

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Developmental States in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections on State, Development, and Foreign Policy

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### Abstract

This article examines discussions on state development in the context of sub-Saharan Africa by concentrating on the nexus of state, development, and foreign policy. First, the article notes ambiguity to still exist on what the essential characteristics of a developmental state are, both in general as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly because developmental state scholars see development as a context-dependent process. Also, scholars often even analyze different aspects of developmental states in the same context (i.e., quality of democracy, developmental outcomes, analysis of what is, and reflections on what *should be*). Second, even though the developmental state framework endorses a perspective that sharply contradicts the neoliberal orthodoxy, the case may be that the two occasionally converge on some policy proposals. Thus, if the goal is to formulate and implement effective policies in sub-Saharan Africa, it is better not to derive an oversimplified dichotomy between developmental state and orthodoxy. Lastly, the article highlights relatively recent attempts to have occurred investigating developmental states' foreign policy dimension in the context of South Africa, thus offering a novel and timely research agenda.

**Keywords:** Developmental state • Developmental states in sub-Saharan Africa • African development • State and development • Neoliberalism

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Due to the 2008 global economic crisis hitting all regions of the world, Africa also had its due share. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), growth rates fell by more than 4% between 2007 and 2009 (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2010). The number of countries with growth rates of 5% or higher declined from 29 to seven while those facing negative growth jumped from two to eight (Osakwe, 2010, p. 204). Sharp falls in export volumes were also recorded, as well as drastic decreases occurring in export prices, especially in commodities crucial to the region's export performance (Osakwe, 2010). Volatile capital flows and exchange rates also injected uncertainty and instability into economies (Osakwe, 2010). Mainly through the trade channel, many African countries' basic macroeconomic indicators deteriorated. The most vulnerable groups in societies (the young, the aged, and in many cases the women) were affected the most by the crisis. For instance, many problems such as access to health worsened (Akintola et al., 2016; Mensah, 2014) with severe human consequences (Friedman & Schady, 2013).

In the face of these devastating developments, many scholars and policy-makers heavily criticized SSA's neoliberal approach to development. One vein of this scholarship has drawn on the developmental state framework while articulating its assessment of neoliberalism. In fact, political leadership in countries like South Africa and Ethiopia, under the influence of Asian developmentalism, explicitly declared their countries to be developmental states. Discussions have been multidimensional and reflect the diversity, heterogeneity, and richness of SSA. This article takes stock of the debates on contemporary developmental states in SSA to highlight three points. First, developmental state as a term is still used in different contexts with different meanings and connotations. Thus, one may get different answers to the questions of what makes a state developmental and how can one identify a developmental state when one sees it. This has arguably two reasons: (i) Development for many developmental state scholars is context-dependent, and (ii) the case is often that researchers and/or politicians even focus on different dimensions of the developmental state within the same contexts (i.e., democratic qualities, economic success, analysis of *what is*, and reflections on *what should be*).

Second, some studies conducted on sub-Saharan developmental states have tended to assess the mainstream approach to development by focusing on the core arguments put forward two or three decades ago while their investigations mostly concern contemporary issues, including recent debates on developmental states.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, while in some cases the mainstream is associated with an extreme market-oriented

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1 Orthodoxy and mainstream are used interchangeably in this article, loosely referring to the collection of theories and models that either follow or are heavily influenced by neoclassical economics. This approach and the consequent policy prescriptions are mainly advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This study has adopted this rather broad definition because this is what many scholars have implicitly done in their analyses of developmental states in SSA, which is the focus of this article. Also, developmental state scholars often using neoliberal as a word to denote mainstream has noteworthy importance, which can be understood in the above manner. The implications of this are discussed throughout this article.

perspective, the developmental state is treated within a homogenous approach that assigns just the right roles to the state and the market in development processes. This article suggests this kind of stance to risk oversimplifying the subject-matter, especially in regard to policy proposals. By not elaborating on recent advancements in the mainstream but instead focusing on what was state-of-the-art in the 1980s or the 1990s, a *straw man* is created. Neither the mainstream nor the developmental state is as homogenous as is occasionally presented. Thus, this study claims that, if the objective is to pursue pro-poor development in SSA, concentrating on the points upon which the mainstream and the developmental state may agree upon is crucial. Lastly, relatively recent attempts have occurred to analyze the foreign policy dimension of developmental states in the context of South Africa. This article highlights the relevance of these attempts by noting how they've offered a new research agenda. The following sections elaborate on each of these points in turn.

### **A Brief Look at Developmental States in Sub-Saharan Africa and Definitional Issues**

SSA is one of the most curious regions in the world for developmental state scholars. SSA has diversity in terms of state capacity (strong, weak, fragile) and socio-economic performance. Also, many countries explicitly or implicitly pursue a state-led development agenda. This has especially been the case since the 2008 global economic crisis, although many countries had begun to implement developmentalism long before the crisis. What is particularly interesting in SSA is that countries like South Africa and Ethiopia explicitly draw upon the developmental state framework while articulating their approach to development. For example, Edigheji (2010, p. 2) aptly underlined, "The South African government is one of the few governments in the world that has expressly committed itself to the construction of a developmental state. Most developmental states were labelled as such after the fact, not by government officials but by scholars." Thus, the form, quality, and future of developmental states in SSA has been a lively topic of discussion.

Some countries that had implemented state-led development in SSA have been particularly successful in terms of socio-economic performance. Two of these cases, Ethiopia (Clapham, 2018; Jostein Hauge, 2019) and Rwanda (Harrison, 2016; Mann & Berry, 2016), are also frequently classified as developmental states. For instance, Ethiopia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate was the second highest in the world and the highest in Africa at 9.6% in 2015 (Clapham, 2018, p. 1151). The country's growth rate was a spectacular 9.5% for the 2000-2013 period, while the sub-Saharan average was 5.2% (Clapham, 2018, p. 1151). The country was also successful in reaching its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as in education and health (United Nations Development Program, 2015). These achievements are noteworthy

because they took place “in a country notorious as a scene of famine and civil war, with an exceptionally rugged landscape, very poor communications, and little by way of natural endowments, and also (since Eritrea’s independence in 1991) landlocked” (Clapham, 2018, p. 1151). Indeed, Ethiopia has been called Africa’s lion by some scholars (Hauge, 2019). Another success case that has often been classified as a developmental state is Rwanda; for example, it has been noted as follows: “20 years after its horrific genocide, Rwanda has become a model for economic development” (Mann & Berry, 2016, p. 119). The average GDP growth was 7.9% between 2000 and 2018, while the growth rate was above 10% in 2002, 2006, and 2008 (World Bank Indicators). Like Ethiopia, Rwanda has also shown strong performance in achieving its MDGs by executing developmentalism. As put forward, “determined government policies involving investment in health and education and their energetic implementation with the support of development partners are identified as ultimately responsible for [*sic*] success in improving the lives of ordinary Rwandans” (Abbott et al., 2017, p. 103). These were drastic changes: “Real per-capita incomes in Rwanda [in 1997 were] less than half their level in 1970!” (Rodrik, 1998, p. 1). Botswana (Botlhale, 2017) and Mauritius (Tang et al., 2019) are other prominent cases of success in SSA, especially in terms of economic performance.

Being the only BRICS member from Africa, South Africa is another case that endorsed the developmental state approach to development. South Africa is in a different league compared to many others in the region regarding development, but the country is commonly considered to be a relative failure in terms of developmental state success. While some scholars see institutional deficiencies as the cause of South Africa’s failure (Edigheji, 2010), others see “the structural class power of business” under neoliberal globalization as the root cause of dissatisfactory performance (Masondo, 2018, p. 204). Nigeria is likewise considered to be a relative failure. Weak developmental state institutions such as a weak bureaucracy (Eme & Ugwu, 2011), and “overdependence on single product export-crude oil-without profound efforts to diversify the economy” have been seen as the main causes of Nigeria’s relatively poor performance (Ezema & Ogujiuba, 2011, p. 100). In Zambia and Zimbabwe, many factors including neoliberal policies and insufficient investments have been said to undermine the countries’ new developmental initiatives (Saunders & Caramento, 2018). In short, a number of countries in SSA have pursued state-led development in the 2000s; this has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, especially after the 2008 global economic crisis.

A comprehensive review on African developmental states concluded that “there is not an East Asian model that can simply be copied, cut and pasted over to Africa” (Routley, 2014, p. 170). Consensus still is found in the literature regarding this statement. Almost all developmental state scholars explicitly note Asian experiences

as offering valuable insights and perspectives on the nature and form of state-led developmentalism but that these experiences were context-dependent and reflective of the unique socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances of Asia.<sup>2</sup> Because SSA differs from Asia in almost every aspect and sub-Saharan countries face a different international political economy structure, state-led developmentalism necessarily reflects local and new external conditions in SSA. The same review further indicated developmental state as a term to be able to be considered as a “buzzword” referring to different phenomena in different contexts, including well-being, efficiency, growth, and prosperity (Routley, 2014, pp. 172–173). This is also still the case. For instance, Brown and Fisher (2020, p. 186) observed that what Western donors understand by developmental state in the Ethiopian context is “varied, vague and superficial.” In essence, the “donors have too readily and uncritically accepted, internalized, and deployed [the idea that a tolerable trade-off exists between economic development and undemocratic behavior] using the ‘developmental state’ concept to justify their withdrawal from serious engagement on democratic reform” (Brown & Fisher, 2020, p. 186). What is more, scholars frequently even examine different traits of developmental states in the same context. While some analysts concentrate on what is (empirical analysis), others elaborate on what should be (empirically-guided normative analysis). One example illustrates this broad pattern.

While reflecting on Ethiopia and on what Evans (1995) had conceptualized as embedded autonomy, Hauge and Chang (2019) characterized developmental states as follows: prioritization of economic development through industrialization, legitimization of policies through economic development, and influence of Asian developmentalism. This is a plausible approach, but at least two questionable issues occur here. First, the nexus of democracy and development is not essential for the authors but a highly contested issue in the context of Ethiopia’s developmental state. Does a trade-off exist between democracy and economic development? Which one should come first? Hauge and Chang (2019) problematized this subject, albeit briefly, noting that expecting to see a type of democracy reflecting “an idealized version of Anglo-American state structures” in all developmental states would be a misleading endeavor. This is an accurate observation. However, the authors did not elaborate on this remark further because the aforementioned traits of developmental states were more crucial in their analysis. In Dejene and Cochrane (2019), however, democracy is a defining trait of developmental states. This is why the authors argued, “We find the developmental state was effective in a number of ways [in Ethiopia], but that this modality of governance appears to have passed its peak of securing advantage... A shift from the developmental state to developmental democracy appears to be underway. Decision-making and economic policies need to align with this change” (Dejene & Cochrane,

2 For a review of developmental state literature, see Öniş (1991), Haggard (2018), Ricz (2019), and Karaoğuz (2019).

2019, p. 161). For Hauge and Chang (2019), developmental states also mean prioritizing economic development as the chief objective (the authors mainly refer to economic growth) through industrialization. This is also a debatable proposition, especially if the discussion is about 21<sup>st</sup> century developmentalism. Many scholars contend achieving high growth rates to be insufficient on its own for today's aspiring developmental states; social welfare and income equality are equally crucial. Furthermore, industrialization may not be as essential as it had been in the previous century because the rules and political economy dynamics of development are different in the contemporary knowledge society (Edigheji, 2010; Evans, 2010). Finally, especially regarding democratic developmental state discussions in SSA, following whether democracy is objectively or normatively relevant for economic development is often difficult. Namely, does one talk about an ideal-typical democracy or discuss democracy by putting it in a historical perspective? While the former approach usually leads to elaborations on what should be, the latter one leads to examinations of what is.<sup>3</sup> In summary, different perspectives still exist on what the defining traits of developmental states are in the discussions on SSA developmental states.

### **Developmental State Perspective vs. Mainstream: An Oversimplified Dichotomy?**

This article suggests that while there are obvious, major differences between the developmental state framework and the mainstream regarding political economy dynamics of development processes, which can be neither overlooked nor reconciled, this does not necessarily imply that there are no common grounds which the two perspectives may agree upon to achieve better institutional configurations and policies in SSA. To start with, changes have occurred at the hearts of both camps in the last three decades or so, creating ample opportunities for convergence on certain issues. The initial success of developmental state paradigm in the 1980s should be remembered as laying in its acknowledgement of the market's role in development, an issue that had been insufficiently covered by the structuralist development economics of the 1950s and the early 1960s (Öniş, 1991, p. 110). Consequently, occasional characterizations of developmental states that derive their logic mainly from sharp contrasts with the mainstream, thus giving the impression that the developmental state is a homogenous construct, need to be evaluated in this regard. As Harrison (2010, p. 1) noted, "Grand concepts like neoliberalism are both necessary and dangerous [*sic*], dangerous because [they] enable generalizations, finesse specificities, and tempt people to reckless degrees of certainty in their observations." This is a crucial warning, and should also be taken into consideration alongside developmental state analyses. As Harrison and Cline-Cole (2009, p. 477) further highlighted:

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3 For examples of historically-rooted democracy analyses in Ethiopia, see Harrison (2016) and Mann and Berry (2016).

Answers to the pressing questions regarding social justice, struggle, and development must always be provisional and subject to as much questioning as that reserved for a new World Bank lending programme or a large oil investment on the Bight of Benin [because] it would be tragic [...] if critical scholars replaced the vulgar teleologies of neoliberal ideology with new teleologies that set out necessary, correct, or irrefutable prospectives for Africa.

Influenced by these ideas, the second argument of this article is that a more productive dialogue can be established between developmental state scholars and the mainstream perspective. To further elaborate, scholars in some cases have drawn a very sharp contrast between the orthodoxy and the developmental state framework at the beginning of their studies to highlight the analytical merit of the latter. While the mainstream is associated with a stateless market-oriented perspective, the developmental state represents a rather homogenous approach of striking the right balance between market and state. Furthermore, while analyses have covered contemporary issues and recent developmental state discussions, they have also mainly criticized the orthodoxy of the 1980s and the 1990s. For instance, Dadzie's (2012, p. 14) analysis starts with the note:

Neoclassical economists contend vehemently that the state's role should be limited to nothing but a "facilitator" or "custodian" [...] Heterodox development economists argue strongly that the role of the state in development goes beyond the scope defined by neoclassical economists.

Dadzie (2012) aptly claimed neoliberal thinking to have mistakenly demonized states in SSA. The author concluded, "Instead of demonizing the state as was the case particularly starting in the early 1980s, policy initiatives should seek to refine the state in ways that allow it to execute its developmental functions while becoming a stronger partner of the private sector" (Dadzie, 2012, p. 22). While elaborating on this key argument, Dadzie (2012) mainly adhered to the developmental state literature. Dadzie's (2012) analysis emphasized crucial points but did not cover recent mainstream developments. Nor did it problematize the inherent issues or diverse views within the developmental state approach. Therefore, it did not question whether overlapping ideas and concerns are found between the two approaches that could be suggested for solving SSA's contemporary problems. Likewise, after noting that the two approaches have been debated extensively by scholars and policy-makers, Kieh (2015, p. 1) highlighted:

Liberal/neo-liberal school argues that the state should have a minimal role in the economy [...] control of the economy should rest with the "market" and "market forces" based on the overarching principles of competition and "supply and demand." In contradistinction, the statist school [...] posits that the state generally should play a greater role in the economy, and serve as an engine of socio-economic development.

Kieh then underlined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's roles in promoting the market-oriented perspective. Although the analysis covered crucial matters, Kieh (2015) did not review mainstream's recent initiatives, nor did he problematize the different analytical views within the developmental state framework

(however, different types of developmental states were broadly discussed). Also, Kieh did not elaborate on the possible points of convergence between the two stances.

To further exemplify, while emphasizing the importance of local economic development agencies in the building of South Africa's developmental state, Khambule (2018, p. 2) noted:

Interest in the developmental state is [*sic*] a reaction to the need to create states that can address [*sic*] national development challenges [*sic* and achieve] inclusive [*sic*] development [which contradicts] neoliberal-driven systems, which often do not prioritize immediate national interests in the pursuit of [*sic*] growth that is often not inclusive.

A stark contrast was derived between the two approaches in Khambule's analysis. As a last indicative example, Kaseke (2017) assessed South Africa's developmental state by placing special emphasis on how social workers may play a role in the process. Even though the study put forward many relevant arguments, it nevertheless oversimplified both the mainstream and developmental state paradigms. As the writer noted:

Developmental state represents a particular approach to development. It contrasts sharply with the regulated state... In a regulated state the market is responsible for allocating or distributing resources... In a regulated state, development is market-driven unlike in a developmental state where development is state-driven. (Kaseke 2017, p. 472)

Regulated states are exemplified in the United States, but one can clearly observe a "hidden developmental state" even in the United States, as many authors have illustrated (Block, 2008). Thus, the issue is more complex than the broad differences that appear at first glance between the mainstream and the developmental state.

In other cases, even when scholars have defined developmental state in ways that overlap with the mainstream's recent suggestions, they do not discuss emergent implications. To exemplify, Ezema and Ogujiuba (2011, p. 100) started their analysis by noting, "There is a renewed interest in the idea of the developmental state in Africa [...] partly a reaction to the failure of the pro-market reforms under the Washington Consensus." The author goes on to note:

Neo-liberal distaste for state intervention often caused them to overlook a great deal of evidence of mutually supportive relations between states and the market. In several cases [*sic*] the state has commonly played an important role as protector and enabler of private sector development (Ezema & Ogujiuba, 2011, p. 101).

These broad differences are properly placed. Yet, as Ezema and Ogujiuba (2011, p. 101) further put forward without an elaboration, orthodoxy's recent stance comes closer to the developmental state on certain points: "Post-Washington consensus [*sic*] hinges the solution to development problems on 'getting the institutions right.'" Whether post-Washington consensus is satisfactory or not is a question in its own right

(Öniş & Şenses, 2005). However, it begs for further analysis. Some crucial aspects of the developmental state discussed by Ezema and Ogujiuba (2011) were more encompassing. Also, more engagement could occur with the mainstream: “The question boils down on how to reduce transaction costs through the establishment of good property rights, effective rule of law, [and] democratic accountability of government” (Ezema & Ogujiuba, 2011, p. 101). These remarks could have been used as a timely opportunity to introduce the broad literature on institutions’ role in development. The mainstream offers different perspectives on this issue. Similarly, Kuye and Ajam (2012) mainly discussed developmental state scholarship while discussing South African developmental state but made only one passing reference to the orthodoxy: “Neoliberal approaches typically favor free markets, minimal government intervention, private enterprise, free trade and investor friendliness, and stringent intellectual property protection regimes” (Kuye & Ajam, 2012, p. 52). However, as aptly noted in the article, “In practice, the South African government since 1994 has followed [*sic*] an ‘intermediate model’ [*sic*] with some neoliberal, some development state, some welfare state, and some clientelist neopatrimonial state characteristics” (Kuye & Ajam, 2012, p. 56). This crucial remark requires extensive elaboration. Dadzie (2012, p. 21), likewise, singled out “strong state-society relations and embedded autonomy” and “effective bureaucracies” as important ingredients of success. Kieh (2015, pp. 9–13) stressed the significance of embedded autonomy among many other fundamentals in the creation of a social democratic developmental state in Africa. Kuye and Ajam (2012, p. 53) noted the necessity of democracy, embedded autonomy, and a capable bureaucracy in nurturing democratic developmental states in Africa. However, the writers did not elaborate on how today’s mainstream may contribute to this agenda. As a last indicative example, Mabasa and Mqolomba (2016) examined the Chinese developmental state to derive lessons for Africa. Although the authors acknowledged the fact that China has successfully pursued a heterodox policy bundle including market-oriented reforms (Mabasa & Mqolomba, 2016, p. 77), they did not discuss potential overlaps between the developmental state and the mainstream as these two perspectives had been defined at the extremes (i.e., market-oriented versus state-led).

To do justice to the aforementioned studies, they did raise significant points, and their intention was not to make a structured comparison between the developmental state perspective and the mainstream approach to development. However, the way the comparisons were made is still indicative. On that note, a more balanced and in-depth elaboration of both the developmental state and the mainstream may reveal which issues have room for collaboration and creative thinking between the two perspectives. In fact, one example of this was well-outlined by Peter Evans more than twenty years ago. As Evans (1998) investigated in detail, both the mainstream (exemplified by the World Bank’s market-friendly stance) and the developmental state framework (exemplified by studies proposing industry-specific policies) acknowledge a quite

capable state bureaucracy to be a prerequisite of development. This was the case even in the extremist market-based approach because bureaucrats with technical knowledge and a bureaucratic structure that can coherently function were seen as necessities for success. Why is this important? In the words of Evans (1998, p. 69):

Agreement on basic institutional prerequisites transcends continuing disagreements over which facets of policy are most crucial [*sic*] across various interpretations of policy there is shared conviction that economic success requires a highly capable, coherent economic bureaucracy, closely connected to but still independent of the business community. If there are transferable lessons to be gained from East Asia's success, they almost certainly begin with this institutional combination.

In this spirit, many studies on African developmental states have adopted a more balanced perspective in their assessments of the mainstream. Mkandawire's (2010) analysis is an exemplary case strongly criticizing the orthodoxy while also acknowledging recent developments in the field. For instance, Mkandawire (2010, p. 75) aptly underlined orthodoxy's self-criticism by referring to a 2005 World Bank report:

If there are still economists enamoured by the 'Gospel according to Washington,' there is little ground for looking to Washington for good ideas, given the acknowledgement by World Bank economists that they in fact had no clue about what the good policies for growth were.

The author also referred to a 1997 World Bank report in which a stateless development strategy was admitted to be doomed to fail. Furthermore, Mkandawire (2010) made many on-point observations. To exemplify, the writer noted how earlier studies like Gerschenkron's (1962), who was an inspiration for developmental state scholars (Evans, 1995, p. 22), had elaborated on the state's central role in mobilizing savings and on how the mainstream endorsed this idea after mistakenly proposing financial liberalization at all costs. The lesson Mkandawire (2010, p. 66) drove home after evaluating both perspectives was this: "There is a key role to be played by the state in mobilising savings in African countries." To cite another example, after emphasizing the necessity of pro-business policies rather than pro-market ones in igniting economic growth, Mkandawire (2010) noted how the previous neoliberal stance had failed to understand this distinction but then realized the fact that not all pro-market policies are necessarily pro-business. Based on this, Mkandawire (2010) discussed what needs to be done in Africa to better construct a pro-business environment through the states' active participation in the process.

Shaw (2012) also evaluated Africa's attempts to build developmental states while turning a keen eye on the mainstream position on and potential contribution to the process. For instance, the author underlined that both the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) endorsement of developmental states and the World Bank's later strategy on development had emphasized the importance of flexible partnerships and regionalisms for Africa, especially given the failure of previous

attempts exemplified by the G8. Like Mkandawire (2010), Shaw (2012) highlighted the World Bank's more flexible approach to development, which included allowances for different ratios of government and market interventions. He then discussed how the region can increase regional coordination and minimize conflict. Shaw (2012) also cited concrete examples like how the World Bank's networks and programs had contributed to positive developments such as improvements in the work conditions in mines and better resource management. Likewise, Cramer (2010, p. 213) focused on macroeconomic policy, claiming that a would-be democratic developmental state in South Africa would be able to use fiscal policy as a supply-side tool to fund developmental programs. Equally importantly, Cramer (2010, p. 213) carefully observed: "Interestingly a similar reorientation of the role of fiscal policy in development is becoming more widely accepted in international policy development [the IMF and the World Bank]."

The recent methodological turn in studies on developmental states should be noted to provide ample opportunities for better engaging with different perspectives in the field, including the mainstream. Previously, developmental state scholars had tended to design their analysis by focusing on outcomes first (i.e., economic growth) then work backwards to identify and explain the causes (i.e., Weberian bureaucracy, autonomy, state capacity; Williams, 2014a, pp. 7–8). This approach tended to construct models for other countries to replicate (while being careful about overgeneralizing). Nevertheless, it made the paradigm vulnerable to methodological criticisms related to selection bias regarding the choice of dependent variables (Geddes, 2003; Haggard, 2015). Currently, studies tend to converge on the idea that "rather than seeking to emulate successful models [...] developmental states must forge country-specific developments that take seriously local conditions, social demands from a myriad of class forces and domestic politics" (Williams, 2014a, p. 24), which acknowledges how many domestic conditions have significantly influenced development trajectories. Rather than outcomes, the question has become more about the factors that shape developmental states' structure in the new millennium. This broad perspective opens room for other perspectives to jump in and contributes to developmental state theorization. For instance, Williams (2014b) underlined in an edited volume four new conditions that the 21st-century developmental states face: economic restructuring (shift from manufacturing to knowledge economy), democratization, emphasis on development rather than economic growth, and ecological limits. In the same volume, Evans (2014) explained how recent advances in modern economic theory and development studies (new growth theory, institutional approaches, and capability approach) had converged on important points for influencing developmental state's re-conceptualization. Evans (2010, p. 40) elaborated how Marxist and mainstream scholars "have come to surprisingly similar conclusions" in the context of Africa. Thus, the methodological re-orientation in the examination of developmental states

has enabled more interactions with other perspectives based on which creative and timely policies can be crafted to better address SSA's contemporary problems.

### **Developmental State Institutions and Foreign Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Developmental state scholars are primarily interested in explaining economic development. They usually adopt an institutionalist approach in defining an ideal, typical developmental state and examining the political economic determinants of economic success. Some studies have also questioned the political origins of developmental state institutions (Doner et al., 2005; Kohli, 1994). The presence of a relatively recent attempt at analyzing foreign policy preferences and foreign policy-making processes of aspiring developmental states (Landsberg, 2005; Landsberg & Georghiou, 2015) is also crucial to note. The key idea is that developmental state institutions, which are relevant in the context of industrial or innovation policy, are also relevant in the realm of foreign policy. That is because ideal, typical, developmental states (should) prioritize economic development in their foreign affairs. As Landsberg and Georghiou (2015, p. 481) aptly noted, this is an understudied subject in the field: "While there is a growing developmental state discourse and theory, very little attention has as yet been placed on what constitutes the diplomatic and foreign policy dimensions of a developmental state." On that note, Landsberg (2005) and Landsberg and Georghiou (2015) defined developmental foreign policy and exemplified the relevance of this concept in the context of South Africa.<sup>4</sup> In short, Landsberg and Georghiou (2015, pp. 486, 488) noted:

Maximising the objectives of South Africa's economic policy by way of trade, market access and foreign direct investment should become overriding goals of South Africa's diplomatic activities. Developing new markets in every corner of the globe is vital, hence the importance of economic diplomacy. This requires that the relationship between departments of foreign or international affairs and those of international trade should become more closely coordinated [*sic*] economic and political officers and attachés should work more cooperatively together [*sic*] diplomats are expected to have a firm and sophisticated sense of what constitutes the national interest of the state [and] a developmental diplomacy should be built on the foundations of a meritocratic diplomatic corps that is able to effectively [*sic*] operationalise foreign policy.

Thus, Landsberg and Georghiou (2015) illustrated that political will, embedded autonomy, and bureaucratic structure matter for the formulation and execution of developmental foreign policy, the foreign policy approach of a future developmental state. The authors go on to conclude that, in the South African context:

Twenty years into the post-settlement era, the Republic does not seem to have the organisational capacity as yet to ensure that it has the most effective and efficient structures and systems in place to realise its goals of becoming a successful developmental state (Landsberg & Georghiou, 2015, p. 493).

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4 Karaoğuz and Kutlay (2020) expanded on Landsberg (2005) and Landsberg and Georghiou (2015) to further the discussion on developmental foreign policy by using Turkey as an illustrative case.

The authors also questioned the quality of developmental state institutions related to South African foreign policy. This article suggests expanding both the conceptual and empirical scope of developmental foreign policy by concentrating on other SSA countries to be a timely addition to the research agenda, especially for countries that are considered to be promising examples of state-led developmentalism such as Ethiopia.

### Conclusion

This article has examined developmental state discussions on SSA to make three points. First, developmental state as a term is still operationalized in different ways in different contexts. Hence, the question of what makes a state developmental and how one can identify a developmental state when looking at one is still contested. This is arguably because developmental state scholars see development as a context-dependent process, and academicians and/or policy-makers even concentrate on different aspects of the developmental state within the same context (democratic qualities, economic success, analysis of what is, and reflections on what should be). Second, the article claims an oversimplified dichotomy to sometimes have been derived between the mainstream and the developmental state. While mainstream is associated with an extreme market-oriented perspective, the developmental state is considered to be a homogenous stance striking the right balance between the state and the market. Furthermore, mainstream is commonly criticized for its views put forward in the 1980s and the 1990s without taking its recent propositions into account, thus creating a *straw man*. This article suggests that if the goal is to achieve pro-poor development in SSA, concentrating on the points upon which the mainstream and the developmental state may agree upon is also important. Finally, the article notes relatively recent efforts to examine foreign policy preferences and foreign policy-making processes of aspiring or ideal-typical developmental states to have been conducted in the context of South Africa. These efforts offer a timely and a novel addition to the research agenda. Much value also exists in expanding the empirical and conceptual scope of these analyses by concentrating on other cases in SSA.

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