

Overview

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1.1 The DRA project

In 2012, two large research programmes reported final results that shed new light on fundamental questions about the past and future development of Africa. Tracking Development (TD), an international collaboration led from Leiden University in the Netherlands, published the most systematic study yet undertaken of the comparative development experience of sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia since 1960. The Africa Power and Politics Programme (APPP) reported findings from a large comparative enquiry into the politics of economic performance and public goods delivery across African countries. Since 2012, researchers from TD and APPP have been collaborating in a new project on Initiating and Sustaining Developmental Regimes in Africa (the DRA Project).

The TD and APPP findings agreed in challenging an international policy consensus on Africa that has treated departures from global standards of ‘good governance’ as the key to Africa’s comparatively weak long-term development record. The two programmes showed that policy choices and institutional differences other than those emphasised in ‘good governance’ theory need much greater emphasis than they get in mainstream policy. However, this convergence left a number of questions unanswered and several policy puzzles to be resolved. Further evidence was needed if a completely coherent alternative story was to be presented. Since 2012, the DRA Project has been addressing these questions and puzzles and publishing the results on a joint website (www.institutions-africa.org). This report summarises and discusses the project’s main findings.

Over three years, the DRA Project produced eight original working papers and six policy briefs. Project associates made presentations to policy-engagement meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe and the USA. The series of policy briefs opened with restatements and reflections on the complementary findings of the two predecessor projects, TD and APPP. The working papers and the related briefs, blogs and oral contributions addressed four outstanding questions identified at the outset to guide the fresh research. The six policy briefs of the complete series are reproduced without substantive change as Chapters 1-5 and 8 of this report. Chapter 7 is a new contribution, providing an otherwise missing link. This Overview places the research in a broader context, guides the reader through the main findings and adds some further reflections on the implications of this body of work as a whole.

1.2 The unresolved questions

At the end of 2014, there is a justified mood of optimism about development in Africa. Over the 2000s, average annual GDP growth for Africa as a whole was 4.7%, rising from 2.7% in the 1990s. Numerous countries from the sub-Saharan region participated in this growth, with several posting output expansion well in excess of population growth (ECA and AU, 2014). While in most countries social conditions for the bulk of the population are still improving slowly at best, visible signs of private wealth and commercial prosperity are increasingly apparent. These indicators of economic turnaround have given grounds for hope that, at last, sub-Saharan Africa is about to join the club of successfully developing regions. However, specialists worry at the very low employment-intensity of current growth, and the associated weakness of impacts on poverty. Increasingly, these concerns are articulated in the proposition that African economies are getting growth but not structural change or the accumulation of new productive capabilities.

In all of these respects and more, the most telling evidence that things are not yet going Africa's way comes from the TD project. Chapter 2 below provides an outline of how the TD research interrogated the long-term development divergence between Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and the conclusions to which it was drawn. Readers wanting a fuller exposition can now be directed to a popular outline (Vlasblom, 2013), a journal special issue (Van Donge and Henley, 2012a), a compendium of articles (Berendsen et al., 2013) and a comprehensive final monograph (Henley, 2015).

The TD conclusions centre on the critical failure of African countries to complement their recent achievements in the areas of macro-economic management and market liberalisation with the investments in smallholder agriculture and rural infrastructure that have been the foundation of Southeast Asian development success. There is a very clear policy implication. African governments should be encouraged to promote pro-poor agricultural productivity growth as the essential first step towards all-round development. They should be discouraged from imagining that it is possible to build successful manufacturing sectors or service economies without the foundation of a productive rural economy. A significant danger arising from some of the current rhetoric about Africa's growth recovery is that it will fuel new illusions of this sort, with African leaders emulating models of Asian development success that bear little relation to the true story.

The TD project has made a significant contribution to policy-relevant knowledge by bringing policy, and policy choices regarding agriculture in particular, back to centre-stage. As the TD team has emphasised, the reason Southeast Asian countries succeeded where comparable African countries failed was not that they had, in conventional terms, better governance. However, this finding refutes the good-governance orthodoxy but does not imply that governance or political-economy variables have no place in explaining differences in outcomes. As argued in Chapter 3, the implication is rather that the relevant variables need to be looked for in places that the conventional thinking does not reach.

TD itself identified some common features of Southeast Asian political priorities that help to explain the policy packages that were adopted, and in turn invite explanation in political economy terms. Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam focused effectively on raising the productivity of smallholder agriculture because their rulers had a policy orientation emphasising 'outreach', 'urgency' and 'expediency'. They wanted material benefits to extend to the maximum populations, as fast as possible and by any means necessary. In most cases, this orientation was translated into policy and implementation by creating new agencies with a strong politically protected mandate that enabled them to be islands of effectiveness in an otherwise untransformed bureaucratic landscape.

These findings pose obviously important questions. Where did the policy orientation expressed as 'outreach, urgency and expediency' come from? Why has it not been present in a similar number of African countries? What is the potential for it to come into existence in Africa in the future?

The APPP results are relevant to handling questions such as these. According to APPP's comparative analysis of African experience (Kelsall, 2013a), the major observed divergences in development outcomes – which are by no means insignificant across countries and time-periods – cannot be explained in terms of differences in formal institutional or constitutional arrangements, especially not in terms of standard indicators of the quality of democracy. The assumption that political systems become less patrimonial or corrupt as multi-party electoral systems are established is not supported by comparative evidence. Rather, the differences that seem to matter most for sustained development cut across the dictatorship/democracy divide. They are about the different forms that neopatrimonial politics can assume at a deeper level than the formal constitution. Often they have to do with the ability or inability of elites and other stakeholders to overcome barriers to progressive collective action (Booth, 2012; Booth and Cammack, 2013).

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The combined effect of these arguments from TD and APPP has been to raise rather sharply five sets of questions concerning the following topics:

1. The political **origins** of the outreach, urgency and expediency that TD found to be a common feature of the policy orientation of Southeast Asian developmental regimes. This is a crucial question for determining where a more transformative type of political regime might be expected to come from in the current African context.
2. The main institutional features favouring the **sustainability** of development effort, once established under a more or less developmental type of neopatrimonial political regime in Africa or Asia. This question picks up the concern that African growth episodes have often been curtailed by problems of leadership succession.
3. The role likely to be played under any potentially developmental African regimes by politically protected **islands of excellence, or pockets of effectiveness**, of the sort that were important in Southeast Asia's agriculture-led development breakthroughs.
4. The implications of recent research findings for a **conceptualisation** of developmental regimes that is fit for purpose in the 21st century in Africa. This new research question was added to the original four, to draw together some emerging conclusions.
5. The potential contribution, for better or worse, of the **international system** to the emergence and sustainability of developmental regimes so defined. This was, and remains, a crucial question in determining the policy implications for international actors.

1.3 Origins of developmental regimes

Chapter 4 and the associated working papers (Fuady, 2013; Henley, 2013) address this issue by entering into a dialogue with one of the most influential political economy arguments in comparative Asian studies. This is known as the 'systemic vulnerability' thesis.

In its strong form (Weiss and Hobson, 1995; Doner et al., 2005), the vulnerability thesis is offered to explain the exceptionally strong state-building and industrialisation ambitions of South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. In this argument, elites of these three countries faced a combination of restive popular classes, extreme geopolitical insecurity and severe resource constraints. This particular set of challenges was not present in other fast-growing eastern Asian states, including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand – which helps to explain their relatively modest industrial achievements. In a weaker form, however, the argument about elite vulnerability to threats from mobilised or potentially mobilisable masses, especially in rural areas, is often offered as the central element in explaining the differences in development performance among members of the latter group, now including Vietnam (Campos and Root, 1996; Slater, 2010; Vu, 2010).

Political economy explanations of this type challenge one of the principal claims made on the basis of the TD research. This says that the influence of different policy ideas is the key factor explaining why Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam achieved so much more in the 50 years from 1960 than their African counterparts, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. But if the choice of a pro-poor rural development path was an elite response to the threat of rural uprisings, the threat factor becomes the theoretically interesting part of the story. Indeed, Africanists looking at the ability of country elites to overcome their fragmentation and act collectively in ways that favour inclusive processes of national development have often been led to focus on the near absence of class-based rural threats in Africa (Bates, 1981; Lewis, 2007). The exceptions in Africa, states like Ethiopia and Rwanda whose leaders are forcing the pace of national and rural development, appear consistent with the view that an acute rural threat to the future of the elite in power is a key explanatory factor (Kelsall, 2013a; Poulton, 2014).

The DRA research summarised in Chapter 4, however, provides a compelling rebuttal of the rural threat thesis as applied to Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The historical circumstances surrounding the adoption of inclusive development policies in these countries do not fit the predictions of this theory. Close examination of the differences in policy orientations between Southeast Asian and comparable African countries does not support the notion that leaders had fundamentally different political interests. Rather, it reinforces the observation that they conceived development progress in different ways. The most significant differences in elite mind-sets had historical roots, but not of the sort emphasised in the vulnerability/threat literature. The leaders of independent Africa have tended to conceive development as a comprehensive transformation, a quantum leap from rural backwardness to urban modernity. Distinctive features of the

colonial experience, the origins of urban life and the process of decolonisation in Africa help to account for why leaders acquired these attitudes and assumptions. Southeast Asian leaders learned a different set of fundamental assumptions about development, which led them to adopt different, and better, policies.

The argument of Chapter 4 provides a powerful set of reasons for not leaning too heavily on political economy in analysing policy choices and regime orientations in developing countries, a position that is increasingly adopted even by distinguished practitioners of political economy analysis (Rodrik, 2014). Indeed, in analysing agricultural policy choices in Africa there may now be value in a three-layered perspective, including realism about political interests, relevant policy ideas and scope for innovative ('politically smart and locally led') methods for securing key reforms (Booth, 2014b; Booth and Unsworth, 2014).

APPP and DRA research on the Rwandan 'exception' agrees with this. Contrary to what would be predicted by the rural threat thesis, the post-genocide Rwandan government took at least ten years to agree a development strategy that gave a central place to raising the productivity of smallholder agriculture. The regime certainly faces a powerful combination of external and internal threats, which does influence policy. But the agricultural transformation policy that now prevails was the outcome of a difficult learning process prompted by a food crisis and alarming poverty incidence statistics in the mid-2000s (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2014a). As discussed later in this report, the ability of the Rwandan regime, and the dominant party in the ruling coalition, to learn from experience may be a more important element in its 'developmental' credentials than has been suggested in the country literature.

These conclusions are somewhat reassuring in the context of any discussion of the prospects for developmental regimes in Africa. As Henley and Fuady point out in Chapter 4, threats of the kind that helped to inspire pro-poor policies in Asia could not be replicated in Africa today, even if this were considered desirable. In most other respects too, history has to be treated as a given. On the other hand, African experience since the 1980s is quite encouraging about the prospects of policy change supported, if not initiated, by a real intellectual conversion among political elites. If leaders can be convinced of the virtues of sound macro-economic management and relatively free markets, why should they not be convinced of the merits of agriculture-led development? This may be easier to achieve if, as in the Rwandan case, the dominant political organisation is predisposed to learning-by-doing, but politically smart reform entrepreneurs may be able to achieve worthwhile shifts in policy even when this condition is lacking, as it almost certainly is in the rest of East Africa (Booth et al., 2014).

1.4 The sustainability issue

In order to get empirical leverage on the sustainability question, Chapter 5 and the longer paper on which it is based (Kelsall, 2013b) approach it indirectly. The question of what should count as a developmental regime in the current African context is not addressed in this report until Chapter 7. In any case, the answers given are difficult to operationalise, partly because of the shortage of extant examples of regimes that correspond to the concept. For the time being, at least, it is necessary to work with proxy measures that capture aspects of the broader issue, using the data that can be assembled on the features and performance of actually existing regimes. Chapter 5 therefore focuses on the conditions that allow economic growth processes to be sustained despite a change in the top political leadership.

The starting point of this enquiry is the finding from APPP research (Kelsall, 2013a) that the current, relatively extended period of fast economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa is not completely unprecedented. According to the best economic studies (Ndulu et al., 2008), the region's economies grew at a respectable rate between

1960 and 1974, with some countries posting extremely rapid rates of growth. The circumstances that brought the most impressive of these processes to an end often included a flawed leadership succession. In Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Malawi and possibly other countries, considerable economic and social progress under the country's first post-colonial regime came to an end following the death or waning capacities of the leader. Leadership successions were managed in a way that eroded rather than sustaining the conditions for growth. Could it have been different and what are the implications for today?

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The study by Tim Kelsall summarised in Chapter 5 addressed this question by means of a qualitative comparative analysis of sub-Saharan African and Southeast Asian states that experienced both high growth episodes and leadership successions at some point between 1960 and 2010. The universe of such cases, after some carefully justified exclusions, is just ten episodes in ten countries, five in Asia and five in Africa. In six cases the growth process survived the succession while in four it did not. The study then used comparative analysis and historical ‘process tracing’ on the individual cases to tease out the relevant explanatory factors.

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Adding weight to the APPP and TD findings, the analysis finds no support for globally influential claims about the positive contribution of inclusive institutions or a ‘golden thread’ linking rule of law, absence of conflict and corruption, and strong formal property rights. A number of contributory factors seemed important in some cases and not others. However, the combination of factors that was present in all six successful episodes and absent in all four unsuccessful ones contained just three elements. They were an intermediate level of ‘systemic vulnerability’ (the concept critiqued in Chapter 4), a broadly market-friendly policy approach, and a policy-making process embedded in one or other of two types of strong institution: a political party with a tradition of consensual decision-making and leadership succession; and a strong, organic state bureaucracy with the ability to insulate policy from changes in political leadership. In fact, the second institutional variant applies only to Thailand (1961–98), suggesting that the institutional character of the dominant party is the most generally relevant issue in Africa today.

The APPP and TD findings on the importance of policy and institutional factors other than political democracy, the rule of law or citizen demand for better government make many people uncomfortable. These findings clash with many firmly held convictions and values, so that a typical response is to accuse the authors of being indifferent to the civil and political rights of poor people or overly persuaded by the propaganda of dictatorial regimes. However, Chapter 5 adds fresh evidence that we need to be thinking in unconventional ways about political regimes and development outcomes, especially if we are seriously concerned about the rights of poor people. In more recent work, the author of Chapter 5 has undertaken a systematic review of the literature on the controversial relationships between authoritarianism, democracy and development (Kelsall, 2014). On this broader canvas, the final conclusion is the same. The factors most consistently favouring development outcomes cut across the distinction between more or less democratic and more or less authoritarian regimes.

1.5 Pockets of effectiveness

The interest of the DRA project in pockets of state effectiveness arises from the observation that the results achieved by regimes that have come to be regarded as ‘developmental states’ have been, more often than not, the work of specific public agencies operating to good effect within an otherwise unfavourable institutional environment. This was the case in Northeast Asia, as documented in the first generation of literature inspired by Johnson’s study of MITI in Japan (Johnson, 1982; 1999). It was an important feature of the Southeast Asian successes examined in detail by the TD project, with the difference that the empowered and effective agencies included those with responsibility for rural development or agriculture. In the African literature, too, a topic that has been well explored by a handful of authors is the disproportionate role played in the fortunes of some countries by the rise and fall of particular organisations that benefited, for a while, from the combination of excellent management and political protection (Leonard, 1991; Crook, 2010).

Interest in this topic has increased recently, thanks in part to the number of documented cases of national revenue authorities and other specialised agencies establishing themselves as islands of efficiency within highly patrimonial settings (Robinson, 2007; Leonard, 2010; Roll, 2014b; 2014a). A key issue not addressed so far, partly no doubt because of the shortage of contemporary examples, is the feasibility in current political contexts of pockets of effectiveness of direct interest to smallholder farmers. The crop parastatals of the Jomo Kenyatta era in Kenya that were the focus of Leonard’s 1991 book were such organisations, but recent examples have been harder to find.

One important effort to fill this gap is the Elites, Production and Poverty (EPP) research project led by Ole Therkildsen (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011; Whitfield et al., forthcoming). Recognising that relationships between clientelistic politicians and producer groups vary across economic sectors and subsectors, this research found and documented a number of instances of a benign and supportive triangular relationship between political leaders, sector bureaucrats and business groups. In these instances, including the cocoa recovery in Ghana, sugar businesses in Mozambique and the dairy sector in Uganda, positive economic outcomes were the product of a perceived mutuality of interests among these three sets of players. The sector officials were characterised by something of the ‘embedded autonomy’ that Evans (1995) identified as the key to industrial policy in Korea. Other examples were found where results were disappointing because the triangular relationship between politicians, officials and producers did not exist or broke down. Examples included export horticulture in Ghana and irrigated rice in Tanzania.

The EPP case studies are certainly suggestive of what a pocket of effectiveness might look like in the current African context. However, with the single exception of cocoa in Ghana the documented success stories do not include sub-sectors that are key to the livelihoods of large numbers of smallholders. The documented disappointments and other experience in East Africa (Booth et al., 2014) serve to underline the general observation that the typical form of competitive clientelism in Africa today does not and perhaps cannot deliver the political protection that an effective agricultural transformation agency would require.

Chapter 6 takes a radical approach to this generally discouraging picture. The chapter and the set of four country reports on which it draws (Akinyoade et al., 2013; Leliveld et al., 2013a; Leliveld et al., 2013b; Dietz et al., 2014) examine the available evidence on progress in particular sub-sectors of crop and livestock production. They set about identifying the sub-sectors in which worthwhile progress has been made over the years 2000-2010, leaving on one side the question of whether this is occurring because or in spite of the prevailing policy environment. The focus is on the four African countries in the TD set: Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda.

Making due allowance for weaknesses in the available data on outputs and yields, and applying a relatively relaxed set of success criteria, the study constructs a healthy list of sub-sectoral successes. The growth in urban populations and the resulting increased domestic demand for food is the main driver in most instances, with exports playing a small role. The study does not delve deeply into the political economy of these developments, except to note that few of them are mainly the result of government initiatives. On the other hand, the results provide the framework for an important set of further research questions covering such matters as: the nature of the value chain for a successful agricultural product; what combination of public and private support works best; the relative roles of domestic and international markets; and the incentives and disincentives underlying production and yield increases. The authors of Chapter 6 recommend support for innovation clusters that stimulate productive liaisons between farmers, market agencies, credit agencies and national and international knowledge centres.

1.6 A new concept of developmental regime

It might be thought that a research project dedicated to questions about developmental regimes would begin by defining its subject of study. The DRA project did not do this, for several reasons that still seem sound.



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Most importantly, the TD project rather emphatically failed to find that Southeast Asia’s development successes were the work of a particular type of political regime. Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam achieved comparable development outcomes under very different sorts of regime. What their governments shared was a pragmatic approach to an immediate problem – summarised in the phrase ‘urgency, outreach and expediency’. The change process was not driven by a bold vision for national economic transformation, but by a consistent incrementalism. As discussed in Chapter 4, ambitious visions for economic transformation were more often found in Africa, where they contributed to a policy climate that systematically avoided providing the needed support to agriculture.

The APPP research on ‘developmental patrimonialism’ did, in apparent contrast, give considerable importance to time horizons and vision. Comparing regimes across Africa, outcomes did seem to be better when the leadership’s policy horizon extended beyond the next election. In the African context, it seems to matter whether the leadership uses the available economic rents to further a vision of national development or merely to keep itself in power by buying the support of a sufficient elite coalition. The most important further question to be explored was how the growth accelerations produced by the economically more successful variants of neopatrimonialism could be sustained, the question dealt with in Chapter 5.



a relevant concept of developmental regime must capture three layers of insight from recent research.

It was a challenge to reconcile these different perspectives in a way that preserved their respective empirically grounded insights. This implied a wider and deeper engagement with comparative development studies on Asia, Africa and beyond, as well as further reflection on the conclusions of Chapters 4-6. Finally, what prompted the proposed conceptual synthesis was the need to address the project’s final research question, concerning the role of the international system. While the issue of sustainability could be illuminated using proxy measures, this question seemed to require the elaboration of a theoretical concept.

Chapter 7, and the longer paper on which it draws (Booth, 2014a), describes such a concept. The central idea is to break out of the rather circumscribed debate initiated in the 1980s in response to the first generation of Asian tiger economies. Based on the subsequent experience in both Asia and Africa, it now seems possible to offer a more generally applicable concept, involving three layers of defining features and a perspective on the causal connections among them. As with theoretical concepts in the social sciences generally (Goertz, 2006; Manicas, 2006; Coppedge, 2012), the proposal is not just a definition but a claim about the nature of the relevant causal mechanisms. It is offered as a source of hypotheses for testing.

The concept captures three layers of insight from recent research, about *policy content*, *policy process* and *political settlements*. Briefly stated, the argument is that policy choice matters, for the reasons adduced by TD; that the way in which policies are adopted and pursued matters even more; and that the ability of a regime to follow the needed problem-driven, iterative and adaptive policy approach is a function of the prevailing political settlement. Chapter 7 offers general reasons for conceiving a developmental regime in this three-layered way. Elsewhere (Golooba-Mutebi and Booth, 2013), we have illustrated its application to the case of Rwanda, arguing that the layered concept helps to make sense of aspects of the performance of a regime that remain puzzling within a normative governance-assessment lens (e.g., Reyntjens, 2013).

1.7 Influence of the international system

The concept outlined in Chapter 7 is the template for the discussion in Chapter 8 and the associated working paper (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2014b) of the way the international system and the policies of the global powers influence the prospects of developmental regimes in Africa today. Among the questions addressed by the DRA Project, this is perhaps of the most direct international policy relevance. Arguably, it is much more important than any question about what rich countries do as aid donors, since it is generally recognised that aid in itself has very little ability to shape the domestic politics of developing countries in helpful ways.

Since we have argued that the policies regimes choose are important, an obvious first topic for consideration is whether it is true that the ‘policy space’ for developing countries is now heavily restricted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements and the conditionalities of the Bretton Woods Institutions. Chapter 8 is broadly sympathetic to the literature that has advanced this idea (e.g., Gallagher, 2005) as well as to the general thesis that developed countries have a tendency to ‘kick away the ladder’ – in other words, to discourage use of the policies and institutions that they themselves used to climb to their current position (Chang, 2002). However, the hypothesis of severe constraints on policy choice is more persuasive when applied to already partly industrialised, middle-income economies than to the typical low-income country in Africa. Applied to Africa, the policy space hypothesis also assumes there is a genuine country interest in pursuing heterodox economic policy options to the point where WTO constraints or World Bank conditionalities kick in. We find this politically naïve.

One reason it is naïve is that policy processes in most of Africa do not have the quality that we have seen to be a feature of the otherwise varied regime types that have achieved exceptionally good development results. Policy is not usually arrived at in a problem-driven, iterative and adaptive way. This is for several reasons. As argued by Andrews and co-authors in advancing their PDIA concept (Pritchett et al., 2010; Andrews et al., 2013), the availability of development assistance works against a sound policy-making approach. The ‘isomorphic mimicry’ that has been observed as a general feature of organisational development everywhere is intensified by aid. The rulers of African countries tend to place a high value on maintaining good relations with donors and therefore policies and institutional arrangements are adopted that signal good intentions. International ‘best practices’ are adopted, formally at least, even though in practice they do not represent relevant solutions to the problems countries are facing.

These observations provide strong reasons for arguing that international factors constrain African countries more through their effects on the quality of policy processes than by limiting policy options. However, this should not be taken too far. Aid dependence does not seem to be a binding constraint, because at least in a handful of aid-dependent countries and in some sectors, policy is made PDIA-style despite the temptation of ‘signalling’. According to our argument, this happens because the political settlement allows it. Therefore, we need to be concerned also about how the international system, or forces within it, impact upon settlements that actually or potentially play this enabling role.

This last question is a difficult one that cries out for more research than the DRA project has been able to undertake. In Chapter 8, we take a few steps in the required direction, with a brief consideration of recent developments in the international relations of Kenya and Rwanda. We argue that these experiences give grounds for believing that international constraints on the emergence and consolidation of developmental regimes are most significant when they affect the enabling level of the political settlement.

By definition, political settlements are about institutions and power, especially about how the explicit or tacit agreements among elite factions – often defined in ethno-regional or faith-group terms – that affect the way institutions work in practice (Khan, 2010; Parks and Cole, 2010). Since the end of the Cold War, however, international policy has been suffused with a naïve liberal perspective that is all about getting the right formal institutions and not at all about informal power.

On occasion, this has contributed to the disastrous unravelling of a viable political settlement, as in the failure of the coalition powers to halt Iraq’s slide back into anarchy under the premiership of Nouri al-Maliki. In Kenya and Rwanda, the effects have not yet been of comparable severity. Nevertheless, Chapter 8 argues, naïve liberalism has worked by two routes to reduce the chances of Rwanda’s settlement evolving in a safe and satisfactory way. One route is through the unmitigated attention given to the regime’s shortcomings in terms of liberal-democratic norms in most academic writing and journalism. The other is the way a failing state-building project in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been bolstered by contested claims, and enduring myths, that shift the lion’s share of the blame onto Rwandan foreign policy, with significant effects on aid flows.

Kenya is a very different case: a country of much greater economic potential but signally lacking the settlement needed to realise this potential. What we say about this will seem no less controversial than our interpretation of the DRC/Rwanda episode. It needs to be stressed that the forces in play in Kenya are overwhelmingly domestic. All the same, the way international, especially US and British, influence was exercised around the 2013 elections and the International Criminal Court indictments of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto seems consistent with our proposition about the harmful effects of a naïve liberalism backed by global power.

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1.8 Implications for policy engagement and future research

The DRA project arose, three years ago, from the need for a more rounded story, addressed to academics and especially policy-makers, about the potential for developmental regimes in Africa. The TD research had indicated clearly enough the need for a fresh approach to development challenges in Africa, including a new level of priority to agriculture and more concern for outreach, urgency and expediency in formulating and implementing policies. By looking closely at the historical record, APPP had shown that African politics was not as consistently anti-developmental as the conventional wisdom supposed. Developmental regimes in Africa are possible, so long as we do not expect them (against all historical evidence) to require prior achievement of open and transparent, democratically accountable and comprehensively capable governance. But this left several critical questions unanswered.

The research summarised in this report has sought to answer these questions and takes us closer to a complete account. One of the most challenging questions was how African countries might be expected to replicate what happened in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam in earlier decades, given the radical differences in context. Elites of those countries are widely assumed to have been responding to existential threats from Cold-War era peasant mobilisation. Does this not reduce the relevance of that experience to Africa? The regimes in Ethiopia and Rwanda may be seen as responding in a broadly similar way to systemic vulnerabilities with their roots in the rural sector, but they are the exceptions. This is a good question to ask, but we have shown that the ‘threat’ thesis has been over-sold, even in the Asian context. The evidence suggests a lesser role for political interests and a greater role for ideas and ideologies in explaining differences across countries, in both Asia and Africa. This has the major policy implication that **those with influence in the matter must persist in advocating vigorously for fuller and more purposive implementation of commitments on agricultural priority such as those in the African Union’s Maputo Declaration.**

Close consideration of comparative experience also points to the importance of factors that provide a bridge between ideas-based and interest-based, or political economy, explanations. One such bridging variable is the willingness of policy-makers to search out solutions to national problems and discover by trial and error how best to make progress with the resources to hand. As argued in Chapter 7, **a problem-driven and learning-oriented policy-making style seems to be a common feature of otherwise varied development success stories.** This has led us to include policy approach, as well as pro-poor, pro-rural policy content, in our specification of what should count as a developmental regime. Another, universal or near-universal, feature of development processes producing impressive outcomes is that they have relied on islands of excellent economic governance, not on comprehensive reform. We have addressed the challenging question of what this means for agriculture in Africa by going back to basics. A close look at the crop and livestock sub-sectors that have done better than average over the last decade suggests that **the most relevant type of ‘island’ may be innovation clusters in which farmers, market agencies, credit agencies and knowledge centres collaborate, with the state playing a role but not necessarily a dominant one.**

Another big question at the outset of the DRA research was about how African regimes might be expected to maintain a developmental orientation for long enough, given the historical tendency for high-growth episodes in Africa not to be sustained, for reasons linked to leadership transitions. We have shown, on the best available evidence from both Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, that **leadership transitions that are sufficiently smooth to maintain economic growth are most likely to be assured under regimes with a well-institutionalised dominant political party.** Since the research was done, a leadership transition in Ethiopia has appeared to add credibility to this interpretation. The findings are highly pertinent to upcoming transitions in several other countries, including the intriguing pair of Uganda and Rwanda, although in elaborating a concept of developmental regime we have been led to emphasise factors that underlie and may help to explain the character of the dominant party, shaping the way it works in practice. These factors are what we are calling the political settlement.

The DRA research on leadership transitions joins a great deal of other recent evidence to confirm that theories about governance for development need to be focused on institutional variables other than those foregrounded in ‘good governance’ or ‘inclusive institutions’ rhetoric. Together with our findings about policy choice and policy-making styles, this points to a compelling message for international development practice. **We have been in thrall for far too long to concepts of governance for development that have a purely ideological, and indeed rather narrowly Anglo-American, origin.** It is high time for development professionals to speak truth to power in this respect, and to do so in greater unison. The politicians who, rightly or wrongly, steer the

diplomacy and development assistance efforts of rich countries need to be told, far more forcefully than has happened hitherto, that the way development happens and is best supported is too important to be settled without primary reference to evidence.

Further research must not be a reason for delaying this practical struggle. However, the DRA project's findings do suggest some priorities for researchers. Our proposal on the conceptualisation of developmental regimes, with its three interconnected layers – policy, policy approach and political settlement – needs further empirical validation. In particular, **for both theoretical and practical reasons, we need to know more than we do now about the range of types of political settlement represented in the recent history of the developing world.** For each type, we need to be able to say more about how the settlement affects the workings of the prevailing institutions and particularly the ability of policy-making groups to take a problem-driven, learning process approach with a suitable time horizon. This is a critical matter for domestic reformers, especially in aid-dependent countries where the incentive to use policies as signals for donors and voters, rather than to solve problems, is great. It should also be of concern to aid donors and the diplomatic missions of developed countries.

In recent years, development agencies have been quite strongly affected by the allure of randomised control trials (RCTs) and other statistically rigorous techniques of impact assessment. As numbers of such evaluations have been undertaken, it has become apparent that their limitations include a difficulty of generalising about development interventions that work across country and regional contexts (Rodrik, 2008; Woolcock, 2013). Consequently, there is a growing need for a systematic typology of relevant contextual factors that can guide a realistic form of aggregation of findings about impacts. If the arguments in this report are correct, this should take the form of a well-supported typology of political settlements.

Donors are also showing some openness to the proposal that they should be supporting PDIA-type working methods (Andrews, 2013), including supporting in-country initiatives that are 'politically smart and locally led' (Booth and Unsworth, 2014). A recent 'manifesto' on Doing Development Differently, capturing several of these ingredients, has been attracting large numbers of signatures from development professionals around the world (DDD, 2014). This movement is based on case-study evidence, personal experience and a large body of writing about fields of human endeavour other than development (e.g., Harford, 2011) suggesting that there are better forms of development practice than the current programming of the donors. However, the same difficulty arises. What works in one context may not work in another. **There is an urgent need to marry up the effort to document better ways of working for development with a more systematic approach to varieties of country context.** This should be a top research priority in the coming years.

“ *the politicians need to be told that the way development happens is too important to be settled without primary reference to evidence.* ”