

Botswana: A Development Oriented Gate Keeping State

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Due to a combination of exceptional economic growth and social development since Independence Botswana has been hailed as an African developmental state. However, this paper rejects the proposition that the developmental state model would be applicable to Botswana. It is argued that the East Asian developmental state model is very specific and characteristics by: A) a planned capitalist economy supporting private property rights and market relations B) actively promoted expansion of the private sector C) enforcement of forceful and focussed industrialisation strategies D) commitment to achieving economic growth and structural transformation through industrialisation and diversification of the economy and D) that state actors driving the transformation process are primarily members of an independent and purposeful bureaucracy. With such a definition the developmental state is applicable only to a minority of developed and developing countries, not including Botswana.

From the 1930s until present Botswana has experienced continuity in the state structure that has been characterised by natural resource dependency, lack of economic diversification, a dual society, selective social development and a close connection between the economical and political elite. These traits are not consistent with the developmental state model. Instead the paper offers an alternative state model. It is argued that while Botswana's socio-economic development since Independence should in no way be underestimated, it should be understood as the efforts of a development oriented gate keeping state characterised by: A) limited state ambitions B) natural resource dependence C) dual society D) limited social development E) the state sector dominating the economy and F) the state being controlled by economically and politically strong elites.

The aim of the paper is threefold. First, to show why Botswana cannot be considered a developmental state. Second, to discuss and elaborate the gate keeping state concept. Third, to apply the gate keeping state model to the case of Botswana. It is hoped that the analysis of the characteristics of the Botswana state can be the start of a theory building process whereby the gate keeping state concept can be elaborated into a well-founded theoretical model that can be used to analyse other African states in the future.