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Editorial

The articles in this issue of the Bulletin engage with recent trends in politics and development in Africa. They are organised around three the-

matic concerns and a book symposium. The first theme, addressed in 'Funmi Olonisakin's article, frames the Pan-African context of Africa's recent democratisa-

tion, peace and security dynamics. The second focuses generally on African politics, and includes articles by Peter Anyang' Nyong'o and Issa Shivji, the former discussing the role of political parties in democratisation and development and the latter examining the legacy of the just-ended regime of John Pombe Joseph Magufuli in Tanzania. The third, represented by Jimí O. Adésinà's piece, looks at social policy and the potential transformative lessons that can be learned from the Covid-19 experience in Africa. The final part of this Bulletin, containing four pieces, is made up of essays that form a symposium on Mahmood Mamdani's recent book, *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Each of these concerns deals with a specific theme but collectively they reinforce the key argument about politics, identity and development that is advanced in this issue of the Bulletin.

The articles raise a central question about politics in Africa in relation to the elusive or receding promise of development. The authors engage with the various manifestations of the stalled postcolonial development project, but also frame alternatives to engender sustainable peace and devel-

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This Bulletin is distributed free to all social research institutes and faculties in Africa and beyond to encourage research co-operation among African scholars. Interested individuals and institutions may also subscribe to CODESRIA mailing list to receive the Bulletin promptly upon release. Contributions on theoretical matters and reports on conferences and seminars are also welcome.

opment. While the concerns are not new, the contributors interrogate new manifestations of old problems related to the dysfunction of politics in Africa and their consequences for development.

The outsourcing of ‘planning’ to international actors in the guise of multilateral or bilateral partners, for example, has re-emerged in much of Africa, and is one such concern. Not only does this ‘partnership’ distort aspects of internal planning, it also undermines existing local capacities and prevents the realisation of the existing state–society social contract. This contract is in fact treated as a relic of the immediate post-independence era whose relevance today is doubted. But we know that development, in the words of Souleymane Bachir Diagne, ‘is not ... dealing on a daily basis with urgencies’ (Diagne 2011: 58).

The tension between long-term planning and the recurrent practice of development as ‘dealing on a daily basis with urgencies’ continues to plague Africa. The disconnect between the two contributes to a growing loss of hope on the continent. Nothing illustrates the tension better than the unexpected assault by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic, its ravages and the uncertainty it has created among everyone, including communities of labour, has deepened the sense of hopelessness, especially because in the absence of proper planning communities have had no reliable and effective social safety nets. Matters have been worsened by ‘vaccine apartheid’ and the attendant ‘European Duplicity [that] Undermines Anti-Pandemic Efforts’ (Chowdhury and Sundaram 2021). These developments are a cause for worry for two reasons: first, diminishing hope is worsened by a lack of proper follow-up on existing normative frameworks to ensure that development does occur; second, the centrality of African agency in this process continues to be ignored, frowned upon or simply blocked.

The failure to sustain hope in Africa and other developing countries acquires new and alarming dimensions in the context of global challenges to democracy, demonstrated most vividly by the popularity of conservative and nationalist movements in North America and Europe and the ascendance to power of these movements in several countries. The economic policies of these movements frame the development question in minimalist terms, often referring simply to the creation of enabling environments for the private sector while de-emphasising the role of the state in cushioning citizens by providing welfare. The push by ‘development’ partners in Africa to implement legal

frameworks that make its countries attractive for Foreign Direct Investment and ‘good for doing business’ is but one example of how a disabling environment is constructed. By insisting on a state–society dichotomy, the economic thinking that emanates from neo-conservative arguments undermines the very logic of development. The neoclassical economic theory that gives weight to arguments in favour of retrenching the state and limiting its role in social provision has had a fruitful run in the last few decades with limited intellectual challenge. But the pandemic, as Jimí O. Adésínà argues in this Bulletin and Howard Stein has argued elsewhere, has exposed the vacuous basis upon which the argument against a strong and functional state is based.

This issue of the CODESRIA Bulletin, therefore, while discussing the deepening challenge of hope, is an introspective one. At the core of the various articles is the assertion that prospects for the peace and development agenda in Africa are profoundly insecure—not because of the lack of a normative framework but, as Funmi Olonisakin puts it, as ‘a result of deep flaws in its leadership infrastructure’. The problem, as Olonisakin diagnoses it in her analysis here, is that:

There is a dire shortage of the quality of leadership that would secure and develop Africa. Had we proceeded on the trajectory that was planned, we might have managed to secure African peoples and moved significantly in the direction of silencing the guns. Nationally and internationally, the weakness of leadership and the non-rootedness of national leaders, their disconnection from citizens, has severely weakened institutions at all levels.

But the Bulletin also strikes a balance by suggesting a ‘prospective’ approach, as articulated by many African scholars who argue for African agency in development and insist on ‘the indigenous or “organic” character of development’ (Diagne 2011: 62). Whatever the successes and failures of the implementation of the existing blueprints to secure Africa’s development agenda, these should not detract from the original will to design workable political and economic instruments for Africa’s growth and development. This is true for African continental planning broadly and national or regional variations specifically.

However, this Bulletin suggests that an urgent conversation is needed if the existing instruments for political mobilisation are to be re-imagined to facilitate development. Anyang’ Nyong’o focuses on political parties but insists that they must secure legitimacy

through electoral processes as the basis of exercising state power and pursuing development. Issa Shivji, on the other hand, reflects on the experience of Tanzania under what he terms the ‘Magufuli phenomenon’, demonstrating the extent to which the late Magufuli inherited one of the most formidable state-party machines but instituted a form of rule that Shivji characterises as messianic Bonapartism. According to Shivji, the messianic variant of civilian Bonapartism ‘rules by fiat of the leader. It legitimises its rule not only by material measures in the interest of the down-trodden or oppressed (called *wanyonge* in Tanzania) but also by metaphysical appeals.’ The result of this form of politics, he concludes, is that polities remain ‘fragile and masses disorganized’ and are ‘vulnerable and amenable to the rise of narrow nationalists and populists on the one hand, and rampant neoliberals on the other.’

The issue of the fragility of polities is addressed in the analysis Jimí O. Adésinà undertakes in his piece. Focusing on the social policy architecture that undergirds the welfare regimes in Nigeria and South Africa, the analysis shows how weak and ineffective this architecture is in a context where the structure of the labour market is dominated by informality. Overall, the article proposes an idea of development ‘grounded in a national sovereign project’. By this, Adésinà signals a preference for transformative social policy that can only be the outcome of a notion of development based on autonomous policy-making

This issue of the Bulletin also carries three interventions that engage with Mahmood Mamdani’s recent book, *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. The book raises significant questions about the history of the nation

and makes a powerful case for rethinking political modernity. The interventions by Ibrahim Abdallah, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Adom Getachew variously engage with Mamdani’s critique, locating it in the trilogy of Mamdani’s work, in the need for epistemic revolution and indeed as part of identifying the lessons that political modernity might borrow from Africa. As Adom Getachew aptly summarises in her intervention, ‘Africa not only offers leverage for analysis of late modern life, but it can also be the grounds of building an alternative normative model to address the impasses of political modernity’.

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