

Inaugural Lecture

Coercion, consent, and the construction of capitalism in Africa: development studies, political economy, politics and the ‘Dark Continent’

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Abstract

The academic sub-discipline of development studies is too often shorn of *politics*, but that field too is usually divorced from its material dimension: the unity of political economy (which constitutes the essence of ‘development’) has been sundered. Concentration on the relationship between consent and coercion – between freedom and force – perhaps the core element of the politics behind the pursuit of power and the formulation and execution of accumulation strategies, could reopen analysis of the construction of capitalism in Africa. All societies’ transitions to capitalism have been accompanied by a large degree of violence; Africa’s history has been especially so and the transition is far from complete now – if indeed it can be fulfilled. Yet the ‘legitimacy’ of ruling classes in the making – the consent to their rule that builds hegemony for them and the new socio-economic system they are constructing – is important too. This contribution’s main question is: how can one understand the relationship between coercion and consent while Africa ‘develops’, unevenly and haltingly, towards capitalist democracy? The query ranges theoretically and empirically; its tentative conclusion emphasises the necessity for the deepening of democracy at time when it seems to be diminishing.

Introduction

Bill Freund’s discussion of democratic and developmental possibilities in South Africa advised scholars and practitioners alike to calibrate ‘the determined and the possible’ generated by the ‘weight of history’ carefully (1999 quoted in Moore 2006: 10). The weight of capitalist development is

heavy indeed: primitive accumulation cannot be worn lightly (Marx 1867, Cramer 2006). Neither can nation-state formation, a process equally as bloody and long, wrapped up in many ways with, but not reducible to, capitalist birthing pains. What Freund said about South Africa can be extended to the entire African continent. As he put it ‘in order to be meaningful, discussions of democratic [and developmental] prospects ... require a real grasp of the historically generated and limited situation’ (Freund 1999: 434). This is hard-nosed materialist realism: neither utopian nor fatalist.

Relatedly, Henry Bernstein’s disquisition on development discourse decries the technocratic nature of the ‘anti-politics machine’ (Ferguson 1991), thus adding to charges against perhaps the most amnesiac of the academy and the polity’s miscegenation. Bernstein emphasises the violence also silenced by the contemporary development discourse that has depoliticised and

marginalis[ed] or displace[d] investigation and understanding of the sources, dynamics and effects of typically savage social inequality in the South, and of no less savage relations of power and inequality in the international economic and political system. It elides consideration of the often violent social upheavals and struggles that characterise the processes and outcomes of the development of capitalism. (2006: 56)

Bernstein’s list of the violent manifestations of life on the periphery of global capitalism is pregnant with the life of politics, but politics is not born within them. ‘De-politicisation’; ‘savage social inequalities’ domestically and ‘no less savage relations of power’ internationally; ‘violent social upheavals and struggles’; and the ‘politically contentious’ nature of the disciplines of political economy struggling against the streams of contemporary ‘apolitical’ development studies emerging from them: these suggest political contestation at many levels of society. Coercion and consent permeate them all, in overt struggles for power and in opposition, and in silent and invisible ways. They circle around and are entwined within Gramsci’s famed dialectic making up the politics and ideology of hegemony – as John Hoffman (1984) made clear many years ago, it is foolish to think of the two concepts of coercion and consent as diametrically opposed and separate, but as dialectically intertwined – composed of variations between ‘force and willing assent’ and ‘subtle (indeed structural) pressure’ versus sullen (sometimes almost unthinking) ‘acquiescence’, and constituted by a multitude of alliances of classes and other social forces.

Yet neither Freund nor Bernstein spends much time outside economic history's *longue durées* or the structural contradictions of agrarian political economy in the place where deep socio-economic tensions meet: the domain of politics. Politics may seem too superstructural for much attention to be paid it by academics searching for a *modus vivendi* of development studies and the classical social science disciplines, and too damned 'political' for those favouring the technocratic, legalistic, or social-worker fix. However, its various fora are where struggling classes and/or 'intellectuals' claiming organic relations with them (Gramsci 1992: 136-40; 1996: 199-208) meet and fight to rule and accumulate within unhappily articulated social formations on the peripheral and encroaching edges of the global political economy's waning 'centre'. The choreographed and spontaneous political dances; the rule-bound, rule-making, and rule-bending power games; the modern and 'traditional' modes of authority and influence; the flood-lit and the shadowed deals and deceits; the institutionalised and informal laws of control and contestation; amidst the ever-evident struggles for access to an increasingly solid state and all that comes with it: this, in an historically-structured context, is politics. It's what Gramsci followed Machiavelli to call the centaur, the half-beast and half-human creature that blends consent and coercion as the representatives of partially formed classes contend for domination and hegemony, working to win the moral and intellectual leadership of the increasingly enfranchised people making up their constituents whilst also controlling enough force over those less convinced (Gramsci 2007: 75). This dialectic of force and freedom is at the core of politics. Its balance can have desirable or deleterious consequences on the wider socio-economic array of developmental processes and structures, and thus should be considered alongside them.

If politics is the art of the possible, 'political development' is the science of struggling to create a space in which there is freedom to negotiate the amelioration of the violent conditions of life for most of the people in most of the world. (Progressive) politics in and about the 'third world' consists of the fora and processes therein for the agency with which the oppressive and poverty-producing forces of everyday life can be overturned at best or lessened at worst. To be sure, 'force' may be necessary to enlarge most people's freedoms (Sen 1999), and thus arrives the petard constituting politics: what is the relationship between force and freedom, or coercion and consent, especially when powerful groups believe they are threatened by the enlargement of possibilities for subalterns (Polanyi 2008)? This essay's

purpose is to investigate this dialectic within the realm of ‘development studies’ on the continent in which capitalism’s construction has most severe consequences.

Politics, then, is the study of the ways in which social forces organise and struggle to change the terrain of socio-economic structures (perhaps these constitute ‘political economy’) in their favour, or to maintain the *status quo* if it is being challenged. Political science analyses power, exercised through the barrels of guns and the mouths and pens of powers’ persuaders and policies’ promulgators, mostly in institutions such as (and especially) ‘the state’ and struggles in and over them, but pervasive in arenas of human interaction ranging from the workplace to the family and including ‘economics’ conceived more narrowly than ‘political economy’. In the first stages of capitalist accumulation, when vast numbers of people are forced into market ‘freedom’, politics and economics are welded together especially tightly; but they are never separated because power and control are entwined in every ‘economic’ transaction. As Tony Judt reminded us shortly before he died, we have not always thought that the ‘economic’ and the ‘political’ are separate realms of activity: Adam Smith was first concerned about ‘moral sentiments’ and de Condorcet worried about ‘liberty’ being reduced to financial freedom (Judt 2009). It is unlikely to be coincidental that Judt wrote his *New York Review of Books* article about social democracy on his discovery that the GINI co-efficient for the USA was approaching China’s (see also Gray 2008).

A more or less strictly ‘political’ discussion of power includes a focus on the ability for A (be it an individual or a group, although in the latter there will be A1s and A2s and so on working out an agreement on what project to pursue, and how to go about it) to persuade B to do what A wants B to do, exercised through the creation of consent – through arguments, debates and the marshalling of good evidence at best, lies and subterfuge at worst. A’s capability to force or coerce B to do what B might not want to do is another sort of power, another sort of politics that combines economics and arms: if the tools of violence are good, and used effectively, they usually have to be backed up by a strong economic and organisational social system – a concept into which *Al Qaeda* as well as the American state can be inserted. These A>B discussions seem adequate when discussing small-scale individual or group action, but when we get into a question such as ‘what is the combination of coercion and consent that has made many groups accept a whole socio-economic system, even if they do not seem to benefit

from it as much as other groups?', we are entering tricky terrain indeed, going far beyond debates about 'structure and agency', and the ability to put some or other items on, or keep them off, the 'political' agenda (Lukes 2005).

This essay tries to travel some way in this direction. It is an attempt to investigate the relationship between the emergence of capitalism – a process that Karl Marx reminded us was born with plasma pouring from every pore, from the 'third world' to its heartland – in places such as Africa, and the dialectics of coercion and consent as it begins and 'develops'. Where it may end is another question, but as Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) demonstrate about the 'spirit of capitalism' in contemporary France, it is enormously persistent, malleable and can even be exciting and fun.

For its early, uneven and not so entertaining stages, however, an equation and a question may serve to establish an analytical frame fitting those parts of the world where capitalism has not (yet) fully subsumed pre-capitalist modes (cf Hardt and Negri 2000: 258; Moore 2001a 2003a; Webber 2008). 'Development = Primitive Accumulation + Hegemony: Or not?' serves to blend the violent and the consensual sides of the question of the original, or primary, or primitive process of accumulation that kick-started capitalism out of feudalism over a period of centuries. If nothing else, Marx (1867; Perelman 2000) informed us that excessive brutality accompanied the historic transition from 'pre-capitalist' modes of production based on various forms of rights and obligations around access to land and its produce, to capitalism, where the majority of people were torn from their rights to the land so they had nothing left but their labour to sell as proletarians or members of the working class. However, as indicated in his writings on India (1853), and by extension the rest of the 'third world', he saw this process as ultimately 'progressive' because along with losing usufruct rights to land, the emerging proletarians gained skills including organisational ones, which – steeled in struggles against new forms of oppression and with forces of freedom emerging globally – would eventually take them into a better form of capitalism and perhaps even into the next 'stage' of socialism (Warren 1980). Thus, the cornerstones of capitalism – wage labour and private property – are created, mostly via coercive means. With this, the dead weight of superstition, religion, and other feudal remnants will melt into thin air: new freedoms, uncertainties, and responsibilities emerge phoenix-like from the ashes of destroyed social forms.

Yet alongside this coercion was the equally important construction of consensus among the majority of this process' subjects that this was a *good*

process that would ‘develop’ them all, or, at least, that it should be accepted as not as evil as the alternatives on offer.

The original Marx did not want to believe that there would be consensus for very long about the benefits of capitalism, but Antonio Gramsci (1971, 1992, 1996, 2007) was willing to take on the idea that in the ‘west’ the ruling ideas of the ruling classes could win over the dominated ones. Of course, on that score he was talking of a well-developed Europe, not one undergoing the first stages of capitalist development, not the ‘third world’. Far from certain about ‘backward countries or ... the colonies ... [where] the State was everything, [and] civil society was primordial and gelatinous ... [where] forms which elsewhere have been superseded and have become anachronistic are still in vigour’ (Gramsci 1971: 238, 252-3) he predicted something more like ‘Caesarism’ (or potentially progressive authoritarian forms) there. Perhaps ironically, he included Russia in such a description, where he was happy to see the Bolsheviks take over without fully entrenched societal consent because he thought they could use the State – which was ‘everything’ – as the great Educator. Perhaps he saw ‘backward societies’ as a blank slate: in this he shared much with today’s ‘modernisers’, who forget about the ‘vigour’ of the ‘anachronistic forms’, unless they think, for example, that *ubuntu*, an imagined African past of sharing co-operation, can be incorporated into ‘modern business practice’ (Metz 2007). Thus, many of Africa’s retrograde rulers incorporate their chiefly kin into co-operative hegemonic ventures freezing their radical challengers out.

Gramsci was aware, too, that the ruling ideas – and the ‘counter-hegemonic’ ones contesting them – in Europe, when transplanted to more unevenly developed social formations, could lead to rather interesting concatenations. When ideologies ‘born in a highly developed country [are] disseminated in less developed countries, impinging upon the local interplay of combinations’ they create ‘new, unique, and historically concrete combinations’ (Gramsci 1971: 182). Thus it is with ‘civil society’ in Africa, which is as much an ideological expression of a political desire to create a liberal society as anything else, albeit one that becomes ‘material’ when well-funded with donors’ dollars (Beckman 1993; Hearn 2001, 2007). When examining the idea of ‘civil society’ in societies coming late to capitalism – where hegemony through consent is cemented by very busy organic intellectuals – then

one must ... distinguish between historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, or ‘willed’. To the extent that ideologies are

historically necessary they have a validity which is ‘psychological’; they ‘organize’ human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual ‘movements’, polemics and so on (even though these are not completely useless, since they function like an error which by contrasting with the truth, demonstrates it). (Gramsci 1971: 367-8)

This is a statement pregnant with foreboding about jumping the stages of history. Indeed, it could be seen as a foreshadowing of the ‘national democratic revolution’ discourse, which is little more than a confused recognition that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to build socialism – or a lot of other nice things, such as ‘democracy’, since the ‘national’ often takes a vicious priority over it – in a poor, not yet-capitalist, country, where for the new ruling classes the concept and reality of sovereignty takes precedence over any other ‘foreign imports’ ranging the ideological spectrum from press freedom to feminism (Moore 2010, 2012). Indeed, sovereignty could well be freedom’s fig-leaf for Africa’s leaders: to them, only imperialism’s puppets would dare oppose their rule, and it will be defended with the oratory of universal values combined with the cracking of particularistic whips – and very individual skulls. Hegemony’s last chance in Africa could well be the best indicator of the Centaur on offer: as a ruling group up against the wall is ‘compelled to defend [its] own immediate physical existence, the more [it] will uphold and identify with the most complex values of humanity’ as it defines them (Gramsci 2007: 284). Sovereignty can mean defense of ‘the people’ but more often than not it is invoked by an ideologically bankrupt cabal of rulers to remain as ‘gatekeepers’ of porous borders and to retain their right to repress (Cooper 2008): to assert otherwise without concrete historical evidence is naïve at best while opportunism at worst. Without the ‘participative critique of economic, political and legal institutions in line with avowed and valuable needs’ of which Lawrence Hamilton speaks, the ‘use of coercive force in a single, local locus of authority’ of which he also speaks is a dangerous blank cheque – unless it is ‘radically new’ (2003: 18, 36). Given that what is ‘radically new’, be it left or liberal, is usually condemned by the beneficiaries of sovereignty as imperialist puppetry, Hamilton’s dismissal of cosmopolitan forms of democracy might be premature. What *is* the arbitrary ideology in these cases: democracy, sovereignty, or both?

Coercion, consent and primitive accumulation in development discourse

As for the development discourse in the Post World War II era that was born of the Cold War, there were hopes that the decolonising ‘third world’ could be won over from the ideological and political threat of the Soviet Union (and to a lesser extent China). Its hegemonic aims were premised on a combination of two basic assumptions (wrapped up with goals, because when assumptions are about development, they become strategically oriented). First, ‘economic development’ is best facilitated on the basis of the ‘free market’ or ‘capitalism’. If it was not already there or at least bursting to get out of its predecessors’ flailing bonds so people could truck barter and trade as destined (cf Wood 1995), then it had to be *created* in these peoples’ best interests – they must be forced to be free if necessary and politically possible (sometimes, regarding the latter qualification, feudalists had to be supported rather than capitalists, to repel the greater ‘communist’ threat during the Cold War). For example, Walter Whitman Rostow, the economic historian and author of the *Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960) for the ‘developing world’, was as national security advisor to American presidents during the Cold War not averse to advising assassins and bombing Vietnam to hasten his ideals (Rostow 1960; Wiener 2007: 186, 263, 269, 281). This was primitive accumulation all over again, with the Cold War adding a twist against the ‘socialist’ variety of the process. Then as now – the ‘peace dividend’ at the Cold War’s end did not last long – all of this is painful, although economists do not dwell on this.

The transition takes a long time and many dead bodies, dead through the direct violence involved in wars, revolutions, land grabs and expulsions, and the indirect sort involving the hunger and illnesses coming with the slums and ‘informal sectors’ of urbanisation, the deep troughs of depressions, the long journeys of migration, and the crime and domestic violence that accompany deep inequalities in societies such as Brazil, India, China and South Africa – the ‘third world’ components of the fast developing BRICS¹ on the brink of full-blown capitalist development, in which the gap between rich and poor is most notable, the violence intense and often internalised (that is, in ‘domestic’ instances such as child rape and street gangs) and the efforts to ameliorate most concentrated (Van der Westhuizen 2012, 2013). In the end, though, as the chroniclers of economic history in capitalist countries agree, along with most contemporary observers of BRICS and other ‘miracles’, capitalism’s rough beginnings have the potential to create huge amounts of wealth which could, given struggles of a different sort, be

shared to a degree determined to some extent on the consent derived from democratic processes (Anderson 2011).

Primitive accumulation means that capitalism emerges with coercion in copious amounts, but this can lead to lifeblood along with the dispensed detritus. Indeed a new mode of production can arise with the potential to produce great amounts of wealth which, if the dominated classes can organise themselves to such an extent that they force capital to be somewhat redistributionist (in the form of better wages, conditions of work, and state administered public goods and welfare), can do more than simply ‘trickle down’. It is a feature of western capitalism at least, that as workers gained more and more through their struggles, capitalists were forced to resort to better technology and work organisation to increase productivity rather than rely on cheap wages for their profit. Serendipitously, workers’ increased wages allowed them to consume – to increase their standard of living after much struggle – as Fordism came into play. Simultaneously, social democratic political parties pushed the frontiers of the welfare state as far as they could: even Thatcher and Reagan could not roll these gains back completely.

Whether this feature is coming into the ‘African capitalist’ mode is an open question at best: as Paul Collier (2007) has popularised the notion, Africa contains most of the world’s poorest, the ‘bottom billion’ while another five have gained magical middle-class status (Furness et al 2012). Aside from preaching the benefits of private property and the difficulties in removing rent-seeking politicians and bureaucrats, most post-World War II development discourse does not discuss the toughness of the transition to capitalism: it assumes it will happen, either with a bit of indicative planning and Keynesian tweaking, or, in the 1980s, by reducing state impediments to growth and ‘getting the prices right’. Now, hopes of ‘good governance’ are added to the basic components: get the government and its various institutions – especially private property – right and all else will follow (Moore 2007b). Lately, the ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) discourse justifies global interventionism to shake the bottom from its feckless fate (Thakur 2011). But, because the good-governance-to-R2P continuum involves some quite direct interventions in ‘economic’ as well as ‘political’ processes, economists (except Collier!) do not go at it enthusiastically. If they are optimists, they would rather assume there is a neutral and effective state. If they are pessimists, they assume that it is full of the rent-seeking and corrupt, in which case the first assumption is almost permanently negated. Some in-between take corruption and rent-taking in stride as long as it feeds into an

accumulation process that develops the forces of production: this might have happened earlier in northeast Asia but does not seem yet to have occurred in Africa (Gray and Kahn 2010). Thus, the role of the state in primitive accumulation – that is, the political question of force necessary to divorce the peasantry from their means of production; to create and maintain a private property, and thus wage-labour, regime – is ever present, although often hidden under protestations in contemporary development discourse of all that is wrong with states and their dictators. Many with an historical bent decry the paltry effort of the colonial state to perform this task (Leys 1994: 44-5).

The second side of this development-discourse coin is the process of constructing the consent to primitive accumulation: building ideological and political hegemony for capitalism and those who run it globally and locally (Moore 2007a). Gramsci's Centaur is stretched in primitive accumulation: perhaps a quarter human (rational consent) and three-quarters beast (forceful domination and expulsion followed by the 'dull compulsions' of the necessity for wages). The state is the concentrated expression of this metaphor: 'state = political society + civil society, that is, hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (Gramsci 2007: 75), but in the construction of hegemonic consent the state has to veer away from the 'freedom' of the 'market', both to construct it out of its feudal predecessors and to mediate it through public goods. Note, however, that here 'consent' is 'protected by' force, not vice versa. Yet in societies wherein civil society is 'gelatinous' – or at least cemented by ideologies and cultures that are far from purely capitalist; they are awkwardly articulated hybrids of many modes and their cultures (Foster-Carter 1978) – one can argue that the politics of force has to be backed up by consent. Force precedes consent: consent has to be constructed after the fact. If this is possible, it is not easy. If it is nigh impossible, then the 'third world' including Africa has a long purgatory to endure: to borrow another of Gramsci's oft-quoted aphorisms: 'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear' (Gramsci 1971: 276). He placed no time limits on the crisis period, which could be labeled something like 'stalled primitive accumulation': the slow process of the emergence of proletarians and bourgeois often appears to be an impasse.

Gramsci was writing what turned out to be his *Prison Notebooks* while enduring Mussolini's expression of capitalism's uneven development in

Italy, but he also believed that such processes could lead to a Bolshevik-like party becoming an Educator – building ideological hegemony within the historic bloc that gave intellectuals-in-power a chance to test the degrees of voluntarism that Croce’s influence, combined with that of Lenin, allowed him (Davidson 1974). The Russian revolution had torn Marx and Engels’ belief that ‘socialism’ could not emerge in underdeveloped societies asunder, seemingly opening up a world of opportunities for those who wanted to believe that ideas about socialism taken from one context (the industrialisation process in Western Europe) could win over the hearts and minds of those struggling in ‘backward’ societies, including peasants (Davidson 1984) and intellectuals under the influence of the first doctrine of the National Democratic Revolution (Filatova 2012). This ‘revolution against Kapital’ (against the vulgar Marxist determinism that saw the ‘economic base’ rule over the ‘ideological and political superstructures’) made Gramsci think about how the leaders of social formations exercised the ‘moral and intellectual leadership’ that persuaded most of the people most of the time that these leaders were truly ‘developmental’ and representing the universal interests of many classes and other social groups. Would he have held on to his idea of a worker-peasant-radical intellectual alliance as a substitute for a developed working class in the advanced capitalist world (led by intellectuals with varying degrees of organic connection to the subalterns) in societies such as Russia and China had he lived to know Stalin’s and Mao’s histories (Chang and Halliday 2005, Dikotter 2011)? Less forceful notions of the national democratic revolution in the ‘east’ have come in their wake: socialism may come in our lifetime, they say, but we might need a ‘patriotic bourgeoisie’ to help out with the forces of production in the meantime.

Even in Europe, Gramsci was never totally convinced that ‘hegemony’ could be won by persuasion alone, as perhaps was the case for Euro-communists in the seventies (Golding 1992). The beastly side of the Centaur is based on the fear of force (and of course the violence itself) that the state – or the group challenging the state – exercises on those who fail to see the ‘good sense’ of the ruling class’ (or the ruling class-in-the-making’s) goals and objectives. Sometimes one half becomes dominant, but too much force does not make for efficient domination, let alone real hegemony. The more active the hegemony, the better: far, far better than force, but better too than sullen acquiescence or even senses dulled by too many hedonistic lures. Yet in Africa, soaking in popular images abounding with brutality that are not just constructs of western media racism, one wonders if even forms of

capitalist hegemony, let alone anything close to cornucopian visions of socialism, are on the agenda. Given the inorganic and coercive nature of the state forms that came with colonialism, the construction of hegemony through its apparatuses could hardly be expected to be easy. Yet, the instruments and organisations enabling people to believe they have influence on the way in which their society is governed have emerged in many instances. Modalities of representation and participation continue to rise and fall as political struggles go on.

The post-cold war moment: from democratic consent to order

In general, though, the second assumption or goal of modern development contrasts starkly with the first, and indeed may be negated by it. Yet the liberal-democratic democracy donors who took charge when the end of the Cold War appeared to make elections and such affairs denoting a modicum of consent 'safe' – the communists could no longer steal it from those naïve enough to vote for leftists and thus endanger their own sacrosanct freedoms, so the story went (Bennett 1998: 61) – bought into the vision of a seamless web linking market and political freedom (Abrahamsen 2000, Robinson 1996, Carothers 1999, 2003). Tagging on to the discontents engendered by the ideological fantasies of neo-liberalism (many people across the continent were demonstrating their unhappiness with the consequences of the Bretton Woods institutions' 'structural adjustment programmes' efforts to release the market by reducing state involvement in the economy) the unknowing Gramscians thought that the best way to get consent was to allow a few parties to compete for it. For them, if there were an adequate system of representation voters would be content to hand over some of their autonomy to members of the elite who could best articulate their world-views. And if the economists could make the case that there was no alternative to capitalism, then the small problem of competing ideologies would be eliminated: political competition would not extend very far in the direction of challenging the imperatives of the scientific laws of economic development. Thus, the democracy exporters and the economic development advisors of the 1990s and early 2000s were akin to Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' developing strategies to assist the 'moral and intellectual leadership' of their cohorts.

There is much agreement that elections to government are a good way to garner this consent, and much money is spent by donors to encourage them in the contemporary 'third world'. Yet liberal democracy goes far beyond

elections, which as Paul Collier (2009) and Robert Mugabe (Moore and Raftopoulos 2012) remind us are prone to much manipulation: good constitutions, the rule of law, property rights, the independence of the various branches of the state, a widespread spirit of entrepreneurialism, and freedoms of assembly and opinion all add up to the western dream. This is (liberal) hegemony – Gramsci’s variegated balance of consent and coercion, weighted heavily in favour of the former part of the equation, extending from ‘system’ to ‘rulers’. Liberal democracy is development discourse’s endpoint in this realm, maybe the simple and heartfelt wish of global proselytisers; perhaps the best to buttress the ‘economic’ structures of a state-society complex (Cox 1987). It could even allow cultural diversity to persist, as long as nothing transgresses the market too drastically. Thus the two sides of the developmental dreams meet with ‘capitalist democracy’.

However, the political and ideological half of the ‘mainstream’ development equation is not nearly as robust as the economic side. Political liberals are not as self-confident as their economic cousins. How could they be, if they had read Gramsci? As noted above, the state in unevenly developed societies such as the south of Italy (Ghosh 2001) was ‘everything’ because civil society is as underdeveloped as the class that usually brings it to fruition (ie the ‘independent bourgeoisie’ for which Barrington Moore Jr’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* [1966] searches). Until the fullness of primitive accumulation, the nascent ruling class’ alliances for hegemony are made with extractive capital on the outside, and the guardians of old modes of production on the inside: in the twain meets the political economy of rent-seeking and patron-client relations in the shadows of the state. In the heydays of structural adjustment, economists in institutions such as the World Bank seemed to be convinced that if they could unleash the magic of the market, states would be unnecessary. Since then, however, they have become more cognisant of the need for states that can create the market and along with some political scientists have ushered in the discourse of ‘good governance’ (Young and Williams 1994, also in Moore 2007a). They have seen that the market is an ‘institution’ with many forms and origins instead of some natural all-pervading force (Rodrik 2008). Yet for them the state can never be trusted to push the process of primitive accumulation forward: it would either be too democratic, facing socio-economic demands that would lead to fiscal crisis (Hirschman 1991, O’Connor 1973, Huntington et al 1975), or it would simply create a class of corrupt rent-seekers and conspicuous consumers rather than the puritanical industrial capitalists of

development discourse's imagined memory.

Thus, nearly a quarter of a century in the wake of the Cold War, development discourse is less enthusiastic about fully-democratic states than on the morrow of the Iron Curtain's opening. As one BBC journalist entitled his book, *Democracy Kills* – unless, as he quoted the popular interventionist Paul Collier, per capita income rises above \$2,700 per annum (Hawksley 2009). As this equation has it, this is when 'democracy can begin to take hold, a point when the individual feels something is worth protecting rather than sacrificing violently for a greater ideal'. When the journalist spoke to a director of a Taiwanese think-tank, the magic number was \$5,000, reached there in 1985: 'that was the point when we were able to move from a government-planned to a market economy that led to the first political freedoms ... in the early stages of development stability is the most important factor' (Hawksley 2009: 122). The linearity is inescapable: until these social formations reach this minimalist nirvana, the 'international community' is invited to create technocratic states guarded by United Nations peacekeepers – perhaps invading or sponsoring coups to that end – in the image of the Marshall and Dodge Plans that reconstructed Germany and Japan after World War II. Combined with the humanitarian nuances of the R2P hue, this looks benign (Paris 2004, Jarstad and Sisk 2008), even though many of these interventions take place along political lines that many scholars thought would end with the Cold War's demise, carrying with it the free-riders such as Mobutu Sese-Seko (Easterly 2010).

Some 'armchair warriors' (Easterly 2009) signal the end of the short-lived liberal-democracy-at-any-cost era of development discourse on Africa in favor of benign interventionism. They will have to hang around to fix up institutions of state and market for more decades, well after colonialism supposedly left the historical scene. Mark Duffield notes that this desire for radical transformation has even infiltrated the realm of humanitarian aid (2002, 2007), while Christopher Cramer (2006) calls it this tendency in its post-conflict reconstruction guise the 'great makeover fantasy'. The interventionists will debate the ethics and practicality of their moves *ad infinitum*. As Michael Doyle (2009) admits, John Stuart Mill was cogitating on the same issues many years ago. In the meantime, while the interventionists and their opponents debate, many of the subjects of these discussions will be turning to what Masunungure and Shumba (2012) call, in the Zimbabwean case, 'electoral authoritarianism', and 'governments of national unity' will ensue for many years as new political classes merge with old in *modus*

vivendis putting off democracy for decades.

Perhaps we have to become, like the ‘melancholic optimists’ at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (Cramer 2006, Sender 1999), resigned to a fate of many year of primitive accumulation, modified only by the abilities of states to develop the capacity to deliver a modicum of public goods before too many more people die in their pursuit. To be sure, states will only do this if public demand is strong enough to force its inhabitants to abandon their private and family pursuits for those somewhat wider (Ekeh 1975). More control over the force of accumulation can only be developed in the context of pressure from ‘below’ rather than interventions from alongside or policies from ‘above’. The pursuit of Paul Collier’s \$2,700 per capita income is more likely to come from the creative energies of Africa’s citizenry – with market and political freedoms within a state formation grasping for popular as well as state sovereignty – than from technocrats, soldiers and mendicants (Hardt and Negri 2000) pouring in from the rest of the world. This does not imply a fully liberal economy; but indicates democracy from the ground up can strengthen a ‘developmental state’ that needs force to implement public goods.

Current trends: from the general to the particular

It is within such concerns that recent optimists’ prognoses must be measured. The trend within business analysts, rather than political economists, is hyper-optimism, not the melancholic sort or especially Afro-pessimism. Yet although consultants are known for their pollyanna tendencies, they cannot be ignored totally. Data (undoubtedly massaged to a positive spin) in the McKinsey report, *Lions on the Move* (2010: 3-5, 45) are emblematic. According to this report, Africa’s future could not be brighter. Its \$1.6 trillion collective GDP in 2008 was roughly equal to Brazil or Russia’s (in 1991 it was about equal to Belgium’s), with real GDP growth of 4.9 per cent from 2004 to 2008 (more than twice the rate of 1980s and 1990s) and a more than 2.7 per cent increase in labour productivity annually since 2000. Forty per cent of Africa’s people now live in cities, compared with 28 per cent in 1980. Eighteen million households earned more than \$5,000 per annum, which is when they start to spend half their income on items other than food alone: and in ten years the number of households with discretionary income will rise by 50 per cent to reach 128 million people. By 2040 Africa’s workforce could be 1.1 billion, overtaking China and India; and with 60 per cent of the world’s arable land, this youthful population – a fifth of the world’s youth – could be hard

at work producing food for the rest of the world. With 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves, 40 per cent of its gold, and 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the chromium and platinum groups, and trade changing from Western to Asian countries (from 1990 to 2008, African trade with Asia doubled to 28 per cent while it shrunk from 51 per cent to 28 per cent with Western Europe, and China's investment in infrastructure has surpassed the World Bank's since 2005), it seems that Africa is poised to grow with the rest of the global South.

One can hardly expect such cheerleaders to pause at the prospect of primitive accumulation's vehement progression, but the chirpy document demurs from analysing countries, disaggregating only at the level of self-defined categories based on the diversification of economies. Thus the report ignores one of the main causes of Africa's uneven development, that being the way in which new ruling classes form around state structures, melding a fragile hegemony over many small states into accumulation strategies far from 'regional', let alone continental, scale. Along with primitive accumulation, state consolidation is a catalyst for violence, but it turns to development only if the right synergies are created (Moore 2001, 2003a). When these rulers feel threatened, more violence than the indignities of inequality ensue: efforts to promote greater political participation – and even liberal democracy moves the consent quotient upwards – often lead to brutal responses and sometimes the unsavoury status of 'failed state' (Bah 2012, Kabamba 2008, 2012). Thus, on the participatory score, McKinsey's analysts do not use the word 'democracy' once, and the only time 'democratic' is used is when it precedes 'Republic of the Congo': a place that has only the thinnest façade of this political mode. 'Order' seems to be the subtext, if not the assumption.

Yet for African citizens on the ground instead of in the domain of well-paid consultants for Optimism International, the diminution of democracy may have more than super-structural effects. This is one lesson from Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe: even relative 'success stories' can be ruined if the democratic dimension fails (to be sure, patriotic agrarianists claim that the land invasions on white commercial farms informing Zimbabwe's current political economy lead to more democracy: in that case, 'democracy' may be starting all over again with a racial twist on the primitive accumulate problematic (Moore 2003b, Scoones et al 2010). The Kenyan example illustrates that although the race question adds a unique factor to Zimbabwe's case, it can only account for some aspects of the crisis there. As Kagwanja

and Southall (2009) put it, the aftermath of Kenya's 2007 election highlights for all of Africa

the ever-present risk of election disputes degenerating into deadly conflicts in the context of weak institutions, elite fragmentation, surging ethnic nationalism, authoritarian undertows, corruption, widening social economic inequalities, historically embedded injustices, grinding poverty, debt overhang and the spillover effects of climate change and global recession. (Kagwanja and Southall 2009: 260)

As for 'governments of unity', the question is if internationally and regionally mediated democracy dampening in the wake of excessive coercion only keeps the coals smouldering to flame later, or if they are a judicious combination of techniques of 'order' and 'African modes of inclusion' (Spears 2013) that slow down the killings and hasten 'development', be it prebendal mal-development (Joseph 2013) or proto-capitalist forms of preliminary accumulation. The 'pre' and 'proto' prefixes constitute the questions that only history will tell. Is 'Africa' permanently beset with patron-client relations that will never head to productive processes of capitalist democracy? Could these be 'stages' leading to a mode of production and politics including capitalism and democracy: neither BRICS-ish nor 'western', but with 'African characteristics' – and far from teleological? Might they be able to include forms of *ubuntu* combining elements of redistributive ideology *and* cynical manipulation of an ersatz 'identity', with a mix approaching a notion of 'nation' encouraging social democracy rather than identity leaning closer to xenophobia than tolerance? Could all of this lead to significant advances along paths of equality and participation? One can be neither teleologically 'modernist' nor culturalist/essentialist and static, but only note that the notion of 'progress' captured in the African National Congress's slogan 'A Better Life for All' is universal.² It will not be won without the democratic space allowing social configurations with material interests in 'all' rather than a small ruling class. This will have to be joined with structures of accumulation that in the recent past have only been accomplished with the heavy hand of 'developmental states'. Whether that iron fist strikes at freedom of assembly with the same force as it hits at capital's liberty is the crux of development's dilemma: it is much easier for ruling collectivities to repress the former than to channel the latter.

Meanwhile in Kenya, pre-election violence in the early weeks of 2013 (Allison 2103) suggested that even carefully crafted governments of national unity (Cheeseman and Tendi 2010) – replete with some of the biggest

parliamentarians' salaries in the world – and the International Criminal Court's pursuit of the perpetrators of the last elections' trail of death, do not eliminate deeply-rooted violence erupting at the moment of power's transition. Zimbabwe's four and a half year 'transitional inclusive government', imposed in the wake of a mid-2008 'run-off' election, necessitated by the opposition's earlier slightly less than majority victory so violent the leader of the opposition withdrew, cooled the ardour of both a furious ruling party (and let it rebuild) and served 'the people' notice that the new kids on the block might not be that different from the devils they knew (Raftopoulos 2013a). Zimbabwe's 2013 election saw a combination of coercion, chicanery and consent of the 'populist authoritarian' sort that created a victory so huge even the ruling party was shocked, thus shaking nearly sacred beliefs about transitions to liberal democracy in Africa at large (Raftopoulos 2013b, Tendi 2013). ZANU-PF'S ability to manoeuvre its way back to a position of weakly contested power indicates how a series of blocked election losses and unity efforts in the name of 'order' serve only to make the status quo last longer. In the absence of the incumbents' ability to create productive and redistributive conditions for 'development', it is far from certain that these manufactured models of democratisation work in the long term. It is probably better to expand democracy in the first instance rather than wait for some indefinable future when the conditions might be more propitious, or to impose some impossibly technocratic extension of a perceived impasse in the meantime.

Conclusion: back to democracy?

The construction of a progressive form of capitalism in Africa can only proceed with a consent crafted through the consolidation and deepening of democracy (Saul 1997, 2010). It is only with political freedom that those wanting it to spread to the socio-economic realm too can push their agendas, and this must be expanded wider than within states and ruling parties that can never be trusted completely. Paradoxically and perhaps tragically, however, it may be that such deepening only proceeds with the development of a vibrant working class that first exercises its power at a workplace created by a process of industrialisation kick-started by a vicious process of primitive accumulation, be it through a 'developmental state' or more 'private' initiatives (Rueschemeyer et al 1992). This process seems only partially underway in Africa, and the evidence that it is on its way quickly is not very convincing. However, if it is possible to strengthen states

democratically so that those who are released from feudal and other pre-capitalist bonds can use their new freedoms to convince the state to use its coercive powers against 'free market' forces militating against relatively equitable development, instead of new entrants to the state, a new start could be in the offing. The public good of development could be hastened, whilst some 'private' goods turning out to be public 'bads' could be stymied. There is enough doubt in the efficacy of benign imperialism assisting in this process to warrant extreme caution in that regard: however, given that many 'sub-imperial' powers – for example, South Africa in the Zimbabwean case – often intervene to slow democracy down, one is forced to consider carefully other countervailing external powers' involvement rather than dismissing them simply as 'imperialist'. In any case, the forces to watch out for are those absorbed in state-party accumulation structures leading away from the goal of deepening democracy.

Amidst the travails and tragedies of what seems to be a permanent process of primitive accumulation, new generations of democratic activists blend the attributes of social justice with fierce pursuit of civil liberties. They portend new combinations of freedoms as yet unknown that could take their continent beyond its current impasse (Raftopoulos 2006, Habib 2010). While expanding these concatenations of control and constraint, however, they – and their cosmopolitan well-wishers – would be wise to heed Bill Freund's words cautioning careful analysis of the systems and processes contextualising freedom's pursuit. Only a dogged historical, structural, and comparative analysis of the conditions within capitalism's formative moments will allow the necessary questions circling around the nexus of coercion and consent – about power and freedom – to be asked. These questions and their admittedly tentative answers will 'ineradicably suggest ... a broad sense of the possible [and the] limits through which in one historical era [African people] ... can make ... [their] own history' (1999 in Moore 2006: 10).

If the horizon for democracy appears further away than ever, Gramsci's question, inspired by Machiavelli, asking 'when can the conditions for awakening and developing a national-popular collective will be said to exist' (Balakrishnan 2005:17) can only be answered through such work. Only conditions of relative freedom can allow the analytical quest for such: and they cannot exist without struggle. As Balakrishnan reminds us, when confronted with such conditions even the arch-realist Machiavelli had an ethical side: accurate analysis, itself gained against the odds, can allow the 'good man to teach others the good that you could not work because of the

malignity of the times or of fortune, so that when many are capable of it, someone of them more loved by heaven will be able to work it' (2005: 18). Africa's new generation on the verge of knowledge and power will have to take this advice, as the developmental dialectic between consent and coercion continues.

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Notes

1. BRICS is the acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This group of states has been organised to mark its members' status in the world system of multilateral organisations as 'not quite third world any more' but something substantially different than, and a challenge to, the advanced capitalist countries in the G8 (now the G7 again, given Russia's responses to Ukrainian events, thus making Russia more BRICS and 'emerging out of third world' than 'first world'). However, Russia seems to be the least 'third world' in BRICS, and China's overall global status puts it on a different plane than South Africa's tadpole economy. China's overall poverty and rural-urban divides serve, however, to grant it 'third world' status while South Africa's political and economic power *vis a vis* the rest of Africa grant it BRICS standing. A BRICS development bank is planned, indicating an effort to challenge the hegemony of the World Bank and the IMF at the economic level. Overall, however, it seems that the contradictions inherent in BRICS would weaken the chances for a concerted challenge to the global system: BRICS rather indicates movement towards 'western capitalism' than an alternative to it.
2. One reviewer noted tendencies in this essay verging on the teleological, and wondered if a Chinese model would influence African modes of politics and production. These few sentences respond to that query: one could also note the great variety of 'capitalisms' history has produced, and the powerful forces in the global economy that combine with African modes to produce enough examples of both predatory and progressive/productive behaviour to necessitate excessive empirical study and projections much more cautious than consulting firms' reports.

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