

The New Ideology Designed for Africa: Developmental Neo-Patrimonialism



Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa

PIERRE ENGLEBERT, POMONA COLLEGE / ⁱ Abstract

<http://prq.sagepub.com/content/53/1/7>

Extract (from [a paper](http://prq.sagepub.com/content/53/1/7) which argues against the “patrimonial-state” in Africa):
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“The weaker the legitimacy of the state they inherit, the more likely it is that political contestation will turn into challenges to the state itself and the greater, therefore, the instability of the regime. In such conditions, elites are more likely to resort to neo-patrimonial than developmental policies, not least because the former are less likely to entail difficult distributional decisions and trade-offs of present to future consumption that they can afford. Finally, the more neo-patrimonial the nature of the ruling system, the weaker the effectiveness of government institutions, the poorer the quality of governance, and the worse the choice of economic policies. Over time, the capacity of such governments to design and implement policies further deteriorates. The law turns irrelevant. Trust in institutions, weak to begin with, further evaporates and leads to worsened corruption. Governments become unable to take sustained action, to make credible commitments, and to enforce the rules of the game. Meanwhile, their spending rises in proportion to their economy. Long-term investments are neglected to the benefit of current expenditure on wages, consumption, and for the creation of additional state agencies to provide prebends (Joseph 1987). ***In the end, the instrumental legitimacy of systemic patronage, while substituting for the lack of political legitimacy of the state, introduces a systematic bias in policy away from long-run growth and leads to decrepitude of national institutions. Hence, the attempts by the elites to remedy their power deficit leads to the ruin of the state itself.***”

(*My italics and emphasis*; Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa)

Ethiopia in Retrospect (A pair of points on patri-monialism)

....”Hence, the attempts by the elites to remedy their power deficit leads to the ruin of the state itself.”(ibid. PIERRE ENGLEBERT, POMONA COLLEGE)
That is the crux of the matter!

Ethiopia during and after HSI:

What gave life to Absolute monarchy during the initial period of emperor HSI, with the successful modernization project (alas? Cultural alienation too, up-rootedness) at the beginning, among others, was the gradual introduction of ethnic diversity into the Ethiopian nation-state fabric by substantially counteracting local-patri-monialism (through various means, marriage, leading posts etc. integrating the ethnically diversified elite into the ultimate development of “the Gondarite” Abyssinian state with its south orientation too).

And as a matter of fact, what brought it down is also the gradual deconstruction of the ethnic diversity, which the state fabric has attained during the prior period. The ideological ammunition, which served this counter-development was “the national question” (with all the substantial social legitimacy it does have), as promoted in the hands and at the service of “alien” (of rather colonial nature) forces and dogmatic perception!

With the policy interlude of the military regime, concerning the ethnic nature of the state apparatus, substantial change has not endured; and at times it has even aggravated the predicament; at the last resort the demise of the traditional–legacy Ethiopian state has ensued!

After the military regime:

The new state-legitimacy was supposedly – “the rights of nationalities” – i.e. “ethnic equality”, which was only ideologically promoted but in reality – rather the opposite was being implemented: a system of domination was under construction – under the ideological legacy of a “one-party” system of the former “communist states”, but in its “ethnic” nature, highly tainted under the hegemony of one ethnic group, TPLF, which won the battle in the contest of the struggle for “self-determination”!

In other words;

The “new” Ethiopian regime during the last 21 years, has continued the patrimonial character of the state under a different banner; *in other words*, it is in effect a continuation of the gradual deconstruction of the state from its ethnic-diversified substance (which positively was being implemented during the first half of HSI reign); i.e. a deconstruction which began in the late era of the HSI regime.

The difference is that a power shift has taken place, to the detriment of the “Shoan patrimonial hegemony” towards the benefit of the “Tigrean” patrimony (to use the ugly term – patrimonialism – which is becoming “salonfähig”/socially acceptable/)

It seems:

Therefore to harmonize reality with ideology; the ideology has to be abandoned by those who have discerned the reality and a new legitimacy theory has to be constructed:

Patrimonialism being promoted to be “salonfähig”/socially acceptable/;

Developmental patrimonialism- The patrimonial developmental state is legitimate since it would contain poverty. As though it would!

This is disastrous since it is undermining the kernel of a legitimate state - the rule of law; the kernel of which is: *equality for all citizens in the eyes of the law!*

“EQUALITY of man”, was even fundamental to “Kibre Negest” –the valid “credo” of governance under the rule of absolute monarchy(Man in the image of God has to be treated equally, be it in Heaven or Earth!)

Developmental patrimonialism is for sure not only morally bankrupt but it will also be ultimately an economic disaster; even leading to a serious ethnic conflict as witnessed in some regions, with their states deteriorating into fascistic ones (Rwanda warns!) or a failed state (Somalia cries!). Moreover, the big danger in neo-patrimonialism as promoted for the legitimacy of the Ethiopian regime is not only just the “patrimonial” aspect of the “leader” as the primary factor but the ethnic backdrop.

-The Ethnic backdrop as a factor of stability and a guarantee for economic development in the structures of EFFORT and the affiliation to the ruling party.

The ethnic underpinning gives the neo-patrimonialism a primordial nature. - A “false faith” and fallacy suggesting to the protagonists that they are succeeding due to their being better than others through their different “primordial” nature, culminating to outright racist ideological commitment, with all the social disaster of ethnic conflict that may follow out of this perception. And this is today in contemporary Ethiopia, already spreading like a social contagion all over the community, with those coming out of favor and benefit being more “ethnically” entrenched with their own fallacies and the beneficiaries on the other hand giving a sufficient ride to their loose tongues “being proud of the better race and origin”! - Simply because they are more successful and can take a ride to “heavens” with the accumulated wealth; not the least concerned and lending any empathic conscience to the misery being witnessed in their peripheries (see the crisis in the Horn of Africa today).

The perceptual disaster is belittling the fact that, patrimonialism embedded in primordialism as a belief or a “dogmatic ideological commitment” can amount to fascism.

Beware!

Nonetheless, since “the social” lies in the nature of the human, things could change for the better if counteracted in due course and in time!

But one never knows. “Gedankenlosigkeit”/ “Stupidity” (cf. H. Arendt) is also rampant in any collective body, since a substantial section of the elite remains at times narrow-minded and one-dimensional in its perception of reality. The elite which mostly has an eye only on its portemonnaie!

Like



<http://www.institutions-africa.org/>

....with funding from the UK Department for International Development and the Advisory Board of Irish Aid. It is led by staff of the Overseas Development Institute, London.

And with

The policy paper telling its presumption:

"And yet there is also evidence, especially from outside Africa, of neo-patrimonial regimes presiding over rapid and poverty-reducing economic growth. For example, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia had strong neo-patrimonial elements in their political systems during their most rapid growth phases.

They were able to distribute economic rents in a way that balanced the demands of political stability and economic growth, while facilitating investment through what Moore and Schmitz have called 'relationship-based' governance.² Most European political systems also contained significant neo-patrimonial elements during their initial growth phases."

The new "legitimacy theory" on board for the self-justification of oppression in the developing countries of Africa! I wonder, in effect, why even South Africa has been done away; with its apartheid at all!

May be, *A new school, The theory per se is going public* to contain any sign of an African Spring, after the experience of the "Arab Spring", which went astray unabated and not controlled by the west as it should?

Crazy! Even if? *Do we have to "drink " the same potage what America and Europe or some others have had in their development!?*

- Promoting the case of Côte d'Ivoire it is said:

"A skillful system of ethnic quotas, although favoring Houphouët's own group, ensured that the benefits of rapid growth were shared with relative equity." The "ethnic quotas" whose consequences are turned tight till the antagonism goes to its peak, so that "the savers and the mediators" have the pretext to intervene and rule by proxy of this or the other side, which is softly instrumentalized in the process! Until things develop detrimental to their benefits. Sudan is a recent example; Ethiopia and Ruanda are from Yesterday and so on..."
....and then they conclude in general:

"Crucial to making neo-patrimonialism work for development in Africa has been a system for centralizing economic rents and gearing their management to the long term"

...and in particular concluding for Ethiopia:

"Nevertheless there are some nations in which developmental patrimonialism looks the most viable route to pro-poor growth. Let us consider, for example, Ethiopia, an extremely poor, landlocked economy with no liberal tradition of note, in which market failures are widespread. Over the past two decades the dominant regime of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, has presided over the increased centralization of rents and implementation of a long-horizon development strategy that aims to guide Ethiopia to middle income status."

And at last the recommended policy to live with "Melesse" or "the system" for long:

"Policy implications

"If we are right about developmental patrimonialism's potential, donors and policy-makers need to be attuned to its existence. If they see genuine signs of developmental patrimonialism at work, they should think twice before insisting on best practice solutions like level playing fields, minimal rent-seeking and arm's length government-business relations. They should

engage African regimes in more imaginative discussions about the kind of administrative capacity building that might help better achieve their goals. And where, in under-performing economies, development partners encounter resistance over good governance reforms, they should consider whether developmental patrimonialism might be a more viable alternative option. (" <http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20110610-appp-policy-brief-02-development-patrimonialism-by-tim-kelsall-june-2011>)

The objective is: “The ruin of the state itself”

I.e. “...*the attempts by the elites to remedy their power deficit would lead to the ruin of the state itself.*” (My italics and emphasis; Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa)

“**The Ruin of the State itself**”- Once upon a time, the strategic vision of the classical colonial powers for Ethiopia , getting fresh life through the new “conceptual” positive formulation of a new and a fake state, - the developmental patrimonial state, which would eventually wither away into a none-state! *That is the far cry from Somalia towards Ethiopia in agony!*

One can get a good notion of the whole mind-set of the “project” by reading the following discussion paper by one of the “scholars” employed to promote the new indoctrination: <http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20080623-discussion-paper-1-going-with-the-grain-in-african-development-tim-kelsall-june-2008>

The partly entertaining “Teach ins” like:

“Africans think about the relation between citizens and the state through the metaphor of an Idealized extended family and its father. Familial metaphors, he claims, issue from an implicit cultural and cognitive template, which shapes African political thought and action.”

*

” Politics is a clandestine, materialistic and opportunistic struggle tied to ‘the ability of the big-men of ethnic communities holding positions in the state to obtain for the regions and districts a significant share of the large scale collective benefits of development in infrastructure projects of roads, schools, dispensaries, etc, as well as the more individual rewards apportioned through the discrete personal contacts of the back verandah’ (Berman, 1998: 335).

*

This may all be partly true with all sorts of variations. However, neither that would make it sustainable nor viable to design acceptable governance on its grounds. The social “machinery” of a state has taken its primary orientation on the grounds of its advanced elements and not on parameters and variables, which would drag it to the far past. In case the “advanced” elements i.e. the elite are no better than its traditional elements, it would have been another story. But, however lagging an African region may be, today, contemporary Africa has also its own elements of modernity. The problem is just the discrepancy of its social consciousness and national commitment, (mostly tainted and entrenched in corruption and sectional economic interests) in grasping its concrete social reality, to work for the objectives of national development.

IN A WORD:

The whole ulterior motive behind the new legitimacy indoctrination of “*neo-patrimonialism*” is the objective of making the state administration transparent for foreign powers in order to rule by proxy. -*The new face of neo-colonialism*. The structure is clear – the hierarchy is

apparent, the social interaction is simple, and that makes it easily corruptible, to get in touch to the valuable resources (see the land grabbing phenomenon – a novel development of the 21st century Africa) – and attain full control over them. It is easier to deal with the “patriarch” than negotiate with all the off springs, where every one of them would come to get the share of the resources and interests.

IN A WORD: The promotion of “neo-patrimonialism” is *HYPOCRISY* for sale in the name of research to perpetuate "neo-colonialism" with a new face: - "Developmental patrimonial state" under the auspices of the global financial oligarchy (an oligarchy for which of course, any "racist" birth-mark- is irrelevant- ...it can be Europe, China, America or Saudi-Arabian! “Capital is not racist” -But only promoted in case of convenience.). And yet, the oligarchy, in the short run, needs its ethnically structured entourage in the developing states, simply because it is easy to blackmail and manipulate!
I would even say; in the final analysis it is the same old "racist credo" which is driving them, to believe that we (Africans) could not do it otherwise than being "ethnically structured"!

i Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa (2000) -
PIERRE ENGLEBERT, POMONA COLLEGE (<http://prq.sagepub.com/content/53/1/7>)
Is a paper which argues against the “patrimonial-state” in Africa.

Abstract:

It is well known that Africa's development lags behind that of other regions. Lesser known is the substantial variance in development fortunes within Africa, with "miracle" economies compensating for the region's development disasters. Prevailing theories of Africa's average performance fail to account for intra-African disparities. Using empirical evidence from cross-sectional data, this study offers a new explanation for success and failure in African development, which builds upon the insights of neo-patrimonial theory. It argues that variations in the extent to which post-colonial state institutions clash with pre-existing ones largely account for what differentiates state capacity and economic growth across the region. The greater the incongruence between pre- and post-colonial institutions, the greater the relative power payoffs to domestic elites of adopting neo-patrimonial policies over developmental ones. The article challenges thereby the social capital and ethnic homogeneity theories of African under-development, and offers substantial qualifications to the "imported state" hypothesis.