

Contemporary statecraft for sustained and 'sustainable' growth

Firoz Khan

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*To walk questioningly and to make the road while walking*¹

Abstract

Focusing on state structure and behaviour, the 'good governance' agenda, political settlement, and the current path, this article describes and elaborates – in a problematic manner – the hurdles we will encounter in simultaneously walking and making the road of state construction that is messy, complex and replete with contradictions. Some implications for planning are outlined related to issues of governance and working with clientelism and patronage as enablers and contributors to growth rather than pathologies to be 'corrected by administrative reforms'. Whether we can carry through and successfully deliver socially inclusive and empowering developmental programmes and projects hinges on understanding and negotiating social change and transformation.

HEDEENDAAGSE STAATKUNDE VIR VOLGEHOUE EN 'VOLHOUBARE' GROEI

Met 'n fokus op die gedrag van die staat, die 'goeie regering' agenda, politieke skikking, en die huidige koers, beskryf hierdie artikel uitvoerig – en op 'n problematiese wyse – die hindernisse wat ons sal teëkom terwyl ons meedoen aan die slordige, komplekse en teenstrydigde proses van tersyldertyd die pad van staatskonstruksie maak en bewandel. Etlke implikasies vir beplanning en met verwysing tot staatsbestuur, wat saamwerk met klientisme en begunstiging as bemagtigers en meewerkers tot groei, in plaas van 'n patologie wat reggestel moet word deur administratiewe hervorming, word geskets. Die deurvoer en suksesvolle lewering van sosiaal inklusiewe en bemagtigende ontwikkelingsprogramme en projekte sal afhang van ons begrip van sosiale verandering en transformasie en hoe ons daarmee handel.

MEKHOA YA SEJOALE-JOALE E MMUSO E LEBELLANG HO E SEBEDISA HO ETSA TSWELOPELE E HOLE

Boitshoaro le mekhoe e mmuso e sebetsang ka teng, ntlheng ya 'puso e nepahetseng' (good governance); meaho ya dipolotiki le tsela e se ntse nkua ke mmuso ke se tlo shebua ka leihlo le hloahloa serapeng sena. Morero oa serapa sena ke ho hlalosa le ho hlalosa ka tsela ea ho bontsa bothata. Mathata ao re tla kopana le ona a tla ba mangata a ba hanane. Tlhahiso tse ling tsa merero ea metse e meholo le detereke ke ho amanya mmuso hore o sebetsane le sechaba hore se khone ho kenyelletsa selo ba khonang tabeng ea khuliso ea baka sa sona ntle le hore mmuso o se ke oa ba nkela hloohong ebe o bona diithlahiso tsa sechaba di hloka ho tshoaua. Ho atleha morerong oa ho phethahatsa dipheo tsa tswelopele tse nepahetseng, ho itswela ho kutloisiso le dipuisano le sechaba ka phetoho.

1. INTRODUCTION

How does one redirect and transform the forces and vectors of an oppressive enduring present past and productively reconcile and align minority and majority aspirations? How does one 'unfix' the fixed elite images of countries and cities and sugar the alternative bitter pill for elite consumption? How does one achieve all of this amid crises in the material and ideational processes and structures of our world?

In full recognition of the fact that contemporary statecraft and the construction of a developmental state is a fuzzy, messy and unpredictable business, this article

is a first attempt in an ongoing negotiation between "what is" – and the "regulating fictions" (Roy, 2009: 820) and fabrications that dictate what the future "must" and "can only be" – versus imagining empowering tomorrows based on the "what ifs ..." of today (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2010: ix). Put plainly, the current dominant nostrums and prescriptions informing 'sound' statecraft – 'good governance', 'failing and fragile states', the 'big' or 'new' society' agendas – deny admission and negotiation of developing country realities manifested in the un/making of institutions and social orders; the inordinate weight of culture, clientelism and patronage in social structures, politics and institutions, and the carrying forward of (unruly) rupture(s) into the postcolonial social order.

The recording and decoding of 'facts', events and history – and their transmitted interpretations – are closely tied to serving power and its subsequent embedding in the consciousness of past and present generations. This 'mental make-up' – history teaches – is to a great degree about elite 'perception' (or prejudice) masquerading as the 'real', which

... may be quite far removed from the reality of the past, but it is the reality of the present, and thus influences the response and groups of individuals ... None of this is to suggest that history is destiny. Policy makers do not have to be prisoners of the past, at least the past as embedded in the perceptions of the present generation. But they cannot ignore it either. At the very least they have to know what these perceptions are – this is just prudent description of the reality onto which the policy intervention will be implemented. But they must go further. If they are to overcome the weight of the past, they have to understand why the population and the polity have these perceptions of this or that policy. What was the process that led to their embedding ... It is only with this knowledge, knowledge that only the

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disciplined study of history in its various facets (political, social, intellectual, cultural) can provide, that they can address the constraints, or the opportunities, that history presents to them for the policy question at hand (Kanbur, 2008: 4-5).

It is not possible, within the constraints of this article, to immerse oneself in an intensive deconstruction and/or disembedding exercise proposed by Kanbur. It is, for this reason, why this short contribution will be accused, and reasonably so, of peddling many simplistic nostrums of dubious merit. Risking this, the purpose of this article is to describe and elaborate – in a problematic manner – the hurdles to be encountered in simultaneously walking and making the road.

2. STATE STRUCTURE AND BEHAVIOUR

It is not controversial to posit that the culture of domination and control inheres in the economic and political institutions of many postcolonial states (see Umeh & Andranovich, 2005: 153). The reasons are numerous, but critical are “processes of mimicry and normative pressures” associated with “institutional isomorphism”, whereby “organisations seek legitimacy by adopting what they understand to be the successful practices of other organisations, and therefore come to resemble each other over time” (Klug, 2000: 5). More pointedly, they identify “mimetic, coercive and normative isomorphisms as different processes through which th[e] transfer of ideas, practices and understandings take place” (Klug, 2000: 5) that in the long run postpone “decisions on sensitive and potentially unresolvable questions” (Klug, 2000: 18), thereby serving to pragmatically (opportunistically) delimit the terrain and field of politics, economy and statecraft. Predictably, with respect to the “structure and behaviour of the [modern] state” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 192), revolutionary leaders have come to realise that they “cannot merely wave a magic wand labelled ‘authority’ and create stable state institutions” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 194). These have to be “crafted from resources at hand” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 193) and mindful of national and international contexts and pressures. But what are these resources, and how to simultaneously resist the temptations and seductions of isomorphism?

Discernible in the long march of history is that of all the major social revolutions (from France in 1789 to Nicaragua and Iran in 1979), “none except for France (1789) has yet produced a fully modern state with both high levels of infrastructural power and low levels of despotic power – and it took France well over a hundred years ... to do so” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 208, original emphasis). Once again, reasons abound for this, including palace politics, the power and influence of old and emerging elites, the level of the country’s development, and the external environment. But more telling is that consolidation of the modern state form (with reference, in this instance, to the European states) was a “development that took close to a millennium to play itself out” (Rueschemeyer, 2005: 144).

Globally, the evolution of state designs, and their diffusion and implementation, has been a “very slow process” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 206) and took centuries, commencing from the Gregorian reforms of the Catholic Church in the eleventh century and the “attendant revival of Roman law” (Rueschemeyer, 2005: 144). However, this model of hierarchical meritocratic bureaucracy and Roman canon law “remained confounded with continued patrimonial/aristocratic authority throughout Europe” until the early nineteenth century (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 206). Confounding matters further was the ascendancy of “church-trained administrators and their hierarchical bureaucratic vision of state structures in secular states” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 206) accompanied by a “decline in the role of democratic or republican institutions that had developed from medieval city councils, provincial self-governance, and the rulers’ counselors” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 207).

From the suppression of the *Comuneros* in Spain, to the lassitude of the French provincial Estates and Estates-General, to the Prussian suppression of the Estates in western Germany, to the efforts of Charles I and James II to rule without Parliament or subordinate it to royal will, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the spread of models of ‘enlightened absolutism’ as the ideal for efficient and rational governance ... [W]hile efforts to rebuild states along constitutional lines spread throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ... such efforts faced entrenched opposition from both landed and military elites

... Thus by the 1950s, although the number of states operating as hereditary monarchies had dwindled to a handful, relatively few states had built effective republican/democratic states. Instead the majority of world’s states were constructed as military or civilian dictatorships, or according to a new, twentieth-century design – the one-party state, in which a modern efficient hierarchical bureaucracy implemented the plans of an exclusive political elite organised as a ‘party’ or corporate body (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 207).

To summarise, historical records reveal that building an effective state is an incremental and slow process. Demonstrated also is that because the old regimes (institutions and elites) pose the “greatest obstacles to revolutionary state building” (Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 202), but simultaneously furnish the resources for state building, the

... normative and institutional transformations in society and in state-society relations are ultimately far more important for effective action than overcoming opposition to the development of an effective state and the expansion of its scope and action (Rueschemeyer, 2005: 153).

On the other hand, the pressures and strains of institutional isomorphism – “new/old” and “old/new” elites, the relative underdevelopment of the “material idea of the *regstaat*/just state” (Strauss, 2007: 63, original emphasis) (versus the secularisation of the biblical motives of freedom), and the authoritarian antecedents of old and new statecraft (Catholic Church hierarchies/meritocracy and patrimonialism whipped together with varying dollops of republicanism and/or civilian/military dictatorships and/or one-party states) – collectively shine the torch on why, both here and elsewhere, there is enormous continuity in discontinuity with respect to our inability to elaborate democratically responsive governance frameworks, (state) corporate coherence and cohesive state-civil society relations.

Without the painting of this historical and cognitive canvas, is it any small wonder why we are hamstrung in explaining and rationalising effective developmental statecraft of the old and modern type, i.e. bad governance, authoritarianism, technocratic rule, centralisation of power, coercion, unsavoury (and often downright corrupt) relationships between public

and private sector elites, rent-seeking, bad institutional design, 'getting the prices wrong', hybrid service delivery institutional production regimes, and so forth. Indeed, a multitude of cases explored by world-renowned sociologists, political scientists and economists consistently and repeatedly demonstrate that "the construction of the developmental state is a deliberate, messy and complex affair" (Noman & Stiglitz, 2012: 34) and that "if developmentalism of a progressive kind is not messy and conflict-ridden, it is probably not happening at all" (Mackintosh, 1993: 49).

Greater appreciation of the historical antecedents of contemporary statecraft may assist in viewing "more macroscopically ... the ways in which the structures and activities of states unintentionally influence the formation of groups and the political capacities, ideas, and demands of various sectors of society" (Skocpol, 1985, cited in Lange & Rueschemeyer, 2005: 242). Hence, if the historical record shows that effective and "rapid post-revolutionary state building requires [among others] ... the removal of entrenched elites" (Lange & Rueschemeyer, 2005: 252) or the regulation and/or redirection of capital and/or the restructuring of socio-economic power blocs, the dynamics of contemporary capitalism and the linked modalities of governmentality present huge problems. With reference to the dynamics, the central components of the present restoration and reconstitution of ruling-class power resides in, among others, a re-energised strategy of "accumulation by [rapacious] dispossession" (see Harvey, 2007: 116), the maintenance and protection of asymmetric economic relations, and heterodox economic refutation strategies at the apex but imposition of orthodox austerity on the rest (a case of 'do what we tell you to do and not [emulate] what we do!'). Uneven in scope and spread, this reconstitution and restoration is bolted together by state technologies and techniques that are extremely thin on democracy ('low intensity' democracy); insulates policies, politics and politicians from social

pressure; lies and deceives the citizenry, and centralises political (executive) power (see Leys, 2006). These technologies and techniques are the "necessary" (not peripheral) "conditions of neoliberal democracy" (Leys, 2006: 3).

However, to simply close the book on the potential for transformative post-revolutionary state [re-]construction by endless carping about historical constraints and internal and external pressures is to dismiss the "unintended consequences of state structures" (Lange & Rueschemeyer, 2005: 242) and state design. Paradoxically, the "removal of opposition and political control" of the subaltern in neoconservative/neoliberal constitutional democracies and one-party "end of history" state formats does, in the longer term, "limit [their] effectiveness, stability [and] durability [as they lack the] reciprocity through which states are guided and disciplined" (Lange & Rueschemeyer, 2005: 252-254).² Thus, the more a ruling regime centralises power, erodes and undermines autonomous (sub-) authorities, and "stifles civil society" (Lange & Rueschemeyer, 2005: 252), the "easier is yo build a powerful revolutionary state" (see Becker & Goldstone, 2005: 202) – and perhaps more controversially, alternative global futures.

3. 'GOOD', 'GOOD ENOUGH' AND 'BAD' GOVERNANCE: DILEMMAS AND DEBATES

Institutional design and crafting profoundly influence and impact the generation and distribution of "returns" to various segments and portions of society (see Evans, 2002: 101-102). This, in turn, determines the pace and type of economic growth (rather than the other way around) (see Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002; Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2005). In retrospect, if the institution is the 'goose' and the economy the 'egg', the close relationship/affinity between the 'good governance' agenda – the institutional and political flipside of the Washington Consensus – and structural adjustment

is eminently and inherently logical/sensible.

The 'good governance' agenda – whose provenance derives from the 1980s shift in the developed world from public administration to "new public management" (Turner & Hulme, 1997: 230) – pivots on accountability, the rule of law, predictability and stability for the private sector, and transparency (equated to sound development management). Drawing inspiration from the minimalist state, private sector management techniques and non-market distorting market-incentive regimes, this governance orientation signals the

... emergence of a kind of 'economic constitutionalism' [3] which endeavours to place certain market regulatory institutions [such as central banks, competition commissions and state auditing watchdogs] beyond the reach of transitory political majorities or the actions of the political executive through mechanisms that provide for a high degree of autonomy for these institutions (Jayasuriya, 2001: 110).

Economic constitutionalism (arguably both consubstantial and/or constitutive of 'good governance') and the other strictures of 'good governance' (plus representative democracy) – a clean and efficient bureaucracy and judiciary; protection of property rights, contracts and patents; good corporate governance institutions; an independent central bank; and so on – now deemed as necessary conditions for development and imposed on developing countries – were the outcome rather than the cause of economic development in the now-developed countries (Chang, 2002). Chang (2002) empirically demonstrates that until 1913 – and even beyond – universal suffrage and secret balloting in many of today's developed countries was a novelty; there was widespread nepotism and corruption in the public sector; corporate governance institutions fell miserably short of modern standards; competition law was non-existent; banking regulation was underdeveloped or patchy; insider trading and stock price manipulation

2 It is worth a reminder, in this instance, that governance is a product of interactions between state and non-state actors. This interaction produces political compromises on how a country and its resources are mobilised, distributed and managed on a collective basis (see Bhargava, 2011).

3 Economic constitutionalism treats the market as a "constitutional order with its own rules, procedures and institutions that operate to protect the market order from political interference" (Jayasuriya, 2001: 121).

4 An independent central bank rips the heart out of the development state through removing the power and capacity of "central economic agencies" to direct the kind of industrial policies that were a marked feature of these states. The shift of power away from technocratic economic agencies to independent central banks effectively erodes the close political relationship or bargaining between state and business that informed the operations of core state developmental agencies (Jayasuriya, 2001: 188).

was common; income tax was not even in its infancy; labour legislation regarding working hours, occupational safety, child and female labour standards were low, coverage limited and enforcement poor. Worded differently, the current demand that developing countries should (immediately) adopt world-class institutions or face punishment is at odds with historical experience of the developed countries. More intriguing is Chang's (2002) finding that developed countries were institutionally much less advanced in those times than the currently developing countries at similar stages of development.⁵ Paradoxically then, it might be said that today's under-developed countries of the world are, perhaps, institutionally over-developed. The maintenance of this 'over-developed' institutional infrastructure may be responsible for diverting scarce resources away from desperately needed investment in poverty eradication and human development, harmful to equitable development, and contributing to their enslavement to the powerful of this world.

One could continue with these comparisons, but suffice it to say that in their early days of economic development, the now developed countries operated with crude and unsophisticated institutional structures versus those in today's developing countries at comparable levels of development. Their democratic credentials referenced to representative democracy and 'good governance' (especially state-business relations) were also extremely suspect and unsavoury. In the so-called developmental states of East Asia, for example, a significant component of their success resided in a unique combination of close government ties with business, clientelism and bureaucratic insulation – termed 'embedded autonomy'⁶ in the literature. Similar practices in Africa are slated as 'state capture', corruption and patronage – fundamentally at odds with World Bank notions of 'good governance' (Mkandawire, 2001).

Stein (2000: 9) states that it is "doubtful" whether accountability, transparency

and the rule of law will produce vibrant economies in the developing world. This follows "the general neoclassical notion of institutional neutrality ... that will permit an unimpeded space for optimal private decision making".

In the developmental states, rents created and allocated by the state – wherein higher than expected profits are provided to the private sector in return for investment and production in economically targeted activities – played a crucial role in the development of a capitalist class and robust accumulation. In the words of Amsden (1997: 469), the development of dynamic productive capacity and processes entailed the deliberate creation of "distortions" in the form of firm-specific skills, knowledge-based monopolies and other types of entry barriers. Government's role revolved around "joining" with the private sector to "socially construct competitive assets" (resources, capabilities and organisations) versus creating "perfect" markets.

To construct socially those competitive assets for production purposes, governments have rigged key exchange prices, such as the price of foreign currency, credit, and labour (by weakening its bargaining power); that is they have deliberately got relative prices wrong (Amsden, 1997: 471).

Accordingly, the system of contingent rents in the developmental states was effective on account of them being extended in response to activities deemed to serve the national interest; rent-seeking costs (information collection, influence peddling and bargaining) were kept low; governments closed off non-productive avenues for wealth accumulation such as real-estate speculation (critical to the success of many housing programmes alongside the successful capture of increments in urban land development/development gains); rents were provided on a selective and temporary basis and withdrawn as new industries matured enough to compete globally, and strict performance standards were enforced (Akuyz, 1996, cited in Stein,

2000: 18). (This is a far cry from many of the present-day supply-side industrial incentive schemes and regimes). The point of the Asian experience, remarks Mkandawire (1998: 13)

... is that the use of 'rent seeking' as an argument against a more active developmental state is simply not credible. The relevant issues are 'rents' for whom and with what reciprocal obligations for receivers of rents? And the answer lies in the desired income distribution and strategy of development. The denial of an active developmental state for fear of 'capture' is tantamount to the denial of the possibilities in Africa of accelerated development achieved by a deliberate 'government of the market' towards greater mobilisation and developmental allocation of resources (including rents). In the African debates, the fear of the damaging effects of rent seeking has not only sustained the argument for a minimalist state, but has also given the foreign experts, who for inexplicable reasons do not engage in rent seeking like all other mortal beings, a moral upper hand.

If case studies demonstrate that the 'good governance' agenda "fatally damages the possibility of creating [and sustaining] a developmental transformation state" (Khan, 2004: 188), it has to battle with the contemporary status quo-oriented regimes of knowledge production that elevates modelling, mathematisation and high-order generalisations (see Buroway, 2005). Undergirded by an 'epistemology of certainty', the conservatives push and underwrite an economy of knowledge that "speaks closure, recognisable answers, simple conclusions and certainties" (see Shepherd, 2010: online). Cause and effect relationships are often confused, and neat correlations, despite evidence to the contrary, are posited between growth and equality; redistribution and growth; democracy and growth; corruption and poor growth; regime type and growth; governance and poverty alleviation; decentralisation and poverty-eradication. These become enshrined

5 The now developed countries had relatively low levels of institutional development compared to the developing countries of today at comparable levels of development (especially per capita income). For instance, the United Kingdom of 1820 had only a slightly higher income than today's India, but the latter has universal suffrage (the UK did not, even at that time, have universal male suffrage), a central bank, income tax, bankruptcy laws, a professional bureaucracy, and labour legislation (see Chang, 2002).

6 Embedded autonomy arises from the fusion of seemingly contradictory characteristics.

Embeddedness provides sources of intelligence and channels of implementation that enhance the competence of the state. Autonomy complements embeddedness, protecting the state from piecemeal capture which would destroy the cohesiveness of the state itself and eventually undermine the coherence of its social interlocutors. The state's corporate coherence enhances the cohesiveness of external networks and helps groups that share its vision overcoming their own collective action problems (Evans, 1995: 248).

in a plethora of indicators and indices, which strive to measure many things in a single moment, but are incapable of telling the whole story (Sanin-Gutierrez, Buitrago & Gonzalez, 2013).

Discovering how policies influence behaviour and hence aggregate outcomes, exploring the conditions under which some reforms are most likely to give good results, and identifying effective ways to improve development outcomes require an understanding of the processes within which countries instrument policies, that is, their policymaking processes. It is essential that the policy process and the political process more broadly facilitate the agreement, design, and implementation of effective long-term policies (Tommasi, 2011: 199).

The imposition of "burdensome lists of 'things that must be done' before development" can proceed (Grindle, 2011: 205) produces an inordinate amount of white noise, detracting from approaches to governance and corruption reforms linked to development outcomes and the processes, agents and drivers of these. The question then becomes: What determines the ability of different societies to produce and implement effective policies? The answer is found in the distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is established and built, namely the political settlement.

4. POLITICAL SETTLEMENT: ELITES, POLITICAL PARTIES AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

Looking at political settlement focuses attention on intra-elite contention and bargaining (political versus economic elites, landed and non-landed elites, rural and urban, religious and secular, etc.), on contention and bargaining between elites and non-elites (either within groups or across them, as between classes), inter-group contention and bargaining (gender, regional, ethnic/linguistic, religious) and on contention and bargaining between those who occupy the

state and society more widely (Di John & Putzel, 2009: 4).

At the risk of over-generalising from the South African experience, the accumulation strategies of many African states – the mineral-rich ones, in particular – is based on an intertwining of state-orchestrated "outside in" (industrialisation by invitation) and state-facilitated conglomerate "inside out" globalisation (neoconservative adjustment strategies) (Carmody, 2002: 266). This gives rise to states that are embedded in global forces and negatively connected to (negative autonomy from) domestic social forces. Transnational capitalist business embeddedness, together with neoconservative dispositifs – self-styled doctrinaire abstractions of 'economic pragmatism', 'sound fundamentals', 'investor confidence', 'macroeconomic balance', and 'good governance' – often put paid to any drastic interference in property rights, financial markets and the socio-political distribution of power.

Secondly, as the state liberalises the economy to maintain the 'confidence' of international investors and uses the global market forces to discipline productive capital and labour, it undercuts the social foundations of a project of developmental state construction and intervention, i.e. the nurturing of a social class and domestic alliances with an interest in state building and vested with sufficient political power to undertake it. On the one hand, the sections of society (working class, informal economy and rural poor) with whom the state needs to align themselves for the purposes of building an assertive state have very little or nothing to gain from the exclusionary economic growth path and distribution patterns. On the other hand, there is little reason for the privileged to support efforts seeking to establish a strong redistributive state (Eriksen, 2005: 407).

Thirdly, with the elevation of supply-sided infrastructure and service-delivery regimes versus coproduction – exhibited in the design and execution of technocratic and authoritarian development policies, programmes and projects for the poor – and the 'exit' strategies of the elite (recalling, in this instance, Albert Hirschman's famous

tract on loyalty and exit) – the social distance between state and society, and rich and poor, function in ways to further entrench and solidify the fault lines of class, race, gender and exclusion. Atop all this is the party that deploys an arsenal of techniques and technologies of liberal governmentality that obliterates the public realm and accountability of the elite.⁸

Fourthly, at some distance from countries whose historical development evolution revolves on markets and capital accumulation regulated by bureaucracies in the national interest, those with enduring pre-industrial agricultural economic foundations and classless/egalitarian-type ethnic/kinship institutions present unique state construction and statecraft challenges. Politics in numerous North and Middle African countries is "personalised and based on coalitions of informal 'patron-client' political organisations, using organisational power to allocate rents" (Khan, 2011: 2). The imposition of colonial models of development, and their intermingling with these foundations and institutions generates complex and complicated patterns of conflict, competition and co-operation not easily contained in the shallow, institutionally monocropping tracts and strictures of 'good governance'.

It is not surprising that many productive articulations and hybridisations have occurred between colonial/liberal and pre-colonial associational and moral economies (Khan, 2011) based on treating "informality" not as "pathology", in other words, inimical to good governance and/or to be "corrected by administrative reforms" (Khan, 2011: 11). Under these conditions and circumstances, administrative efforts to render African governments more transparent often work against the grain of their societal patterns/practices of legitimacy, accountability, power and obligation, and are likely to have "limited success" (Kelsall, 2011: 232). Differently worded, the programmatic push to enhance transparency denies the reality that these practices/patterns

... must remain opaque because they are both necessary and illegal: necessary because politicians for reasons of traditional legitimacy must deliver

8 These include the professionalisation and/or the collapsing of party into state structures; the diminished influence over public policies and governing processes of the wider public and the increased use of special advisers with direct relationships to the highest offices of land; insulation and centralisation of decision-making at executive levels of state (especially central); the corresponding downgrading and displacement of the legislature and executive oversight; greater ministerial discretion and control over the formulation and implementation of official development interventions via the supplementing/replacement of cabinet-endorsed 'policy' by (secretive and/or restrictively circulated) 'frameworks'/'strategies' (Khan, 2010).

resources through personalised clientelistic networks, and illegal because they contravene an imported ideological, legal and governmental system founded on a strong separation between public and private that has never existed in Africa ... The lack of the fit between local culture and imported institutions consequently creates incentives for rule-breaking and opportunities for self-enrichment. What is more, the formal institutions of the state are working against the grain of society's more dynamic forces. At best, this may hold unmanageable centrifuges in check, but, more normally it puts a brake on society's energies, channels politics and administration into opacity and unpredictability, and makes trust impossible to attain (Kelsall, 2011: 232-233).

So what might working with the grain of viable governing and governance regimes entail? Drawing from the work of researchers connected to the Africa Power and Politics Programme,⁹ this includes refraining from imposing external behavioural models; complementing local understandings of power, authority and organisational modes; respecting traditional norms for selecting local leaders; harnessing the authority of local leaders that command/wield legitimacy and 'fitting institutions to realities of political legitimacy' at ground level. Acknowledging corruption and working with neo-patrimonialism and the political context, in which it is rooted and functions, requires an in-depth understanding of the multitude organisations and the functioning of clientelism and, most critically, their role (albeit not always) as enabler and contributor to 'sustained' and 'sustainable' economic growth and development.

5. THE CURRENT PATH

The 'End of History' triumphalism – culminating in the financial crisis of 2008/2009 – marked a significant turning point in the rethinking and remaking of national and global political economies. There is now widespread agreement, even in conservative circles, that the events of 2008/2009 herald an end to the "market state" or an end to a "market fundamentalism [that] abandoned the fundamentals of the market" (Blond, n.d.: 1, 3). Slowly and steadily replacing it is a "more balanced account of state versus market, global integration, and fiscal and monetary strategies" (Kanbur,

2009: 6). The post-crisis market re-embedding exercises and strategies, especially in the Americas and Europe, alert us to alternative/different pathways to economic development that were dismissed and vilified for a long time. Buttressing this are the success stories of India and China, who bucked the economic orthodoxies of the Anglo-Saxon growth model, and the post-structural adjustment stratagems of centre-left Latin American governments with their eclectic mix of orthodox and heterodox pro-growth (versus pro-market) interventions. Amazing about these newish and on-going policy reform initiatives are the diversities of the balances struck between state and economy, state and society, and national and global interests. In a context of a crisis of ideas, there have been democratic renewals in countries that one never thought possible, and innumerable – though dispersed and incoherent – radical development experiments in the poor slums, shantytowns and townships of the world, alongside the protests and rebellions "everywhere" else (*The Economist*, 2013b: 56).

The prospects and potentials afforded us by this conjuncture to remake the 'development' project, re-engineer governance regimes, and (re)-activate (a high-intensity) democracy impels us to open the eyes of our mind. Unlike the past, however, this type of political engagement is less about climbing or scaling the emancipatory peaks of the imaginaries of the new age-development thinkers. Politics, in this frame, is "not an event that happens once, a spectacular outburst of energy that overcomes the dark forces of oppression and lifts liberation into a superior state of perpetual triumph" (Farhi, 2003: 39). This politics is the "act of climbing, daily, tenaciously and incessantly" (Farhi, 2003: 39), advancing each day by a "millimetre, in the right direction" (late President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, 2004, cited in Swilling, Van Breda, Van Zyl & Khan, 2005: 1), and "centimetre" to "simply do what needs to be done" (ex-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, cited in Bearak, 2004: 3). It is important to bear in mind though that less significant in all these many contexts are the forms of (or the follies and foolishness of) brushing against the grain. More critically, "[i]t is hoped that the search for answers will yield insights into the problematic of

African development never considered before" (Kelsall, 2011: 245) or, to state it more forcefully, never permitted consideration by those in the development and academic community, who have for so long outlawed the political adultery, institutional promiscuity and institutional trespass/hybridisation that are both implicit and explicit in these (historically proven successful) unorthodox governance orientations and pathways.

With this uppermost in our minds, the questions before us are:

- For how long are we going to allow narcissistic, snake-oil salesmen to pedal their hope-stripping orthodox state reform and statecraft medicine that kills 'the patient'?
- For how long will we permit these charlatans, who are in the pay of the rich and powerful, and not ignorant of oppressive design, to continue administration of their vile and toxic medicine, which prematurely extinguishes (even) the possibility of installing and nurturing 'sustained' and 'sustainable' growth and development?
- For how long are we going to allow the neocons to continue to build a road on which we un/questioningly walk in the knowledge that it is a highway to lifelong misery and purgatory?

Recent uprisings and protests in societies ruled by democratic and undemocratic regimes (including those in the grip of economic crises and harsh austerity programmes) – Egypt, Tunisia, Spain, Greece and Brazil – might offer some clues to these questions. Many would no doubt contest the rebellions and revolts relaying clues as they are ideologically undefined and without clear strategies. Without doubt though is the message relayed to governors the world over: "[P]oliticians who want to peddle the same old stuff, the news is not good" (*The Economist*, 2013a: 34-35). This is because they originate in the unprecedented and profound degeneration of the core 'institutions' of our modern societies/'key components of our civilisation': representative government, the free market, the rule of law and civil society (see, for example, Ferguson, 2012; Harvey, 2012). What is distinctive about the protests is that "their organisers saw themselves as being part of the same global upsurge".

⁹ A consortium research programme, supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Irish Aid, for the benefit of developing countries. Richard Crook, David Booth and Goran Hyden are some of the luminaries associated with this project.

Placards in Madison paid homage to Tahrir Square and the activists in Occupy Wall Street took inspiration from Madison. What stood out the most was that, for the first time since the 1980s, social movements put the question of *capitalism* back on the political agenda (Panitch, Albo & Chibber, 2012: ix, original emphasis).

In Brazil, the scene of the most recent uprising, protestors took to the streets not only to express their dissatisfaction about education, health and transportation. Their outrage – including the hurling of Molotov cocktails at government offices – was directed at the skewed distribution of benefits from growth, a political system that favours the “powerful few” at the “expense of the many”, and “politicians who act *legally* on behalf of the powerful” (Teixeira & Baiocchi, 2013: online, emphasis added).

The degeneration of the core institutions of civilisation, the placing of 'capitalism' back on the agenda, revolts against the uneven distribution of resources (in New York, Brazil and South Africa), and the rejection of politicians and political systems that legally exclude the majority, should, at minimum, unsettle the narcissistic neocon charlatans or, at best, behead or depose them. Either way, the news of their fate will be welcome! We hope and pray that they are rewarded with a fate they richly deserve: damned to Hell!

6. CONCLUSION

This article is a modest contribution to growing scholarship registering profound disillusionment with the content and practical interventions of both aspirant and aspiring contemporary (transformative) state construction. There is no doubt that state construction is messy, complex and replete with contradictions. Disturbing though is how the technologies and strategies championed and advocated by those of mainstream orientations and schools come to be unquestioningly appropriated by ruling elites (worldwide) in spite of the overwhelming evidence of the damages and devastations wrought on institutions and societies, i.e. the agenda is out of kilter with reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment. Indeed, research shows that a great many of the orthodox stratagems, by omission and commission, design and default, frequently reduce the capacity and capabilities of the state to 'inter-vene' so as to further the demands and

priorities associated with the popular will. This article points to the need for us to work with the 'grain of African societies', which is of quintessential importance, given the limited resources, money, time, knowledge, and human and organisational capacities that we have at our disposal. There is an urgent need to begin searching for innovative ways to move towards better governance grounded in a critical analysis of our context, paying particular attention to the balance of social forces and the strength and agility of forces within and outside the state, and cobbling political settlements that manage the tensions between short-term losses and long-term gain; that is, containing social fallout from the inevitable winner-loser policy impact calculus. New and interesting vistas connected to pro-poor transformative statecraft are daily being prised open in other countries from which all of us can learn. A great many of them are anchored in historical record, democratic experimentation and 'less-than-heroic' versions of effecting and sustaining social and economic change/transformation.

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