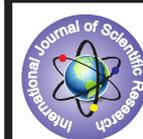


Debates on the African Experience of Developmentalism



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ABSTRACT

Developmentalism as an ideology has been practiced by various African nations as the result of the witnessed rapid economic transformation of East Asian states. However the African experience of the ideology is full of debates up to the present time. Accordingly the paper will majorly focus on the debate related to the intention of post-colonial African leaders in adopting the ideology, the impossibility syndrome regarding the effective implementation of developmentalism in African nations and the paradox of patrimonialism and developmentalism in African experience. By taking what has been stated above as a background, this paper analyzes the debates on African experience of developmental state ideology. Methodologically, the paper uses information that will be gathered from official documents, books and others.

The beginning of developmental state ideology in Africa is a debatable issue between scholars up to now; some scholars argued that the concept of developmental state ideology is totally new for African nations up to this time, but others state that:

[a] discussion of the relevance of the developmental state concept for Africa must necessarily begin by referring back to the initial post colonial experiences of African countries in the 1960s and '70s because these were characterized by state led interventions and have been seen to be an expression of developmentalism (Shivji in Meyns and Musamba, 2010:28).

As indicated in the preceding quote, the idea of developmental state ideology is not a new phenomenon for African nations. Based on the experiences of few African countries after the end of colonial era some political analysts believe that these African countries turned their faces toward economic development which has been weakened by the colonial regime through centralized state power.

Furthermore, Mkandawire argues that African states around mid-70's can be categorized as developmental states as far as they pursued the developmentalist ways and goals. Based on this he discarded the notions which alien the ideology from African countries.

Having the above debate, the other controversial issue is with regard to the intention of African leaders in post-colonial time in choosing developmental state ideology over other ideologies for the purpose of healing Africa from the damage caused by colonization. On the other hand Claude Ake argued that the ideology of developmental state serves African leaders to maintain their power. To illuminate his argument let us consider the following statement:

[t]he politics that rendered development improbable has made the adoption of an ideology of development inevitable. For the political elites struggling to maintain their power and to reproduce their domination amid the problems of the postcolonial era, the ideology of development has been an effective strategy of power that addresses the objective necessity for development (Ake, 1996: 16-17). Here, Ake illustrates the intention of post-colonial African leaders as the deep desire and will to stay on power for long period of time. Subsequently, he accused these leaders for assigning abused instrumental value for the concept development by using it as a way to sustain on power.

Additionally, in post-colonial Africa the struggle for power was enormous and consequently, leaders who were able to catch the power used various methods to maintain their power. Here, the political context of developmentalism is directly related with such African experience of the ideology.

However, Peter Meyns and Charity Musamba in *INEF Report on 2010*

document portrayed Mkandawire's argument as a good response to Ake's statements on the intention of post-colonial African leaders. This comparison perceives and projects Ake as the accuser of post-colonial African leaders for adopting and implementing the ideology based on the desire of power, and put Mkandawire as a defender for the leader's intention which is ambitious for development per se.

Here in the other end of the spectrum Mkandawire asserts that 'for most of the first generation of African leaders, 'development' was certainly a central preoccupation (Mkandawire, 2001)'. Furthermore, he argued that the post-colonial African leaders preferred developmentalist ideology with the motive to create a significant social, political and economic advancement. Therefore, it is wrong to throw the blame on these leaders of using the developmental state ideology for their power survival. Thus referring to some African nation's experiences, he justified that the post-colonial African leaders adopted developmentalism with the intention of bringing positive change for the nations after the horrible damage caused by colonization.

But still Ake argued as when they employed such ideology, economic transformation has a secondary status for those African leaders. Accordingly he enumerated 'developmental state ideology' as:

[a]n ideology,... [of] development served a dual function. It represented the interests of the African political elites and their patrons. At the same time, it was an ideology of economic transformation. But the latter was secondary. As a basis for economic change, the ideology was shaped decisively by the essentially political interests of its proponents (Ake, 1996:17).

Moreover, he states that developmental state ideology is a tool for African leaders in which they use to shape African people in order to secure their position and employ a system which fits and satiate their desires.

Though few African nations claimed in practicing developmental state ideology, Peter Meyns and Charity Musamba argued as follows:

[d]evelopmentalism in Africa in the 1960s and '70s was characterized by weak state capacity and ineffective statist intervention in the national economy [...]. The political and economic crises which resulted from post colonial statist experiences in Africa must, in conclusion, be seen as the outcome of states which lacked essential features of a developmental state (Meyns and Musamba 2010:30).

The above text exposes the other side of the issue which is not assessed by Ake and Mkandawire. Meyns and Msumba, rather than arguing on the exploitation of the ideology by African leaders, they illustrated the weak understanding and application of developmentalism by African nations in the 1960's and '70s. Actually these African nations were practicing centralized and hegemonic

system and this can be considered as one of the major attributes of developmentalism. Hence, by considering this fact it is indisputable to say African nations in 1960's and '70's cannot be mentioned as developmental states in strict sense of the ideology.

The other burning case in African experience of developmental state ideology is the possibility and impossibility of developmentalism in relation to effective implementation of it in African nations. Scholars in the first category like Mkandawire tried to defend and show the possibility of implementing developmental state ideology by referring to the perceptible experiences of African developmental states based on Asian practices of the ideology and he praised the aspiration of democratizing the ideology by mentioning few African countries which are said to be developmental democratic states (Mkandawire, 2001:310).

Literature from 90s stands at the other end of the spectrum, and contend the impossibility of implementing developmental state ideology in Africa for some reasons like, the practice of developmental states cannot be replicated mainly because the institutions associated with the East Asian developmental states are both highly contextual and time specific, the problem of transferability of developmental state institutions is linked to East Asian societal traditions and culture. [developmental state ideology is] determined by a particular geo political and historical context (Meyns and Musamba, 2010:31-32). Moreover, the aforementioned factors justify the impossibility syndrome in implementing developmental state ideology in effective manner and attain the expected outcome in African scenario.

At this juncture, Kelsall states six African nations; Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. And from these nations he regarded Ethiopia and Rwanda as patrimonial developmental states. Moreover, he characterized them as:

[a] system to centralize the management of economic rents and orient rent generation to the long term. In other words, there was a structure in place that allowed a person or group at the apex of the state to determine the major rents created and to distribute them at will. In addition, leaders had a vision that inspired them to create rents and discipline rent-seeking to expand income through productive investment over the long term. The mechanisms for doing this differed from country to country, but they always involved a combination of: a strong, visionary leader (often an independence or war-time hero), a single or dominant party system, a competent and confident economic technocracy, a strategy to include, at least partially, the most important political groups in some of the benefits of growth and a sound policy framework, defined here as having a broadly pro-capitalist, pro-rural bias (Kelsall, 2011. 2).

Having the witnessed situation in developmental states particularly the mentioned once in the above quote, are authoritarian regimes with single dominant party and ethnic group. And this dominant ethnic group will be benefited in advance from the achieved economic growth rather than accommodating the remaining part of the society. Referring to history, every ideology and implementation of it has a creator and proponent which usually counted as a hero. When we look at it in Ethiopian case, the hero is deliberately recruited from the ruling party which is formulated by one ethnic group. Following this, the hero will be taken as a symbol of the revolution and change.

However, scholars like Maphunye, contends that 'given the challenges of the Asian developmental states, especially in terms of democratic participation, it would be desirable for African countries to consider adopting and implementing developmental states that are also democratic, particularly in terms of allowing a space for civil society and public participation (J. Maphunye, 2009:14). So, Maphunye discarded the impossibility syndrome via supporting the idea of democratizing developmentalism. Accordingly, by aspiring these, few African nations like Botswana, South

Africa, Mauritius, and Ethiopia are characterized as developmental democratic states.

Recent literature with regard to developmental state ideology discussed the possibility of patrimonial mode of governance as a core essence in developmentalism. And in connection to this point, a patrimonial mode of governance can take different forms, some developmental and some not. [...] case studies of states whose forms of patrimonialism can be seen to have had positive developmental impacts (Kelsall and Booth in Routley, 2012: 33)'. Here scholars argue in contrary by taking developmentalist African nation's experiences in particular, patrimonialism is found to be the main obstacle not to achieve the developmental aspirations.

Based on the above quotes, it is visible that developmentalism incorporates patrimonial approach in governing process and few developmentalist countries are said to be patrimonial namely Japan, Korea and Taiwan. And from African continent, some nations are categorized as neo-patrimonial states, for instance, Botswana and Ethiopia. As indicated, scholars like Kelsall and Booth asserted that patrimonial mode has played a positive role in realizing the expected outcome. Nonetheless other scholars contended the opposite which means, they portrayed patrimonialism as an obstacle in developmentalism.

Here When we look at patrimonial ruling system itself, it prioritize political elite's benefits at the expense of basic societal gains, it also creates a conducive environment for corruption (rent seeking), and one part of the society or a particular ethnic group hegemonies the remaining ethnic groups in a society.

Accordingly, characteristics of patrimonial mode are highly interrelated with the nature of developmental state ideology which means, 'The separation of the developmental patrimonial state from the developmental state is perhaps not as such a clear cut. Additionally, whilst developmental gains have been made by those states highlighted by the Africa power and politics program as examples of the model, these successes have not amounted to the miraculous growth of the East Asian economic miracle (ibid:35)'.

Furthermore, developmental state ideology incorporates effective and large bureaucratic system as a core essence and this system interconnects the state and the society particularly business persons, and as a result, the whole governing system and the market situation will be exposed to rent seeking and corruption. And this scenario shows how patrimonial system of governance negatively impacts the ideology.

Having the above facts,

[p]oliticians can consolidate their personal power base differently... For example, if politicians seek to build a professional network of loyal clients in the bureaucracy, this network helps them but not the state they run. Instead, if they consolidate their power base by building effective coercive state apparatuses, these may stay with the state long after they have left the scene (Vu in Routley, 2012:35).

Though such system is antidemocratic and conquering, developmentalist countries which applied a regime tuned with patrimonial mode like South Korea and Malaysia achieved rapid economic growth. When we come to the African case, the mentioned countries as patrimonial developmental states are witnessing fast economic advancement. However, the social and political development in these nations in fact is infant and fragile. And at the same time, some patrimonial developmental states in Africa are not able to realize the expected rapid economic growth. Additionally, the lack of good governance which is rooted in the ideology in such nations triggered various social, political and economic crises and this situation highly impedes the development process.

The opportunistic and greedy desires of the political elites in patrimonial developmental state ideology directly affect the market,

huge projects like infrastructural constructions and generally the development of a nation. The debate in connection to patrimonial developmental states in Africa continued up to now but taking the perceptible factual experiences of these countries, it is undeniable that developmental state ideology in most African nations includes patrimonial mode of governance.

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