiques of neo-classical theory has been that government and the market are often symbiotic rather than conflictual (see, for example, Killick 1989; Stewart 1985; Taylor 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Toye 1987; Weeks 1993). In other words, to make the market more efficient one need not so much reduce the state's role in the economy as alter it. Given that structural adjustment has been the practical manifestation of neo-classical theory in the developing world, it is telling that much of the empirical research on structural adjustment points to a similar conclusion.

Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) aim to remove blockages believed to thwart the efficient operation of markets. Typically, these blockages are seen to result from government intervention. So SAPs have usually included such elements as the removal of price and other controls on enterprises, the removal of quantitative barriers to trade and the streamlining of taxes on imports (import liberalisation), the abolition of marketing boards (market liberalisation), exchange rate devaluation, the privatisation or denationalisation of state-owned enterprises, and the encouragement of new industrial private foreign investment.

Many doubts have been raised about the principle of structural adjustment. Even their supporters admit that while SAPs restore macroeconomic stability, it is not entirely obvious that macroeconomic stability on its own leads to growth (see Frenkel and Khan 1992; and Doroodian 1993). Africanists can easily point to countries that have fared badly under structure adjustment (Guillaumont 1993); while even where the policy has produced more positive results, expectations still remain unfulfilled (on Nigeria see Oyejide 1991a; on Tanzania see Shao 1992). In the case of Ghana, for example, arguably Africa's test case for structural adjustment, most observers say there have been clear gains, but hasten to add that these gains relied on strong donor backing, unlikely to be repeated elsewhere in Africa, while the long-term sustainability of the programme remains in doubt (see Rothchild 1991; Loxley 1990; Kusi 1991).

The African experience with structural adjustment has generally pointed to one conclusion: while yielding short-term improvements, the policy is apparently jeopardising long-term development. And so, quite apart from the moral and political critique of structural adjustment — the fact that SAPs tend to have concentrated benefits while immiserating a susbstantial part of the population — a cursory glance at the evidence from Africa, as well as from some Asian economies (see, for instance, Rahman 1992 on Bangladesh) could lead one to conclude that structural adjustment, and with it the neo-classical approach to development, has generally been an unmitigated failure. That conclusion would be hasty. For turning to Latin America, we find that structural adjustment has yielded some considerable gains, even if the benefits remain unevenly distributed (on Chile, see Ritter 1990, and Diaz and Korovkin 1990). This contrast points us towards an emerging consensus in development studies: liberalisation works best in those economies which have first been through a phase of infant industry promotion.

An anatomy of SAPs helps explain why they succeed and why they fail. Different elements of structural adjustment have met with differing degrees of success. Beginning with privatisation, agreement is emerging that such policies have little to commend themselves. Not only does the basic assumption underlying them, that private ownership leads to improved firm performance, not stand to reason, the growing body of evidence belies it.

To begin with, it is questionable that public firms can always be assessed by the same criteria as private ones, the standard measures being financial performance and efficiency. State firms are often created to rectify market failures of deficiencies, or to confer beneficial externalities (spin offs that enhance the development of the economy, but are not profitable for individual firms to undertake, such as research and development or human capital formation) conducive to the development of the private sector. Or they may embrace difficult subsectors whose development is necessary to the economy, but that private firms eschew (Lesser 1991:166). In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, the *Banque Ivoirienne de Developpement Industriel*'s unrecovered loans eventually drove the bank into bankruptcy, but not before it had funded the creation and expansion of a large number of successful local private ventures. These ventures would probably not have been funded otherwise, because the foreign-dominated private banking sector avoided Ivoirien entrepreneurs in favour of safe investments in large multinational corporations (Rapley 1993:135-36). Such a case is scarcely exceptional: research on Taiwan (Crane 1989-90), Brazil (Faucher 1991) and Indonesia (Ellis 1993) has also highlighted public firms whose individual performances were questionable but whose contributions to national economic development were not.

But even ignoring the importance of externalities, there is little if any evidence that publicly-owned firms are intrinsically prone to poor performance or that private firms are necessarily more efficient than public ones (Taylor 1993a:586; Bardhan 1992:566; Killick 1989:26; Toye 1987:58). In fact, there are many instances of successful public firms in the developing world (for examples see Crane 1989-90, Harrigan 1992, Naqvi and Kemal 1991; also Cook 1992:404). Consequently it is not clear that reducing the public sector to expand the private one exercises any significant impact on development (Yoder, Borkholder and Friesen 1991). As for the inefficiencies of African marketing boards, Gibbon (1992:58) argues that these did not always result from public mismanagement but from external problems like under-capitalisation or mandates beyond the scope of the boards' resources.

Because of such findings, most development theorists, including some who might loosely be described as on the right (see, for example, the cautious stance of Harrell (1993) who is echoing the position of a World Bank study), have moved away from advocating privatisation as an ingredient in a recipe for accelerated development. Not only does it seem neither to improve firm performance nor accelerate economic development, but contrary to popular perception it does little, if anything, to raise money for cash-starved governments (Cook 1992:406; Naqvi and Kemel 1991; Ramamurti 1993:37-38). It is also arguable that the resources put into privatisation could be better spent elsewhere (Murrell 1992; Ickes and Ryterman 1992): luring investors into the purchase of the public firms may 'crowd out' investment in private firms at a time when capital is in short supply. While some still consider privatisation to be useful in certain situations, such as the former Soviet bloc countries (Lee and Nellis 1991), more and more development theorists are favouring reform over privatisation as a means to improve the performance of public firms.

The results of liberalisation have been more mixed than those of privatisation. Most theorists now agree that liberalisation can have beneficial results, but only if done in a discriminating manner which takes account of both local and international demand

and supply conditions. At a general level, there are two types of liberalisation: the liberalisation of domestic markets through the elimination of such things as price controls and marketing boards, and the liberalisation of foreign trade through the elimination of such things as tariffs and qualitative restrictions on imports, and also by devaluing overvalued currencies. In addition, because it raises the price of export goods in local terms, devaluation has often been promoted as a means to 'get the prices right'. In theory, freeing up markets and restoring currencies to something approximating a 'market' value should increase the efficiency of resource allocation. In practice things are not so simple.

Because the world economy is dominated by the highly protected and subsidised producers of the developed world, indiscriminate import liberalisation can lead to deindustrialisation in developing countries (Steward 1991; Lall 190:66). Nevertheless, while the benefits of liberalisation should not be overstated — the relationships between trade liberalisation on one hand, and exports and economic performance on the other, are at best weak (Adhikari, Kirkpatrick and Weiss 1992:7-8; Greenaway and Sapsford 1993; Wade 1990:15-22) — it has produced positive results in East Asia and Latin America, even if these benefits have sometimes been modest (see Weiss 1992 on Mexico). This brings us back to the point made earlier: opening onto the market works best after a phase of sheltered development, during which industries are nurtured by the state and strengthened in preparation for future competition (Singer, in Singer and Roy 1993:21; Lall 1992; Bienefield 1987).

This has come to be known as the infant industry model for industrial development. During the early phases of industrialisation, the state can not only mobilise large pools of savings in a short time and build up human capital and technological capability, it can also foster comparative advantage (Lall 1992). Herein lies one of the weaknesses of the neo-classical approach: its calls for liberalisation are motivated by the desire to realise comparative advantage, but these calls presuppose static comparative advantage and ignore dynamic comparative advantage. In addition, there are cases in which a national economy is unable to realise even its static comparative advantage in the absence of effective government intervention. A study of Lesotho's wool and mohair industry found that while Lesotho enjoyed a clear comparative advantage in the production of these goods, producers were unable to realise it because South African exports benefited from a considerably superior distribution network, something which could only be rectified by the Lesotho government creating its own distribution network (Storey 1992).

Contrasting the successful East Asian experiences with the more disappointing ones of Latin America and India, where import substitution industrialisation was used at length, import industry theorists agree on a few simple rules. They accept the importance of export-orientated industrialisation, and tend to agree that there should be a time limit to protection: clearly specified time limits enable plant managers to know how long they have to build up their capabilities before their companies will be thrown onto the world market. In addition, government interventions should be in support of the market, or market-enhancing, rather against the market, or market-repressing (Lall 1990:60; Lall 1993; Naya and Imada 1990:303; Putterman and Rueschemeyer 1992; Garnaut 1991; Killick 1993).

The idea that the state should shelter and assist domestic industry during the build-up phase, then gradually withdraw from the economy and allow for encroachment by the market, has many supporters. In fact, Peter Nolan attributes the success of the Chinese reforms at producing one of the world's fastest-growing economies partly to the Chinese state's gradual opening onto the market; in contrast, the one-off reforms tried by Russia have yet to promise similar gains (Nolan 1993). Even those not so wedded to the idea of a strong state are coming to agree that gradual reform of state socialist systems is preferable to the Russian approach (see McKinnon 1991).

It is therefore important to understand that most who criticise import liberalisation are not suggesting that it not be done at all, but that it not be done too soon. Even in more developed third world countries like Mexico, some contend that too far a retreat by the government will jeopardise future development due to spending reductions on investment and infrastructure (Ramirez 1993). Thus, an emerging trend in development studies seems to be that import liberalisation is an effective strategy for promoting economic development, but only after a period in which the state has nurtured the development of industry and prepared it for world competition, and even then with continuing government support in the form of such things as infrastructure provision and human capital formation. Yet if the benefits of import liberalisation are now widely accepted, getting the prices right, or domestic market liberalisation, has been an entirely different matter. For the most part, this exercise has produced disappointment. Not because of unsound theory, but because the practice has frequently failed to take account of the realities of third world agricultural markets.

The current fascination with getting the prices right grew out of the 'new political economy', associated with the work of Robert Bates (1981; Lipton 1977). This school contended that Africa's urban-biased ruling elites overvalued their countries' currencies so as to inflate industrialists' profits (by keeping the prices of imported inputs low) and keep the prices of consumer goods low for the urban working class. Food prices were also kept deliberately low to favour this urban constituency. At the same time, marketing boards were used to skim off resources from the rural sector in order to develop the cities. All in all, there was a net drain of resources from the rural to the urban sector, while low producer prices resulted in sluggish production. This was seen to be especially detrimental in Africa, which relies so heavily on exports of primary goods to fuel its development. The solution, once again, was to roll back the state: abolishing marketing boards would inject competition into the purchase of primary goods, while currency devaluation would cause local prices of primary commodities to leap. It was expected that these price incentives would spur greater exports, and thereby greater revenue and faster growth in the economy.

Among the shortcomings of the new political economy as it has been applied to Africa, critics have noted that the urban interest groups which Bates suggested controlled the state turned out to be less powerful than he had supposed they would be; after all, structural adjustment has hit them hardest. Moreover, given that most urban Africans retain close ties to their villages, rigid urban-rural dichotomies seldom apply (Gibbon 1992; Mkandawire 1992:308-9). Nor is it obvious that a net drain of resources from the countryside to the cities always inhibits development. It can, and often does do so, but in East Asia industrialisation often relied on the state transferring resources from agriculture to industry (Jenkins 1991:214-15). Arguably, this strategy was also used successfully in Côte d'Ivoire (see Rapley 1993: chapter 4). As for the argument that raising producer prices will lead to increased exports, all other things remaining equal, the logic is fine. The problem is that all other things are rarely equal, especially in Africa.

The moral economists aside, most development theorists currently believe that peasants do in fact respond positively to price incentives. However, the neo-classical emphasis on prices is not being criticised for being too reductionist: in its focus on prices, it neglects the many other incentives or the conditions that must be in place before they will respond to prices. It is now well-established that peasants will respond positively to price increases only if they have access to such things as a good transportation infrastructure, reasonable credit, subsidised inputs, land and labour, as well as the benefits of government-sponsored research and development. They also seek incentives to production: getting a better price is of little value if there is nothing that can be done with the extra income. So, readily available consumer goods are among the important incentives to production. The availability of inputs, incentives and an adequate infrastructure, can be jeopardised by government rollback. Retrenchment in some spheres, such as marketing and price-setting, may need to be accompanied by advances in others like infrastructure, credit provisions, extension and so forth. Thus an emerging consensus seems to be that 'getting the price right' relies on a number of government measures to be made effective.

Using devaluation to raise producer prices presents its own problems. While it may benefit agriculture, devaluation can hurt urban industry since it raises input prices. Moreover, some argue that devaluation has done little to stimulate exports in sub-Saharan Africa due to the low demand elasticities for these commodities and declining demand in developed countries (Mengisteab 1991; Mengisteab and Logan 1991:106). Meantime, devaluation and/or the removal of subsidies on inputs lead to inflation because of the jump in import costs. This yields a whole new set of problems, including the possibility that resultant inflation can erode most of the gains in producer prices, as appears to have happened in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (Shapouri, Missiaen and Rosen 1992; Shao 1992). Once again, the solution to these dilemmas posed by devaluation appears to be not a wholesale renunciation of the strategy, but government intervention to mitigate the effects of inflation or decreased consumption, at least in the short term (see Rhodd's conclusion on the Jamaican experience: Rhodd 1993).

In addition, it now appears that the new political economy may have overestimated not only the degree of currency overvaluation that prevailed under the old regimes in Africa (Mengisteab 1991), but also its negative impact. While devaluation and producer price increases have led to some significant increases in recorded exports, at least some — and in several cases possibly most — of this increase can be attributed not to new production, but to the re-entry into formal circulation of goods formerly smuggled because of unfavourable official prices (Guillaumont 1993). Sara Berry (1993) suggests the new political economy overstated the detrimental impact of government policies on agriculture: they may have led not to decreased production, but simply to increased secrecy. The obverse of this is that government retreat may not be as effective as the data seems to suggest it is.

As for liberalising domestic agricultural markets by abolishing marketing boards, the results have been mixed. Nigeria's experience appears to have been good (Akanji 1992), but elsewhere, the withdrawal of the state has not left in place a free and competitive market. Agricultural markets all over the developing world, especially in Africa, are often fraught with imperfections (Harriss 1992; Harriss and Crow 1992; Lesser 1991; Guillaumont 1993; Gregoire 1990). In such cases, small groups may end up absorbing the price gains, perhaps even depositing them abroad (de Alcantara 1992). Not all African agricultural markets work so badly (Beynon 1992:8), but when they do, *re*regulation rather than *de*regulation appears a better way to increase output (Harriss and Crow 1992). Again, better rather than less state intervention.

Apart from reducing market distortions, marketing boards can perform other functions. Some subsectors — in Africa, examples include cotton and bulk food crops — rely on public marketing because they are unattractive to private traders (Gibbon 1992:58). More important is the role that marketing boards can play in price stabilisation: a completely free market in primary goods will reflect the vagaries of world commodity markets, with their sometimes violent price swings. Peasant producers are often more concerned with risk than with price, and will retreat from production of crops in which the risks of price fluctuation are very high (Narayana 1993). Many theorists argue for the retention of marketing boards (Guillaumont 1993; Beynon 1992:7; Barker 1989:210), though reform remains an option. This is because 'monolithic' marketing boards may not be necessary, as Indonesia's experience shows. Its rice board has successfully stabilised prices by intervening at the margins of output, buying between 3 per cent and 8 per cent of any year's marketed output (Ellis 1993).

Finally, in addition to the liberalisation of the markets for primary products, neo-classical theory has advocated financial liberalisation and labour market deregulation. Although financial liberalisation can free up credit, especially that available to small firms (Oyejide 1991b on the Nigerian experience), it can equally raise rather than lower capital costs if the banks choose to lend money to firms rather than invest in them. A more regulated market, in which banks are required to invest directly in firms — one can add, in long-term bonds rather than stocks, as in Germany — will maximise the efficient use of capital (Taylor 1993a:585-86). As for labour market regulations, the evidence is weak that minimum wage laws significantly distort labour markets (Haggblade, Liedholm and Mead 1990:67). Indeed, there are cases where minimum wage rates actually reduce distortions (Azam 1992). Allowing wages rates to fall too low can erode the gains brought on by increases in comparative advantage if the domestic market becomes so restricted as to reduce sales (Taylor 1993a:587; Fitzgerald 1990:385-86).

The growing criticism of liberalisation policies has not gone unnoticed by neo-classical theorists. Among other things, they have recognised that structural adjustment has tended to fall rather hard on the poor. The World Bank itself admits that there is a political element to adjustment: people must be sheltered from its hardest effects if regime stability is to be preserved (Davies and Sanders 1993:81). With this in mind, the World Bank has come to advocate targeted programmes of assistance to the poor, which re said to have achieved partial if not complete success in Jamaica (Grosh 1992), Chile (Barrientos 1993) and India (Chellaraj, Brorsen and Farris 1992). Yet underlying such programmes is a continuing mistrust of the state; they are designed to alleviate misery until the expected benefits of structural adjustment trickle down to the population. Grudgingly, neo-classical theorists accept that maybe better rather than less state intervention is a good idea, but only for a while. Fundamentally, the neo-classical faith in the market remains unshaken, even if one can detect clear shifts away from earlier radical free-market approaches (see the World Bank's call for an increased state role in its 1991 World Development Report; Perkins and Roemer 1991).

Yet the state continues to play an important, often essential role, in the development of third world countries, and as the influential work of Lance Taylor has shown, more state does not necessarily entail less market. The two may expand and contract together (though even Taylor acknowledges that state investment can sometimes 'crowd out' private investment: see Taylor 1993b:5). It is now apparent that there is no firm evidence to suggest that less government leads to faster economic growth. If there is any relationship between the two, it may be that in the aggregate, more government leads to more growth (Sattar 1993). Moreover, many of the successes attributed to the increased role of markets may in fact have stemmed from other factors, as Bramall (1993) argues with regards to the decollectivisation of Chinese agriculture.

Structuralist economists and developmental state theorists will hardly be shocked to hear that the state has a vital role to play in the development process. What is perhaps surprising, though, is that many neo-classical economists are now coming around to the view that it is not the size of the state, but rather its role and effectiveness that is the key to development (Singer and Roy 1993:23). Even the World Bank appears sensitive to the renewed importance of the state in development. What is emerging in the current development debate is a subtler and more sophisticated view of the state than the traditional state-market dichotomy allowed for. It is concerned not so much with the quantity as with the quality of state intervention.

It is all very well to say that better rather than less state is the solution to underdevelopment. The fact remains that the capacities of states to implement development programmes and policies differ widely. As regards Africa, many Africanists are coming to the gloomy conclusion that many states are simply not up to the task of development (Rothchild and Chazan 1988; Seidman 1992:10). Some, yearning for the elusive 'governance' that has become the World Bank's Holy Grail, have looked to the recent wave of democratisation as means to improve the functioning of African governments. Half-heartedly, they hope that the increased accountability forced on political leaders by liberal democracy will yield such results as a reduction of corruption (Mkandawire 1992; Medard 1990). Unfortunately, a good many Africanists are pessimistic as to what democratisation can achieve. Few see it as a bad thing, but they are not overly confident that it will make much of an impact on the operation of governments (Shaw 1993, chapter 5; Clapham 1992; Bratton and van de Walle 1992; Jeffries 1993). Some point to the apparent contradiction of the twin processes of state retreat and democratisation: in poor societies, states need to mobilise popular support for both democracy and state legitimacy, and are handicapped by the lack of resources they suffer from retrenchment (Clapham 1992; Mengistaeb and Logan 1991:110). Among other results of state retrenchment, people lose faith in the government's ability to render even the most basic of welfare services, turning elsewhere for functions normally performed by government (Rudebeck 1990). This further undermines the state's ability to play an effective role in development, regardless of whether that prescribed role is minimalist or maximalist. A few Africanists, bewildered by state failure, throw up their hands in despair and say that the nation-state, imported from Europe by colonialism, is inappropriate technology in Africa and cannot hope to fulfill the requirements of development (Davidson 1992; Darbon 1990).

This last opinion of the state in Africa remains a minority one. Nonetheless, it epitomises a despondence that has gripped many Africanists over the last decade. Although there have been cases of good, and even outstanding, state performance in Africa, like Botswana and Côte d'Ivoire, there have been many abysmal failures, like Zaïre and pre-Museveni Uganda. This raises a question that challenges development theory even more than does the question of what the appropriate role for the state in the economy is: why is it that some states have apparently been instrumental to development, whereas others have apparently been obstacles to the process? What explains such glaring differences?

There are a number of theories that seek to explain success and/or failure. Attention has inevitably turned to the 'success' stories — the East Asian NICs — in order to identify possible reasons for success. This has given rise to the developmental state school. Originated by Chalmers Johnson, the concept of the developmental state has come to be closely — though by no means exclusively — associated with a group of theorists at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. While neo-classical theory has attributed East Asian success to outward-oriented market economies, the developmental state school emphasises the highly interventionist role of the state in East Asian development, particularly in South Korea and China.

Speaking loosely, one can list the features of the developmental state as including the following: a state in which economic development is the top priority, with the welfare of the population being given little importance; a state committed to private property and markets (this allows for socialist developmental states like China, since they are opening onto the market); state guidance of the market, as engineered by an elite or technocratic economic bureaucracy; a bureaucracy that enjoys substantial autonomy, with its autonomy guaranteed by a powerful political authority, typically though not necessarily an authoritarian regime (that autonomy enables the bureaucracy to impose discipline — at times harsh — on the private sector). In directing development, the developmental state plays an interventionist role that goes far beyond the limits acceptable to neo-classical theory. However, its protection of infant industries differs from import substitution industrialisation in its discrimination: some industries receive little if any protection, and even in healthy industries poorly-performing firms are left to wither on the vine. Finally, developmental states promote the social change necessary to development by redistributing land (if necessary) and repressing labour.

The developmental state model, with its emphasis on the 'strong' state, seems now to be the chief rival to neo-classical minimalism. It may well emerge, in modified form, as the leading explanation for state failure and success. Yet how is it that some states obtain this strength and autonomy while others do not? And why should the governors of a strong state choose to develop an outward-oriented capitalism with such effectiveness? The rules of many powerful states choose to do otherwise.

Some developmental state theorists have turned to the overdeveloped state model, originated by Alavi (1972) and Saul (1979), to explain state strength. According to this explanation, developmental states are considered strong because they elude capture by societal interests, unlike 'weak' or 'soft' states. This strength is attributed to the fact that such states were colonial legacies suspended above society, rather than being institutions which grew out of domestic social forces. While this model may apply to some cases, Taiwan being a possibility (Wade 1990), it offers a poor explanation for the behaviour of the state in Africa, where theorists argue that it is precisely because the state is weakly linked to social forces that it can be both rapacious and ineffectual: civil society is so weak in many African countries that it lacks the ability to limit the state's predatory behaviour, while the state is unable to use links to civil society to mobilise support for its development policies (Woods 1992; Clapham 1992:13-15; Healey and Robinson 1992:89-91). Nevertheless, the theory of the overdeveloped state draws our attention to the importance of the colonial legacy. Particularly in East Asia, efficient civil services and centralised power appear to have been products of colonial rule (Amsden 1993:32; Nordhaug 1993). In Africa, as we shall see below, the legacy was usually quite different. At one time, the bureaucratic-authoritarian model was a popular tool for explaining state strength. Developed by the Argentinian political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell, this model sought to account for the rise of military regimes in Latin America during the 1970s by attributing it to the advent of the need for difficult economic development policies, and thus for a regime that could ignore or repress popular demands. Subsequently, the model came in for trenchant criticism (Serra 1979), and experience has shown that authoritarian regimes are not always the best at implementing demanding economic reform or austerity programmes (Remmer 1986; Haggard and Kaufman 1992:32-34; Healey and Robinson 1992:122; Bates and Krueger 1993:459; Moore 1990). The thesis that authoritarian regimes are better than democratic ones at implementing reform seems also to assume an enlightened leadership, something which is often lacking. After all, there have been cases of monumental mismanagement by authoritarian regimes in, for instance, Marcos's Philippines, Duvalier's Haiti and Mobutu's Zaïre (Haggard and Webb 1993:146). Nor are authoritarian regimes immune to societal pressure: they may be able to resist popular pressure, but the result may not be an interest-free state but one in which a single interest monopolises power (Toye 1992:193). Furthermore, it is apparent that democratic, or otherwise 'weak' regimes *can* implement difficult reforms, sometimes quite effectively, provided their leaders mobilise popular support for change.

Such findings may lead to a refinement of the developmental state model. It appears that state strength — the autonomy needed to engineer and direct development — arises not so much from authoritarian rule, but from a concentration of power in the executive branch along with the focus of policy-making power in a small circle of technocrats. Even those outside the developmental state school seem to accept this (Krueger 1993, chapter 7; Bates and Krueger 1993:462). At key conjunctures in their history, many states have experienced something akin to what Marx called a bonapartist moment: turning points, sometimes crises, in which political power was largely granted to, or usurped by, the executive branch, or even one leader. This can occur in the midst of a political-economic crisis (see Onis 1992 on the Turkish experience) or result from a military coup (see Haggard, Kim and Moon 1991 on the South Korean experience). In Africa, where it occurred, it seems to have followed decolonisation, as in Côte d'Ivoire and Botswana, a key feature in each case appearing to be a strong party (an element in state strength emphasised by Haggard and Webb 1993:150-51).

Côte d'Ivoire presents an interesting case, because the Ivoirien state not only ruled in alliance with capitalists, indeed it was thoroughly penetrated by them. However, through a variety of economic organisation, and via the key agency of the *Parti Democratique de la Côte d'Ivoire,* the class was able to articulate a unifying vision which could override the interests of individual members (Rapley 1993). This gave the presidency, where decision-making power was concentrated, a coherent development strategy with which to work. Meanwhile the technocrats who put it into effect were insulated from political pressures of a patrimonial variety, and developed a high degree of organisation loyalty (Crook 1988). It is interesting to note, however, that at the height of the political-economic crisis of 1989-90, the president appointed a government comprised largely of technocrats, who set about implementing a strict reform programme. In this experience Côte d'Ivoire may mirror the Turkish transition.

What keeps regimes with highly concentrated power from becoming predatory, like Zaire's government? The answer appears to be twofold. It seems that two conditions, neither sufficient but both necessary, need to be in place before an autonomous regime will become developmental. First, the executive power must have at its disposal a pool of highly-skilled technocrats who enjoy a considerable measure of autonomy; that is, civil servants who do not owe their positions to political or personal appointments. This helps to account for Zaire's failure, since it has been estimated that there were fewer than two dozen trained technocrats in the entire country at the time the Belgians left (Davidson 1974:288). Equally, it accounts for Côte d'Ivoire's success, where the regime retained a large French contingent during a transition period in which it built up its own administrative capacity (Crook 1988). It also helps to account for those African countries in which the weakness of class rule has led to personalised rule based on patron-client networks: official positions are filled not necessarily by the best qualified people, but by political clients (Sandbrook 1985, 1993; Medard 1990).

Second, given that there is no such thing as a purely autonomous state; given that every state is embedded in the society it governs, and is closely linked to and penetrated by social forces; given that the state is dependent on the economy for the resources that enable it to function; it is important that the regime be closely linked to the capitalist class, while being comparatively distanced from what Clive Hamilton calls the 'classes which derive wealth from unproductive activities or which are otherwise hostile to industrial development' (Hamilton, quoted in Sorensen 1993:11). By blending Hamilton's thesis with Evans' conception of 'embedded autonomy', Georg Sorensen develops a useful theory for understanding the relationship between capital and the state: while the governing elite must be closely linked to business, it must at the same time retain sufficient autonomy from it to be able to discipline it (Sorensen 1993; Amsden 1993:35). This brings to mind the marxist debate of the 1970s, which generally concluded that the most effective capitalist regimes were those which were able to overlook and even repress the demands of certain fractions of capital in order to govern in the interest of the whole class.

Among other things, the class basis of African states may help to explain why some of them become patrimonial while others become developmental. Independence movements led by urban petty bourgeoisies (e.g. civil servants, teachers) lack a private base of accumulation, and turn to the state as their avenue to upward mobility. Put crudely, the state becomes their cash cow, offering opportunities for taxation and rent-seeking. Moreover, coming largely from state positions, these individuals arguably share an ideology which places faith in the capacities of the state to enact social change. By contrast, independence movements led by bourgeoisies turn to the state as a means to secure and advance their private interests: any improvements in the economy will benefit their interests, so they will seek to keep state predations within limits that the economy can sustain (cf. Brett 1985). However, to forestall the emergence of what has been called crony capitalism, these business people probably need to be organised into associations. Such organisation enables them to recognise and articulate a common class interest which governs their political behaviour. Otherwise they might act only in their personal interests, and seek or enact policies that advance their businesses to the detriment of other capitalists.

Much of the recent development literature on East Asia concludes that what can be called developmental states are rooted in capitalist power, especially productive capitalist power, with these capitalists enjoying close ties to the bureaucracy (see Naya and Imada 1990:301; Islam 1992:77; Vogel 1992; Haggard, Kim and Moon 1991:869). Similar findings emerge in two African states which might be considered developmental, Botswana and Côte d'Ivoire, where indigenous bourgeoisies captured the state at the time of independence (Botswana, it should be noted, presents a nuance to the developmental state model: it has effectively spearheaded development, but in so doing has been much less interventionist than either the East Asian or

Ivorien states). In a similar vein, the recent reform drive in much of the third world has in many cases been attributed not to external pressure but to the rising power of an indigenous bourgeoisie. This meshes with Jonathan Barker's thesis that reform in Africa will be motivated by a triple alliance among international financial capital: the World Bank and IMF; private capital; foreign and domestic; and 'progressive' small farmers (Barker 1989), which seems to find support in Mozambiques's reform experience (Bowen 1992). One hastens to add that Barker is not optimistic that such alliances will emerge in most of Africa. His pessimism points to a phenomenon which may lie at the heart of Africa's disappointing post-colonial development record. At the time of independence, indigenous bourgeoisies in much of sub-Saharan Africa were politically weak. Seldom did they play a prominent role in independence struggles. By consequence, independence movements were typically led by urban petty bourgeoisies. These new ruling elites, unconstrained by bourgeois civil societies, were left with surprising latitude to use, and abuse the state.

Thus it is not surprising to find that while development theorists elsewhere are presently concerned with reinserting the state into development, Africanists are moving in the opposite direction and increasingly calling for state retreat. In the form of decentralisation or devolution, this is seen as a way to improve the delivery of services and mobilise people in support of development efforts, and the chorus in favour of decentralisation is getting ever louder (Wunsch and Olowu 1990; Klitgaard 1991; Cornia, van der Hoeven and Mkandawire 1992; Hyden 1990; Mabogunje 1990; Janvry, Sadoulet and Thorbecke 1993:573; Stewart 1993). In keeping with this stance, the World Bank is calling for central governments to continue financing public services like health care, but to leave service delivery in the hands of private sectors and non-governmental associations (Hecht and Musgrove 1993). It is not an ideal solution, but may be the best of a set of undesirable options. Whether or not decentralisation will improve governance is difficult to say. So far the evidence is mixed, and Ingham and Kalam (1992:377) identify a shift in the decentralisation literature away from cautious optimism towards a view that decentralisation is not self-evidently good. The most optimistic prognosis might be that any change which makes government more responsive will increase its legitimacy, thereby leading to its long-term strengthening (Bratton and Rothchild 1992:269, 284).

The glum assessment of the state and prospects of bourgeois power in much of Africa dampens hopes of developmental states emerging in all but a few countries. It is not that capitalist development will not occur. While it may be difficult for indigenous capitalists to emerge in small economies (Bayart 1993:91-92), especially if those economies are dominated by producers and distributors from a neighbouring economy as is the case in much of southern Africa, elsewhere capitalists are prospering. Even in Zaïre, by reputation the predatory, anti-developmental state *par excellence*, capitalists continue their activities (MacGaffey 1987). But these activities will remain inchoate — linkage into an emerging capitalist economy will be minimised — and concentrated disproportionately in those sectors which offer fast returns and are most easily concealed from the public eye (for instance, trade). Certainly, entrepreneurs in hostile or unpredictable policy environments will hesitate to move into manufacturing (cf. Forrest 1994, chapter 9). In the absence of state direction, whether minimalist or maximalist, coordinated national development is unlikely to occur. After years of disparagement, one of the canons of marxist theory may be correct after all: a bourgeois revolution, in some form, may have to precede national capitalist development. And in much of Africa, such revolutions may not be on the horizon.

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