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Finding the Missing Links

Internalizing Development: The Question of Intent

One would think that by now, more than 50 years since the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries gained independence, they would have completed the task of nation-building. But the reality is that a big mismatch exists between Africa's legal, political and economic institutions in name and what these actually deliver in practice. This appears to be an outcome of a serious lack of ownership and a failure to 'internalize' development. Such a perception is shared by African scholars.¹

Before people can 'internalize' development (that is, being oriented towards development as individuals), some kind of visions or schemes for development at the national level to which people can ascribe would be required. Hence, the government's 'moral authority'—which derives from leadership, credibility, performance, etc.—is vital to encouraging people to actively comply with government initiatives. Certainly, the formation of a national consensus and unity will be a huge boost for development. But as many Africans would divulge, their national identity, sense of nation and patriotism are comparatively weak and

ambiguous. This, together with the weakness of the role of the states, has impeded the ability of African countries to pursue development. As a result, many African nations have spent decades following independence with the facade of development, like electoral democracy and economic liberalization, without substantively making much progress in the essence of nation-building and modernization.

There is a popular saying that poverty should not be passed on to the next generation. The task of development has to be taken seriously by African countries because they are certain to face mounting social, economic and political pressures that can erupt and unleash untenable consequences.

As far as the political system is concerned, the 'hybrid regime' that is typical of Sub-Saharan Africa has proven to be unsuccessful and should also be redressed. Africa's hybrid regimes which combine the formality of liberal-democratic polity with neo-patrimonial authoritarianism are the outcome of the adaptation of the Western political system to 'local needs'. The problem is that they have the attribute of being neither democratic nor transformative, but in essence are status quo-oriented. Rather than being transitory, this type of polity coupled with problematic electoral democracy appears to be assuming permanence in Africa.

The downsides of this kind of system are that it seemingly satisfies (even if in a minimalist fashion) popular demand, while protecting the vested interests of the privileged class, so that it is ultimately status quo-promoting. But what may be a comfort zone for political leaders can turn out to be exactly the opposite of what 'national development' requires. David Booth and Dianna Cammack rightly point out the clear gap that exists between formal democratic institutions and the reality in Africa: 'The trouble with democracy, as a substantive reality and not just a set of formal arrangements, is that its effectiveness depends on social and economic conditions that are not yet enjoyed in most developing countries'.²

African countries should pause and think about how to comprehensively and meaningfully alter their approach of development rather than following the same course that will only yield the same results. This is a critical task of 'internalizing' development, and it comes down to the basic question of intent. There are so many variables that can have an

impact on the livelihood of nations, but African countries should be able to discern between 'external variables' and 'internal variables' and understand their implications.

The reason why Sub-Saharan Africa's 'development frame' has been ineffective in comparison to other regions like East Asia is that Africa got the priorities or sequencing wrong: it treats the external variables as the 'principal' variables while relegating the internal variables to a 'secondary' status. Sub-Saharan African countries have always tended to seek explanations and solutions 'outside' of themselves, and they continue to do so, even though they talk about ownership. Many Asian countries, and particularly South Korea, understood that development is what comes from within, like taking action to catch up with rich countries with a strong sense of responsibility and ownership.

South Koreans could have placed the blame for the country's predicaments on a range of external factors like the colonial legacy, the Korean War, geopolitics, geographical and natural conditions, etc. They could have relied on foreign aid without making strenuous efforts for development, leaving the nation's destiny in the hands of outsiders and external dynamics. If this had been the case, Korea would never have even come close to what it achieved.

So the real question lies in the *intent* of Sub-Saharan African nations. How much do African leaders, elites and the general public want to see change? What is the thinking of political leaders and are they really prioritizing national development or are they more interested in amassing wealth for themselves and simply staying in power as long as they can? What is certain is that economic transformation and the overall national development that entails structural changes will not occur as a result of technical prowess and the introduction of systems only.

One of the misguided thoughts that is widely held in the region is that people cannot do things and need assistance from outsiders because they lack the necessary 'capacity'. But capacity is not something that can be injected into someone and then have an immediate effect like vaccination; there is the 'knowledge' part and the 'application' part, and while the former can be gotten from others, the latter is totally up to oneself. In the absence of determination and implementation, knowledge will end up merely as knowledge. When there is a willingness to

learn, it will simply be a matter of time before knowledge and skills will be acquired. Nothing can happen all at once and everything is achieved through the 'building-block' approach, as no one has skills and expertise from the beginning.

An overwhelming number of invitation programmes for capacity-building, study tours, conferences, education, cultural exchanges, etc. are offered to Africans of various backgrounds by donor countries and organizations. Many entry points are provided, but apparently many Africans are not fully taking advantage of these programmes to promote their individual and collective capacity.

Edmund Phelps, the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2006, rightly points out that 'economic growth is dependent on the character of the nation'.³ Mindful of this, it will be worthwhile to figure out what would be the 'missing links' to development. In my view, they are the following three elements: (1) a sense of nation or national identity; (2) 'development-mindedness'; and (3) a strong role played by the state—coherent industrial policy, prioritization of agriculture-rural development, etc. For African countries, securing these missing links is certainly achievable if there is the intent to do so.

But we also need to take account of the realities such as the 'odd' electoral democracy, the influence of the internet/social media and globalization, the government's policy of providing handouts, etc. The development of ICT enabling greater access, sharing of information and inter-connectivity, along with economic globalization, are also affecting the lives of African people. These would make people conscious of global trends and raise their expectations of the things to come.

This, coupled with the dependency syndrome which seems to have only been exacerbated over time by the government's policy of providing handouts, has fostered a troubling environment where people's demand keeps growing to the extent that meeting these demands becomes unsustainable. The paradox is that while political leaders and civil servants struggle to respond to people's demands with what available resources they have, the population do not become any more empowered in terms of becoming more responsible and productive. Social pressure mounts when African states continue to fail to deliver public services and mismanage the economy.

African countries and the international community alike should take a long hard look at what takes place underneath the facade of African dynamics. Let us take economic growth, for example. It is true that over the last decade or so, many Sub-Saharan African countries have achieved quite impressive growth and this is to be commended. However, when one looks at the substance, growth was led by extractive industries (and now the downturn because of this), and multi-nationals or foreign companies were the ones that profited the most. Business, investments and economic growth did not translate into meaningful industrial transformation, the creation of a manufacturing sector or the creation of significant job opportunities for the masses.

When African economies are assessed in terms of the key parameters of economic development like industrial structure, infrastructure and agriculture, there is hardly any country that would qualify as a success.⁴ A raw materials or commodity-based industrial structure, absolute shortage and poorly maintained physical infrastructure, a rudimentary and non-competitive agricultural sector, etc. are the causes and at the same time the reflections of chronic weaknesses of the Sub-Saharan African economies.

Many countries are belatedly prioritizing the expansion of physical infrastructure and the increase in power-generating capacity. It is surprising to see that the countries are still struggling to achieve the minimum level of the most basic features of infrastructure, like roads, railways and electricity supply. This is often attributed to a lack of funding, but human failure, which manifests itself as mismanagement, diversion of funds, lack of will and follow-up actions, is more responsible for such deficiencies.

In many cases, the conditions and efforts for 'economic take-off' were not put together from the start. Rural-agricultural development, a backbone for economic transformation, has not been given due attention and pursued energetically because of a lack of understanding of the basics of economics and a reluctance to foresee the problems ahead. When it comes to the formulation and, more importantly, the implementation of national policies, the myopic approach has always incurred heavy costs.

Many things that people are hoping for in developing countries may not easily come about when the leaders' and people's way of life and work patterns are steadfastly maintained. The situation is that people are unwilling to change their attitudes and yet they want to become better off. But how you change without changing? This demands a holistic and long-term view of the problems and solutions, and self-reflection.

What African countries can easily do if they have the willingness to do so is to hold national dialogues, leading to action-oriented national campaigns to enhance people's awareness of national tasks and to build a national consensus on the way forward. Nation-building is far from being achieved in the region. The identification and pursuit of societal and national objectives and values are vital for the nation to move forwards, and common goals or interests should be established at the national as well as the community level.

But what will be counterproductive is sectarianism or sectarian interest-seeking at the extreme, especially when the social fabric and social capital are weak, as is the case in Africa. There is no shortage of public gatherings or events, and very long hours are spent conducting protocols and listening to what everyone has to say. These should become venues for leaders and the people to engage in fruitful discussions and debates on public agendas and how to work together to achieve national goals.

A Sense of Nation and National Identity

It is generally recognized that the sense of nation and national identity in Sub-Saharan African nations are not as strong as in many other nations in different regions. A high level of ethnic diversity is what stands out as a distinct characteristic of Sub-Saharan Africa, but ethnic diversity in itself cannot be correlated to instability or considered to be a direct cause of underdevelopment. And ethnicism and loyalty to the state do not necessarily come into direct conflict. This is all the more so when people realize that the state and their ethnic entity are at different levels. What impact ethnical divergence or multi-ethnicism would have on the nations would vary from country to country, and the

overall outcome of the studies on ethnicity and development tends to be inconclusive.

Crawford Young talks about Africanism, territorial nationalism and ethnicity as 'the ambiguous triple helix of identity' and concludes that they operate on different tracks: 'Territorial nationalism usually does not compete directly with ethnicity; in contrast to what happens in Europe, in Africa ethnic groups are never referred to as "national minorities" juxtaposed to a titular nationality ... the prevalence of multilingualism lowers the temperature of language issues that are so volatile in India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Belgium or Canada'.⁵

One thing that is quite remarkable and should be taken note of regarding territorial nationalism in Sub-Saharan Africa is that the territorial boundaries of African states that were drawn during the peak of the colonial era remain virtually intact today, long after the independence of nations. While the artificially set linear territorial boundaries did not match the ethnic identity map, Africans have been able to maintain their existing state boundaries. A more accurate way of putting it may be that they have opposed the fragmentation of their territory or, because of the apparently huge task that any effort for re-alignment of territories would entail, they might have accepted living with what has already been given. Pierre Englebert and Kevin C. Dunn point out that 'for all the talk of the emphasis on ethnicity in Africa, one of the most salient and puzzling features of African politics is actually the surprising degree of national identity that African states have managed to produce among their citizens, and the extent to which the latter profess nationalist sentiments despite their subnational divisions'.⁶ As mentioned by these authors, this is somewhat paradoxical, given the colonial origins of these states.

Considering the degree of Africa's ethnic diversity, nationalism in this region (or, to be more precise, territorial nationalism) can be viewed as quite remarkable. But in reality, Sub-Saharan Africa's nationalism is neither forceful nor ideological. It is rather weak, as is in the case for the role of the state. Territorial nationalism might have been maintained because it is conveniently in compromise with ethnicity, not superseding it. Another reason could be that from the standpoint of ethnic entities, since the ethnic composition is complex, they would see no point

in seceding to form a separate state entity when they lack the capacity and self-sufficiency in terms of resources and infrastructures, as well as being impeded in terms of geographical remoteness, etc.

Nationalism, which originated in Europe centuries ago, evolved in other regions around the world in the twentieth century with the rise of anti-colonialism and doctrine of self-determination during the independence struggles of the colonized. In the process of fighting for independence, the inhabitants of colonial territories became a nation. By the early second half of the twentieth century, 'nationhood' became universal and the international political norm. Sub-Saharan African countries, in the wave of independence, strived for nation-building which was necessary in order to gain not only internal legitimation but also international respectability. Crawford Young points out that 'the nation-building project generally did succeed in representing territorial nationalism as a higher form of identity distinct from ethnicity, existing on a different identity track. Ethnicity was deemed legitimate within a purely cultural and private kinship realm but not as a discourse of statehood'.⁷

In Sub-Saharan Africa, ethnic tensions can be latent, subdued, sporadic or exploited, but they do not often degenerate into all-out violence, although there are some exceptions to this. It would be fair to say that in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, ethnicity does not directly challenge or pose a danger to territorial nationalism. In some instances, a high degree of ethnicity can have a moderating effect on potential cracks or the break-up of a nation. Uganda provides a good case study in this respect. It is viewed as the most ethnically diverse nation on earth, but its very multi-ethnicity makes the predominance of any single ethnic group virtually impossible as others will be united against it. Ethnic checks and balances, even if they are far from ideal, are having an effect. The people of Uganda have lived through tough times and lengthy civil wars in the past, during the eras of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, the Bush Wars and the fight against Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army. And over the course of time, they have learned the lessons of the dangers of ethnical sectarianism getting out of hand. Rwanda, by African standards, is one of the least ethnically diverse countries, but it experienced the most horrific genocide in Africa.

The 'backtracking syndrome' is also at work here. At the time when Sub-Saharan African countries gained independence, a major feature of nationhood was about differentiating it from, and transcending, tribalism or ethnicity. At the beginning, many African leaders considered that ethnicity would soon become a relic; the Guinean leader Sekou Toure declared that 'in three or four years, no one will remember the tribal, ethnic or religious rivalries which, in the recent past, caused so much damage to our country and its population'.⁸ Like Toure, subsequent nationalist leaders of the new African nations vehemently rejected ethnic nationalism, seeing it as a threat to their states.⁹ But, as it turned out, this was all an illusion. Ethnicism never withered, but the existence of states itself was not seriously threatened either. Later on, the leaders themselves would often take advantage of ethnicism for their own political purposes.

Nation-building with the sense of nation or patriotism at its core is not the task of leaders or government only, but should also be supported and driven by the people. If the masses have no part in it, there is no point in pushing for nation-building in the first place. How nation-building was achieved in most other countries was through 'movement' rather than in a customary fashion. The realization of nation-building without the people's support and fervour is hard to imagine.

So why has nation-building still not been accomplished in Sub-Saharan African countries? Why has the weakness of nationhood in Africa continued for so long? Many have attributed this to colonial legacies and the way in which post-colonial transitions took place. Normally, new nations around the world have developed a sense of nation and national identity over the course of their history or through their struggle for independence. But as some have pointed out, Sub-Saharan Africa's independence by and large did not feature 'vehement' struggles in a political sense, as was the case in many other countries outside the region, and the colonialists' state apparatus was virtually handed over to them. Since independence was not earnestly fought for, the result is a weak sense of nation and patriotism.¹⁰ The mismatch between the euphoria of independence and the reality that unfolded thereafter in Sub-Saharan Africa is still repeating itself in the

twenty-first century in a rather dramatic fashion in South Sudan: no sooner had South Sudan become independent than it was drawn into a much deeper turmoil of constant internal conflict and chaos.

A sense of nation—the feeling of togetherness as a nation—that has a special meaning and value of its own as an integral part of people's lives and which matters for their livelihood is what constitutes an essential foundation for nation-building and national development. But in Africa, not only is this noticeably weak, but it is also often misinterpreted or purposely distorted.

Many still blame the 'colonial legacy' for this, but what should be considered even more seriously is the 'Africans' legacy of missteps'. It does not make logical sense to blame the former while being silent about the latter, which is much more pertinent to the reality of Africa today. So how can the sense of nation and patriotism, which should have been cemented a long time ago at the outset of independence, be erected at this time of ever-heightening liberalization and inter-dependence on a global scale? I believe this will be a true test of the commitment and readiness of Sub-Saharan African countries to move on to the next stage of development. The answer is simple: make conscientious effort now before it become even more difficult.

Development-Mindedness

Now, we are coming down to the crucial part in the discourse on development: development-mindedness. It seems that everyone in Africa wants to see their country develop, but not many seem to genuinely understand, let alone do, what it takes to being about that development. This could be due to many things, but in my view, what is most fundamentally missing is 'development-mindedness'.

So what is development-mindedness? It is a matter of definition and I have purposely simplified it to mean what is 'functional'; it falls within the realm of 'work ethics'. Development-mindedness is a mindset that is conducive to the development or *fulfilment of one's work*. This book takes a logical viewpoint (of 'structural functionalism' in sociology) that a nation ('the whole') is made up of its members, the individuals ('parts'

or 'entities'), and that national development is the aggregate sum of their actions. I base my proposition on the premise that human factors or actions are the single most important component of national development, because the essence of development lies in 'doing' or 'taking action', and not on 'possessing' materials or resources.

So, what constitutes development-mindedness? In an effort to search for the answer to this question, I had to think about what cycle people generally go through or what the things are that people have to do in order to successfully achieve their aims. What I have deduced is the following, 'KPOP': (1) knowledge; (2) practising (embodying); (3) owning; and (4) passion (devotion). The sequencing may not necessarily occur in this order and could vary, and these elements tend to be interactive. I may refer these elements, which are pertinent to national development, as 'steps' or 'phases' for the sake of convenience.

The first thing anyone must do is to *know* what and how to do things. But know-how itself will be of no help if it is not put into practice. As the saying goes, knowing and doing are two very different things. It should also be plain that practising involves 'embodying' process, and these two tend to go together. 'Practising' means going beyond just knowing—to really digest and put into action what needs to be done. The next phase is taking 'ownership', which means that the individuals themselves are 'taking charge' of their work in an active, responsible manner. This would entail broadening of thinking on the planning and execution of tasks. The last phase is 'passion', where people show genuine devotion and motivation for their work. This is what really pushes people to excel and reach the culmination of their work.

This rule applies to everybody from all walks of life and at every level: national leaders, politicians, bureaucrats and public service workers, CEOs and businessmen, labourers, farmers, students, specialists, technicians, academicians, etc. 'Knowing'—that is, acquiring knowledge or expertise—is an initial but important step. One learns through natural process, studying and training in various forms. Many upper and middle-class people are well versed in the category of 'know-how' and have a grasp of the issues and the way forward, thanks to their enthusiasm for, and early exposure to, higher education and frequent contacts with the outside world. In fact, their ability to express themselves in an

organized manner impresses many visiting foreigners. In elite circles and the well-to-do class, their level of knowledge and expression is up to the 'world-class'. But the domain of 'knowing', while essential, is only an introductory part, and it has to be followed by the 'main body' of embodiment, application, ownership and passion.

But 'knowledge' is by no means a given. This is especially true for ordinary people like the youth and the rural populace. What is encouraging to see is that at least the students are enthusiastic and have a yearning for education in many parts of Africa. Of course, a great disparity in terms of the quality of education exists between urban centres and rural areas, where teachers' absenteeism is very high and the contents of education or knowledge imparted often have little relevance to reality.

Practising or applying knowledge is a much more challenging part. The main issue here is twofold: either very little work has been done or things are done improperly. No doubt, a widespread propensity of inaction and non-implementation is evident in Africa. Even worse, people frequently apply their know-how not to where it is due, but to do things that are detrimental to society and the public interest. This is common among civil servants throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Government departments, law enforcement authorities and local governance bodies are deeply entrenched in irregularities, corruption and abuse of power, so that the problems have become institutional and undermine what little progress is made.

The picture outside the public sector is no less bleak. Sometimes workers have little regard for the most basic things. We can see many instances where knowledge, practice, ownership and devotion are all missing. Many things break down easily, but people tend not to mind and take it for granted. What is clearly visible and can be very easily fixed is often ignored. For example, I heard a story of local employees at a training institute in Uganda who did not bother to do anything about newly purchased classroom chairs. They were new and in good condition, except for a few loose joints that could be easily fixed manually. The employees were blaming the product and saying it was now useless. The principal of the institute, a foreigner, was at a loss in relation

to their utter irresponsibility, and he fixed the chairs himself by simply tightening up the screws.

Unnecessary wastage and loss due to such indifference and carelessness is beyond our imagination. In general, some point out that it is not only the ‘commoners’ but also the ‘capitalists’ of Africa who are known to be wasteful.¹¹ In Sub-Saharan Africa, the ‘mismanagement’ is so prevalent, ranging from something small to something on a national scale, that ‘good management’ is considered rather rare. Probably the more profound harm done is that people become numb to the seriousness of the problem. A question that comes to mind is: ‘If expectations and standards for work are set at such a low level, will development ever be possible?’ A testimony by an Asian national who runs a mechanic shop in Kampala is reflective of this; he half-jokingly said ‘a good thing about working in Uganda is that customers don’t complain about my work, even when my equipment they purchased is not working properly. Better still, they never call me up late in the night to ask me to come and fix it’.

In our world, this KPOP combination can sound like an ideal type. But logically speaking, if the mindset or work ethics cannot keep pace with basic standards, what are the chances of progress? As such, strenuous efforts should be made to bring about the enhancement of quality and productivity of work to meet the acceptable ‘standards’. Let us take an imaginary salesman, for example. In the phase of ‘knowing’, the salesman has to learn the basics—the nuts and bolts of sales and marketing, and company rules and policies. The next ‘practising’ step would require him to *act* as a salesman, ‘embodying’ the routines, being customer-friendly, service-oriented, keeping up with his work schedule and so on. Then in the ‘ownership’ stage, he would be going beyond routine work to have a sense of responsibility and attachment towards his organization. And finally, he would become fully devoted to his work, exhibiting the level of passion to make him a competent and professional businessman.

It is generally recognized that many African nations suffer from mismanagement or a lack of management capabilities. The reason for the scarcity of successful and sustainable businesses run by those native to the region is due to this. And the reason why government projects and

services fail time after time, businesses go bankrupt, factories, hotels and restaurants need foreign managers to keep their business and reputation alive, etc. is because of this shortcoming in development-mindedness.

The human factor of ownership, responsibility and implementation is particularly important. But so much time has been wasted looking elsewhere for answers without addressing the real root causes of the problems of the region. Everybody involved, including the development partners, will have a share of responsibility for this, but no one could deny that the primary responsibility rests squarely with the African people.

This is where mindset change approach can come in. Instead of waiting for the lengthy process to be completed in a sequence, if the mindset change campaign can cause the people to be self-driven and passionate, that is, to go directly to the fourth stage, then stages one, two and three will be taken care of easily and almost automatically. This is the reverse engineering of development-mindedness. Those who feel passionate about doing something will be driven to learn, execute and own the things they want to do *of their own accord*. The reason why 'knowing' is not often followed by 'practising' and 'devoting' is that people are, for some reason, 'involuntary' or 'half-hearted'. In such a situation, coercing people would be counterproductive.

This 'reverse engineering' method can succeed where conventional approach fails. There are examples of such a model of development being tested and applied in Africa. The National Farmers Leadership Centre (NFLC) situated in Kampiringisa in the Mpigi District of Uganda is a prominent case in point. This institution, constructed by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Uganda, was formally opened in May 2016, following the completion of all the facilities, but it had actually been operational for about a year and a half by this point.

During its trial operating period, in January 2015, about 50 Ugandan farmers from the Millennium Village Project in the Isingiro District were selected for a two-week mindset change and agriculture-livestock development courses. What I witnessed was striking. I have not seen such remote villagers attending a training course this elated, energetic and determined. They were said how much gratified

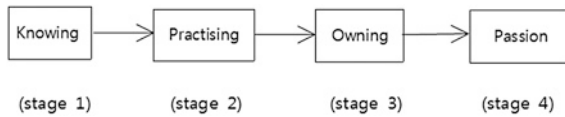


Fig. 5.1 Basic stages of development-mindedness (KPOP)

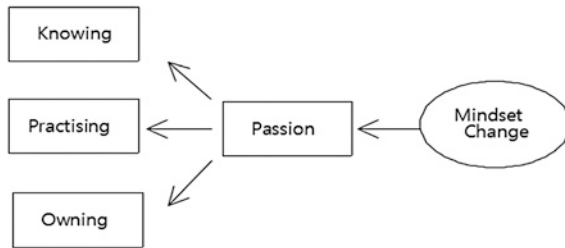


Fig. 5.2 Reverse engineering of development-mindedness

they were, and impressed by, the mindset change training which was something they had never experienced before. What was surprising is that this Canaan Farmers School style mental-disciplinary programme had such a strong appeal to the locals. The aim of this course was to ‘reform’ the trainees’ mind to become self-confident and disciplined.

The benefits of this programme are having a sense of self-esteem, confidence, responsibility and being motivated to work. Those on the programme have to wake up at 5 a.m. every morning to participate in jogging and cleaning-up exercises before having breakfast and starting their classes. To my amazement, I later learned that these farmers, long after having returned to their villages, had stuck to this daily routine, chanting ‘I can do it’ slogans well before dawn. And this sounds almost like magic because it is all done *voluntarily*. The reason why it appeals to them in such a way may be because it felt innately ‘natural’ for them.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate the basic stages of evolution of development-mindedness and the reverse engineering scheme respectively. The sequencing shown in Fig. 5.1 need not be taken literally; it is simply to illustrate a general idea and the order may vary depending on the individuals involved and the relevant circumstances.

Figure 5.2 shows the logic of the mindset change programme that was successful in South Korea. A successful drive for mindset change has the advantage of instantly impacting human attitudes and behaviour. Instilling people's mind with a can-do spirit, positive motivation and encouraging them to work cooperatively so that they become the spontaneous agents of rural transformation is the logic behind the *Saemaul Undong*, the New Village Movement. When people are motivated and passionate, their intensity of learning and practising will naturally become greater, if not automatic.

Figure 5.3 illustrates a repetitive pattern in Sub-Saharan Africa: the 'backtracking syndrome'. The biggest problem here is not so much the scope or level of knowledge, but the low level of intensity of actions like, in many cases, a surprising lack of attention to basics and details. It cannot be emphasized enough that what is steady, consistent and predictable is much better than what is irregular, arbitrary and unpredictable. The advantage of the former is that over time, it will have positive accumulative effects, while the latter will entail so many impediments like slow and meagre performance, frustration, uncertainty, rise in costs and loss of confidence.

As shown in the figure, backtracking syndrome is represented by 'regressions', the act of falling back and failing to stay on track towards progress. People may give up very early in their work or may not quite make it to or keep up with the 'practising' or the 'owning' phase. 'Tentative actions' is when the 'embodiment' of knowledge has not properly taken root in the individuals. While the term 'backtracking

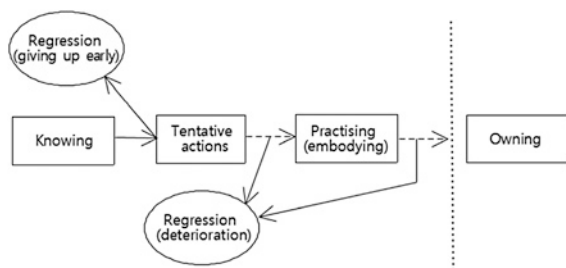


Fig. 5.3 'Backtracking syndrome'

syndrome' is used here for the first time, this is a common and recognizable phenomenon typical of Sub-Saharan Africa that many locals frankly acknowledge. Moreover, it occurs both in individuals and in organizations, including the government.

The Strong Role of the State

The weak role played by states poses another major vulnerability for Sub-Saharan African countries. From a broader context, the perceived lack of capacity and credibility of African governments seems to be due, in no small part, to the issue of the mindset or development-mindedness. The inefficiency or poor output of governments is deemed to be more attributable to lack of commitment and the problem of 'not doing' the basics than to the matter of policy choices because there are always many ways to make policies work.

As for the role of government in economic development, different theoretical perceptions have been put forward: the neoclassical view, the revisionist view, 'market-friendly view', the 'functional approach' and so on.¹² But today, the prevalent view in the development community is that the government's role matters and is important for economic development. No doubt, the successes of 'developmental states' in Asia is a powerful testament that developing nations can indeed achieve fast and successful economic transformation based on the positive role of state.

I believe that the developmental states model still is very relevant and deserves to be examined because its lessons and applicability can certainly benefit African countries. Jordan Kyle points out that 'between 1960 and 1995, the economies of 10 East Asian countries – Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Japan – grew faster than those of nearly any other country in the world ... In each of these economies, the government played a significant role in development process'.¹³

Nations should not treat the maxim 'actions speak louder than words' as a cliché. Countries in the region had ample time for nation-building and economic transformation, but the desperation was lacking. Thandika Mkwandawire is absolutely right that 'neither Africa's

post-colonial history nor the actual practice engaged in by successful “developmental states” rules out the possibility of African “developmental states” capable of playing a more dynamic role than hitherto’, but equating a scholarly ‘misreading (in this case Myrdal’s concept of “soft state” that he coined in 1968)’ to ‘denying Africa of the opportunity to think creatively’ is far-fetched.¹⁴ As long as the leaders and society as a whole fail to take measures to rectify the situation and scholars continue to justify the reality on their behalf, little progress can take place; taking responsibility and ownership is key.

The tasks requiring direct action to be taken by a nation, like nation-building and economic development, should not left to be initiated, planned and shaped by theorists and directed by international organizations that do not and cannot bear responsibility on behalf of developing countries. South Korea and other Asian countries did not develop because they were guided by theories and the donor community. Explanations or model-building comes after, not before, the accumulation of results and samples. If Sub-Saharan African countries find themselves at odds with the international development community, the chances are that this is due mostly to donor fatigue exacerbated by the slow-paced, non-committal response of the former. Everyone involved in the partnership suffers from consequences like delays, breakdowns and rising costs when parties repeatedly renege on their obligations. International recognition and favourable terms are won on the basis of merit, not on insistence.

The role of the state is deemed to have become more important in light of growing global challenges and inter-dependence. It is true that globalization in the form of greater economic and social inter-dependence calls for complex decision-making processes, which take place at various levels (namely sub-national, national and global), paving the way for a growing multi-layered system of governance.¹⁵ The need for enhanced cooperation and regulation on a wider scale in the international arena justifies the more robust and effective role of states in the process. Imagine the uncertainty and chaos that would ensue should states start reducing and abandoning their role. The emergence of global civil society or world government that was once imagined by transnationalists seems less likely than ever.

African countries have every reason to push for a strong state in which the government plays an active role in relation to economic and social development. Developed countries and international organizations, on their part, should be supportive of Africa's endeavour in this regard. Economic stability and predictability that countries around the world need would come from credibility in actions. The question is how African countries can move in this direction. With respect to the success of East Asian economies, debates have taken place as to whether this was due to policy choice, i.e., selecting the right policies, or to initial conditions like better state capacity and autonomy, higher human capital formation, etc. While both policy choices and initial conditions were proper, the more fundamental and decisive factor was the latter, as stressed by Keun Lee.¹⁶ But 'initial conditions' should not be taken literally as something already given that cannot be replicated. The lesson for African countries is that there is no shortcut to development, but that it is achievable when the necessary effort is indeed made.

Western nations undertook a variety of mercantilist policies to increase national wealth and pursued aggressive industrial policies to develop and transform their industries; the latecomers to industrialization followed this course in order to catch up with the forerunners. Ha-Choon Chang observes that the role of the state was central in the initial stages of the evolution of economics and in Western Europe the role of states increased with the emergence of nation states and the development of capitalism. During the golden era of capitalism, the rise of the state both in terms of economic theory and practice was dramatic.¹⁷

The states were not only preoccupied with exercising sovereignty for the defence and maintenance of order, but also actively promoted economic transformation. European countries have incessantly pushed forth, tested and refined the state's functions or roles in order to meet domestic and international needs or challenges. The welfare state, which is seen as a distinctive combination of democracy, welfare and capitalism, is another example of the state playing an active role in the social and economic wellbeing of its citizens.¹⁸ Originating in Europe, the welfare state has spread to different regions, taking different forms as it has done so. Others have retained significant government roles, as can

be seen in the strong regulatory role played by the US government. Western nations, which started economic development in the primary industry, are still materially involved in protecting and promoting the agricultural and other sectors.

Today, developing and developed nations alike need to have a strong and well-functioning government to handle various economic and social tasks, in addition to security challenges that take many different forms. The role or intervention of active government to promote economic growth in itself should not be regarded as simply being protectionist or anti-free market. Despite all the clamour of neo-classical liberalism and neo-liberalism in the theoretical or academic realm, in practice, how many countries would indeed fit the description of 'laissez-faire capitalism' or a 'night-watchman state?' In reality, there is no such thing as a free market without the government's involvement. Even in the most neo-liberal economies such as the US, the 'invisible hand' is a myth. Today, the role of government in developed countries remains robust and is even upscaled to meet the challenges of economic globalism.

So what are the lessons to be drawn for Sub-Saharan Africa? One of them could be that the so-called adverse international development regime that many hold accountable for Africa's continued economic plight, such as structural adjustment policies, the Washington Consensus and neoliberalist policies, cannot be an excuse of giving up the strong role of government. Since independence, Sub-Saharan African countries have had every opportunity to build a consolidated and effective state to push for economic development with the backing of the international community.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, the centrality of the role of the state and the need for market regulation was widely accepted, and there was a general perception that economic development called for industrialization, following the path of many Western economies.¹⁹ At the time, Gerschenkron, who analysed the cases of France, Germany and Russia, which wanted to emulate Great Britain, suggested that a backward economy might take a considerably different form of development from the advanced economies and that 'there could even be advantages for late industrializers because they might be able to leapfrog into more

technologically advanced sectors, by learning from and imitating the pioneers'.²⁰ He later argued that 'the greater the degree of backwardness, the more intervention is required in the market economy to channel capital and entrepreneurship to nascent industries'.²¹ Hence, in this period, the goal of development was growth and the agent of development was the state.

Despite an optimistic worldview on the part of 'modernization' and 'big push' theorists, and the developmentalist zeal of first-generation African leaders, the disappointing performance of African countries in this regard brought about a great shift in development thinking around the late 1970s and early 1980s influenced by neo-liberal thought, which was well reflected in the World Bank's report *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, commonly known as the Berg Report.²² The report attributed the failures of Africa's development to all the negativities of African governments' problematic intervention, missteps and mismanagement.²³

The essence of the problem was not the strength of government or governmental intervention per se, but rather the failure of states to assume their roles as developmental states. In the meantime, countries in East Asia, namely the NICs, were making strides in terms of economic growth and development. Without addressing the fundamental problem of underperforming or dysfunctional government, the pendulum shifts in policy adoptions are not likely to bring about the desired outcomes.

Liberalization and privatization have become popular catchwords and norms for Sub-Saharan Africa's leaders, policy-makers and business sectors. But many have also cast doubts, in hindsight, on the appropriateness of this policy orientation, especially with regard to the manner in which they were implemented, in the absence of sound governance and oversight of the state. The United Arab Emirates case of Dubai provides a good example of a successful marriage of proactive economic liberalization and highly disciplined and effective government oversight.

Fortunately for the United Arab Emirates, it has the riches, the oil, but many other resource-rich countries have not capitalized on their resources. Generally, the hallmark of the strong role of the state in developing countries should be industrial policy. Developing countries,

as latecomers to industrialization, should be able to drive economic development forward with a sufficient level of ability and authority. The more a country lags behind others, the more it will need to exert itself through an industrial push to catch up with the others, instead of leaving everything up to the markets. The word 'transformation', which has become fashionable in the region, implies making real change and breaking the status quo, which is contrary to the general inclination of African states. It is an irony that people want change and yet they themselves are not willing to change.

Regarding the Korean model of latecomer development, Keun Lee argues that Korea's sustained economic growth is due to the capacity of the people and enterprises rather than the role of government, departing from the conventional debates on the state-market dichotomy. According to Lee, the real lesson to be learned from Korea is not the role of government, but the fact that it was able to build up the capabilities of people and companies, thus inducing sustained growth for decades.²⁴ He makes a powerful statement that neo-classical economics focuses on macroeconomic stability and trade liberalization, but these are hardly connected to capacity-building, and such 'bias in economics dates back to the intrinsic limitations of neoclassical economics when the word "capabilities" (and by implication, "learning") did not exist'.²⁵ The classical theory advocates effective allocation or 'optimization' of resources, with an implicit assumption that the necessary resources are already available. But for developing countries, optimization of resources cannot be their preoccupation because they lack such resources as capacity to begin with, and so the more pressing and critical task for them is how to build such capabilities.²⁶

Sung-Hee Jwa proposes that economics must take governments and business firms into account alongside market mechanism because governments and corporations also drive the economy. Hence, he calls markets, governments and corporations the 'holy trinity' or the three key entities of economic development. He claims that markets are old as human civilization and are not a new feature of the capitalist world. As the case of South Korea shows, what also matters is the role of the government and firms in addition to market mechanism. Korea in the 1960s and 1970s, during the tenure of President PARK Chung-Hee,

successfully combined these three components to achieve the ‘miracle on the Han River’, according to Jwa (2015, 2017). Its secret was *sin-sangpilbhur*, a Korean axiom meaning ‘reward good deeds and punish wrongdoings’, which he termed ‘economic discrimination (ED)’. He argues that the sustained economic growth of Korea during the tenure of President Park was possible because economic policy-making and implementation was insulated from political influence; the strict application of ‘economic logic’—efficiency, incentives and competitiveness—while disallowing political influences and considerations for welfare was the key to success.²⁷

The examples of South Korea and other East Asian countries demonstrate that governments and firms can be formidable ‘pro-capitalist’, ‘pro-market’ agents or forces complementing and reinforcing market mechanism. In this respect, Jwa’s theorizing work on the ‘extended market mechanism’ that brings government and firms into the equation is a valuable contribution to economics. In developing countries in particular, market distortions and failures often occur not necessarily due to too much government intervention, but more often due to weak institutions and a weak role played by the government; this is all the more true in view of their imperfect economic environment.

When the functioning of government is meagre, not only will government projects fail, but the general public will suffer the most. Since poor public service delivery reflects a lack of discipline amongst and responsibility of civil servants, this will have a negative effect on the society as a whole. In many countries in the region, the spirit of ‘serving the people’, whether it concerns public service by government workers or customer service by the private sector, is markedly weak. The perennial poor delivery of service lowers people’s expectation of service and they take this to be the norm. This translates into less pressure on those on the government payroll to do their job. Hence, the vicious cycle of poor service and performance, wastage of public resources, marginalization or disempowerment of the public, and weak accountability in the public sector continues. Furthermore, officials are engaged in widespread corruption, aggravating the problem in the public sector. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s Index on Governance

released in October 2016, the level of red tape and corruption in governments in Africa has increased over the last ten years.

Agricultural-rural development in the wider context of industrial policy deserves the special attention of African leaders because this should be the bedrock of industrialization and economic transformation for any developing country. There is clearly a renewed advocacy for agricultural development in the community of African elites, Africanists and international development organizations.

David Henley sheds light on Asian states' pro-poor agriculture-rural development policies, which African countries have not been able to successfully adopt and implement. He views that the divergence in performance between Africa and Asia boils down to the ways of combining rapid economic growth with mass poverty reduction, and the fact that African leaders have never shown a serious intention to pursue such pro-poor development: 'Their development models, implicitly or explicitly, have focused not pragmatically on mass outreach and rapid impact in the battle against poverty, but on ideas of technological and cultural modernity based on conditions in already rich countries'.²⁸

Joe Studwell outlines the crucial roles that governments of Asia played in economic development: (1) the restructuring of agriculture as a highly labour-intensive household farming to maximize output alongside land ownership reform that provided land for small farmers; (2) using the proceeds from surpluses in agriculture to build an export-oriented manufacturing sector; and (3) intervening in the financial sector to direct capital towards the small farming and export-oriented manufacturing sector.²⁹

Let us revisit the classical economic growth theory of Walt Rostow. This is a theory of modernization development postulating that developing countries go through the following five stages: (1) traditional society; (2) establishing conditions for take-off (underdeveloped economy); (3) economic take-off (developing economy); (4) drive to maturity (developed economy); and (5) high mass consumption (post-industrial economy). The first stage, traditional society, is associated with the country having the majority of its people engaged in subsistence agriculture. The second stage is entails change in order to build up the conditions for growth and take-off. It is characterized

by the massive development of raw materials, increase in capital use in agriculture, and the mobilization of funding and investments. There is also a shift from an agrarian to an industrial or manufacturing society, and trade and other commercial activities are broadened. In the third, take-off stage, urbanization increases, new industries expand rapidly and a technological breakthrough occurs. This is characterized by dynamic economic growth and the reinvestment of increasing profits in new industrial plants. The fourth, drive to maturity stage features the diversification of the industrial base, the expansion of multiple industries, the shifting of manufacturing from investment-driven capital goods to consumer durables and domestic consumption, and the rapid and large-scale development of social infrastructure. The fifth stage is about high mass consumption, with the industrial base dominating the economy and with widespread consumption of high-value consumer goods.³⁰

An important point to make here is that economic development started from the agricultural-rural sector. For non-Western countries, the development path need not follow such an order, but this is not the central issue. What should be recalled is that not only the East Asian economies but also the Western economies that have industrialized much earlier have taken the course of achieving economic transformation on the basis of successful agriculture-rural development.

In *Common Wealth*, Jeffrey Sachs lays out his version of the economic development stages of poor countries rising to the status of wealthy economies in which agricultural development plays a key role: (1) subsistence economy; (2) commercial economy (large boost in agricultural productivity); (3) emerging market economy (expansion of infrastructure); and (4) technology-based economy. And he observes that 'once the economy gets an initial surge in food productivity (stage 2), it begins to grow and prosper on its own. This is because the initial surge in wealth allows private citizens and the government to make investments in health, education and infrastructure'.³¹

All in all, we can argue that what is fundamentally lacking in Africa that East Asian countries and much earlier Western economies were able to do during the early phase of their development are: (1) the construction and operation of strong government functioning mechanisms; and (2) an effective policy drive for rural-agricultural development.

So why haven't most of the countries in the Sub-Saharan African region been able to take advantage of these historical facts and lessons? The models of development did not emerge out of a vacuum; they are the outcome of decades or even centuries of efforts. It is up to developing nations to figure out what best suits their situation, given all the facts and experiences. What is obvious is that true economic transformation takes objective, consistent and broad-scoped thinking, planning and, most of all, action.

After popular optimism of the 'Africa rising', indications of the flaws in the economic state of Sub-Saharan Africa continue to show themselves. For example, the deterioration of the economic situation in Zambia has threatened to send the copper-rich country that was hailed as a middle-income nation to a point of near-collapse. For decades, Zambia reaping heavily from its sole mineral export, copper, which accounted for nearly 70% of the country's export earnings, and was the second-biggest copper producer in Africa behind the Democratic Republic of Congo. But today, Zambia provides a lesson on the perils of overdependence on a single commodity and a handful of multinational mining companies. Declining copper prices and a severe electricity shortage were the biggest reasons for its fall from grace. Zambia's economic growth rate, which had averaged seven per cent annually for the previous five years, fell to an estimated 3.4% in 2015, leading to speculation that it might have to turn to the IMF for assistance.³² Fortunately, however, for Zambia and other resource-rich African countries, commodity prices are on the road to recovery in 2018.

Nigeria is just one of many countries that have suffered in recent years from over-reliance on oil production without having proper governance in place. As of early 2017, as the largest oil-producing nation in Sub-Saharan Africa, where oil income accounted for 35% of its GDP and 75% of government revenue, Nigeria was facing a serious shortage of electricity even in Lagos, following a 35% fall in the value of its currency over the previous year amid rampant corruption, which saw billions of dollars of oil revenue disappearing into thin air. Nigeria has been the biggest tomato-producing country in Africa, but was importing tomato pastes from abroad because it did not have sufficient manufacturing facilities to make the product domestically.³³

Rick Rowden noted that: ‘Africans were told to simply privatize, liberalize, deregulate, and get the so-called economic fundamentals right. The free market would take care of the rest. But this advice neglects the actual history of how rich countries themselves have effectively used industrial policies for 400 years, beginning with the U.K. and Europe and ending with the ‘four tigers’ ... This inconvenient history contradicted free market maxims and so has been largely stripped from the economics curriculum in most universities’.³⁴ It is up to African countries to decide how they want to develop but they should be at least cognizant of historical facts and lessons to be able to make the right decisions.

Notes

1. See George J. Sefa Dei and Paul Banahene Adjei (eds), *Emerging Perspectives on African Development* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2014), p. 5.
2. David Booth and Diana Gammack, *Governance for Development in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2013), p. 87. Booth and Gammack argue that evidence tends to support E. A. Brett’s thesis (‘Problematising the Democratic Imperative: The Challenge of Transition and Consolidation in Weak States’, draft paper, London School of Economics, 2012) that open democratic processes have only ever been established in countries that have strong states, cohesive societies and liberal capitalist economies’. And they make an important case that ‘careless promotion of elections and economic liberalisation – the trappings of democracy and capitalism – in countries where inter-communal relations and political settlement are fragile can be very costly in terms of violence and human life’.
3. ‘Secrets Behind Korea’s Economic Success’, Korea Foundation DVD (October 2014).
4. In this respect, South Africa can be categorized as a different class. But when we discount the ‘white minority run-economy’ if we can describe it as such, then the situation is comparable to other countries in the region. There are ‘pockets’ of developed or industrialized areas in countries like Kenya and Nigeria, but when we see them from the holistic perspective of the ‘national economy’, they lag considerably behind other regional economies.

5. Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), p. 332.
6. Pierre Englebert and Kevin C. Dunn (2013), pp. 89–90.
7. Crawford Young (2012), p. 312.
8. Ibid.
9. Asongazoh Alemazung, 'Leadership Flaws and Fallibilities Impacting Democratization Processes, Governance and Functional Statehood in Africa', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5, no. 1 (January 2011), p. 32.
10. Edward Kirumira, Principal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Makerere, speaking at the workshop 'Colonial Legacy and National Development: Comparative Post-colonial Impact Assessment and Lessons Learned between South Korea and Uganda', 15 August 2015, Sheraton Hotel, Kampala, Uganda.
11. See Thandika Mkandawire, 'Thinking About Developmental States in Africa', http://archive.unu.edu/hq/academic/Pg_area4/Mkandawire.html. See also Thandika Mkandawire, 'Thinking About Developmental States in Africa', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25 (May 2001), pp. 289–313.
12. Oh-Seok Hyun (President, Trade Research Institute, Korea International Trade Association), 'The Role of Government and Economic Development', November 2006 (PPT presentation), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/Session2Oh.pdf>. The government's role involves the mobilization and allocation of resources, the stabilization of the national economy and the promotion of technological development. The neo-classical view emphasizes a stable macroeconomic environment, the absence of price controls and other distorted policies, a reliable legal framework, free trade, investments, etc. The revisionist view is that industrial policy and interventions in financial markets are not easily reconciled within the neo-classical framework, and some policies in some economies are much more in accordance with models of state-led development. The market-friendly view prescribes the appropriate role of the government in the market-friendly strategy (the World Bank's *World Development Report*, 1991). The functional approach identifies successful cases like South Korea, considering that South Korea achieved rapid growth based on the 'three functions of growth': accumulation, efficient allocation and rapid technological catch-up.

13. See Jordan Kyle, 'Perspectives on the Role of the State in Economic Development—Taking Stock of the "Developmental State" After 35 Years', *IFPRI Discussion Paper* 01597, January 2017.
14. Thandika Mkandawire, 'Thinking About Developmental States in Africa' (2001).
15. Guido Bertucci and Adriana Alberti, 'Globalization and the Role of the State: Challenges and Perspective', paper drawn from *United Nations World Public Sector Report*, 'Globalization and Public the State' (2001).
16. Keun Lee, *Economic Catch-Up and Technological Leapfrogging: The Path to Development and Macroeconomic Stability in Korea* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), p. 15.
17. Ha-Joon Chang, *Globalization, Economic Development and the Role of the State* (London: Zed Books, 2003), Korean translation (2006) by Bookie Publishing House, pp. 37–39.
18. T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).
19. John Harriss, 'Development Theories', in Bruce Currie-Alder, Ravi Kanbur, David M. Malone, and Rohinton Medhora (eds), *International Development: Ideas, Experience, and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 39.
20. Ibid. See Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1962). Gerschenkron stresses the importance of capital for overcoming technological gap confronting 'backward' nations. He argued that state intervention compensated for inadequate supplies of capital, skilled labour or entrepreneurship in late-developing economics.
21. Ibid. See Albert Fishlow, 'Review Essay on Gerschenkron's *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*', for the Economic History Network (www.eh.net/node/276).
22. Ibid., p. 42. The Berg Report faults Africa's 'inappropriate state dominated policies' for leading governments to take on more than they could handle, distorting economic incentives and creating all the opportunities for unproductive rent-seeking.
23. Thandika Mkandawire (2001), p. 289.
24. Keun Lee, 'Korean Model of Latecomer Development: Capability-Building and Smart Specialization Leading to Structural Transformation', a policy report, Center for Economic Catch-up, Seoul National University, December 2016, pp. 2–3.

25. Ibid., p. 3.
26. Ibid.
27. Sung-Hee Jwa's PPT presentation 'Korean Economic Development and Saemaul Undong: Experience and Lessons' (8 September 2015, Kampala, Uganda) and the presentation paper at the Korea Forum for Progress (1 September 2015, Seoul, Korea), 'Success Factors of Saemaul Undong' (Korean). Dr. Jwa, Sung-Hee is the Chair Professor of the Park Chung-Hee School of Policy and Saemaul, Yeungnam University, Korea.
28. David Henley, *Asia-Pacific Development Divergence: A Question of Intent* (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp. 209–210.
29. Joe Studwell, *How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region* (London: Profile Books, 2013).
30. W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 4–16.
31. Jeffrey Sachs, *Common Wealth*, 2008, <http://www.povertyeducation.org/stages-of-economic-development.html>.
32. 'Declining Copper Prices a Large Factor in Zambia's Economic Tumble', *Globe and Mail*, 26 October 2015.
33. *Nigeria Crossroads*, CNN International, broadcast on 3 May 2017.
34. Rick Rowden, 'Here Is Why "Africa Rising" Is Just a Myth', *The Observer* (Uganda), 6 January 2016, p. 24.

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