

THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE: REFLECTIONS ON SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS LOCAL SPHERE OF GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

The developmental state in South Africa has become a matter of great concern and urgency to all practitioners at the three spheres of government. The government has, since its inception in 1994, promoted economic growth and development through a variety of mechanisms, including policy implementation and the promulgation of legislation. In the local sphere of government provision has been made for national and provincial intervention to maintain the national standards of service delivery. However, since 2004 the protests, sometime violent, against the inability of municipalities to deliver their services have increased exponentially.

This article argues that realising the developmental state cannot be considered without taking into account both the social origin of the concept as well as its bureaucratic content. The spate of violent confrontations between municipalities and communities led to renewed calls for an interventionist and distributive state. However, the balance between developmentalism, interventionism and democracy has to be maintained. The new developmental state is one where equal emphasis is given to the concepts development through performance, managerial, technical and bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness and institutional rationalisation and transformation, while maintaining the democracy which provides a voice for the poor and marginalised, protects and accrues the rights of citizens, promotes institutional separation of powers and functions, transparent decision making, accountability and effective monitoring and control.

INTRODUCTION

Approximately ten years after the political liberation of South Africa, the first real challenge to the authority of the democratic state emerged from a rather unexpected origin. Unexpected in the sense that the challenge came from the ruling party's historically most loyal constituencies on the *platteland*, but perhaps to be expected as the revolt against the state surfaced at the coalface of government: the sphere of local government. Between 1994 and 2004/2005, just more than 50 protests against municipalities and their capacity to deliver basic services in communities were recorded. Thereafter the figure increased almost exponentially and in 2005 the Minister for Provincial and Local Government indicated that 90 per cent of the 136 local authorities which were identified as in need of special financial assistance had experienced revolt in some form. For 2004/2005, the Minister for Safety and Security, Charles Nqakula, reported 5085 legal protests and 881 illegal protests (SARR, 2006: 551; Atkinson, 2007: 58).

The often violent confrontations between the democratic state and the ruling party's traditional constituencies raised questions not only about the durability of South Africa's young democracy, but also about the very nature of accountable government. Rather ironically, the conceptual and operational attributes of the post-apartheid state is still debated more than a decade after the inception of political liberty. It seems as if the socially fluid and the contending - if not mutually hostile - political values prevailing in South Africa's volatile social sphere are continuously encroaching upon the social consensus that was implanted in the form of a regime compromise during the mid-1990s. In new democracies, changes to the master-narrative of state-formation (paradigm-shifts) are almost always subsequent to civil strife. The spate of violent confrontations between municipalities and communities led to renewed calls for an interventionist and distributive state.

However, it seems as if the conceptual realm of the developmental state is applied in a nominal sense with little understanding of the institutional and social requirements of such a state. This article reflects on two indicators fundamental to the institutional and social composition of a developmental state. *Firstly*, the requirement of a very specific bureaucratic architecture with a specific conceptual history, and rigid - if not authoritarian - operational edifice is elaborated upon. *Secondly*, the state-societal fabric which precedes the successful evolvement of a developmental state, and which is conceived in very historically distinguishable social origin, is considered in comparison with prevailing features of South Africa's local constitutional and legislative regime.

CONTEXTUALISING SOUTH AFRICA AS A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

The developmental state is defined as a state where politics have assured that power, autonomy and capacity is centralised in order to achieve explicit developmental goals. The focus of the developmental state is to either direct or enable economic growth (Taylor 2007). Leftwich (1995) has identified six major components that defines the developmental state, including:

- a determined developmental elite;
- relative autonomy;
- a powerful, competent and insulated bureaucracy;
- a weak and subordinate civil society;
- the effective management of non-state economic interests; and
- legitimacy and performance.

The developmental state seems to be synonymous with countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and more recently, China. In contextualising the developmental state for the purpose of this article, focus will also be placed on striking the balance between interventionism, developmentalism and the democracy. Modern society, and the involvement of civil society in South Africa, has called for a new type of state, namely one that is both democratic as well as developmental in both content and character. Olayode (2005) maintains that the centrality of the state in nation-building and socio-economic development is reaffirmed, while also asserting participatory democracy and a culture of human rights as key features of the developmental state. This context does however, place a burden on both the politician and practitioner in defining, planning for and realising the concept.

Two references by senior members of the ANC at their June 2007 conference, as regards the operational attributes of the developmental regime, reflects the difference between the political and the economic regimes of the developmental state. The chairman of the ANC's Economic Transformation Committee, Max Sisulu (as quoted in *Sunday Times*, July 8, 2007) states that the developmental state will be democratic in nature and "not have the state decree what is to be done". Similarly, head of policy in the Presidency, Joel Netshitenzhe, explains the developmental state's most pressing challenge as the *successful implementation of the ambitious infrastructure project* (*Sunday Times*, July 8, 2007). If these two views are considered against the backdrop of party-political resistance to the distribution of social grants to the unemployed, as a means of poverty eradication, it becomes obvious that the developmental state, in economic terms, may well be more regulatory than interventionist.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to the implementation of a developmental state is the robust societal urge (also embodied in legislation and entrenched in the Constitution, 1996) of South Africa's local communities to participate and determine policy and policy outcomes. This reflects on the social as well as institutional memory (the connective tissue of the continued resistance), which, perhaps somewhat ironically, was conceived in the liberationist political realm. South Africa's political and social restlessness did not originate in the natural history and social fabric of a civil society; it is a correlate of social resistance. Under the conditions where civil society typically came to fruition as a culmination of, and consensus between, representative interests, the need for a developmental state recedes.

The developmental state, thus, precedes the augmentation of civil society. However, where the state is confronted with the dispersed edifice of societal-based authority (beyond the control and/or reach of a relatively weak state), the notion of a developmental state is not compliant with the universal conceptual or operational confines thereof. Historically,

developmental states are preceded by a quiescent social comportment, and an efficient, but authoritarian state. Of this, China, is probably the most recent and appropriate example. South Africa has neither the social history nor the political efficiency to institutionalise authoritarianism. Pekkanen (2004: 35), in the context of Japan, refers to the era of the developmental state drawing to a close, references to a developmental state for South Africa may well be more normative than empirical.

The concept of administrative efficiency seems to call for the increased intervention of the state in determining the competence of employees, how they will be structured, their responsibilities, while the oversight function of government is strongly emphasised. In the conceptualisation of the developmental state, the purpose of realising economic growth can only be achieved by a bureaucracy committed and competent to carry out the functions given to it. Realising the developmental state will be dependent on the ability of the bureaucracy to respond to the challenge of productivity.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF AUTHORITY AND CONTROL IN A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Although the emphasis of the developmental state is economic growth, the trend since the 1990s has been towards proving that the *quality* of government is closely related and connected to economic growth. On 25 April, 2007 in a presentation made to the South African Local Government Association, the Minister of Finance spoke about the itinerant nature of the politician as opposed to the permanent nature of the office that serves him or her. Itinerant in the sense that political office-bearers are placed where their skills are most needed. The point is made that offices need to be staffed by competent and committed administrators. In his words: “if people are appointed for any other reason other than their ability to perform the job at hand, the employer undermines the constitutional mandate as set out in Section 152” (financial responsibility). The deduction is made that without appropriate skilled and qualified staff, municipalities will be unable to meet the standards prescribed for financial and performance management. The Minister places emphasis on the fact that staff needs to be evaluated and appointed based on their qualifications and job-appropriateness.

In building a developmental state, the Minister quotes Chapter 3 of the Constitution, 1996 on cooperative government as a collective responsibility. The SAMDI MINCOM Report (2007) on the future role and scope of the South African Management Development Institute reports that a Public Service required by a developmental state will, *inter alia*, present the following characteristics:

- shares a clear and common understanding of government policies and strategies to address the challenges through the building of a developmental state (including ASGISA and Programme of Action);
- comprises institutions that are strategically aligned and harmonised to complement one another to operate in a coherent and effective manner;
- staffed by patriotic, professional and well-trained public servants who believe in the goals of the developmental state;

- executes their mandates effectively with clarity and a singular sense of common purpose;
- is committed to effective training and career development; and
- is representative, participative, transparent, honest and accountable.

The emphasis on appropriate recruitment, placement and development focuses attention on the Weberian ideas of meritocratic recruitment based on a combination of education and evaluation, as well as predictable career planning (Evans & Rauch 1999:751-753). In essence the human resource provisioning function in the developmental state negates the constitutional principle set out in Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) of establishing a public administration, and thus a Public Service, broadly representative of the population it serves. Although it does reinforce the principles of appropriate career management and good human resource management practices.

Meritocratic recruitment, according to Evans & Rauch (1999:752) facilitates the establishment of an *esprit de corps*, which in turn will have a positive effect of the motivation and commitment of the human resource component. In a country plagued by allegations of poor management capacity, low productivity, high turnover, high absenteeism and continuous job-hopping, establishing recruitment standards based on education and evaluation might assist in ensuring at least minimal standards of job appropriate competence. The argument is further enforced through predictable career management practices. The possibility of a long rewarding career might reduce the appeal of quick profits through corrupt practices. Challenges in the current Public Service with regard to the human resource management function, include (SAMDI MINCOM Report 2007):

- fragmentation in the implementation of the function;
- low remuneration levels leading to skills loss;
- inability to retain competent and well qualified public servants; and
- ineffective management of performance with subsequent inability to manage careers.

Evans & Rauch (1999:752) maintain that the expectation of promotion related to performance and commitment may make the individual disinterested in following corrupt avenues, especially if those avenues undermine organisational goals. Longevity carries an incentive which includes development and purpose. Entry into the Public Service can only be obtained by passing an entry level exam or the attainment of a tertiary qualification. Promotion is internally based and Rauch & Evans (2000:52-54) argue that internal promotion increases a *virtuous circle* where the value placed on power increases as progression in management levels are obtained. Because the exercise of power is obtained through promotion, the incumbent is able to communicate the organisational goals more effectively, and through the legitimacy of his or her authority and power, ensure compliance and performance.

The developmental state places the responsibility for development as a state responsibility. As such, emphasis is placed on institutional and infrastructural effectiveness and efficiency. Institutional capacity is built by a strong bureaucracy committed to the

goals of development. The SAMDI MINCOM Report (2007) states that government should take the leading role as enabler of domestic economic growth, employment creation, social upliftment and human resource development.

The need for better management has been evident in the large scale protest against municipalities' inability to deliver services. Fakir (2007) states that inappropriate and ineffective modes and models of service delivery are implemented, inefficient administration is evident and elected officials do not carry out their oversight function and lack accountability. Protests are expressions of frustration and stronger management, or bureaucracy is required to curb the allegations of poor decision making, ineffective participation, lack of responsiveness and unavailability of local politicians in ensuring accountability and transparency. Naidoo (2006:484) points out that the developmental state literature does not award sufficient attention to the normative implications of realising the developmental state. The question one should ask is how to ensure the balance between the autonomy needed to pursue national development goals vs. the accountability required to ensure that the achieved objectives offer a legitimate representation of societal needs?

Fakir (2005) makes provision for the balance between democracy and developmentalism by stating that the developmental state should emphasise performance, managerialism, technical and bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness and institutional rationalisation and transformation. The democratic state should create a voice for the poor and marginalised, protect and accrue the rights of citizens, promote institutional separation of powers and functions, transparent decision making, accountability and effective monitoring and control.

The centralisation of authority, containment of workerist tendencies/evolution of civil liberties and growth preference to participation so typical to the theory of the developmental state is in stark contrast to the constitutional and statutory regime agreed upon as a compromise in the aftermath of apartheid. More importantly, it is contrary to the consolidated, political culture of social resistance - to imposed state formation, which prevailed in South Africa ever since the first settler societies arrived.

POLITICAL PARADIGM-SHIFTS AND ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

Following the 1994 elections, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which was at the political level fundamentally conceived in liberationist reasoning, succumb to the reality of an unresponsive bureaucracy, stagnant economy, and the contested extractive capacities of the new republic. However wholesome the intentions of the founding fathers of the RDP may have been, unless such an interventionist regime was based upon a sound monetary regime and a profitable process of production, it will have turned out to be not only beyond the distributive competence of the National Treasury, but also the bureaucratic capacities of a municipality. With limited resources and a radically transforming bureaucracy, any new master-narrative for reconstruction and development would have to have been founded upon economic frailties.

The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) paradigm – with some justification – was confronted at a systemic level by an impervious labour regime, but

was also subjected to the deep-rooted realities of sluggish diversification in the economy, the mechanisation of the process of production – aggravated by contracted levels of productivity, both within the private sector as well as the state – and the ideological illusion of the trickle down corollary of the invisible hand. Despite the *redistribution* intent of the GEAR paradigm, it never, in formal policy documents, mentioned the reduction of inequality as a policy goal. Weeks (1999:801) argues that the emphasis on growth (as opposed to redistribution) in effect polarised the discrepancy between South Africa's two (formal and informal) economies. The consequences of a macro-policy framework aimed at reducing inflation by investing heavily in the growth sectors of the economy not only contributed to rising relative deprivation amongst those excluded from the process of production, but unionists within the ruling alliance found the growth-disposition intolerable and stigmatised GEAR as a policy framework by labeling it as contrary to the interests of the masses.

The developmental state-paradigm is in a formative assessment stage in South Africa. As a frame of reference of the state's intentions, it is preceded by the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA), and the real question is: to what extent will the developmental state turn out to be a policy edifice, or functional extension, of the outcomes envisaged by ASGISA. On 6 February 2006, the Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, in a media briefing, referred to the key constraints to the implementation of ASGISA. These were:

- macro-economic issues;
- infrastructure programmes;
- sector investment strategies;
- skills and education initiatives;
- second economy interventions; and
- public administration issues.

These are, however, hardly the constraints typically identified by an interventionist state as impediments to the fulfillment of a populist mandate. To the contrary, it reminds of a developing state endeavouring to create the conditions conducive to substantial economic growth cycles.

In contrast to market-driven macro-economic framework, which received general approval from the international Bretton Woods-regime, is the so-called workerist state envisaged in the policy documents disseminated by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) before the June 2007 conference. The notion of a workerist state is both conceptually and operationally outdated, and the SACP is perhaps too much of a peripheral phenomenon in the tri-partite alliance, as well as the national political narrative, for it (a workerist regime however defined) to be considered a viable, contending regime preference¹. Furthermore, in theory, the universal (historical) conception of a developmental state is innately contrary to the participatory objectives of workerism. As apparatchiks and/or elected officials seldomly display scholarly resolve, concepts with a very verifiable social origin are often domesticated for populist purposes, culminating in ambiguous theory postulation.

INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MUNICIPALITY

Atkinson (2007) suggests three socio-political phenomena to be at the heart of a municipality's weaknesses. Most laymen's assessments would in all likelihood concur with Atkinson's reasoned reflection on impediments to good administration and governance at the local sphere, and in that respect the obstructions to distributing the greater good seems obvious. What is less clear, even for experienced scholars, is how to address such impediments and weaknesses.

Atkinson (2007: 33) postulates that (individual and institutional) ineffectiveness, (individual and collective) unresponsiveness and (individual) self-enrichment are the independent variables which precede the exhibition of social dismay so prevalent in a large number of communities. The large number of mass protests and violent confrontations between communities and the democratic state's coercive apparatus since 1994, and which is reminiscent of the Apartheid state's struggle against its own citizens, reflects a longitudinal confrontation preceded by independent variables such as the political opportunism of opposition parties, individuals and/or groups pursuing sectarian interests, and disturbed patronage lineages due to the redrawing of municipal and provincial boundaries. The often appalling institutional and individual capacity to deliver basic services is at the heart of the conundrum, but the *problematique* of social instability is almost certainly multivariate at conception.

Raenette Taljaard of the Helen Suzman Foundation, and former Member of Parliament (MP) for the Democratic Alliance, reasons that the "... sense of substantive public participation in our democracy must be strengthened if the institutions crafted in the Constitution [and legislation] are to remain robust and democracy is to remain secure" (*The Star*, July 30, 2007). Until 2002, it seemed as if the National Treasury assumed a local treasury with sufficient taxation and extractive capacities to largely determine its own monetary destiny. Consequently local government spending as per the national budget declined by approximately one per cent per annum (Makgetla, 2007: 160 – 161). However, as a primary site for service delivery, and the point of organisational fusion between the developmental interests of society and that of the often dreadfully inefficient grass roots managers of the greater good, the local sphere of extraction and distribution would always have been the soft underbelly of the ruling party. It wasn't only the rising discontent with the growing centralisation of authority in the Presidency, but more so due to the disturbing erosion of the ruling party's hold over policy processes and procedures in favour of the organisational architecture of the state. The discrepancy between the authority of state functionaries and party political functionaries were polarising to the detriment of the party.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration (2007) stated in her Budget Vote before Parliament that there are no cases of successful economic development in the world where the state has not played an important and prominent role. The creation of a Single Public Service has been high on the development agenda of government and currently the Single Public Service Bill is being made available for comment from the general public. The creation of the Single Public Service aims, not only to improve service delivery, but to

do so through the alignment of policies, conditions of service and governance frameworks between the three spheres of government. The Public Service Amendment Bill (2007) aims to improve the organisational and human resource framework to ensure compliance and provide guidelines for enhancing capacity. According to Fraser-Moleketi (2007) the Bill will provide the necessary information which will become the basis for government's plans to create a single public service. However, she noted, that the Bill does not aim to centralise power, but rather ensure that all sections of society is properly served. The Bill contains measures to:

- improve compliance with the Public Service Act (1994) to ensure accountability of political and administrative heads;
- institute a government component model to assist financial officers with oversight on policy implementation, performance, integrated planning, budgeting and service delivery; and
- enhance the alignment and coordination between conditions of service for the Public Service and all those sectors falling within the boarder public service but have their own employment legislation.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration stated that the Bill is designed to enhance governance, accountability and compliance. The argument is made that those are the aspects required for improved service delivery. The question does remain: How will local governments' governance framework be aligned with that of the Public Service? Has the path already been paved for stronger national and provincial intervention in the functions of local government?

Local government aims to address development in a sustainable manner. The concept of Developmental Local Government was identified as pivotal to municipal transformation through the White Paper on Local Government (1998). Provision for national intervention is made by both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) in sections 100 and 139, as well as through the White Paper on Local Government (1998). The principle of national intervention in local government is provided for in order to ensure that municipalities have the capacity to develop their own strategies to improve the lives of citizens. In this regard 'national government may have to adopt a more prescriptive approach towards municipal transformation'.

The four characteristics of developmental local government include:

- maximising social development and economic growth;
- integrating and coordinating;
- democratic development; and
- leading and learning

Elaborating on the above four characteristics, the White Paper on Local Government (1998) states that municipalities are, for instance, not responsible for job creation, but rather for ensuring economic and social conditions conducive to the creation of employment opportunities. A SAMDI MINCOM Report (2007) describes the developmental state as one in which government "leads a strong concerted drive for

economic growth, ensuring the mobilisation of national resources towards national development priorities”.

Municipalities are responsible for integrating and coordinating their function with other spheres of government in order to promote the social and general welfare of the community they serve. When municipalities are unable to fulfil this obligation, national and provincial spheres of government have the legal and moral obligation to take a more *prescriptive role*. Furthermore, section 44 of the Constitution, 1996 makes provision for Parliament to intervene in both the exclusive and concurrent functions of provincial government and municipalities. Section 87 of the *Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998* (Act 117 of 1998) states that should district or local municipalities be unable to fulfil their functions, provincial government may intervene after written notice has been table in the National Council of Provinces. In the protection of municipalities’ rights to govern their own legislative and executive rights, section 3 of the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000) provides that national and provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality’s ability of right to exercise its authority.

From the above may be concluded that even though legislative provision is made for allowing both national and provincial governments’ prescriptive right over municipalities, this right may only be exercised in the event of municipalities’ inability to perform its own legislative and executive authority.

CONCLUSION

If it can be accepted that a very nominal definition of a developmental state is pursued in South Africa by the ruling party, the tri-partite alliance and policy makers, a fundamental anomaly still prevails in the execution of the ideal of a state functional in the social and economic upliftment of destitute communities. The statutory and constitutional regime makes provision for the active involvement of society in the formulation of policy, but at the local sphere of government, the responsiveness of the state has reached appalling levels, allowing for, in a rather ironic sense, discontent and disorder to become embedded (*cf. Atkinson, 2007: 64*). The discourse in which South Africa’s developmental state is considered, is too contradictory, both as regards its historical development as well as pertaining to the evolvement of policy. It is not possible for a market-driven developmental state (really only a social democratic state) and a workerist state (where distribution and intervention lies at the heart of governance) to occupy the same realm of reason.

Ideally, the developmental state will have the capacity to both intervene in the economy and to regulate its own extractive and distributive obligations in a functional manner for purposes of enhancing the greater good. What might be seen as a paradox since the South African government is also, constitutionally, committed towards democratic and participatory governance. In this context, Fakir (2007) makes the very valid argument that the [elusive] search for a developmental state may well mean that effective management comes at the expense of better [responsive] governance.

NOTES

- 1 President Thabo Mbeki, in reference to the SACP, suggested at the June 2007 policy conference that the ANC is not a socialist party with a socialist agenda, and the SACP should not 'try and tell the ANC what to do', may well affirm the Cinderella-status of the SACP as regards the national political narrative.

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