AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IMPASSE
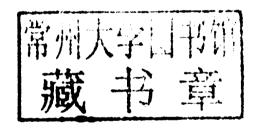
RETHINKING THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRANSFORMATION

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Acknowledgements

Given what I deem to be a reasonable division of intellectual labour, there are essentially two kinds of scholars who write on Africa. There are those who either live in or know Africa intimately and those who study the continent from outside. My contribution here is that of the outsider who, equipped with the visitor's eye for the broader, and in this case comparative, perspective and the occasionally enlightening first-hand experience, reflects on developments in Africa with the aim of understanding not only what is happening there, but also in the hope of gaining a better understanding of what our impressions of Africa tell us about the greater context of the modern age in which we all exist. Working on any subject with some significant degree of abstraction from that subject entails both advantages and disadvantages. It is my hope that the outsider's perspective presented in this book will be of interest to anyone fascinated by Africa and the politics of development, irrespective of their location or particular knowledge of the subject matter.

Some of the ideas underpinning this book came into being during my time as a PhD student at Arizona State University under the supervision of Patrick McGowan, Hendrik Spruyt and Peter McDonough. While this book would not have been written without the research undertaken at that time, it is only very loosely based on the theories and empirical research with which I then engaged. This book concerns itself instead with some of the questions regarding development and socio-economic transformation in post-colonial societies that conventional frameworks leave aside. It asks a fundamentally different set of questions, and it therefore identifies other problems and arrives at new conclusions. In the end, writing this book did not come easy. It required me to confront ideas that I initially resisted considering but which I have eventually come to accept as being of great importance. At the very least these ideas pose disturbing questions that we should attempt finding answers to, and which we ignore at our peril.

In writing this book I am indebted to my former PhD supervisors, in particular to Patrick McGowan, on account of the scholarly foundation they provided, and also to the Institute for Global Dialogue in Johannesburg, where I was provided with a 'home away from home' and conducted research on corporatism, which constituted a valuable

Key abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party (Bechuanaland Democratic Party)
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DA	Democratic Alliance
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme
HDI	Human Development Index
IFIs	international financial institutions
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACP	South African Communist Party
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

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Introduction

The basic question with which this book is concerned is whether genuine alternatives to orthodox development policies can be envisioned and implemented in southern Africa. And if so, on what social and political basis these alternatives can be founded, and by what means they can best be pursued. In particular, this book investigates the degree to which southern African countries in the wake of transitions from settler colonialism contain the sort of cultural, social and political impulses that can support a new thinking about development and the means thereto. This rethinking of the political economy of development is about the *possibility* of pursuing alternatives to orthodox development strategies, but not about providing a new blueprint for what that future should look like. Given the deep sense of despair at Africa's post-independence developmental impasse, and given southern Africa's volatile post-transition environment, the question of possibilities for alternatives is a critical one indeed.

The primary point of departure for this study is the transition from a settler colonial to a post-colonial southern Africa in which states and politics are now dominated by the African majorities previously relegated to the sidelines of society in the period of colonization and industrialization that fundamentally reshaped southern Africa over the last few centuries. The official end of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994 as South Africa's first president with a genuine democratic mandate became the crowning achievement of southern Africa's many liberation struggles during the latter half of the twentieth century. Indeed, Mandela's inauguration on 10 May 'stands out as one of the epic moments of the second half of the twentieth century, on a par with the breaching of the Berlin Wall ... But unlike the fall of communism in eastern Europe, which took place suddenly, the triumph of democracy in South Africa was a culmination of a longer process' (Guelke 1999: vii).

With the exception of the North African struggle against French colonialism, eternalized in the incisive accounts and analyses by Fanon (1963) and Memmi (2003), no other anti-colonial struggle in Africa captured the imagination of peoples and politicians outside the continent, not least academics and intellectuals, as did the struggles against South African apartheid, Rhodesian intransigence and Portuguese reaction. Leaders emerging from nationalist and liberation movements, foremost among

them Nelson Mandela and Robert Mugabe, became global icons of the struggle against what was often portrayed and perceived as the last remnants of Western imperialism and neocolonial exploitation in Africa.

The hopes for southern Africa on the cusp of independence were high. By the 1980s disappointing post-independence political and economic trajectories were well established elsewhere across sub-Saharan Africa, as illustrated by Sandbrook's (1985) influential statement on Africa's economic stagnation. At the very outset of what became described as Africa's 'lost decade', the World Bank's (1981) *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* set the stage for a host of market-oriented analyses of Africa's shortcomings and prescriptions for their potential remedies. But in southern Africa there was a palpable sense that things were different, and that countries like Zimbabwe and eventually also South Africa could offer hope for a continent where 'Afropessimism' had become conventional wisdom in political and economic analysis and where the hopefulness of independence had been deferred and betrayed time and again. 'Colonialism of a special type' in southern Africa had not only thrown up formidable tasks for independence movements coming to power (ANC 1977; Saul 1986: 10–12), but also provided the region with a generation of liberation fighters well versed in engaging with colonial power, most importantly the economic and social structures erected to dominate and exploit Africans in their very midst.[1] In that sense, the struggle with this special type of colonialism produced a more particularly sophisticated civil society and leadership cadre among the oppressed than existed elsewhere on the continent, as well as arguably more skilful means of domination and exploitation on the part of the region's white regimes.

Southern Africa was, and continues to be, the most Westernized and modernized region in sub-Saharan Africa. Economic infrastructure and sophistication of political organizations were superior to what had developed during the colonial era elsewhere on the continent. A vibrant civil society emerged in South Africa with the African National Congress's (ANC) and its affiliates' near-century-long struggle against oppression, and structures of opposition proliferated and gained in sophistication and experience following the 1970s wave of strikes and the emerging global anti-apartheid movement during the 1980s. In Zimbabwe, independence ushered in an era of expanded education and health provision, as well as a renewed civil society activism. Such developments coexisted increasingly uneasily with a government veering from its revolutionary commitments to the people towards desperate attempts at reconciling

demands of local and global capital with a burgeoning neo-patrimonial system of governance, leading eventually to the complete breakdown of democracy that fuels the current crisis. In Botswana, largely bypassed by the modernization transforming its larger neighbours, albeit integrated into the regional apartheid system as a labour reserve for South African farms and mines (Harvey and Lewis 1990: 36), a quasi-traditional yet in some aspects highly modernist post-independence dispensation managed to achieve impressive levels of economic growth and infrastructural development in the 1970s and 1980s, earning it the label Africa's 'miracle' (Samatar 1999).

The initial hopefulness about a post-colonial southern Africa produced a wealth of literature analysing the region's historical legacy, most notably that of European settler colonialism, industrialization and the creation of segregated and deeply divided societies. Liberal and socialist accounts alike offered insights into the dynamics of southern African societies, identified their particular problems and offered solutions that new governments with a democratic mandate would be able to pursue and implement. It is this literature, in particular that which broadly may be labelled the political economy of development, and the broad regional trajectories in southern Africa since the transitions from colonial rule, which are examined and assessed here with the aim of better understanding whether alternatives to the modern development paradigm could genuinely be pursued given contemporary social, political and economic imperatives circumscribing the room for manoeuvre of both states and civil societies.

The argument in brief

The key argument of this book is that a rethinking of the political economy of development, which crucially includes a renewed examination of post-development perspectives on southern Africa's future, offers the best opportunity to transcend the current developmental impasse where orthodox strategies for socio-economic development have failed spectacularly, both those strategies relying on the pursuit of a developmental state, *à la étatisme*, and those relying on neoliberal reforms to achieve development via the market-oriented route.

A comparative case study of post-transition reforms and trajectories in Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa provides three variations on the theme of failure, i.e. the denouement of attempts to overcome a debilitating colonial legacy. Shared regional experiences of settler-dominated colonialism culminating in a regional apartheid system make these

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former British territories and colonies ideal for comparison (see du Toit 1995: 4–14). High hopes for the future were to a greater degree than else-where in Africa readily apparent in all three countries in the time period immediately preceding and following independence: in Botswana owing to a peaceful transition and plentiful natural resource wealth wisely man-aged; in Zimbabwe owing to a relatively modern economy and expanding health and educational programmes in the early independence years; and in South Africa owing to a modern economy and infrastructure, along with a history (albeit racially circumscribed) of parliamentary democracy and an active civil society. Initial promise did not, however, lead to envi-sioned socio-economic transformations. In all three countries, transitions to democracy and a range of development programmes have failed to break the stranglehold imposed on poor people by structural inequalities inherited from previous regimes. Nor have development strategies been able to address key problems of societal and cultural disruption that follow from conventional development thinking and policies. Given these three cases of fundamentally disappointing and untenable outcomes, the modernist development paradigm, which has dominated political and economic thinking since the Industrial Revolution, has effectively been exhausted. Hence the urgent need for alternatives.

The arguments put forth herein pose a fundamental challenge to influential scholarship on the political economy of development which re-mains wedded to a narrower vision of what development entails and what kind of political and economic institutional configurations are likely to promote such development (e.g. Englebert 2000; van de Walle 2001; Moss 2007). Dominant visions of development remain dependent on accom-modation of global and local market forces, often within the confines of a 'thin' liberal and procedural democracy in order to pursue growth and accumulation more efficiently, with the assumption that greater genera-tion of wealth will result in alleviation of poverty and increased well-being (Easterly 2001; Mistry 2004). While the importance of critical analysis and interventionist strategies in producing societies that are socially inclusive and sustainable is acknowledged with increasing frequency (e.g. Rapley 2002; J. D. Sachs 2005), there are no examples of systematic attempts to combine research on the political economy of developing countries with the genuinely critical development studies literature, most obviously that of post-development theory. Thus, the comparative analysis in this study of southern Africa's political economy in a heterodox development studies context brings attention to a neglected interface between politics and economy, as well as culture and ideology.

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Three core theses inform the analysis of southern Africa's developmental dilemma to be developed in ensuing chapters. They are as follows:

1 A *communal* effort at reinventing, or reimagining, societal goals and aspirations – distinguishing novel considerations of development, and beyond, from previous scholarly work based on narrow assumptions of growth and accumulation (see Andreasson 2005b) – is necessary for any fundamental socio-economic transformation to occur. A political economy approach alone does not allow for this reinventing; hence the need for a conscious engagement with core tenets of post-development theorizing.

2 Two types of *alienation* central to human existence in late modernity must be resolved in order to move beyond development as conventionally understood. The first type is alienation of mankind from nature, which is introduced in the Western tradition with the Book of Genesis as it is commonly if not necessarily correctly interpreted and later, following what Parfitt (2002: 14–15) describes as the 'desacralisation' of nature, in the works of Bacon and Descartes. The second type is the alienation of human beings from each other, which is symptomatic of liberalism and social Darwinism and which runs counter to a communitarian understanding of human nature, including that embodied in the traditional African philosophy of *ubuntu* – an African humanism emphasizing empathy, understanding, reciprocity, harmony and cooperation (E. D. Prinsloo 1998: 42). An underlying assumption here is that a genuinely holistic perspective on development depends on an essentially communitarian view of human nature and relations. It is primarily with the second, societal, form of alienation that this study is concerned, as overcoming such alienation is a necessary precondition for anchoring any move beyond development in societal structures reflecting an African post-colonial order.

3 The theses put forth in (1) and (2) are grounded in the hypothesis that modern civilization, as it has developed and exists today, is not compatible with genuinely broad-based and sustainable development for humanity as a whole as it has been envisioned by orthodox approaches to the subject (Rist 2002). This is the core assumption on which relies the argument to be developed herein.

It is essential to note at the outset that the approach pursued in developing the central theses and arguments in this book does not sever itself from the historical context of a critical political economy. Nor does the present approach amount to merely yet another post-development

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critique of modernity and orthodox political economy. Rather, the central criticism put forth echoes Parfitt's (2002: 6) argument, *pace* Derrida, that any attempt at a 'complete definition' of development – i.e. what it *is* and how it can be achieved, and, therefore, how it ought to be pursued – 'is bound to fail since it will inevitably omit and repress projects that may legitimately be identified as falling within the ambit of development'. Any new approach attempting to overcome the developmental impasse is necessarily open-ended, with no teleological assumptions being made about an end stage towards which development must move and against which 'success' must be measured. This approach, then, does not constitute a rejection of all conceivable forms of development, but is rather a caution against hubris of both the intellectual kind displayed in a variety of modernization accounts, such as Rostow's (1960) stages of development and the many subsequent accounts of development that they inspired, and of the managerial kind commonplace to policies of governments and international organizations such as the World Bank. Most importantly, this caution regarding the orthodox pursuit of development, at both theoretical and practical levels, does not preclude an active engagement between the insights of mainstream political economy and post-development thinking that combine to form the context in which a search for emancipatory politics oscillates between the strictures of modernity and the potentialities of post-development.

How, then, can this proposed analysis be most effectively pursued, given the theoretical material and empirical evidence already available? First, the post-development theorizing of the 1980s and 1990s constitutes a useful tool for a new approach to development by acting as an ideational springboard for moving 'beyond development' in a way that is novel yet reconnects with traditional insights of critical, and per definition inherently historicist, approaches to political economy. An idealist element is integral to the approach developed here, as it is necessary to avoid simply producing yet another blueprint for development (considering the great volume of contributions already to that aspect of development studies), but to instead engage in some detail with why a move beyond development is necessary in the first place and on what ideational grounds such a move could be contemplated and justified. To accomplish this, the goals and aspirations of those who have traditionally taken an interest in development are redefined, and indeed reimagined, to approximate the more general aspirations of key thinkers associated with the post-development tradition. These aspirations revolve around the concepts of emancipation, the restoration of individual dignity in the context of

indigenous cultural values and the casting of development as a genuinely holistic process including material as well as ideal/spiritual aspects. Identifying these aspirations makes it possible to apply a political economy analysis to concrete empirical situations (in this case southern Africa), thus better understanding the possibility of moving from the 'here' (the current developmental impasse) to 'there' (transformation of society and a move beyond development) while at the same time being conscious of not reproducing problematic linear assumptions of progress that underpin orthodox development thinking.

Outline of the book

The crucial problem that remains following decades of theorizing, strategizing and prescribing development is that 'new' thinking on development is based on mere tinkering with existing models (whether state-led or market-driven) rather than an exploration of genuinely novel alternatives that recognize paradoxes inherent in the concept of development, as well as the formidable constraints on pursuing alternatives posed by the region's capitalist economies and their linkages to vested interests in the global arena. It is therefore necessary to resuscitate and re-examine radical alternatives to conventional development. Research on such alternatives, falling under the post-development rubric (e.g. Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Munck and O'Hearn 1999), provides a useful source for finding workable substitutes to development as well as a basis for a new South–South dialogue about what kind of societies peoples across the global South may wish to create.

To that end, the first section of this book examines changes in the nature of a 'developmental nexus' of state–market–society relations in post-colonial southern Africa and how regional political and economic dynamics affect prospects for socio-economic transformation. It is argued that the political economy of development must be reconceptualized so that key tenets of post-development thinking can be accommodated. These tenets are: first, the importance of including marginalized peoples, and *their own* particular ways of thinking and living, in decisions affecting their future; second, a holistic conceptualization of social harmony and well-being that does not separate cultural, spiritual and ecological facets of development from economic and political ones; and, third, a rejection of the modernist notion that 'becoming developed' must be based on material values manifested in ever-increasing exploitation of natural and human resources, economic growth, material accumulation and mass consumption. Translating these post-development ideas into

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actual politics, producing a clear break with the modern development project, would constitute one conceivable path towards transformation and a sustainable future – the potential for such a future being the main issue under consideration and investigation here. Without such a transformation, which has not so far been achieved in the post-colonial world, there can no longer be genuine and lasting improvement to human and natural well-being.

Chapter 1 introduces the central developmental dilemma in southern Africa: how generations of uneven development, symptomatic of the region's historical evolution and its evolving political economy, combined with the increasingly competitive global economy and its attendant strictures of neoliberal economic reform, produce converging pressures on states and peoples. These pressures make it very difficult for the 'targets of development' to formulate and advocate independent strategies that are suited to their own particular needs. This environment does not encourage serious consideration of issues such as social harmony and the importance of belonging, nor of other aspects of acceptable living conditions not easily incorporated in traditional accounts of development. It is argued that the continued social, political and economic marginalization of peoples in southern Africa and their indigenous sources of knowledge and legitimacy explain why political transitions to independence and nominal democracy have not produced radical socio-economic transformations.

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of a 'developmental nexus', a site of political action where state, market and societal actors converge and interact to produce policies aimed at socio-economic development and where, in the end, a conceptual transformation of these actors' understanding of what development actually consists of – what development *is* – must occur. Traditionally this nexus has been understood as the institutional location – e.g. a corporatist forum such as South Africa's National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) – where states, businesses and organized labour make decisions on economic policies and development strategies. Underhill and Zhang's (2005) conceptual innovation, the 'state–market condominium', is elaborated on and engaged with in the post-colonial context of southern Africa's developing countries. Understanding why the traditional pursuit of development within this nexus has not produced broad-based and sustainable development in Africa becomes the starting point for thinking 'beyond development'. Analysing this nexus suggests that all actors involved must rethink relations with each other and the ends pursued in shaping policy. The failure of

development strategies in southern Africa offers these actors an excellent reason and opportunity for doing so. Only when the developmental nexus becomes securely anchored in a deeper indigenous epistemology, manifested in the communal concept of *ubuntu*, can it exercise a legitimate, broadly democratic and therefore sustainable influence beyond that of the narrow 'utility' of existing corporatist arrangements. This anchoring is ultimately how the elusive developmental nexus can be transformed and thereby able to incorporate a post-development critique of the foundering mainstream development project. This constitutes the conceptual and theoretical framework within which the case studies are evaluated, emphasizing the origins and nature of capitalist relations in southern Africa, the defining characteristics of these relations and how both these relations and the actors involved have changed over time following the granting of independence in Botswana, the war of liberation in Zimbabwe and a negotiated transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa.

To combat the pervasive 'Afro-pessimism' resulting from disappointing conclusions regarding prospects for development in Africa, and from Africa's perceived difficulties negotiating what is conventionally understood as the complexities and inherent stresses of modernity, Chapter 3 articulates a new vision by which developing countries can transcend current predicaments. This vision builds on path-breaking work by post-development theorists (e.g. W. Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Esteva and Prakash 1998), as well as work on post-development theorizing in the African context (Matthews 2004). By engaging with criticisms of the radical stipulations of post-development theory (e.g. Hettne 1995; Corbridge 1998; Pieterse 1998, 2000), and analysis of the post-colonial approach more generally (Abrahamsen 2003), it is argued that a post-development vision offers the global South genuinely new means to reclaim indigenous knowledge, ways of thinking and being, for purposes of pursuing an emancipatory politics radically different from past attempts at development – thereby also taking seriously the many exhortations to inclusiveness, respect for tradition and sustainability that are increasingly prominent in development blueprints emanating from Western governments and international organizations. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how post-development thinking can form the basis for a new dialogue among countries in the global South on how to pursue a worthy way of living, free from imposition of a (Western) modernization paradigm that, in both its traditional liberal and socialist variants, has for too long constrained thinking on development and progress. This new dialogue will leave old debates on how to best import Western 'success'

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into Africa aside and instead consider how unique characteristics of southern African societies can be turned into strengths on which alternatives to development can be built.

Three case studies constitute a second, empirical section of the book and highlight different aspects of the region's developmental trajectories. These case studies examine what sociocultural and political foundations exist in the region, upon which a post-development vision of well-being can be based, by examining relations between states, markets and civil societies in the historical context of a regional apartheid system and in the theoretical context of the flawed ideological prescriptions of the post-Second World War 'Era of Development' (see Rist 2002). The end result, in terms of theoretical contribution, is a synthesis of the political economy and development literatures as they relate to southern Africa (and the global South more generally). This synthesis moves beyond orthodox accounts of how to find optimal arrangements of productive forces geared towards growth-led development by also accounting for non-economic aspects of development. Informed by post-development theory, this perspective does not abandon all traditional concerns of mainstream political economy but recognizes that existing actors and institutions must be transformed to work for different purposes: i.e. if states and markets are to remain relevant, they must support rather than direct societal needs. On this theoretical and empirical basis, possibilities for thinking 'beyond development' are identified.

Chapter 4 examines competing claims about Botswana being either Africa's premier developmental state (Samatar 1999) or an initially successful democracy where serious shortcomings in terms of democratic governance, the persistence of socio-economic inequalities and lack of economic and social diversification have mounted to dangerous proportions (Good 2002; I. Taylor 2003). The ultimate 'verdict' on Botswana is important, because it is the one African country that has been held up as evidence of an ability to pursue development in Africa via traditional means of export-led growth and orthodox development policies. Botswana's impressive record of economic growth and political stability is scrutinized in light of its continued reliance on a paternalistic form of democratic governance that encourages deference and passivity among its citizens and a developmental policy-making that remains too dependent on exploitation of natural resources. It is argued that Botswana's government finds it increasingly difficult to resist authoritarian ways of dealing with dissent, and that persistent attempts at co-optation of policy-makers by business are eroding state autonomy and the ability to consistently