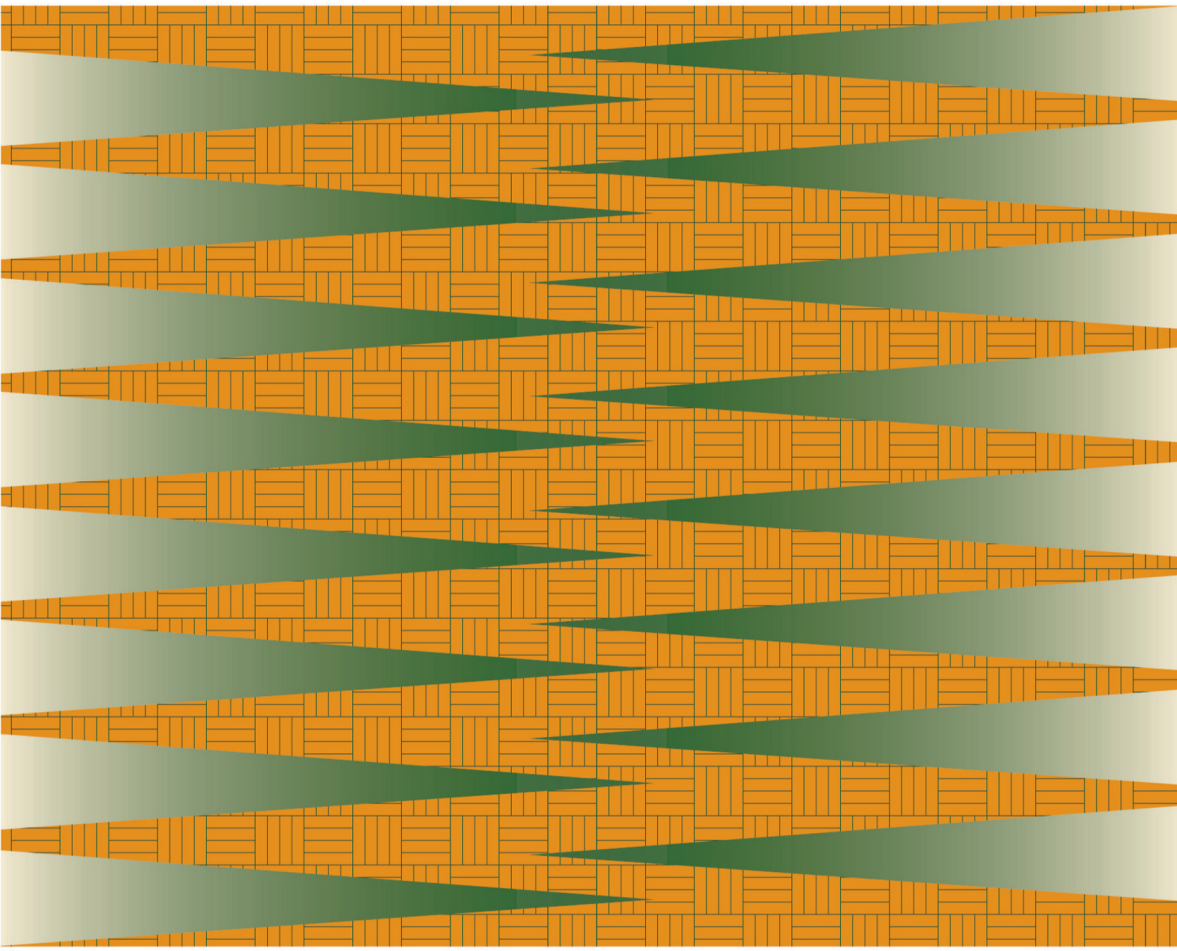
AFRICA

Dilemmas of Development and Change



edited by
Peter Lewis

Africa

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To the memories of Carl Rosberg,
whose dedicated teaching and insightful scholarship
inspired generations of students,

and Claude Ake,
whose penetrating views and personal fellowship
are greatly missed

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Peter Lewis

Introduction: Development and Change in Africa

Africa south of the Sahara encompasses some forty-eight countries with more than 600 million people. Although these states reflect great variety in their territories, populations, cultures, resources, and historical legacies, the diversity of this region should not obscure the common problems and challenges evident during four decades of postindependence development. The search for stable and legitimate government, the quest for unity among heterogeneous societies, and the aspiration for economic attainment have been perennial themes since the end of the colonial era. African countries have worked toward these goals with varying degrees of success, yet the region as a whole has experienced some of the most formidable—indeed, often intractable—problems in the developing world. Scholars and analysts have examined Africa's travails through different conceptual prisms, yielding an assortment of prescriptions for policy and strategy. Their debates have evolved in response to changing trends on the continent.

This book surveys the enduring themes and current challenges of development in sub-Saharan Africa. The readings include many classic works on African political and economic development, along with important writings on emerging issues in the region. The selections focus mainly on broader comparative questions, rather than descriptions of specific countries or areas. Readers familiar with Africa will find a concise review of the leading concepts, controversies, and questions in African studies over the past two decades. Those who are new to African affairs will find a general introduction to salient issues and ideas. I hope that all readers will find this an engaging selection of writings on this complex region.

By way of introduction, this chapter provides a brief historical overview of Africa's developmental challenges and a survey of the leading conceptual approaches to the region. I will review the colonial legacy in Africa, the pivotal moment of decolonization, and the central challenges encountered by postindependence regimes and describe the lead-

ing schools of thought that have influenced the analysis of African development in recent decades. The chapter concludes with a note on the rationale guiding the selection of readings and an outline of the book's organization.

The Historical Context

Although I cannot do justice here to the broad sweep of African history, it is important to point out the great heterogeneity and rich heritage of African societies before the advent of colonialism.[1] In the centuries prior to European rule, Africa was home to both large centralized empires and smaller segmentary communities, as well as an array of other political entities. Cooperation, conflict, alliance, and rivalry among peoples could all be found within the region. Although precolonial economies were overwhelmingly agrarian, pastoralism, trade, crafts, and mining also contributed to the livelihoods of many populations. Islam and Christianity were evident in some areas, and many parts of the continent had regular contact with European, Middle Eastern, and South Asian cultures.

The colonial legacy had a formative impact on African states.[2] As traumatic and far-reaching as colonialism may appear, however, we should not yield to the view that foreign rule completely effaced existing structures and practices. To the contrary, it is evident that colonial interventions produced widely disparate effects. Indigenous societies were utterly transformed by some aspects of foreign control, yet they adapted, resisted, or evaded other influences. Thus contemporary Africa reflects the lineage of both its precolonial institutions and successive historical changes, among which the disruptive elements of colonialism are prominent.

European involvement in Africa began in the late fifteenth century, although formal colonization was not established in most areas for another three hundred years. The odious slave trade, which peaked between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, was organized mainly by European commercial networks in collaboration with dispersed local intermediaries. Prompted by the combined pressures of industrial capitalism and strategic rivalries in Europe, leading European powers began to demarcate their interests in Africa during the latter half of the nineteenth century. By 1870 a "scramble for Africa" was underway, as competing powers struggled for a foothold on the continent. By 1885, Europe's powers, both the dominant and the Johnny-come-lately, had ratified their respective claims on the continent at the Berlin Conference.

European imperial domination created new territorial boundaries, political relationships, social strata, and economic structures. Among the most pronounced features of colonial rule was the creation of new states.

Colonial territories were formally demarcated, and control was instituted by civil and military administrations. Colonial rule introduced a central bureaucratic form of authority that had never been experienced in many areas. The new states were arbitrarily defined, often with little correspondence to precolonial divisions of culture, politics, or commerce. Several ethnic groups could be incorporated within a single colonial territory, or a single group could be split by two (or more) colonies.

The colonies were extensively integrated into the global economy. Commercial production and trade penetrated into the interior as infrastructure opened up the hinterland. The growth of export and import activities created broader linkages between world markets, foreign capital, and dispersed rural communities. The expansion of commodity production and the development of open economies created problems of dependence and vulnerability, as African societies were increasingly exposed to outside economic forces. Investments in enterprise and infrastructure during the latter decades of colonial rule fostered additional economic transformations, especially in the areas of manufacturing and primary commodity exports.

Africa was profoundly affected by new cultural and social currents. The colonial powers typically cultivated a cultural mythology through a European lingua franca, education, and symbols of identity. Although most Africans did not readily identify with the culture of the colonizers, these new influences had far-reaching effects on colonial societies. Urbanization, formal education, and the migration of peoples led to greater interaction among groups and ideas. Social change gave rise to a new stratum of elites—many with unique education and skills—who ultimately usurped the traditional authority of their elders. Missionary activities were a major impetus to Christianity in many countries, although new avenues of communication also facilitated the expansion of Islam. By the middle of the twentieth century, the spread of such ideas as democracy, egalitarianism, socialism, and self-determination created powerful intellectual currents throughout the continent, exerting a subversive effect on the maintenance of colonial rule.

Finally, Africa became enmeshed in an international state system. African countries came under the jurisdiction of international law, and their external affairs were defined by predominant standards of global diplomacy. They were also powerfully impacted by the strategic and security objectives of the major world powers. Even during the period of colonial rule, African interstate relations were transformed into broader international relations, with all the risks and opportunities attendant upon this new status.

The decline of empire progressed rapidly after World War II.[3] Dissipated by the war, the European powers confronted a growing tide of anti-

colonial nationalism even as their domestic constituencies evinced greater ambivalence toward the colonial enterprise. Initiatives to reform or modify the colonial system proved ineffectual, and by 1960 Africa joined the prevailing global movement toward independence.

The newly independent political systems were shaped, in large part, by the specific characteristics of their struggles against and settlements with the respective colonial powers. Many countries attained sovereignty through a process of negotiation between colonial officials and a relatively small nationalist elite. The resultant governments were typically conservative, inviting limited popular involvement. In several other territories, the independence struggle was advanced by militant popular movements, often guided by magnetic and ideologically inspired leaders. This commonly yielded populist regimes with ambitious agendas for change and a bent toward the mobilization of mass constituencies. A few colonies were governed by settler regimes whose intransigence provoked armed struggles against foreign rule. After prolonged efforts to attain liberation, these movements frequently established governments with a revolutionary profile.

Challenges of Development

The independent states of Africa have confronted a series of fundamental developmental tasks that in many respects echo the historical experiences of other regions. The first of these has been the project of state building.[4] African countries have faced the difficulties of constructing effective public authority, establishing viable state institutions, and creating responsive and legitimate agents of governance. Attaining security and managing conflict are also integral features of state consolidation. Building public power requires much more than the installation of new governmental structures, indeed, it involves the very character of relations between rulers and citizens.

A second common challenge is the task of nation building. Many African countries have experienced the travails of forging unified political communities from plural states. Because of the arbitrary basis of colonial boundaries, newly independent states inherited diverse populations that often became fractious as disparate groups contended for resources and identity. The difficulties of managing competition and strife among ethnic communities and promoting common symbols and identities have placed substantial demands upon governments throughout the region.

Economic development presents a third overarching task for African states, who have to cope with the myriad challenges of growth and structural transformation in low-income agrarian economies. They have also grappled with external dependence and a marginal position in world

markets. Regimes have pursued various means to promote a diversified productive base and to make inroads against poverty and inequality. Many governments have been equally intent on modifying patterns of trade and regulating international transactions.

These developmental challenges have been reflected in regional strategies and problems since independence. As the wave of decolonization swept over Africa in 1960, many people had high expectations for the newly independent states. Colonial rule bequeathed weak economic and political foundations to most countries, yet there was a widely shared view that abundant resources, human energies, and political innovation could offer a sound basis for development. The popular mobilization of the nationalist era provided substantial legitimacy to the fledgling governments, and an array of dynamic leaders commanded broad respect and loyalty. The new rulers experimented with a variety of ideologies and strategies for development, while many sought a distinctive regional identity for Africa in the global arena.

Signs of disenchantment were manifest quickly, however, as much of the region succumbed to authoritarian rule, internal division, and instability. Participatory institutions were curtailed in many countries as political leaders created single-party regimes and personal dictatorships. Even as 1960 was called the year of independence, 1966 became known as the year of the coup d'état after several governments were toppled by military intervention. Disquieting signs of ethnic discord were also evident in a series of civil conflicts, secessionist challenges, and political antipathies. The seeming unity and purpose of the independence moment was soon replaced by the disarray of factional struggle.

New sources of interstate conflict and ideological rivalry in Africa appeared in the 1970s alongside growing international intervention and a deceleration of economic development. A "second generation" of socialist states emerged mid-decade, when several countries embraced Marxist-Leninist doctrine, eclipsing the populist and African socialist models of the independence era. Regional or local strife erupted in the southern and eastern zones of the continent and in the Horn of Africa. Many of these hostilities attracted the interest and intervention of the major powers, bringing Africa into prominence as a major arena of Cold War rivalry. These developments unfolded against a backdrop of waning economic performance, as oil price shocks and domestic policy problems led to a significant slowdown in growth.

The 1980s were bracketed by crisis. At the beginning of the decade, Africa experienced a steep regional economic decline. Dozens of countries experienced stagnant growth, dwindling production and trade, widening domestic poverty, and burgeoning foreign debt. Confronted with acute fiscal problems, many governments turned for support to the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. With the sponsorship of these international financial institutions, a majority of African states pursued economic reform programs that yielded tentative recovery for many of them. Yet the social and political effects of adjustment and the role of donors in the region provoked substantial controversy.

At the close of the decade, the region experienced a dramatic political transformation as African regimes were confronted with concerted pressures for democratization. The end of the Cold War disrupted the external alliances and rivalries that had long stabilized many governments. A combination of domestic opposition and global influence induced a majority of regimes to either liberalize their political systems or concede a transition to democratic rule. The ensuing political shifts proved beneficial to some countries but detrimental for a number of others. Most of the region's military and single-party states shifted toward some form of competitive politics, although in several instances regime change yielded new instability or increased conflict.

These historic currents yielded different trajectories for African countries in the 1990s. States such as Ghana and Uganda sought recovery from the ruinous political and economic circumstances of the preceding decades. South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique ended longstanding conflicts and embarked upon democratic beginnings. Benin, Malawi, Mali, and several other countries also gravitated toward a democratic path. On the other hand, many states including Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, and Niger remained mired in authoritarian rule. Still others, notably Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, and Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), experienced civil catastrophe or state collapse. As the millenium draws to a close, Africa reflects greater intraregional diversity than at any time since independence. Across the continent, growth has contended with stagnation, democracy with dictatorship, and stability with turmoil.

Structure, Change, and Choice: Theories of Development

Since the era of independence, analysis and debate have produced various views of development. These approaches offer very different perspectives on the sources of underdevelopment and the prospects for change in Africa.[5] Modernization theory was the earliest attempt to provide a comprehensive explanation of progress or stagnation in the former colonies. The modernization perspective, elaborated by Western social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, regards the developing countries as endeavoring to "catch up" to the advanced industrialized states.

Drawing upon the historical lessons of European development, modernization theorists offer an archetypal model of modernity, counter-

posed to a generic image of traditional society.[6] Modern societies are identified as industrialized, mass consumption economies, reflecting high levels of technological development and innovation. Their social and economic structures are characterized by specialization and complex interdependence. Frequently, modern society is also described as democratic, with a premium on individual rights and popular engagement in politics. By contrast, this model describes traditional societies as having simpler technology and lower productivity. Most modernization theories identify as traditional those economies based on agriculture, with a comparatively rudimentary division of labor and relative stasis in their economic and social structures. They are mainly hierarchical polities, reflecting the primacy of customary authority. In the view of modernization theory, the reasons for these differences and the potential for change reside in different forms of cultural and social organization. Modern societies embody individualism, a preference for abstract principles, pragmatism, and the rule of law. Traditional societies are oriented toward collectivism, stereotyped social roles, the dominance of inherited tradition, and the rule of custom.

Modernization theory not only poses a dichotomy between traditional and modern societies, it also indicates a unidirectional pattern of change, from traditional to modern attributes. It views modernization as an integral package of transformation, driven by the related influences of education, communications, trade, migration, urbanization, and economic growth. The theory recognizes that, once certain elements of the process are set in motion, it is difficult to arrest modernization, or to limit the extent of change in society. This creates abundant stresses and tensions in modernizing societies, as different spheres of economy, society, and politics are transformed at different rates. But solving the problem of modernization is primarily a question of comprehending western patterns of change and managing the strains and conflicts in the process.

Scholars in the developing countries soon dissented from this view. Beginning in the 1960s, they presented a radical critique of modernization perspectives. Their point of departure was the observation that developing countries have a separate history from industrial capitalist states, as Third World states were dominated by Western imperialism for at least a century before independence and attained independence in a world already stratified and dominated by the advanced industrialized powers. They criticise modernization theorists for ignoring the international context of change.

Dependency theory, or underdevelopment theory, is premised on the struggle between North and South in a stratified world. Dependency theorists present a single international model in which two spheres—core and periphery—interact in an unequal relationship. In this perspective,

the core countries of the North grow wealthy by exploiting and subordinating the resources, markets, and labor of the peripheral countries of the South. The underdevelopment of Third World countries is attributable mainly to the structure of the international system. Dependency theorists disparage modernization theory's emphasis on cultural and social forces in development, stressing instead the primacy of economic and political factors. In dependency theory, the structures of dependency are elaborated through several processes and institutions. The unequal terms of trade between industrial exporters in the core and primary commodity producers in the periphery constitute a fundamental economic imbalance. The role of multinational corporations in shaping investment, trade, consumption, and labor markets in the developing world form another important mechanism of dependence. The elites in Third World countries commonly appear as active collaborators with foreign elements in constructing dependency relations. Moreover, the direct political and military interventions of core states sustain international inequalities.

Dependency theorists argue that the chronic underdevelopment and poverty in Third World countries can only be explained in global terms, and that the primary objective for developing states is to change their relation to the international system. They admonish countries of the South to minimize exploitive linkages with Northern states and take collective action to change the dynamics of the international system.

By the 1980s, many critics challenged the premises of dependency theory, especially its preoccupation with external constraints on change. More generally, there was a reaction to prevailing theories that viewed African governments as essentially marginal to the development process, whether caught up in an evolutionary path of modernization or constrained by global structures of capitalism. Instead, many analysts came to focus on the state, an emphasis that highlights the importance of domestic political capabilities in the development process.[7] State-centric analyses start from the simple premise that governments and public institutions have a decisive role in managing domestic change and international interactions. Although all countries face constraints and challenges, the qualities of leadership and government determine the relative abilities to surmount such difficulties.

State-centric analysis proceeds from the distinction between the state and society. The state embodies the formally constituted public institutions of coercion, bureaucracy, and infrastructure, as distinct from the private and particular interests of societal groups. The state can provide important public goods such as security, law and order, infrastructure, and selected market institutions. States can also structure social relations through the establishment of property rights, the reinforcement of social hierarchies, and mediation among different groups and strata.

In comparing the performance of different state structures, we can observe that certain states may assert relative autonomy from their constituent societies. The interests of state elites may take precedence over pressures from specific domestic or external interests. The comparative autonomy of states conditions their success in meeting long-term developmental goals. Governments also reflect varying capacities in pursuing important objectives. State capacity reflects the ability to gain compliance from society, to organize diverse interests, and to influence various actors. State capacity is broader than mere coercive power, referring also to qualities of administration, the coherence of leadership, and the legitimacy of government.

State-centric analysts have acknowledged that modernization pressures and external dependency create challenges for states, yet they stress that strong states are better equipped to cope with such obstacles.[8] The state-centric perspective emphasizes that even weak states have considerable leverage over domestic society and external linkages. From the vantage of state theory, key issues in African development have been the comparative weakness of African states and identifying outlets for improving the capacity of governing institutions.

However appropriate the focus on the state, in many instances it has been overemphasized or misplaced. By the mid-1980s, there was growing recognition of the independent role of societal groups in the region's political dynamics. The frailties of state institutions and the limited capabilities of ruling elites in Africa suggested that social networks, interest groups, and an evolving realm of associational life merited equal attention as significant political factors. A number of analysts have argued for a shift away from state-centric analysis, toward a perspective encompassing state-society relations.[9] In this view, politics is regarded as a process of reciprocal interaction between governments and societal groups. While state elites seek to establish authority and control over their constituent societies, social groups also endeavor to influence state policy and resource allocations. Elements of many societies also attempt to evade or resist the reach of central authorities. State-society relations embody an often contentious interaction over the control of resources and power.

An Eclectic View

The readings presented here offer a frankly eclectic view of states, societies, and economies in contemporary Africa. Naturally enough, the selections reflect my own biases, derived mainly from the traditions of historical sociology and theories of political development.[10] This vantage focuses on domestic social and political factors, rather than international linkages, as central factors in the process of change. It also stresses the im-

portance of contingency and choice alongside the evident structural influences on development. It is necessary to recognize the social forces and economic constraints surrounding any political regime, but an understanding of developmental outcomes requires that we also pay attention to the quality of institutions, the design of public policy, and the autonomous role of leaders. Ultimately, we can only understand the course of change in Africa and the disparate fortunes within the region by examining the initiatives of political actors within the limitations consigned by history and resources.

Plan of the Book

This book is organized around a series of developmental issues and analytical themes. The first three sections address perennial questions regarding states, societies, and political action. Part 1 takes up the nature of state power and political leadership, focusing on the historical construction of African states, the modes of political control in the region, and the character of political elites. Part 2 turns to the relations between states and social groups, examining the nature of political legitimacy and the avenues of participation or withdrawal pursued by various popular sectors. Part 3 looks more closely at issues of social stratification: class, ethnicity and gender. The meaning of these divisions in African settings and the political significance of different forms of inequality is the common thread among these articles.

The last two sections survey the region's evolving challenges of political reform and economic transition. Part 4 focuses on recent movement toward political liberalization and democratic transition in Africa. The chapters assess the progress of democratization, the nature of political change in various countries, and the prospects for enduring democratic rule. Part 5 considers the dilemmas of regional economic failure and recovery. The debates over economic development, the background of economic crisis, and the challenges of reform are discussed.

Notes

1. For a general introduction see John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

2. M. Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

3. D. K. Fieldhouse, *Black Africa 1945–1980: Economic Decolonization and Arrested Development* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986).

4. This scheme is derived from the model outlined by James Coleman et al., *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

5. Alvin Y. So, *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theories* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990); Naomi Chazan, Robert Mortimer, John Ravenhill, and Donald Rothchild, *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa,* 2d ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992).

6. Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

7. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

8. Tony Smith, "The Underdevelopment of Development Literature: The Case of Dependency Theory," *World Politics* 31 (January 1979): 247–288.

9. Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988).

10. For a concise review of these perspectives, see Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971); and Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, ed., *Understanding Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987).

Suggestions for Further Reading

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