



# Over 50 years of African statehood: Locating a new narrative for African development challenges



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**Background:** Africa remains one of the least developed continents in the world. What remains debatable is how countries on the continent find themselves in this situation after more than 50 years of independence for most of them.

**Aim:** This article attempts to join the debate on the crisis of development in Africa by first taking a clear departure from the common narrative of linking Africa's development challenges largely to exogenous factors. It critically examines how to build African states' capacity for development by first addressing prevailing politics of 'clientelism', 'prebendalism' and 'neo-patrimonialism' in Africa.

**Setting:** The article holds strongly that impacts of exogenous factors have been over-romanticised and therefore there is a need to take a deeper look at how most African countries at the moment find themselves in their precarious situation.

**Methods:** The study is qualitative in nature and relies on secondary sources of data.

**Results:** The article locates the crisis of development in Africa within the context of the failure of African states to intervene in the process of development, which incidentally is a product of the lack of commitment to development by African political elites as well as an absence of the capacity for development by techno-bureaucratic institutions.

**Conclusion:** The main ingredient in enhancing development of Africa is competent, meritocratic and 'result-oriented' techno-bureaucratic governance. Thus, for effective techno-bureaucratic governance that would generate development, commitment of state actors and capacity of the state itself are important.

**Keywords:** Leadership; corruption; statehood; development; technocrats.

## Introduction

*We have seen a Prince becoming a slave, and we have also seen a slave becoming wealthy.*  
(Anonymous African Proverb)

Africa is both the birthplace of humankind and the cradle of civilisation. It is also endowed with enormous human and natural resources (Fonchingong 2005). Many years after independence, African nations continue to grapple with bad governance, insecurity, endemic poverty and underdevelopment (Aliu 2014). It is paradoxical that Africa has today become the unlikeliest to be made comfortable and habitable (Osimen, Adesuwa & Sam 2014). The disturbing fact is that African countries constitute the overwhelming majority of the underdeveloped countries of the world. No wonder, Osaghae (1999) and Onimode (2000) remark that 'Africa remains a continent of crisis and contradiction'.

Africa is an urgent development challenge in the world economy today (Economic Commission for Africa 2011). Because of the low level of income per head of most countries in Africa, this is a development challenge because it implies a high level of deprivation, poverty, high human vulnerabilities and low living standards. After 50 years of independence of most African countries, majority of these countries are yet to enter the promised kingdom of the development (Adejuwon 2012). To be sure, the development crisis in Africa has become a reoccurring issue, combined with the series of contradictions inherent in every epoch of African society; the continent has passed through different phases, starting from primitive to slave society, colonialism, decolonisation and neo-colonialism (Olanrewaju 2015). Today, the development crisis is one of the most severe challenges confronting Africa. Several decades after the end of colonialism, despite the abundant human and mineral resources, Africa remains largely underdeveloped (Alumona 2009).

Over the years, Africa has been climbing the ladder of development rather slowly. The African development crisis has been shown in the increasing inability of different countries in the continent to provide basic needs to the people (Akpomuvie 2014). All actions and remedial steps geared toward addressing the situation in Africa have so far been ineffective in tackling the menace. This shows why Africa today remains at the very lowest point of development.

How has Africa got into such an appalling state? Various arguments have been advanced for the causes of underdevelopment in Africa. While some argue that these problems are external, that is, they are imposed or caused by years of colonialism, others argue that they are internal, that is, self-inflicted problems. For instance, Farah, Kiamba and Mazongo (2011) argued that colonialism distorted and retarded the pace and tempo of development and the trend of civilisation in Africa. In their analysis, Fatile and Adejuwo (2012) posited that the development dilemma in Africa has been attributed to the problems of exploitation and repression perpetrated by the colonial masters. This position was taken by Walter Rodney (1972) in his famous book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. The description shows how Africa was robbed of her resources and potential, precisely through the slave trade, colonialism and imperialist exploitation. Similarly, Kasongo (2010) argued that while westernisation was imported to African countries, the hidden side of modernism was materialistic interest.

The accounts by most scholars on the crisis of development in Africa point toward the exploitative tendencies of the colonialists and how Africa's God-given resources were syphoned through colonialism by the Global North. Without downplaying the roles of the Global North in the crisis of development in Africa, it is very important to point out that there is a need to go beyond the impact of exogenous factors on development in Africa by looking for a new narrative that better explains post-independence development crisis on the continent after more than 50 years of statehood of most of these countries. No one disputes the fact that external factors have an impact on the socio-economic development on the continent. However, as argued in this article, development challenges posed by external factors are hindrances to be surmounted, not permanent reasons for the present state of underdevelopment. Thus, the need for a new narrative for explaining the crisis of development in Africa in this 21st century is becoming more compelling.

Flowing from the above argument, the article posits that without absolutely isolating the impacts of external variables on the problem of socio-economic development of Africa, this article attempts to look beyond this commonly held narrative on African development by locating the problem within the crisis of leadership and states' ineffectiveness in Africa, which is based on the backdrop of existing sociopolitical structures of most countries on the continent. This position is in line with what Rodney points to as the fact that the advancement to a new stage of development is

pre-conditioned on the capacity to deal with the environment and the particularities in the superstructure of any given society. Such superstructure, according to Rodney (1972), includes patterns of behaviour, forms of government and systems of belief that can never exactly be the same in any two societies.

This article examines the past steps taken by the African ruling class in engendering development on the continent, with an overview of problems associated with those steps, an examination of the reasons behind the continuous existence of ineffective states in Africa, an analysis of how to address the development crisis in the continent and then the concluding remarks.

The major questions that this article tries to answer include the following:

- What is [are] the cause[s] of developmental crises in Africa?
- Is the state still relevant for development in contemporary Africa?
- What are the endogenous factors inhibiting development in Africa?

These and many others constitute the focus of this article.

## Objective of the study

The main objective of this article is to analyse development challenges facing Africa, and to explain how the endogenous factors such as leadership and state failure contribute to development dilemmas in Africa.

## Methodology

The article is qualitative in nature and relies on secondary sources of data, such as textbooks, journal articles, official documents and online materials. Qualitative research is concerned with multiple perspectives. It is an important tool for addressing developmental questions and helps to generate new insights from previous studies. It provides researchers with access to a volume of data that would otherwise have simply been impossible, and also provides a basis for comparison.

## State and development: Conceptual clarifications

In social science, concepts and terms must be clearly defined. The reason for this is to avoid confusion. There is no single universally acceptable definition of 'state'. Because the concept 'state' is often used so confusingly we must begin with by giving a definition of the term. A state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Gauba 2003). According to Anifowose (1999), a state is:

... the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organised in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular

common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organised. (p. 85)

Peruzzotti (2015) explains state as:

... a specific institutional configuration that resulted in the establishment of a sovereign structure of political authority within a territory. It consists of a cluster of constitutionally regulated agencies that have supreme jurisdiction over a delimited territory and population. (p. 1)

The state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Weber (1946) conceives the state as 'a human community that successfully claims for itself the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory with determined boundaries' (Akude 2007:2).

From the above definitions, the four main elements of a state can be identified, which include population, territory, government and sovereignty.

Development has been defined variously by scholars from different perspectives. This is why Todaro (1992) defined development as a 'multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system'. From this viewpoint, Martinussen (1997) explained different ways of grasping development, which include development as elimination of dependency, development as economic growth, development as modernisation process, development as human development, development as dialectical transformation and development as history, among others. Rodney (1972) is of the opinion that the term 'development' is used in an exclusive economic sense – the justification being that the type of economy is itself an index of other social features.

Adamolekun (2005) also stressed that development has to do with improving the living conditions of people. He highlighted some indicators of development, which include the following: a higher quality of life, higher income, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty in society, a cleaner environment, more equal opportunities, greater individual freedom and richer cultural life among citizens of a given state.

Sen (1999) sees development as existence of freedom. Okoli and Onah (2002) asserted that development involves progression, movement and advancement toward something better. Hence, it is improvement on the material and non-material aspects of life involving actions, reactions and motions. They also observed that development goes beyond economic and social indicators to include the improvement of human resources and positive changes in their behaviour. However, of great importance is that development is seen as a product of human efforts (Adeyeri & Adejuwon 2012).

## Theoretical review

There are many theories that can be used to explain the development dilemma in Africa, such as structural functionalist theory, modernisation theory and new world theory, among others. This article is anchored on dependency theory and developmental state theory.

Dependency theory originated in Latin America in the 1960s in response to the alleged failure of both continental development and theories attempting to explain it. The dependency theory takes a view of development that gives attention to international and transnational influences on questions of development (Bruce & Harvey 1981). Its proponents draw mainly from Latin America and Africa in the likes of Paul Baran, Henrique Cardoso, Andre Gunder, Walter Rodney, Daniel Offiong and others.

Dependency theory attempts to explain the present underdeveloped state of many nations in the world by examining the patterns of interactions among nations and by arguing that inequality among nations is an intrinsic part of those interactions. Dependency theory suggests that

... the condition of underdevelopment is precisely the result of the incorporation of the Third World economies into the capitalist world system which is dominated by the West and North America. (Eme 2013:116)

Hence, in development studies, dependency implies a situation in which a particular country or region relies on another for support, 'survival' and growth.

Frank (1966) sees the world economy as being divided into two major components: metropolis and satellite (metropolis – developed societies; satellite – underdeveloped societies). This categorisation is similar to that of Wallerstein's (1974) concepts of core and periphery. Wallerstein believes that the flow of economic surplus in the world economy is from the satellite (or periphery) to the metropolis (or core), and the world economy is organised to make this happen. From this viewpoint, Frank (1966) has called this process the development of underdevelopment. This is based on the fact that the development of the rich nations and the underdevelopment of the poor ones are but two sides of the same coin, as underdevelopment of some nations has made development for other nations possible and the development of some nations has made the underdevelopment of other nations possible (Eme 2013). The thrust of the dependency theory is the position that developing or peripheral countries are underdeveloped and poor because their economies were developed and relied on developed societies which operate capitalist economy.

While underlining the importance of institution to development, Haggard (2013:10) avers that 'the process of economic development is characterised by a myriad of market failures that can only be solved through government intervention, coordination and institutions'. Central to the

developmental state theory is the fact that development, especially in the Global South, should be viewed as a chain in which states need to play strategic roles in planning and sustaining economic development. This state, according to Leftwich (1995), must have:

... sufficient power, probity, autonomy and competence at the centre to shape, pursue and encourage the achievement of explicit and nationally-determined development objectives, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions of economic growth, by organizing it directly, or by a varying combination of both. (p. 381)

This state is what De Onis (1999) refers to as a state where government is adequately involved in macro- and micro-economic planning for economic growth. Johnson distinguishes the 'developmental orientation of such a state from the socialist type command economy state, on the one hand, and the capitalist regulatory orientation on the other hand' (Johnson 1982:19). This type of state is the type that 'can create and regulate the economic and political relationships that can support sustained industrialisation or in short, a developmental state' (Chang 1999:183). One important element of such a state is the cooperation between private business and government or, in other words, the private sector and the public sector in the process of generating policy that aids development (Johnson 1999).

According to this theory, in order to safeguard the state from being captured by private interests in the process of state activism in development, there need to be relevant roles of a powerful, efficient and autonomous bureaucracy recruited from the best talents available in a state. Furthermore, apart from this effective and autonomous bureaucracy in the state-led developmental process, there is the need for networking between the state and the private sector in order to negotiate and renegotiate developmental policies. Wade (1990) pointedly says that an effective institution is vital for a developmental state. Therefore, the study conducted by Wade (1990) hinges on the fact that there is the relevance of institutions as well as political variables in the process of state-led development.

## The state and development in Africa

Is the state still relevant for development in contemporary Africa? The debate on the role of the state in development has constantly been at the heart of development experts. As stated by the Economic Commission for Africa (2011), there are three major responsibilities that the state has to undertake as a means of achieving socio-economic transformation and development in Africa: the planning of the development process, the formulation of appropriate development policies and the implementation of development plans and policies.

From market-led to state-led growth, or from market to state failure, the central canon in any development model is a theory about the role of the state in development. The tragedy of post-independence developmentalism was the assumption that only the state could drive development, liberation and national unity. The implementation of this idea, in the opinion

of Olukoshi (2001:4), provided the context for the restriction of political pluralism, military regimes and the eventual demise of the entire development programme. This is premised on the fact that the state in most of Africa is a colonial project and a product of competition between colonial powers for access to resources, a development which has left some lasting impressions on the evolution of the post-colonial state in Africa (Arrighi 2002:24).

In the face of high expectations and huge demands from post-colonial leadership in Africa, access to modern health facilities, education, transportation, housing and skills development in every sector was increasingly widened (Olukoshi 2002). These developments were linked to the reasonably high levels of economic growth, which most African states recorded in the first decade of independence. However, most states in Africa cannot meet the needs of their people. This, in the opinion of Aliu (2014), is the reason that state and its managers in Africa continue to depend on, deploy and strengthen inherited colonial institutions, laws, values, processes and interests that are repugnant to popular development and good governance. The dysfunctional role of post-colonial African states in the festering crisis of development and governance as captured above is indeed overwhelming. African states by virtue of their historical, economic, social and political conditions, as argued by Aderonmu and Aliu (2011), are fashioned to perpetuate elite exploitation of the economic, social and political space and resources, protect foreign interests and undermine popular participation in the development process.

Adopting an institutional approach, Edigheji (2004) argues that the institutional nature and institutional perspective of the African state since independence primarily account for the continent's poor social and economic performance. Similarly, Lumumba-Kasongo (2002) is of the opinion that African people need to reinvent new state forms that can effectively address issues related to poverty and gender inequalities. The interconnection between the state and the sordid conditions of development is the dominant and discernible pattern in Africa. In view of the monumental failure the states in Africa have come to symbolise, there is an urgent need for a fundamental overhaul and restructuring of the state to make it the harbinger of a people-oriented development and governance processes in Africa.

The reality in most African countries is that the state has not succeeded in achieving meaningful socio-economic development. Indeed, African development strategies have been ineffective in addressing the challenges of development facing the continent.

## The context and premise of Africa's development in the 21st century

It is evident that that state-led development is achieved through effective and sustainable policies, formulated and implemented by independent technocrats and bureaucrats. The most crucial question that should be raised is what are



the principal reasons for the success and failure of state involvement and intervention in developmental policies? Preliminary answers that the authors offer and several scholars like Thovoethin (2015), Evans (1995), Routley (2012), Kim (2009), Edigheji (2005), Beeson (2004), Kohli (2004) and Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001) have proposed is that combinations of political elites' commitment to development and effective techno-bureaucratic governance are some of the factors responsible for the nature of development in any state. Techno-bureaucratic ideology as opined by Fatile, Olojede and Adejuwon (2015) values technical expertise and efficiency that are crucial for effective public service delivery toward the attainment of social and economic development. This realisation arises from the fact that Africa still demonstrates a lack of capacity to break free from the challenges of development that have characterised previous centuries. There is a general lack of consensus on the appropriate approach for articulating these changes, as they account for the restructuring of social, economic and political developments in the continent (Onuoha 2010).

Beeson (2004) observes that the historical and remarkable unprecedented development in Japan was because of the efforts of a rationally planned state. According to him, the reconstruction of industrial capacity through widespread social consensus and the significance of economic development are the factors that contribute to the development agenda in Japan. This shows that at the centre of Japan's significant development was competent bureaucracy and a highly committed political leadership dedicated to the delivery of public goods through effective formulation and implementation of a development agenda. This is in agreement with the view of Adejuwon (2016) that public bureaucracy can serve as an 'agent of fruitful change and development'.

In Asia, at the beginning of 21st century, Malaysia moved from an agrarian economy to a knowledge-based and industrialised economy. This can be attributed to the commitment of the political leadership in the country as well as the general public orientation of the need for shifting from an agriculture-based economy to an industrialised economy. However, in the 1960s and the 1970s, Malaysia was heavily dependent on agriculture. But unlike most African states, with the ideological commitment to development, Mahathir Mohammed's administration (1981–2003) believed that state intervention in development is of utmost importance to industrialise the Malaysian state. Thus, Malaysia pursued a state-led development bureaucracy committed to meritocracy and dedication on the part of political leadership (Thovoethin 2015).

From the above examples, it is evident that political leadership isolated from negative sociopolitical influences made the critical difference in enhancing state capacity for development. Thus, the political elites in the countries mentioned above displayed commitment to popular welfare by promoting embedded and autonomous

techno-bureaucratic governance. Numerous scholars and analysts, such as Routley (2012), Kim (2009), Edigheji (2005), Kohli (2004), Beeson (2003, 2004), Acemoglu et al. (2001), Waldner (1999), Woo-Cumings (1999), Evans (1995), Wade (1990), Amsden (1989) and Deyo (1987), have also over the years raised similar arguments that the East Asia states' political elites were able to develop functional state institutions that enabled economic and social development.

The poser that should engage the mind of every Afrocentric scholar as well African political economy commentators is why African political elites have over the years failed in having the political commitment that will enhance the emergence of functional institutions that can facilitate socio-economic development. In the literature, there are two lines of argument on this. Mkandawire (2001:29) remains a vocal African political economist who believes that for majority of the first generation of African leaders, development was undoubtedly a central preoccupation. Mkandawire (2001) argued further that:

In Africa, we have examples of states whose performance until the mid-1970s would have qualified them as a 'developmental state', but which now seem anti-development because the hard times brought the economic expansion of their countries to a halt. (p. 5)

Kidane (2001), while adopting Marxist and liberal historians' arguments, makes reference to Mkandawire's position by asserting that in the first decade after independence up to the early 1970s, Africa witnessed an average annual growth rate of up 4.5% in gross domestic product (GDP). Sako and Ogiogio (2002:4) support this claim when they assert that 'Africa achieved respectable economic growth in the first decade of independence'. According to them, between 1965 and 1974, most countries in Africa achieved at least 2.6% increase in GDP annually. This line of argument of Mkandawire, and other scholars who are on the same page with him on the history of development in Africa, opens up the debate of whether early post-independence political leaders were actually committed to development or not.

Ake (1996a), however, has a quite different point of view from that of Mkandawire on the commitment of African political elites to development as well as the state's capacity in achieving development. For Ake, post-colonial African political elites have not in any way pursued economic and social development, but only sought to consolidate power. Ake (1996b) believes that African political elites only implemented intervention policies meant to facilitate the accumulation and appropriation of wealth by means of power. Ake (1996b) observes further that:

... the politics that rendered development improbable has made the adoption of an ideology of development inevitable. For the political struggling to maintain their power and to reproduce their domination amid the problems of the postcolonial era, the ideology of development has not been an effective strategy that addresses the objective necessity for development. (p. 16)

Scholars who have written on African developmental challenges have taken positions relating to that of Mkandawire and Ake, conflicting interpretations of Africa's development trajectory and tragedy. This article joins this debate by first subscribing to Mkandawire's position that some of the first post-colonial African political elites have development on their agenda. This article justifies the support for Mkandawire's position by pointing out that African continent consists of many countries, which, according to Meyns and Musamba (2010:29), believe that 'the post-independent experiences in most of these countries differed substantially', that is, there were countries on the continent which immediately after independence have records of development. This position could be justified by assessing the administration of Kaunda Kenneth in Zambia, Nyerere Julius in Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. In these countries, socio-economic development was pursued after independence. The common problem associated with development plans of these leaders was that their developmental agenda and vision were not supported by effective and efficient techno-bureaucratic governance. This article emphasises the lack of state's capacity for development, which serves as the second take on the political commitment to development by African political elites.

In the African situation, even though the post-independence state assumed an enormous economic role, most of these countries lacked efficient regulatory mechanisms and did not have the workforce or the embedded administrative ability to effectively drive development (Englebert 2000; Nissanke 2003; Van De Walle 2007). No wonder Meyns and Musamba (2010) declared that bureaucracy in Africa lacked innovation and the required freedom necessary for effective operation of public institutions in a developmental state. Innovation, as put forward by Fatile and Adejuwon (2017:194), is 'an important factor in sustaining a high level of services to the citizens'. This, according to them, influences the performance of the bureaucracies.

## Leadership and development trajectory in Africa: The missed steps

A leader [...] is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go on ahead, whereupon others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind. (Mandela 1995:3)

Thus, this section tries to explore the political elites' commitment to development and institutions' capacity nexus in the process of development by examining the nature and manner of ideological commitment to development by the ruling class in countries that have achieved development through state intervention when compared with other countries in Africa. Central to such beliefs is the advancement of the logic that the ruling class's ideological commitment to development depends on what Abdullah (2008:9) calls 'public orientation'. The type of public orientation in a situation whereby the state determines whether collective or

shared interests of the people are pursued, or the philosophy of the state, is dominated by the pursuance of individual and personal interests. This position is what Evans (1989:32) refers to as 'the motivational logic that constrains individual action and behaviour in the direction of consistency with collective interests'. And it is, in fact, the existing orientation in a state that redefines personal goals that motivate and encourage them to pursue corporate and general goals. Through this public orientation thesis, this article argues that the success of development in East Asia countries and developmental failure in most countries in the Global South can be linked to 'public orientation'. Thus, this article attempts to examine how sociopolitical factors affect state-led developmental outcomes. This is in line with the view of Thovoethin (2015) that political factors are important in the determination of developmental outcomes.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, most countries in Africa discovered abundant natural resources. However, instead of spending the windfall from this boom on development projects, most of the countries increased the number of civil service employees who did not have the needed bureaucratic quality. At any rate, the bureaucracy became the avenue for employment generation. In effect, the bureaucracy was not in any way a driving force in the formulation and implementation of development agenda. In fact, as Hyden, Court and Mease (2003) argue, using the example of Togo, under President Eyadema's rule, policymaking was politicised where professional expertise was insufficient and also not valued. Therefore, as there was no effective and embedded autonomous bureaucracy, the bureaucracy in Africa became vulnerable to predatory behaviour such as rent-seeking, corruption and abuse of public resources. Meyns and Musamba (2010) while quoting Olowu (2003) raise the verdict that in most cases, post-colonial bureaucracies are part of the developmental challenge of Africa because they failed in their responsibilities as the custodians of public resources.

Therefore, because of the weakness of state capacity in Africa in the early 1970s most countries on the continent faced serious economic decline. More worrisome during this era was the fact that instead of engaging some of the academic and economic elites who were critical of the economic decline in championing alternative development policies, the political elites oppressed and intimidated them through the machinery of the state. Let us substantiate this claim with few examples. In the 1970s and the 1980s, there was a flight of professionals from Ghana, partly as a result of political repression (Howard-Hassmann 1983). Also, in Kenya, the critics of Kenyatta's regime were substantially punished. In 1975, the populist politician J.M. Kariuki was murdered. More importantly, many prominent Kenyan academics were arrested, while the University of Nairobi was closed down. Among those arrested was Ali Al Amin Mazrui, who stayed in solitary confinement up to May 1983 despite his extremely poor health (Howard-Hassmann 1983).

In the 1970s, the development crisis in Africa was characterised by ineffective and weak state intervention in national economies, which invariably undermined the initial efforts of some political elites to establish developmental states in Africa (Meyns & Musamba 2010). Faced with the continuous socio-economic decline, most ruling elites in the 1970s and beyond engaged in 'spoil system' to stay in power, diverting public resources for patronage purposes, while in the process, they were departing from genuine development efforts (Acemoglu 2005; Englebert 2000; Goldsmith 2004). As opined by Gordon (2007:10), in his *African Politics*, 'to garner mass support in the face of socio-economic depression, politicians naturally turned toward their ethnic groups and villages'. It is during this period that Ake's claim of lack of commitment to the development agenda by African political elites became relevant. This article furthers the argument in support of the contemporary relevance of Ake's take on Africa's development challenges with relevant literature.

Bayart (2009) in his work, *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly*, explains the neo-patrimonial nature of the political economy of Africa, when he proclaims that 'African countries have overwhelmingly been run along the lines of what he called the politics of the belly'. That is a primordial lust for wealth and power along crude racial, tribal, party and familial lines. In this system, government officials, and politically connected business elites, use their positions and influence to enrich themselves and their families or kinsmen. Similarly, Chabal (1999) argues that:

... in most African countries, the state is no more than a decor, a pseudo-Western facade masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations [where] legitimacy is firmly embedded in the patrimonial practices of patrons and their networks. (p. 5)

Bayart (2009) further contends that comparing Africa with Asian developmental states, the natural endowments and resources in Africa have been used only to spread corrupt practices, enrich elites and divert development energy and focus. Ighodalo and Ayodeji (2013) extend this position when they aver that:

... the political commitment of the ruling class in Africa hovers around the mantra-exploit the little you have today for the brief time you have it because that is the only way you can feed yourself and your family today. Tomorrow, the next generation must look after themselves. (p. 20)

Furthermore, Arowosegbe (2011) notes that post-independence leaders in Africa privatised the state's resources for the purpose of primitive accumulation, clientelism, repression and all forms of opposition instead of building state capacity for development. Thus, instead of using the state machinery and resources for initiating development through the involvement of bureaucrats and technocrats in the process as other developmental states did, African leaders utilised state power to terrorise the citizenry, thereby leading to the disengagement of experts in the process of development. The unfortunate situation of African

states was described by Adejuwon (2014) in the following words:

Africa has long been saddled with poor, even malevolent leadership, predatory kleptocrats, military-installed autocrats, economic military-installed autocrats, economic illiterates and puffed-up posturers. By far, the most egregious examples come from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe – countries that have been run into the ground despite their abundant natural resources. Under the stewardship of these leaders, infrastructure in many African countries have fallen into despair, currencies have depreciated, and real prices have inflated dramatically, while job availability, healthcare, education standards and life expectancy have declined. Ordinary life has become beleaguered; general security has deteriorated, crime and corruption have increased, much-needed public funds have flowed into hidden bank accounts (local and foreign), and officially sanctioned ethnic discrimination become prevalent. (p. 39)

Similarly, Aliu (2014) captures the nature of post-colonial ruling elites:

Most of the ruling elites in Africa have imbibed and continued to appreciate, accept and adopt colonialists and imperialists values and aspirations for Africa. The potency of the hegemonic structures and institutions established by the colonialists to produce and reproduce ruling elites that are complicit and compromised to the need for good development and governance in Africa is critical in this context. The flawed processes of political socialisation and leadership recruitment pervasive in Africa have further helped to sustain the colonialists and neo-colonialists system of producing their desired copy of ruling elites for Africa. (p. 61)

While the political elites in the Asian developmental states were more collectively committed to development, which enhanced their countries' capacity for development, the elites in Africa used the state for their own personal interests and those of their support groups. Thus, African political leaders since the 1970s, whether military or civilian, with very few exceptions, have failed in their efforts and mission, by making Africa, 'the least advanced continent on the planet' (Le-Roy 1997:2).

The major argument in this section is that the nature of political systems, based on the level and form of neo-patrimonialism and clientelism, determines political commitment and states' developmental potential. Invariably, it is correct to answer in the affirmative that there is a link and close relationship between the political process and the state's capacity for development. Fritz and Menocal (2006), Khan (2005) and Hellman, Geraint and Kaufman (2000) follow this line of argument when they suggest that the difference between successful and failed attempts at state-led development should not be primarily linked to corruption, but rather to the problem of 'state capture'. State capture, according to Khan (2005), implies that:

... aside from the fact that benefits from state interventionism are diverted into private pockets, the policies are not driven by the need of yielding development, but rather are intended to yield benefits for limited groups. (p. 2)

In other instances, most countries in Africa lack committed, competent and innovative bureaucracy (Menocal 2004).

Having established the position discussed above, what requires further examination is the understanding of the underlying reasons why the lack of commitment to development by African ruling class which started in the 1970s has remained in place for so long even though the resulting challenges of development failure have undermined governments' popularity and legitimacy. This will be examined under the next section of this article.

## Causes of development failure in Africa

This section attempts to address the reasons why the political class in Africa lacks commitment to development and why there is ineffective techno-bureaucratic governance in Africa, which has resulted in the ineffective capacity of the state for development. The starting point of analysis is the understanding of the economic background of the political class in most African countries. Post-independence states in Africa, according to Ezema and Ogujuba (2012), are characterised by political elites who lack an economic and material resource base, and scramble for the state power to compensate for the lack of these economic and material resources even in the face of economic downturn. While tracing the historiography of African economic development, it is evident that majority of the post-independent African leaders were made up of owners of small amount of non-agricultural capital, such as contractors, traders, small manufacturers and the richer peasants including white-collar workers.

Thus, on the basis of the fact that the post-independence ruling class lacks sufficient material and economic resources, when confronted by development failure, as mentioned in the preceding section, they abandoned a development agenda and were preoccupied with extracting rents in the form of economic resources (Majekodunmi & Adejuwon 2012). More so, as Akude (2007) opines, that pursuing economic development by the political elites could be harmful to their interests as new classes might emerge and wrestle for political power and hence their failure to attempt pursuing developmental agenda.

Ake (1996:24) advances an argument in this direction when he posits that 'political intensity was reinforced in Africa by the tendency to use state power for personal aggrandisement and accumulation'. According to him, this practice can be linked to the weak material and financial base of the new political leaders, who in their view had been economically marginalised by the discriminatory economic policies of the colonial regime. Even when they assumed political power, they had little experience of entrepreneurial activity. Invariably, they were obliged to explore the one leverage they had: control of state power to strengthen personal gain.

A similar explanation for the prevalence of political elites who are not committed to social and economic development is the nature of Africa's political economy. Under this system, the neo-patrimonial politic reflect a particular level of economic development. As consistently stated in this article, the acquisition of political office by the ruling class in Africa is an avenue for personal aggrandisement and accumulation. Unlike in Botswana where the political elites were rural capitalists and entrepreneurs before their ascension to national public office (Pitcher, Moran & Johnston 2009), most members of the African political class have no known capital base. As Gordon (2007) contends:

... one of the preferred 'favours' in patron-client relationships was the allocation of jobs; this resulted in the exponential growth of the civil service and government-owned businesses during the 1960s and 1970s. (p. 32)

Therefore, the bureaucracy in most countries in Africa was largely ineffective as it mostly consisted of political acolytes and the ruling class kinsmen and not qualified professionals. This directly affects the capacity of the bureaucracy for policy formulation and implementation and offers the most stunning contrast to the East Asia bureaucracy.

This section has shown the more logical reasons why the ruling class in Africa were or are not committed to development and why the state in Africa has become ineffective as a result of the absence of techno-bureaucratic governance. And as Fritz and Menocal (2006) opine, ineffective and inefficient states have to rely on social structures of clientelism and neo-patrimonialism to accumulate resources for personal aggrandisement. This is exactly what the state in Africa depicts.

## Conclusion

### Findings and conclusion

As discussed in this article, a key ingredient in enhancing development is competent, meritocratic and 'result-oriented' techno-bureaucratic governance. Establishing such a system as seen in most African countries is challenging. As Menocal (2004) posits, in East Asia, competent bureaucracies did not develop automatically or overnight, but were rather the result of a prolonged struggle guided by strong political motivation to achieve national development. Thus, for effective techno-bureaucratic governance that would generate development, commitment of state actors and capacity of the state itself are important (Fritz & Menocal 2006; Kohli 1994; Leftwich 1995; Menocal 2004; Randall 2007; Thovoethin 2015). However, in Africa, as this article confirms, technocratic and bureaucratic structures and other benefits that could be generated by state-led development were frequently manipulated by the government apparatus and ruling elites as a source of patronage. In most of these countries, the state has been captured by narrow interests more concerned with building clientelistic networks than with pursuing collective interests that will generate



socio-economic development. Thus, in these countries, the challenge of development has become more immense.

Therefore, there is a need for the transformation of existing social structure and power relations in African countries in order to bring about commitment to development on the part of the political class as well as the state capacity for a state-led development in these countries. The transformation in this direction becomes more compelling as we have stated in this article because colonialism in Africa established a particularistic society and elite structure which later affected post-colonial state's commitment to achieve developmental goals and also undermines the state's capacity for development. This is what both the economic and political elites in Africa have failed to overcome and hence the continuous development challenges in the continent.

More so, there is a need to enhance state capacity for development by increasing the level of efficiency, effectiveness and autonomy of the bureaucracy in these countries in order to engender development. The efficiency of the bureaucracy can be enhanced when recruitment and promotion are based on merit rather than patronage. The developmental state literature pushes for an extremely meritocratic form of recruitment into bureaucracy as the starting point in understanding the extraordinary degree of bureaucratic autonomy associated with the developmental states. The bureaucracy should be a system where recruitment is designed in such a way that it can attract the best managerial talents available to the ranks of the bureaucratic elite.

### Recommendation or suggestions

The argument that African countries are yet to fulfil their potential since independence is to repeat the obvious. Every development indicator consistently points to the fact that while over the past 50 years other developing regions and countries have grown, most countries in Africa have stagnated. Unfortunately, most African leaders, and political economy commentators and scholars, have become adept at blaming colonialism for Africa's failings. If one were to agree with the assumption that Europe should be blamed for Africa's crisis of development, then we are invariably assuming that Africans themselves are not sure about their capacity to transform and develop their natural environment after more than 50 years of independence of most of these countries. With such doubts, it means there may be no hope that Africa can develop through the efforts of Africans.

This article strongly contends that blaming colonialism for Africa's post-independence sociopolitical woes remains an old assumption, which must be changed. There is a need for extending our narratives on Africa's challenges of development beyond the commonly cited impacts of colonialism. Blaming colonialism for the problem of development in Africa is extremely harmful to development in the continent because such an assumption is to accept underdevelopment as a fate. Europe was able to move

forward through reformation and renaissance; Europeans were able to challenge their old assumptions. As Rodney (1972) suggests:

... if we can determine when underdevelopment came about, it would be easy to dismiss the lingering suspicion that it is racially or otherwise predetermined and that we can do little about it. (p. 25)

As indicated and which has been established in the literature, the East Asia developmental states survived the challenges of development through the formulation and implementation of good policies. In order to formulate and implement good policies sagaciously in these developmental states, there were effective institutional structure of the state as well as ruling elites who were ideologically committed to development. As Mkandawire (2001) suggests, Botswana, which happens to be a reference point for a developmental state in Africa, built state capacity gradually. Such state capacity can be enhanced through effective and competent public service, which in turn, according to Hartland-Thunberg (1978:4), 'attracted foreign aid and private investment to the country and thereby facilitated the rapid growth of the economy'.

It is instructive however to note that Botswana, like other developmental states, has ruling elites who were committed to development, hence the emergence of a state that has capacity to pursue a development agenda. How an effective state capacity for development as well as a ruling class who are committed to development could be realised in other African countries remains the major focus of this section. The article however in the first instance examines how state capacity for development could be enhanced in Africa, and, later on, examines how ideological commitment to development can be engendered in Africa.

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### Author's contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. P-S.T. designed the study, wrote the literature and the first draft of the manuscript. J.O.E. managed the literature searches and reviewed the draft manuscript, updated the work and also corrected the work using plagiarism software. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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