

COMMITTEE V

Problems of Third World Development:
The Case of Africa

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Discussant Paper on W. Theo Roy's Paper

POLITICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

by

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Theo Roy, Political impediments to development in Southern Africa

This paper concerns itself primarily with the political and not socio-economic or religious determinants of development. Politics is defined as "the authoritative allocation of whatever resources are available" (p3) and which is made by "accepted decision makers" (Ibid). I have to return to this later. The author then emphasizes the cultural, historical and personality aspects which have an influence on decisions and which "reduce their level of rationality". (Ibid). This affects the "correctness" of political decisions which retards developmental goals.

The 'Southern Africa' in the title limits itself to the so-called 'frontline' states namely Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana as well as Namibia and the Republic of South Africa. The interrelationship between these states and the RSA is deeply and negatively affected by the race issues which have a bearing on development in Southern Africa.

The author attempts to give a synoptic review of major impediments to development. He refers to the Portuguese and British colonial regimes especially as the frontline states were under their influence. He maintains that although their styles "were significantly different" they "left their 'successor states with strikingly similar problems bearing directly on their developmental capabilities". (p4). I will return to this also.

Leaving colonies unprepared for effective self-government is a characteristic of colonial regimes. Colonial attitudes relegated indigenous people to junior levels in all spheres of colonial existence. The type of education was very elementary and limited - thus woefully inadequate. With the disappearance of the colonisers, they left individuals with "rudimentary and often contradictory ideas of how to approach often complex tasks of government". (Ibid, p. 5). The consequence was that they fell back on "ill considered and over-simplified authoritarian solutions". These so-called solutions were often from the start the greatest problems. Even scholarships handed out to top rate students were not very helpful

as a large percentage of them did not return.

Being an extractive enterprise colonialism seldom allowed industries to develop beyond the elementary level. Primary produce was practically the only source of income which were offered on fluctuating world markets which creates economic insecurity. Technological handicaps affected the much needed diversification of economic activity.

Colonial authorities at their metropolitan societies upheld capitalist forms of economic organization accompanied by a political form of representative democracy. But this was not practised in the colonial context. Marxism is often accepted more as a reaction than as a conviction but this nowhere in Africa enhanced development but has often been a short cut to poverty. Lack of trained leaders often led to near dictatorial one party political forms. The author refers to Zimbabwe's dismantling of its democratic constitution.

Reference is also made to another problematic issue in Africa namely the arbitrary boundaries drawn by the colonial powers which cut through traditionally homogenous societies both ethnically and culturally.

The Republic of South Africa

Militarily this country with a well developed industrial base is strong. Its forward economic planning takes place from a "highly rationalised organisational structure". Managerial ineptitude, on the contrary, is the "key element" in economic decline. There is a serious shortage of technical/managerial personnel because of the lack of an adequate infrastructure to develop skills in this direction. The result is that the front line states remain weak unable to confront the RSA effectively concerning its policies. On the contrary they are embarrassingly dependent upon the RSA.

The conflict between the authorities in the RSA and the black majority overshadows all other aspects in the Southern African context. The author refers to white South Africans who consider themselves to be subjected to selective persecution. This however needs more circumscription. He sees in the initial attempts at dismantling apartheid more than "mere cosmetic tinkering". Internal disorder and external fiendish forces had to be addressed especially with the Soviet Union and its surrogates active in this part of the world and in the Indian ocean.

Regional policies of the RSA

The ANC is considered to be the main threat to internal stability. Attacks on ANC premises in the "front line" states evoke much reaction in the international context. Intense and frequent however are the military operations of the RSA on the Namibian border with Angola.

Namibia on the western border of the RSA remains a political football between the RSA, the international world and Namibia itself. Internationally SWAPO is seen as the representative of the peoples of Namibia. In spite of its Ovambo orientation (the largest section in Namibia) and its non-Ovambo support, SWAPO claims of support is optimistic. The presence of Cuban troops in Angola is seen as a danger to Namibia's political future as it could enhance the march of communism on the RSA. SWAPO's victory without Cuban presence will be less dangerous. Savimbi's position will also be strengthened over against the Angolan MPLA government. The RSA would like to disengage but not at the risk of Namibia becoming another hostile 'front line' state.

Between Mozambique, on the eastern border of the RSA, a more pragmatic relationship exists with the RSA. The USSR assisted the liberation struggle and Samora Marcel became himself strongly attached to Marxist-Leninist ideas. Treaties with the USSR and the German Democratic Republic was not to Mozambique's economic

benefit. Only Soviet arms eventually came to the assistance against the Mozambique Resistance Movement. The economic deterioration was also due to the lack of foresight with the Portuguese colonialists to train leaders in the various directions pertaining to development. Internal strife affects the total stability of the state. Collective agriculture proved to be a disastrous failure with 68% of the 12 million in Mozambique engaged in agricultural food production which has declined by 75%. The USSR takes only 3.8% of Mozambique's exports while the USA, EEC and RSA take 50.1%.

The RSA has been engaged in various projects. The Nkomati agreement signed on 16 March 1984 was done in the hope to reduce political tensions and for economic reasons. The Pretoria Declaration, an accord between Frelimo and MNR, signed 3 October 1984, to defuse tensions among them landed up in failure. The Nkomati accord hangs on a shoe string.

Zimbabwe considers the RSA as an enemy in its liberation struggle. This country is dependent upon the RSA for many of its goods and transport facilities. Its own tribal conflicts weakens its position in being a determined factor for change vis a vis the RSA.

Grand strategy of the RSA

The author refers to P W Botha's more international stance and the traditional laager mentality changed into a concept of "a constellation of states", economically and politically interdependent for the sake of prosperity and stability in Southern Africa. This includes the homelands. There is also the concept of a Southern Hemisphere belt of states.

This new vision is confronted by the verkrampte, rightist Afrikaner soaked in the apartheid ideology; also by the neighbouring states which attempted to establish a 'counter-constellation'. The author sees the Reagan administration's

reluctance "to lower significantly the barriers of diplomatic reserve" as another factor which militates against "the swifter implementation of the new style South Africa polity".

External political determinants of development in Southern Africa

There exists thus a complex web of interdependence between the RSA and the so-called 'front line' states. What are the factors in Southern Africa which are largely beyond the control of any of these mentioned States?

1. The enormous economic involvement of western industrialised states in Southern Africa especially the RSA.
2. The dependence of the West on certain specific minerals obtainable from the RSA.
3. The appearance of rival political influences such as the USSR - a threat to regional stability and a serious problem for western interests especially with regard to strategic minerals.
4. Disinvestment will lead to unemployment here and abroad. This will be an important destabilising factor which could have far reaching political consequences. The USSR will be the only power to gain from destabilisation.

Conclusion

The author sees the tricameral development as one of the initial efforts to dismantle apartheid. Furthermore that it is "on stability and stability alone that the developmental future of the whole of Southern Africa depends". (P. 22) He reacts against the "holier than thou" attitudes. A high premium is put on diplomacy in the context of this situation.

Remarks on paper

1. Politics is too narrowly defined by the author - it goes much further than allocation of resources. (P3)
2. Do "cultures, historical experiences and personalities" necessarily "modify decisions" and "reduce their level of rationality?" (P3)
3. The author states that Portuguese and British colonial regimes "left their successor states with strikingly similar problems". "Similar" yes but the intensity differed. The percentage of trained and educated Blacks were higher in the British territories. (P4)
4. The "authoritarian solutions" (p 5) have a background in the traditional structures which need attention in the context.
5. The development of industries "seldom beyond an elementary level" (p 6) should be seen in the context of largely un-adapted educational systems. The East took to science and technology with great ease - Africa not. The difference lies within their philosophies. The educational authorities limited education to western orientated, non-adapted, often meaningless facts and figures.
6. The RSA is not the food store of Africa south of the Sahara as the author indicates (p 9). It does export food but it also imports from Zimbabwe for example.
7. P W Botha as an experienced "organisation man" (p 9) is not accepted as such by a significant section of the business community.
8. Not all "white South Africans feel that they are victims of selective persecution" (p 10). A significant section feel

that the acts and attitudes qua race have brought reactions which were to be expected. (p 10).

9. The Reagan Administration's reluctance "to lower significantly the barriers of diplomatic reserve" (p 18) should be seen in the context of the suspicion's over against the Nationalist Government and its apartheid laws, through nearly four decades and the relationships it has ruined with Blacks in Africa.
10. The tricameral development has done much harm with regard to the RSA Blacks. The exclusion of urban Blacks was a central contributory factor to the violent outbreaks in the townships. It has highlighted their disenfranchisement and the injustices to which Blacks feel they are subjected. The educational system which is not market orientated, unadapted in a modern technical society, was co-responsible for the reaction of the youth. Much of the grievances are related to bread and butter issues but only when the political grievances of especially the urban Blacks are properly addressed will there be any hope of stability.
11. This paper gives nevertheless a good insight into the issues that are at stake.