

DOES THE 'CHINESE MODEL' UNDERMINE THE INFLUENCE OF THE EU'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT? THE CASE OF KENYA

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Recent years have witnessed a sharp increase in speculations that China's development trajectory may provide a model for other developing countries—particularly those in Africa—to follow, and that this poses a profound challenge to current global development paradigms. In seeking to verify these claims, this study examines the case of Kenya, a country that has traditionally followed 'Western' approaches to development.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 43 Kenyan senior policymakers, business representatives and community leaders, I find that many of the principles underpinning EU-funded development initiatives are indeed being challenged by 'lessons' taken from emerging markets in East Asia. Rather than following the 'Chinese model' that some fear will come to dominate in Africa, however, Kenyan elites prefer to emulate the region as a whole. Unlike the Washington Consensus, the development paradigm prompted by this lesson-drawing is historically-contingent and views nation-building by a strong, visionary political leadership as the country's single most important priority. Because it favours large physical infrastructure projects, rapid economic growth, technologically-optimistic solutions and a civilisatory discourse, its divergence from the recent mainstream emphasis on grassroots participation, 'basic needs' and institution-building is even more striking. In these and in other central lessons drawn, the development approach it most resembles, in fact, is the modernisation theory of the 1950s and 1960s. Such views find their most striking realisation among that coalition of business leaders, technocrats and planners closely involved in the government's long-term 'Vision 2030' development blueprint.

This has several striking implications for the EU and other Western donors. On the one hand, Kenyan elites' distrust of China as sole exemplar demonstrates the enduring power of historical ties and other constraining factors. On the other hand, the return of a broader East Asian development model requires the EU to reconsider many of the assumptions that have driven its overseas development efforts in recent decades.

In 2004, Goldman Sachs advisor Joshua Cooper Ramo published a working paper titled *The Beijing Consensus*, in which he argued that China's influence on the developing world stemmed primarily from 'the electric power of its example' (Ramo 2004: 3), and that this example differed radically from that offered by the West. The notion that China's post-reform development experiences are transforming global development practices by encouraging emulation in areas as far afield as Africa and Latin America has, in the years that followed, sparked a wave of discussion in the media and in policy fora.

Despite the vigour of this debate, there is very little agreement on the implications such emulation may have—or even whether it exists in practice. For every suggestion that China constitutes a dangerous model that allows African elites to privilege stability over democratic freedoms and transparency (e.g. Callick 2007), there are several that either view it—as does Ramo himself—as a valuable driver of growth in Africa, or alternatively who object to the very notion that China's experience is unique or successful enough to constitute a model (Dirlick 2006).

This study seeks to ameliorate this situation by bringing together substantial empirical data from the Kenyan case with the existing literature on emulation and lesson-drawing. It finds that Kenyan elites do engage in the extensive drawing of lessons from East Asia, but that other states in the region are frequently preferred over China. It also finds these lessons to be rooted within a paradigm of development that differs significantly from the current assumptions and practices of traditional donors such as the EU. This paradigm is modernisation theory, and it increasingly becoming a force to be reckoned with by anyone wishing to engage in countries such as Kenya.

1. The Problem and Promise of the Current 'China Model' Debate:

Within the relatively short period since their emergence, concepts such as the 'Chinese Model' and the 'Beijing Consensus' have generated a substantial body of analysis and conjecture.¹ The discussion has been particularly prominent in the Western, Chinese and African press (Economist 2010; Zhang 2006; Kaluba 2004) but has also begun to make its way into academia. Since Ramo's paper, the debate regarding the desirability and the very existence of such a model has centred around three broad camps. Those I label *advocates* believe both that developing-country leaders wish to follow the example of China and that this phenomenon is delivering broadly positive results. Thus, for example, Ramo points to the numerous 'nations examining China's rise and trying to see what pieces of this miracle they might make manifest in their own land' (Ramo 2005: 26), Peerenboom (2007) sees China as the most recent incarnation of an East Asian Model of modernisation that can allow emulators to break free from age-old developmental stalemates, and Li *et al* (2009) construct an extensive list of principles that China can teach others looking to learn from its success. Although the features of the Chinese experience that authors believe to be transferable vary widely, cautious economic liberalisation, the ability to construct domestic policies free from international intervention and the prioritisation of political stability are cited with some frequency.

Opponents of the Chinese model share with this first group the belief that developing countries are indeed emulating China, but differ on the normative implications of this emulation. These authors often originate from Europe and the United States, and express a concern with the declining influence of 'Western' values such as political liberalism and democracy. Stefan Halper's *Beijing Consensus* (2010), the pessimistic namesake of Ramo's paper, sees in the Chinese example a dangerous combination of authoritarianism and capitalism that allows developing countries to partake in the economic growth offered by the latter whilst rejecting the democratisation that was hitherto assumed to accompany it. These warnings of models built on 'authoritarian growth' (Yao 2010) are joined by more moderate assessments that view China's ideational influence as one component of a broader increase in its global soft power (Kurlantzick 2007; Leonard 2010: 96).

A final group of commentators, the *sceptics*, are leery of the very notion of a 'Chinese Model' or 'Beijing Consensus'. In *The Myth of the Beijing Consensus*, Scott Kennedy argues that both terms imply a long-term coherence and a unity that has simply not been present in China's post-reform policies (Kennedy 2010). In addition, he writes, China's path has hardly been unique, as 'many countries have successfully pursued economic development in the context of a strong authoritarian state' (Kennedy 2010: 475). Other sceptics argue that China's enduring social and environmental problems preclude its status as exemplar (Dirlick 2006), or that discussions of lesson-drawing from China are entirely rooted in Western alarmism and fear (Suzuki 2009). Perhaps surprisingly, most Chinese-language scholarship (summarised in Kennedy 2010: 473) echoes these stances, arguing that the notion of a Beijing Consensus overestimates China's departure from the Washington Consensus, underestimates China's current developmental challenges and downplays internal debates within the country.

The proposition that countries may draw lessons from one another is not in itself a novel one. In fact, a large literature has explored the myriad ways in which the voluntary, purposive transfer of policy programmes may take place between political entities.² Some of these observations have focused on the

1 The terms 'Beijing Consensus' and 'Chinese Model' form dual strands of a single debate but differ slightly in their emphasis and assumptions. The former is the more polarising of the two, and contains within it a *de facto* assertion that China's approach to development is fundamentally different from that of the West. It is the preferred term both in the most positive account of the Chinese example (Ramo 2004) and the most negative (Halper 2010), leading Chinese scholars in particular to view it as overly combative and divisive (Kennedy 2010: 473). Finally, it is often used to refer both to China's domestic development trajectory and to the country's mode of engagement with Africa and the developing world, particularly as this contrasts with the approach of traditional donors (e.g. McKinnon 2010). The term 'Chinese Model' is less prone to this troublesome blurring of boundaries, as it usually focuses solely on those elements in China's domestic situation that may be fruitfully applied elsewhere. At the same time, because it does not assume the internal coherence and discursive unity that Dirlik (2006: 1) rightly objects to *vis a vis* the former term, it more flexibly encompasses the myriad aspects of this domestic situation. Because it also fits more comfortably with discussions of emulation and resonates with earlier literatures on the 'East Asian Model' of development, my analysis prefers to use only the latter term.

2 In keeping with the ways in which these terms are frequently used in the literature, I use terms 'lesson-drawing' and 'emulation' interchangeably to refer to the voluntary 'utilization of evidence about a programme or programmes from overseas and a drawing of lessons from that experience (Bennett 1991a: 221). This stands in contrast with concepts such as 'policy diffusion' or 'policy transfer' that also respectively encompass the non-purposive and non-voluntary adoption of policies originating elsewhere.

transfer of discrete policies at the micro and meso levels (Bennett 1991; Weyland 2004). Others have demonstrated the ways in emulation may contribute to broader paradigm shifts, as when elites have historically used certain modern societies as templates for their own pursuit of modernity (Westney 1987; Greenfeld 2003; Robertson 1995). Unlike the sceptics cited above, many such authors do not reserve the term 'model' for policy programmes that are unique or inherently admirable, but apply them instead to any existing or historical policy (or set of policies) viewed by others as an example for emulation (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 252; Bennett 1991: 36). By this reasoning—one my own paper adopts—a country becomes a model when enough policymakers view it as such.

Despite the availability of a rich body of theory, the 'Chinese Model' debate has, somewhat surprisingly, taken place largely within a theoretical vacuum. Whether due to the topical and media-driven nature of this debate or to the wide range of disciplines from which its contributors hail, discussions have tended towards the polemical or the descriptive. A second problem is almost the opposite of the first: because so much of the 'evidence' given for the influence of a Chinese model in Africa and elsewhere is anecdotal and highly speculative, the discussion suffers from a dearth of empirical data. According to Gill and Huang (2006: 20), 'no systematic information is available to assess the popularity of this model', while Ramo's (2004: 26) argument for the existence of a Chinese model is premised on the assertion that 'increasingly around the world, you stumble on anecdotes of nations examining China's rise' and attempting to emulate it.

My own study seeks to fill both gaps highlighted above: by applying the concepts of 'cross-societal emulation' and 'lesson-drawing' and by situating the lessons identified within an examination of post-colonial development paradigms, it aims to provide the debate under consideration with a sound theoretical underpinning. By systematically collecting and analysing primary qualitative data drawn from the single and highly-relevant case of Kenya, it also seeks to add empirical robustness to the discussion. This data took the form of 43 semi-structured qualitative interviews with Kenyan elites selected for their contribution to the discourse and practice of development in Kenya. I analysed these both manually and using Nvivo (Version 9)—the computer programme most frequently used for qualitative data analysis in the social sciences (Budding and Cools 2008: 23)—before supplementing and triangulating my findings with a selection of key documents originating from Kenyan government bodies, ruling parties and individual elites.³

Before the findings are presented, several important points must be kept in mind. Firstly, this study is not concerned with the material dimensions of China's engagement in Kenya—this places it largely outside the purview of the bulk of the now-extensive 'China in Africa' literature (Brautigam 2010; Alden *et al* 2005; Kaplinsky *et al* 2007). In addition, even where I do restrict my analysis to questions of China's ideational influence, I do not at this stage aim to predict or describe the influence of this emulation on concrete policy or practice. Given the lack of agreement in the existing literature on the defining characteristics of an 'East Asian Model' or a 'Chinese Model', it would have been difficult to arrive at a definitive list of policies derived from these exemplars. Studies of lesson-drawing require an examination of the cognitive processes and preferences of lesson-drawers. Desires and beliefs must be measured independently from action unless preferences are to be inferred from behaviour alone (Rathburn 2008: 691; Bevir and Rhodes 2003: 132) and policy-makers must thus explicitly demonstrate the utilisation of information from foreign experiences in order for such a conclusion to be drawn (Bennett 1991: 32).

This work therefore makes use of a hermeneutic epistemology that approaches social reality as empirically 'knowable' but subject to intersubjective interpretations; it also utilised a constructivist ontology, arguing that intangible factors such as values, norms and ideas were at least as important as material or institutional factors in making up the fabric of this reality (Onuf 1989; Wendt 1999). My primary aim was, therefore to arrive at a Weberian *verstehen* of elites' perceptions of development and the ways in which these have been affected by external exemplars. The key questions encapsulated in the 'Chinese Model' debate can at present best be understood by examining the ideational frameworks of those elites who contribute to the discourse and practice of development in my country case.

2. Kenya's Choice of Model

As the largest collection of developing countries on the planet, Africa is frequently viewed as a particularly important locus of the 'China Model' debate. Several key texts (eg. Halper 2010; Ravallion 2008), devote

³ This paper summarises the Kenyan findings of a larger comparative study that included Ethiopia as a second country case. Further details of the methodology employed and the Ethiopian findings can be found in Fourie (2013). A list of Kenyan interviewees can be found in the Annex to this paper.

more attention to this region than to any other, and a recent review article on the subject (De Haan 2010) singles out Africa as a particular focus of the literature. In addition, African leaders are frequently quoted in the international, Chinese and African media discussing the merits (and, to a lesser extent, the dangers) of the Chinese example. The study's isolation of Africa as a region of particular interest therefore has a persuasive logic rooted both in the existing literature and in the data on which it draws.

Within Africa, Kenya presents a compelling case study partially due to its intrinsic value as a large, populous and influential regional actor. More important, however, is the prominent position the country has occupied in development discourses on Africa and the cautious analytical generalisability that its study therefore allows.⁴ Since the colonial era, Kenya has occupied a central role in the popular Western, and by extension the academic, imagination of Africa. As host to and focus of the paradigmatic 'Kenya debate' in the 1970s, which pitted Marxist scholars against those positing the existence of an indigenous pre-colonial Kenyan capitalist class (see Kitching 1985 for an overview), it has also had a particularly strong impact on political economy debates. Although the country is unusual in certain respects, many of its major problems—corruption, ethnic discord, inequality, climatic and demographic pressures on land—are those seen as most troubling for the continent overall. Kenya is therefore in many ways the emblematic African post-colonial political economy struggling with problems of governance, resource management and ethnic discord.

If the views of Kenyan elites can reveal something of how China's putative model is perceived more broadly on the continent, what exactly were these views? A first key finding concerned general attitudes towards emulation and lesson-drawing, where three distinct groupings soon emerged:

A) Technocrats and Planners

In his macro-economic policy, Kenya's former President Mwai Kibaki was advised primarily by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), an advisory body established in 2004 and comprising selected government officials, business leaders, representatives of professional organisations and economic advisors.⁵ NESC's flagship project is the highly ambitious *Vision 2030*, a long-term development plan that seeks to transform Kenya into a 'newly-industrialising, middle-income country' by 2030 (Kenya 2007). Although *Vision 2030* explicitly seeks to address the social, political and economic 'pillars' of development in equal measure, NESC has not, at the time of writing, contained any representatives from the NGO sector. In contrast, the business sector plays a dominant role in NESC/*Vision 2030*, with several entrepreneurs and business elites having held key positions from the conceptualisation to the implementation phases.

As shall be shown in the next section, the very existence in Kenya of bodies such as these is an outcome of lesson-drawing. It is thus interesting that elites from this group were overwhelmingly the most positive towards emulation, viewing it as an essential component of policymaking. The more senior the respondent, the more eager he or she was to draw lessons from abroad. Many spoke of having participated in visits and study trips to selected countries, and recounted foreign lessons they had implemented on their return. 'Everywhere we go', said one 'we actively go to learn lessons to see what's working, what's not working, and why' (N10).

A useful typology of elite attitudes to the emulation of foreign models can be found in Rivera (2004), who classifies elites either as 'pure voluntarists' (those who wish to draw from a particular national, regional or historical model), 'quasi-voluntarists' (those who wish to draw from several or many models) and 'traditionalists' (those who largely eschew the use of models). By this schema, the majority of technocrats and planners interviewed for this study were voluntarists, with one country or region clearly in mind throughout our interview. The director of the *Vision 2030* Secretariat was typical of this group in arguing:

I think sometimes you can study things to death. My focus is on execution, and as you're executing, you do what works for you. So therefore picking one country and then along the way, as you encounter different problems, asking 'who should we look to?' is a much more efficient way of doing things than sitting down and saying 'let's look at the 180 countries in the world and take the top 20 and then apply it'. We could spend 10 years doing that G16).

In the vast majority of cases, the model that these elites wished to emulate was not China, however, but an

4 This variant of generalisability is not produced by systematic statistical sampling but instead entails 'a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation' (Kvale 1996: 262); the reader is an active participant in this process.

5 Although the composition of NESC 2013 is yet to be announced, it is likely that incoming president Uhuru Kenyatta will continue to convene this body during his presidency.

alternative country in East Asia, or the region as a whole.⁶ Sometimes individual East Asian countries were highlighted; according to one bureaucrat, 'the countries I think you have heard we admire here so much are Singapore and Malaysia...and probably South Korea. Those are the countries we have to emulate' (G13). At other times, respondents spoke of East Asia as a single model, stating, for example, that 'most of all, the need to forge ahead, and the desire to get to the same level as the Asian Tigers, is really moving us ahead' (N9).

Most leaders viewed China as distinct from the rest of the region, however, and tended to give several reasons for seeing the country as a generally unsuitable model. Elites raised questions regarding China's performance, particularly in the areas of democratisation, pluralism and decentralisation. China was also seen as fundamentally different from Kenya in its culture, history, size and political and economic systems. A third obstacle to emulation lay in distrust of China and its alleged actions on the African continent—actions such as dumping and the sponsorship of oppressive regimes. Many lesson-drawers were supportive of close China-Kenya economic relations, but at the same time opposed to emulation of China on the grounds that this would further increase Kenya's dependence on a large, increasingly powerful country, the intentions of which were not yet entirely clear or trustworthy. A fourth factor cited as problematic concerned a lack of knowledge of and prior contact with China; the language barrier and lack of an institutional structure to facilitate lesson-sharing with China were seen as preventing emulation. The only foreign advisors to serve on NESC in 2010 and 2011 originated from South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Malaysia. In contrast, experts from China, according to a presidential advisor on development cooperation, 'weren't interested' and 'didn't come to ask' (G21). A final barrier to Kenya-China emulation arose from the sentiment that China, despite its developmental successes, did not, in fact, possess a unique model of development—and here, elites often preferred to look to the original source of innovation:

Everything that I like about China, Singapore has done (G16).

A good chunk of the development of China recently was advised by Singapore. If one of the smallest countries can advise one of the biggest countries in the world, why can't we learn from it? (G15).

It is no coincidence that both quotations above mention Singapore. Singapore was one of two countries to emerge with particular regularity as a model for this group of elites; the other was Malaysia. The choice of these two models was accompanied by what I term the 'fall from grace' narrative. This ran as follows:

Malaysia, Singapore and Kenya all gained independence from the United Kingdom within a few years of each other, at which stage all three possessed roughly similar levels of development. If anything, Kenya was the more advanced of the three countries, leading Malaysia and Singapore to draw lessons in areas such as agriculture, construction, transport infrastructure and tourism. Since then, something has gone dramatically awry, and Kenya's per capita GDP is now roughly one-third that of Malaysia and Singapore. If we can pinpoint the source of this divergence, we will be able to emulate these countries' trajectories and attain their levels of development and modernity.

This story contains several important elements of convergence and divergence. Historical and 'social-psychological' linkages (Rose 1993: 107) are writ large here: the three countries are all seen as having suffered equally under British rule, having inherited common colonial institutions, and lacking substantial natural resources. They are also viewed as having 'come of age' at a similar time (independence came in 1957 for Malaysia, 1963 for Kenya and 1965 for Singapore), and therefore having had to confront similar international environments. For one business leader, for example, 'We have a similar historical background—colonisation by the British. Therefore our thought processes might not be that far apart' (N7).

Most importantly, elites see Kenya as having begun on a similar developmental footing as did these two countries, and even as having acted as their model during the early decades of independence. Crucially, this allows Kenyan elites to feel that the lessons they are taking are not entirely new or alien to their society, but that they have merely been 'lost' and are now being re-appropriated. 'We are told, when we go to Singapore', said one planner, 'that some of the processes that they used began in Kenya, so I would say we are following a road of modernisation processes that probably we discarded before – that's where we are starting' (G14).

⁶ Decision-makers were first asked about their general attitudes to emulation, before being asked whether they wished to emulate any country in particular; In order to avoid introducing bias, China was only mentioned as an example once the answers to these initial questions had been discussed in some detail.

To Kenya's emulating elites, then, these similarities combine with the vast differences between the countries' development levels today to produce a very distinct heuristic. The differences are seen as just large enough to render countries such as Malaysia and Singapore worthy of admiration, while not so large as to make lesson-drawing impossible; according to one trade union leader, for example, 'Malaysia was a third world country. Of course we can't compare ourselves to countries like Germany – those are just too far' (N4). The speed and the recent nature of East Asia's growth is also appealing, as elites feel that they can observe, first-hand, the structural transformations taking place in these economies—and that they can hope to see similar changes in their own countries within their own lifetimes. Finally, because Kenyan elites attempt to isolate the independent variable that accounts for the divergences between potential models and their own countries, no country is seen as too small to selectively learn lessons from: elites are not fazed by Singapore's status as a city-state or 'laboratory of development', while China was consistently labelled too big and populous to act as a model. The fact that Kenya is said to have acted as erstwhile mentor rather than disciple to these countries is, at the same time, deeply emotionally satisfying.

B) Other Political Elites

Those political elites not intimately involved in *Vision 2030*—career politicians, party advisors, bureaucrats in minor ministries, legal experts and others—tended to hold somewhat different views. The majority still held generally positive views towards emulation, but chose a much wider range of potential models. This group was dominated by 'quasi-voluntarists', to return to Rivera's (2004) typology, who emphasised the rational and selective nature of their lesson-drawing. One such respondent spoke of other countries experiences, for example, of 'a buffet of ideas' from which 'we pick and choose as we deem fit and necessary' (G17). Malaysia, Singapore and the rest of East Asia were still the most frequently-mentioned countries or regions, but information on these cases was often presented in a second-hand manner. A Deputy Prime Minister of Kenya named Malaysia and Singapore as models, for example, but was unable to explain why advisors from these countries in particular were invited to sit on NESC (G5). All in all, a coherent programme of emulation was thus more difficult to discern, and these respondents ultimately answered as one would expect from a group without a clear agenda for lesson-drawing. Once again, China was seen as an important economic partner—but a generally unsuitable model—for Kenya.

C) Civil Society

A third and final group comprised senior representatives from the media, trade unions, religious groups and non-profit organisations. This group mentioned the broadest range of possible exemplars, and was also dominated by 'quasi-voluntarists' interested in 'shopping' widely and eclectically. Singapore, Malaysia and East Asia were, once again, the most commonly-cited models, but this group also mentioned Western and other African countries with some regularity. Some of these elites (particularly in non-profit organisations or activist positions) counted among their ranks some of the fiercest critics of a 'Chinese Model'. 'I don't like China', said one, 'The example it sets is so negative, I'd basically campaign against people adopting China as a model' (N13). Non-governmental respondents were also asked whether they perceived the government to be emulating any country or region; in keeping with the findings of the previous section, most viewed Singapore and Malaysia as the Kenyan government's key exemplars. Their own emulation was more diffuse, however, again making it difficult to discern as clear and unambiguous a lesson-drawing agenda as had emerged among Kenyan planners and technocrats.

3. The Lessons of East Asia:

As 'Section Two' has demonstrated, the situation in Kenya presents a more nuanced situation than that put forward by many *advocates* and *opponents* in the 'China Model' debate. Most elites in one of Africa's most important and emblematic states do not see China as a suitable model for their own country. However, the very strong 'pull' exerted by several other East Asian models among that group of policymakers tasked with long-term planning and clustered around *Vision 2030* and NESC also casts many of the *sceptics'* assumptions into doubt. This is particularly true due to the fact that Singapore and Malaysia are perceived not as polar opposites but as 'friendlier' alternatives to the 'Chinese Model'. In order to understand why this is so, and what this means for development paradigms in Africa, it is important to know what lessons these planners draw from those East Asian countries they do see as exemplars.

It is important, also, to contextualise these lessons. Instead of constituting a mere 'laundry list' of changes

that elites would like to see realised in their own country, each aspect of East Asian development that Kenyan elites wish to replicate bears a striking resemblance to modernisation theory. This controversial development paradigm was highly influential both globally and in Africa in the early post-colonial era; it fell out of favour in the 1970s, however, when it was attacked for the perceived ethnocentricity of its assumptions and the purported inaccuracy of its prescriptions (Wallerstein 1976; Weinberg 1969). At the heart of this theory lay the belief that the evolution of non-Western societies towards the modes of economic, societal and political organisation found in their Western counterparts was both inevitable and desirable. Modernisation theory originated from and reached its apogee in the United States, where the writings of key proponents such as Talcott Parsons, Marion Levy, Neil Smelser, Walt Rostow, Seymour Lipset, Lucien Pye, Daniel Lerner and Gabriel Almond helped it to become a plank of US foreign policy dedicated to simplifying and universalising the American experience. As we shall see, however, Kenyan elites now view East Asia as the most recent incarnation of this same experience. Eight key lessons run through their own attempts at lesson-drawing, the development trajectories of their exemplars and the assumptions of modernisation theory. These are:

1. Development as an Endogenous, Sequential Process

Early post-colonial development theory viewed modernisation as a series of interrelated systemic changes that gradually transformed the entire fabric of a given society. This view had three implications: firstly, development was largely a national project exercised within the confines of the modern nation-state. The early post-colonial era witnessed the globalisation and naturalisation of the nation-state system, which became the 'organic' setting within which all development activities took place and 'the central and unquestioned unit of study for modernisation theorists' (Berger 2003: 422). Development was also seen to occur in series of distinct, virtually unavoidable stages from the 'traditional' to the 'modern', although the transfer of technology from more 'advanced' countries could help to accelerate this process (Rostow 1990 [1960]). Finally, modernisation theory's reliance on structural-functionalism (Parsons 1991 [1951]) implied the fundamental interconnectedness of the socio-cultural, economic, political and legal realms—as one realm developed, the others would adjust accordingly. Development was thus unified into a meta-narrative that applied to all facets of all societies, albeit at different points in time.

These beliefs are central to development thinking among Kenyan elites, and there is evidence to suggest that the East Asian example has compounded their importance. A newfound endogenism means, on the one hand, a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Traditional aid and the conditionalities that often accompany it were denigrated by even otherwise Western-friendly interviewees. As one planner put it, "To succeed, you wait for World Bank and IMF consultants, you listen to the advice, and then you do the opposite" (G15).

African leaders may have been unhappy with Western prescriptions irrespective of East Asia's economic situation, but the latter has provided a vivid illustration not just of the desirability, but also of the importance and the *possibility* of greater self-reliance. Several discussions of the Chinese Model have emphasised China's ability to safeguard its domestic 'policy space' (Zhang 2006; Zhao 2010: 424), and the 'economic nationalism' with which East Asian models are so often associated (Wong 2004: 351) includes a desire to free one's country from dependence on foreign 'charity'. Parallel discussions emphasise the role that China's economic presence in Africa plays in giving African governments greater policy freedom (Oya 2006).

Freedom from aid and the dependency it brings has become almost a rite of passage, signifying a country's entrance into the 'club' of middle-income countries—a status much of the Kenyan leadership has staked its future on attaining. For this reason, the ability to achieve parity with the West through trade rather than aid was mentioned by several elites as one of the foremost lessons drawn from East Asia:

But other countries that have 'made it' have actually organised themselves internally and forged development from inside, by starting industries, by pretending they need to produce what's already available elsewhere. It's not that there was a lack of goods when the famous Asian Tigers set out to build cars, washing machines, what everybody else was producing. It's not that they couldn't get them from Europe, it's just that they wanted to make them for themselves. And this has helped, that at the end of the day they have come up and are now talking to you and the rest of the developed world on equal terms (N15)!

Increasing policy space should not be confused with political isolationism or economic 'delinking', however. Virtually no elites wished to retreat from participation in the global economy; instead, respondents wished to use policy freedom to affect gradual integration with the global economy—but on their own terms. In the

past decade, Kenya has managed to diversify its income and decrease levels of foreign assistance (Mwega 2010: 117), and those who seek to emulate East Asia often do so with the medium-term goal of further increasing and maximising this freedom.

A focus on endogenous routes to development had another, more surprising outcome. In Kenya, the national context was seen to hold not merely the keys to future success, but also to present failure. When asked to identify the main obstacles to development, the vast majority of respondents pointed to internal factors such as the lack of a national committed leadership (G19, G20, N6). Relatively few focused on the legacies of foreign interference, structural adjustment or an unequal international economic order. Those who mentioned East Asian countries as models were the most likely, of all groups, to emphasise domestic constraints. Countries such as Malaysia, they argued, had demonstrated the possibility of succeeding in an international system that was initially stacked against them. As a result, they felt, elites could no longer use external constraints to excuse their own poor performance:

Look at Korea – Korea is a question of hard work, discipline, and really being a lot more relaxed about opening to investment. We didn't do this, because we came in to a situation of our own colonial structure, and then spent a great deal of time blaming the colonial structure rather than moving ahead with the work (G3).

Optimism is a difficult concept to address in the political sciences, as it is not easily operationalised. Nonetheless, there existed a tangible sense of possibility among those Kenyan technocrats who most desired emulation of East Asia, while pessimism about the future was strongest amongst those who felt the East Asian experience to have little applicability to the African situation. It is no coincidence that modernisation theory is the most optimistic of development theories, envisioning, as it does, a future in which technological and scientific knowledge is harnessed towards 'progress' and the amelioration of humanity's problems.

The example of East Asia has also strengthened the notion of development as a staged process of transformation. One of the most striking ways in which many East Asian approaches to development have harked back to post-war development theory is in their focus on sequencing and historically-contingent development. Gore (2000: 794) contrasts the desire of modernisation theory to understand the 'rhythms, patterns and laws of development' with the 'ahistorical performance assessment' undertaken by the World Bank, and finds East Asian developmentalism partially responsible for the return to prominence of the former approach.

This stagist reading of development was one of the aspects of modernisation theory that its critics have most objected to, especially when it was accompanied by the belief that these stages were broadly similar for all countries. Yet Kenyan emulators made frequent use of Rostow's terms, speaking of the need for cultural, technological and industrial 'take-off' and the imperative that their country undergo a broad structural transformation from a reliance on agriculture to industrialisation and finally to a service-based economy. This was partially due to an acknowledgement that Kenya's colonial legacy was shared with other countries, but also, as we have seen, to a sense of having fallen behind in a race for development:

In my view, [development] has to be similar but the evaluation at different times will find people at different levels...All of us will have to take different paths, but the outcome might be the same...It takes time and effort for countries to develop to certain levels. If we say we are going to take 300 years to be where Europe is, it's not going to be right. It's a long time (N7).

Closely related to the issue of staged development are the notions of prioritisation and sequencing. Much of the literature on the East Asian and Chinese models emphasises the importance of pragmatism, sequencing and prioritisation (Peerenboom 2007: 31; Zhang 2006; Yusuf 2001: 7-8). A law, institution, policy or practice might be essential at a later stage of development but inadvisable at present, or vice versa. This, according to the theory of 'catch up growth', is also how Japan developed—by rapidly emulating 'higher echelon' countries and thereby 'scaling up the ladder of industrial upgrading, rung by rung' (Ozawa 2005: 144).

Kenyan elites indeed drew this lesson from the East Asian countries they cited as models. They demonstrated a particular interest in the sequencing of product development, whereby countries begin by exporting crude products or primary commodities and later progress to higher-value exports. This manifested itself in the prominence accorded, in the country's development strategy, to policies of value addition and agro-processing (Kenya 2007: 14), and also in the broader beliefs exhibited in elite discourse. Several respondents took solace in the fact that countries like Taiwan and Japan had initially been discounted by the West as purveyors of cheap, low-quality products—only to use this experience to become global leaders in the export of sophisticated technological products:

There was a time when 'Made in Japan' was a bad thing. It's had to be 'Made in England'. Show me what's made in England today. Do I even care if it says 'made in China?' No. The quality has come to a level where it's acceptable, it's a brand name...Everything has gone up on a quality level (N10).

2. *The Privileging of Rapid 'Catch-Up' Economic Growth:*

If development, according to emulating elites, is a process of phased, self-propelled structural transformation, the question remains as to how this transformation is to be achieved. One key factor was held to be an emphasis on rapid, double-digit economic growth that would allow Kenya to 'catch up' after having 'fallen behind'.

The concept of 'catch-up growth', whereby countries use technology transfer to achieve a level of rapid growth that comes to rival the originator of the technology, has been theorised by Ozawa (2005) in reference to the Japanese example. According to this notion, emulation and learning are said to constitute the primary mechanisms by which countries achieve 'catch-up' growth (Ozawa 2005: 8). The importance of economic growth also echoes the writings of modernisation theorists, for whom it was the '*ne plus ultra*' of development (Gilman 2007: 183). It was the accumulation of capital that would lead to economic 'take off' (Rostow 1990 [1960]) and the emergence of an educated middle class that would foster the 'secular reformist gradualism' needed for democracy to flourish (Lipset 1960: 60).

The fact that many Kenyan elites look to East Asia in order to achieve catch-up growth and take-off is thus not unexpected, but instead consistent with the literature on emulative modernisation. Interviewees frequently used a metaphor derived from athletics, whereby development was conceived of as a competition, or a race:

It's like doing a pole vault – to catch up with [Western countries], they are very high – you need a pole vault. You need somebody who is just where you can catch up or learn lessons of transformation like industrialisation, where did they start, what are they doing (G14).

'When you are at the back, you have to put additional effort to get to the front of the pack. So we have to grow rapidly to be able to get there.' (G9).

One of the most frequent observations concerned the importance and the possibility of achieving the level of sustained, double-digit economic growth that East Asian countries had exhibited:

When NARC [the National Rainbow Coalition] won the election in 2002, I was Minister of Planning and National Development. We more or less did what the Singaporeans and Malaysians did. We sat down and we said 'look at where we are today. How do we bring economic recovery? What are some of the things we must do to have economic recovery? And that is what led to the ERS [Economic Recovery Strategy]⁷—the key elements of it' (G4).

It was not only the presence of rapid growth in these countries which impressed interviewees, but its sheer speed: several interviewees remarked that their countries could not afford to take several hundred years to develop, as the West had done. As a 'latecomer' to an unavoidable and universal process, Kenya could achieve this only by aiming for double-digit growth.

This trend also manifests itself in the content of the country's ambitious medium-term and long-term development plans. Vision 2030 aims to 'maintain a sustained economic growth of 10% per annum over the next 25 years' (Kenya 2007: 2) and to 'transform Kenya into a rapidly industrialising, middle-income country' by 2030 (Kenya 2007: 1). A Kenyan economic planner told me that the standards of living in Malaysia, Thailand and certain Latin American countries—rather than formal *per capita* income figures—had acted as yardsticks during the formulation of this goal.

The tensions between wealth creation, redistribution and poverty alleviation have run through over half a century of development debates, and these same tensions can be seen in the discourses of Kenyan elites. Although interviewees emphasised all three aspects of economic development, subtle differences illustrated the influence of the East Asian example. Those who cited East Asia as a central model were more likely than their peers to accord paramount importance to growth, often arguing that wealth creation would lead to other desirable economic outcomes. Although these elites were careful to emphasise the importance

⁷ Under outgoing Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki's *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007*, Kenya saw a moderate upturn in GDP growth and *per capita* income.

of ensuring that this wealth was sustainable and equitably distributed, many were also candid about their prioritisation of growth over direct poverty reduction. Thus the same top-level Kenyan planner who drew direct parallels between East Asia's growth strategy and his own country's ERS, above, condemned the current 'pro-poor ideology' as 'very bankrupt' and described the motivations of the drafters of ERS as follows: 'We needed a paradigm shift from PRSP [poverty reduction strategy papers] to economic recovery. The aim of the Kenyan government was not to reduce poverty but to create wealth and employment' (Anyang'Nyong'o 2005). Another policymaker echoes this perspective, arguing that 'the leadership of the country decided that it wanted an economic strategy for wealth creation and employment generation', and that it wanted to move away 'from the traditional approach of doing poverty reduction strategies' (G8).

In contrast to these respondents, those who disapproved of emulation of these countries were more likely, also, to criticise what they saw as an increasing focus on growth. When asked whether modernisation informed the thinking of Kenyan leadership, one critic answered 'I guess it has come back in a different sense – really now the focus is on growth and the idea that growth will trickle down' (N12).

3. *Scientific and Technological Optimism*

Kenyan emulators also drew from East Asian countries a belief that the vast majority of developmental challenges could be solved through the harnessing of science and technology. As one official put it, 'the basis of a country's development is the use of technology. We can talk of the best economic theories in the world, but if you are not able to have technological development, I don't think you will be able to achieve it...that is where you start' (G13).

East Asia was not the only region from which elites drew this lesson, but it was still the most frequently referred-to overall. It was also a national priority that admirers of East Asia emphasised far more frequently than did non-admirers or admirers of other countries. 'To me', responded one Kenyan interviewee, 'those [countries] still remain the ultimate case studies in terms of benchmarking how you can infuse technological aspects into development' (N15). More than one respondent cited Kenya's membership of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Development as an important forum for lesson-drawing in this regard; the forum, which aims 'to become a leading agent of change in harnessing technology for growth and wealth creation' (CPTM 2012), was founded and is still chaired by Malaysia's erstwhile science advisor.

Lesson-drawers' emphasis on science and technology did not consist solely of the usual assurances that this was one priority among many. After all, few governments today, or even in the past, would deny the importance of innovation. Elites were actually willing, however, to argue for the replacement of other, arguably equally important priorities with a focus on science, and to re-engineer an entire culture to centre on its almost single-minded pursuit. In 2010, Kenya's then-Minister of Higher Education William Ruto announced tentative plans to cut government funding of those university subjects deemed 'irrelevant' to the realisation of *Vision 2030* (quoted in Muindi 2010). Although Ruto did not specify the subjects he was referring to, these were widely regarded as comprising agriculture, construction, architecture, engineering, medicine, information technology and the like, and excluding subjects such as on anthropology, philosophy, history, archaeology and the arts (Wanyama 2010; Muindi 2010).

Another concrete expression of this lesson is an emphasis on the use of technology in increasing crop yields and driving agricultural growth. The central argument of the influential *A New Harvest* (Juma 2011), written by an advisor to the Kenyan government, is that African countries should adopt from East Asia—and especially from China—a more technologically-intensive approach to agriculture with a view to increasing productivity. In 2010, Kenya passed the Biosafety Act, allowing for the commercial cultivation of genetically-modified crops; in the same year, it launched an ambitious irrigation programme aimed at moving from rain-fed agriculture towards intensive irrigation in Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas and at tripling agricultural output through irrigation from 2010 to 2020 (Kenya 2010: 54).

As is the case with other aspects of emulation, this lesson has close parallels with modernisation theory. Industrialisation and mechanisation, ran the paradigm's reasoning, would instill in 'modern man' a belief in science and technology (Inkeles and Smith (1974: 23). This technology, a symbol of humanity's increasing rationality and 'rapidly-widening control over nature' (Rustow 1967: 3), would foster greater productivity, economic growth and overall societal progress. The discourse of Kenya's emulating elites is thus not far removed from the theory's view that 'the progress of the country rests on rational technology, and ultimately on scientific knowledge' (Shils quoted in Gilman 2007: 2).

4. *The Return of Physical Infrastructure:*

To the modernisation theorists, the large civic infrastructural projects undertaken in the United States during the 1930s—notably the Hoover Dam and the Tennessee Valley Authority—provided a model of modernity for other underdeveloped nations to emulate. As Graham and Marvin (2001: 84) describe it, 'the assertion of an embryonic national identity in the form of airports, four-lane highways and power stations...would sweep away the divisions of colonialism and the barriers of traditionalism'. The government was often held to occupy a central role in the planning and execution of the 'big push' that such initiatives—and the broader programmes of industrialisation and modernisation of which they were a central part—necessarily entailed (Rosenstein-Rodan 1957).

It is thus notable that the fourth key lesson Kenyan lesson-drawers draw from East Asia centres around the immense priority currently accorded to the improvement of physical infrastructure. Once again, it is virtually impossible to overplay their enthusiasm in this regard. At a 2010 infrastructure conference convened by the Ministry of Roads and attended by nearly every high-profile decision-maker in the Kenyan executive, Prime Minister Raila Odinga proclaimed that 'our priorities are: first, infrastructure; second, infrastructure; and third, infrastructure' (Odinga 2010). The budget of the Kenyan Ministry of Roads had already increased five-fold from 2003 to 2010 (G14).

Whereas smaller, more familiar countries were usually preferred as models in Kenya, China was indisputably Kenyan elites' primary exemplar in the sector of infrastructure (although other East Asian countries do play a role). According to one governmental respondent, for example, 'China is a huge country, with a huge population...However, they do their roads very well. We can learn a thing or two from them (G3). China's central role here is due to another anomaly in this area of learning: more than any other, this was a policy sector in which elites preferred not to differentiate between international development cooperation, foreign investment and lesson-drawing. China is the external actor most directly involved in road construction in Kenya; conversely, road construction is one of the areas in which China is most involved in the cases under consideration. There is evidence that the visibility of Chinese construction—exemplified both by the presence of Chinese labourers and the rapid appearance of new roads funded or built by China—directly contributes towards lesson-drawing.

Decision-makers drew from this Chinese involvement the lesson that infrastructural development was not only important, but also that it was actually *possible*. This recognition may initially appear self-evident. However, such an assumption would underestimate the deleterious impact of longstanding donor conditionalities, corruption and local neglect on Kenya's infrastructural networks. To interviewees accustomed to viewing highways, dams and high-speed trains as unattainable luxuries found only in a handful of the most developed countries, East Asia's domestic infrastructure and current Chinese-led projects on their own soil were both sobering illustrations of their own countries' tardiness. One respondent viewed China as having 'demystified' infrastructure (G1); for another, the use of Chinese labour had alerted Kenyans to the fact that 'the actual cost of construction is actually quite low. And you wonder what was happening before?' (N5).

There also exists an element of what Baruah (2008: 62), in reference to China, has called 'developmental monumentalism'. Countries engaging in developmental monumentalism undertake the construction of infrastructure for symbolic as well as for more practical reasons. To the Kenyan Minister of Roads (G14), then, Kenya focuses on road construction as much for the 'feel-good factor' as for transportation: 'It's like walking with a torn dress – if you find everybody walking with a torn dress, here in the streets, you go back and the image you have of Kenya is that people are very poor, they can't dress, they can't eat', he says. 'When you arrive at an airport, that's your first image, then you drive from the airport to a hotel—how does the road look?' (G14).

5. The Need for Cultural Transformation:

Less tangible and somewhat more controversial than the lessons mentioned thus far is the desire, prevalent among Kenyan emulators of East Asia, to bring about widespread cultural 'modernisation'. The modernisation theorists of the post-war era sought to use education and mechanisation to create 'modern' citizens who would use science and rationality to order their affairs, and who could become entrepreneurs and informed political participants in a way that 'traditional man' could not (Inkeles and Smith 1974). This process of cultural transformation was tightly linked to economic growth—whether as cause, outcome or (very often) both.

Kenyan decision-makers, too, viewed certain difficult but essential processes of internal societal transformation as the keys that would unlock other aspects of their nation's progress. This viewpoint, while not exclusive to those using East Asia as a model, was again more common among this group. One example

is a technocrat who listed Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia as the countries Kenya should most seek to emulate. On the afternoon of our interview, he had just come from a meeting with the World Bank on the subject of Kenya's policy towards its indigenous pastoralists. He recounted his government's position, one that the World Bank found had problematic:

We told them that our thinking is not to preserve the culture of the indigenous people as such, but we recognise them as marginalised, behind the rest of society in terms of development, which is now modernisation. So our policy is to bring them to our level, which is now modernisation (G10).

One very common cultural lesson that leaders testified to drawing from China and East Asia was the importance of discipline and hard work in bringing about economic growth. One senior Kenyan bureaucrat, citing the examples of Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Scandinavia, wished to impose a policy of universal military service in order to instil discipline in young Kenyans (G9). The recent influx of Chinese labourers to Kenya seems to play a key role here, as a large number of elites expressed admiration for the diligence and determination of those Chinese migrants with which they had come into contact, as well as a desire to transfer some of these values to the local population:

We want the minds of Kenyans to awaken. It is good to be pained – it is good for people to feel pain when they see the Chinese contractors on all these jobs, and they can ask themselves 'why are we not succeeding?' If we use that...to excel and invest in the infrastructure, it can be the medicine or the catalyst we need. (G14).

A second common thread united elites who believed that the example of East Asia militated not only for economic and political change, but also for cultural transformation. This was a desire to educate the population in the application of science and rationality to every aspect of their daily lives. To one Kenyan decision-maker, then, South Korea's success lay in its ability to create an 'engineering culture' (N8); to another, Kenyans needed to learn a 'new scientific way of reasoning' (N11). Yet another held that 'we need Version 2.0 of our culture, where people use scientific methods to determine their future' (G9).

Finally, interviewees wished to inculcate a strong sense of national, civic identity in the population. The desire to bring about a new and universal identification with the machinery and symbolism of the Westphalian state was often linked to the role that such an identification had played in mobilising, unifying and modernising large parts of East Asia. It is in this context, for example, that one civil society representative expressed admiration for the 'social restructuring' that Mao had brought about (N15).

6. A state that is business-friendly but 'defensively nationalist':

The role that the state can most fruitfully play in national economic development lies at the heart of one of the most enduring debates in development theory and practice. It is thus not surprising that this area was one in which Kenyan emulators frequently draw lessons from East Asia. Lesson-drawers looked to that region for examples of states playing a larger role in the national economy than is currently preferred by traditional donors. The role envisioned for the state is moderate, with a liberal but 'defensive' state partnering with a vibrant private sector in the interests of 'economic nationalism'.

It is highly significant that Singapore and Malaysia were the preferred models in this regard. On the one hand, these are relatively economically-liberal and business-friendly environments: Singapore was ranked by the libertarian Cato Institute as having the second-highest level of 'economic freedom' in the world in 2010 (Gwartney *et al* 2012). A number of interviewees pointed to these two countries as sources of lessons on areas such as outsourcing, investment promotion and export-led growth. One bureaucrat, for instance, bemoaned the fact that Malaysia had used Kenya's sugar processing and cultivation industry as a model during the 1960s, only to subsequently move towards higher-value industries such as palm oil; Kenya, he felt, had been unable to do this due to powerful lobbies from the domestic sugar industry (G8). Another identified Malaysia and Singapore as the inspirations behind initiatives such as the government's ambitious plans to spend \$12 million on a 5000 acre 'technopolis' dedicated to Business Process Outsourcing (N5).

While the trajectories of these two countries do reinforce in Kenyan elites the desire to create globally-competitive industries and attract foreign investment, they also present examples of activist states that harness and broadly guide economic development for the purposes of national modernisation.

Malaysia's rapid growth, while export-oriented, has entailed considerable strategic oversight on the part of its leadership. During the 1980s and 1990s, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir used economic nationalism to argue that Western-imposed neo-liberalism was aimed at subjugating a rising Malaysia (and, by extension, Asia) (Beeson 2000: 339). His leadership's use of currency controls and large state-supported industrial projects earned it the reputation for having trod a middle ground between national autonomy and globalisation, and for demonstrating the continuing agency available to national governments (Dent 2004: 84; Beeson 2000: 347). Post-Mahathir, Malaysia has continued to resist full economic liberalisation: in 2010, Malaysia's economy was classified by the Cato Institute as only partially 'free' (Gwartney *et al* 2012). This liberal yet 'defensive' national economic policy has both sustained and been sustained by a distinctive fusion of government and business interests; government incentives to advantage the country's indigenous 'Bumiputera' ethnic group and diffuse inter-ethnic tensions has led today to a sizeable domestic capitalist class with a very intimate relationship to the country's bureaucrats (Beeson 2000: 340).

The argument can be made that even Singapore has been headed by a government that uses business-friendly policies for the purposes of economic nationalism and regime stability. 'Most importantly', argues one observer, Singapore's political leadership 'works in close developmental partnership with hosted foreign MNEs [multi-national enterprises] in ultimate accordance to state-determined interests and policy blueprints' (Dent 2003: 84). Lee Kuan Hew—the country's Prime Minister from 1965 to 1990—used tightly-controlled, directed credit to steer the economy to pre-determined governmental objectives, and relied on increases in economic welfare as the main source of regime legitimacy; he retains great influence in the country and government projects such as these have continued under the present leadership.

These aspects of Singaporean and Malaysian development resonates with Kenyan elites' choice of these two countries as primary models. They help to explain, for example, why leaders cited these countries as the inspiration for Kenya's public-private-partnership initiatives (N10; G21), despite the widespread existence of such initiatives around the world. They also account for the fact that Kenyan elites used East Asia to argue for greater government intervention in the economy at least as often as they used the region as an example of successful liberalisation. Respondents pointed to the social engineering that Malaysia had been able to accomplish through affirmative action, housing quotas and other mechanisms, and to the ways in which they felt this had enabled national integration and civic sentiment (G7). Other lessons included the Singaporean state's role in controlling interest rates (G13), managing private land ownership (N21) and channeling technical assistance to other countries (N15).

The very fact that *Vision 2030* is centred on the promotion of six key economic sectors testifies to a desire for bureaucrats and other members of the executive to take a somewhat interventionist role in the make-up of Kenya's macroeconomic structure. In 2007, the erstwhile American ambassador to Kenya (quoted in Okulo 2011) remarked in a leaked cable that 'Vision 2030 often reads like a naïve call for a perfect society, smacking a bit of old-fashioned socialist central planning'. While this illustrates the unease with which many developed countries regard ambitious long-term visions such as these, it rests on a flawed understanding of the extent to which non-socialist countries in East Asia and elsewhere engaged in restrained but nonetheless significant intervention in their economies. Whether one labels this a 'market-planned economy' (G21), 'managed progress' (G7) or merely the building of capacity prior to greater liberalisation (N6), it marks a reconceptualisation of the relationship between the private and public sectors at least partially drawn from a handful of key East Asian models.

Kenyan leaders' drawing of lessons from East Asian countries other than China in their pursuit of a middle ground between unfettered capitalism and *dirigism* is not surprising if one looks beyond the current 'China Model' debate. Although the existence of strong state involvement in the economy is often held to be one of the key features of the Chinese example (Zhang 2006; Zhao 2010: 424), this point is in many ways a reprise of earlier assertions that the growth of the 'Asian Tigers' of the 1980s and early 1990s had been due to strong but selective state intervention. According to one contributor to this large and influential literature on the 'East Asian Model', South Korea, Japan and Taiwan's development accorded to a 'governed market' approach (Wade 1990). Similarly, Johnson's (1982) 'capitalist developmental state'—epitomised by but not limited to Japan—was dependent on the firm but business-friendly guiding hand of an elite bureaucracy of economic policy-makers. Another observer argued that development in Taiwan (Amsden 1985) and South Korea (Amsden 1992) could not be understood without giving credit to the powerful role played by public enterprises and other instruments of the state. This school of thought did not deny the benefits of integration into the global capitalist economy, particularly through the attraction of foreign investment and the creation of strong export-oriented manufacturing industries; this integration, however, needed to be gradual and carefully sequenced.

This literature is far more nuanced and historically-grounded than its current incarnation, but even

the 'East Asian Model' is rooted to some extent in the modernisation theory that preceded it by several decades. Modernisation theory, too, supported 'managed capitalism', whereby the state did not control the means of production but played a key planning role and made strategic investments in public goods such as infrastructure and technical education. The success of the Marshall Plan and the rapid industrialisation of the Soviet Union had demonstrated to American observers the potential of state-led technocratic planning, and the enormous government-led TVA project—intended to modernise the 'backward' areas of the United States during the 1930s—became, post-war, an example for US-advised governments to implement as far afield as South Vietnam, Iran and Colombia (Ekhbladh 2002). Thus Levy argued that modernisation necessitated unprecedented levels of centralisation, control and planning—'usually under government auspices, but by no means confined to them' (Levy 1966: 529). 'Only vigorous leadership from the central government', wrote Rostow (1990 [1960]: 31), 'can bring about those radical changes...whose quick achievement may also constitute a precondition for take-off'.

7. The desire for leaders that are forceful, visionary and technocratic:

Arguably the most controversial and surprising aspect of Kenya's emulation concerns the extent to which certain leaders admitted to using East Asian governments as political models. Several planners and business elites drew from Singapore and Malaysia the lesson—much criticised by those respondents in civil society who viewed these countries as unsuitable models—that development, at least in its initial phases, is best led by forceful, technocratic leaders who are willing, at times, to judiciously suspend certain political freedoms in service of the material wellbeing of the majority. These respondents were candid about the need for modernising elites to sometimes act as 'benevolent' or 'benign dictators' and temporarily postpone some of the dictates of liberal democracy:

I think one needs to go back and acknowledge one thing. Singapore, South Korea and Malaysia, if you just pulled out those three and went back to their first development plans – their first leaders were dictators. They were not democrats, but they had the society at heart. So their dictatorship...was for the development of those societies" (G8).

[We need] that kind of leadership they had earlier in Malaysia...good governance and someone who is forceful – not really a full dictator, but somehow. At least we'd be able to do a lot of things, because a lot of things are not done...So you need someone who says 'we need to do it this year – no compromises' (N8).

I think the Asian tigers have got something to teach anybody, because places like Singapore and others took very very visionary leadership...You need a strong man or woman at the helm with the right vision, and they just push it through. There will be a lot of hurt, there will be some damage, there will be some sections of society which will be very unhappy but the end, in this case, justifies it (N15).

This should necessarily be taken to not mean that Kenyan elites wish to suspend democracy entirely. Although emulators expressed a desire to draw selectively from strong governments in East Asia, they revealed an almost universal distaste for what they viewed as one of the most authoritarian of these, namely China. In distinguishing between China's 'completely autocratic' leadership and Singapore's 'strong' leadership (G9), Kenyan lesson-drawers echo the distinction between 'hard authoritarianism' and 'soft authoritarianism' drawn also by many observers of East Asian political systems. Malaysia and Singapore are regarded as archetypal examples of the latter regime (Means 1998) and are marked by 'an extremely strong and comparatively unsupervised state administration, single-party rule for more than three decades, and a set of economic priorities that seems unattainable under true political pluralism' (Johnson 1987: 131).

It is also highly likely that certain Kenyan leaders long for more political restrictions precisely due to the relative openness of their own political system. They therefore view selective emulation of Singapore and Malaysia as a means of counterbalancing what they perceive as increases in political freedoms and governmental guarantees that have outstripped increases in institutional and material resources. One admirer of East Asia wished Kenyans 'were able to crawl back a little bit on the democratic space so that we are able to focus more on development' (N20), while several expressed the wish that Kenya had taken advantage of its authoritarianism during the Moi regime in order to affect economic growth and efficient central planning. Time and again, elites referred to democracy as a 'genie' that could not be put back into the bottle (e.g. G3). Elites were however less likely to advocate a return to authoritarianism or the repeal of democratic

legislation than they were to express a desire for the government to push the legal limits of its power and to delay further political reforms.

In Kenya, admiration of Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir feed into a desire for a mobilising, developmental leadership that was almost an obsession among interviewees, who mentioned the word 'leadership'—unprompted—an average of almost five times per interview. This factor was seen as the primary reason for Kenya's post-colonial divergence from Singapore and Malaysia, countries whose leaders were held to possess three key traits. Firstly, their leaders were deemed to be *visionary* and able to enact policies that stretched beyond the current electoral cycle. It is for this reason that so many elites pointed to the Singaporean and Malaysian roots of NESC and Vision 2030, the most long-term-oriented development plan in Kenya's post-colonial history. According to one planner, for instance, 'the key thing was to actually call it 'Vision Something'—that's very Asian. To set it far into the future...If you look at the programmes in [East Asia], there has always been 'Vision this' and 'Vision that', but in other countries it is simply called a strategy (N5).

This leadership was also *forceful* when necessary, knowing when to put an end to excessive public consultations if these threatened other developmental objectives. To domestic critics of this emulation, the East Asian model provides the private sector-allied Kibaki administration with a self-serving justification for cracking down on those engaged in labour disputes and strikes (N13). To emulators, themselves, however, the intricate and lengthy consultation and conflict-resolution measures demanded by local civil society and western donors were seen as a barrier to the sustained yet rapid modernisation that 'catching up' demanded. These elites emphasised the legitimising role that sound management of the economy and the creation of a functioning state infrastructure would have on governments that temporarily held back further democratisation (N15) and accused civil society organisations of an inordinate focus on citizens' rights over their responsibilities (G15). One of Kenya's most senior planners and most fervent admirers of Lee Kuan Hew (Anyang' Nynong'o 2007) feels, for example, that 'it is very difficult to pursue political democracy and economic reforms at the same time' due to the 'compensation culture' that accompanies the former (Anyang' Nyong'o 2005).

Finally, the leadership of Singapore and Malaysia were held to be both technically knowledgeable and able to isolate themselves from political and societal pressures; in short, this leadership was *technocratic*. These forces were seen as stemming not only from below, but also sometimes from above, at the level of elected representatives. Another interviewee attributed the economic growth of East Asia, and later of the Kibaki regime, to the central position that each had accorded to technocrats:

Political leadership is the one that gives leadership in all other spheres...It can provide a basis for the take-off. In Korea, we had Park Chung-Hee, the benevolent dictator. He set the path for growth in Korea. We had Mahathir in Malaysia, we had Lee in Singapore. So political leadership sets the target for the population to follow, allows growth. That is what has happened in the Kibaki regime. Technocrats have been given free space to excel and to basically plan without much interference, and therefore you find now that gives room for growth, rather than being directed and being told what to do (G14).

The influence of this line of thinking was most clearly visible in the existence and envisioned roles of *Vision 2030* and NESC. According to the Secretary of NESC, *Vision 2030* was specifically conceived as a national project able to transcend the politics of the 'government of the day' (Muia 2007). By establishing an exclusive advisory council of business and governmental experts and a written plan with a time-frame spanning a generation, elites hope to keep developmental decisions separate from Kenya's fractious political climate and from the composition of parliament at any one time. The mid-term review of the ERS formally announced the incipient *Vision 2030* in the following way:

To function with the effectiveness of the kind we have observed in East Asia, national visions and strategic plans need the full backing from the country's political leadership, including the willingness to intervene whenever the implementation machinery gets bogged down in disagreements, detail, or bureaucratic inertia (Kenya 2007: 32).

To critics of the government's vision, this technocratic distancing that emulators desire is precisely the central flaw at the heart of NESC and *Vision 2030*. Accusations that ordinary Kenyans lacked ownership or knowledge of these 'elitist' initiatives—that *Vision 2030* 'dwells on the macro and forgets...the micro' (N13)—were more frequently voiced than charges that the leaders of these institutions were corrupt or self-interested (the most frequent accusation levelled at elected politicians).

East Asia's high-performing economies are well-known for their technocratic rule: Japan's Ministry of Trade and Industry, an elite agency that coordinated all aspects of the country's industrial policy and

macroeconomic planning in the decades following World War Two, has famously been viewed as the most important ingredient of Japan's post-war development (Johnson 1982: 319). South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan have over the years emulated this by creating their own influential 'super-agencies' in which planning and implementation over a vast range of policy areas are concentrated.

By separating NESC from the *Vision 2030* Delivery Secretariat, Kenya has taken a somewhat less cohesive approach; the former body is convened afresh each year, while the latter organisation is tasked primarily with project management rather than policy coordination. Several elites therefore called for even greater emulation on this front. According to one economic advisor, for instance, 'I would go for an institution which you find in Malaysia, and even Singapore, where they have a planning unit that is very strong, has a lot of capacity and is chaired by the top political leadership, that is able to say 'this is how you prioritise things' (N20).

To a certain extent, the fact that planners were most likely to draw these lessons is not unexpected; most elites involved in *Vision 2030* are, after all, technocrats who could reasonably be expected to desire an increase in their own influence. While such actors may long have believed in the need for an expansion of their role, it is still nonetheless significant that East Asian exemplars now inspire them to verbalise and more openly pursue this goal. In addition, non-technocratic elites in business, politics and even civil society were also more likely to draw this as a lesson if they were already admirers of East Asia. Finally, many lessons that technocrats drew from East Asia—a choice to emulate Malaysia's strategy of collaboration with business and insulation from parliament rather than the other way around, for example—were more complex than a desire to simply increase their scope of action.

The fact that technocrats are the group most likely to draw lessons from countries such as Singapore and Malaysia is in itself an interesting finding in light of the position that technocrats occupied in East Asian developmental states. This suggests that the degree to which the country as a whole is able to emulate East Asia is likely to correspond with the degree of influence and insulation that bureaucrats in Kenya are able to carve out for themselves. If this particular lesson were drawn and Kenya were to become, like Japan, a country where 'the politicians reign and the bureaucrats rule' (Johnson 1999: 50), the likelihood of other aspects of emulation taking shape would also increase.

The sentiment that Africa is increasingly emulating China's privileging of order, centralised control and long-term stability over political liberalism is frequently heard among both advocates and opponents in the 'China Model' debate (Peerenboom 2007; Halper 2010). The East Asian developmental state offered a similar example to developing countries, however; according to the term's originator, such states were very rarely—if ever, classifiable as fully representative, liberal democracies (Johnson 1999: 53-54). Their leaderships drew their legitimacy primarily from rapid economic growth rather than adherence to formal rules of representative democracy; full political liberalisation—where it occurred at all—often followed decades after economic liberalisation had taken place. Once again, it becomes less surprising that Kenyan emulators eschew China's example in favour of similar but less drastic lessons from 'soft authoritarian' countries such as Malaysia and Singapore.

Just as the size of the state in East Asia mirrored older modernist thinking, so too did its approach to governance. Most modernisation theorists held democracy to be inseparable from development, but this democracy was often Schumpeterian and minimalist in nature, with democratic procedures, rather than outcomes, used as the criteria for evaluating democracy (Schumpeter 1976 [1950]). Democracy was a system of government in which citizens gave groups of political elites the right to rule in periodic elections, but these technocratic elites could not rely on the often unformed and uninformed opinions of citizens in day-to-day decision-making. Democracy was also held to be contingent on a range of economic and cultural preconditions such as economic growth (Lipset 1960), the evolution of a 'civic culture' (Almond and Verba 1963) and the creation of 'modern' personalities (Lerner 1964; Inkeles and Smith 1974; Parsons 1991 [1951]).

One such prerequisite—political order and stability—gained increasing emphasis as the Cold War wore on and the developing countries in which the US had intervened failed to democratise as expected. The practical application of modernisation theory through American foreign policy had long seen sacrifices to democracy in the name of putative technological and economic progress (as attacks on the democratically-elected rulers of countries such as Chile, Zaire and Nicaragua had showed), but the 'politics of order' and 'political modernisation' variants of the theory lent it an increasingly 'authoritarian flavour' as time went by (Gilman 2007: 9). Thus Rostow opined that 'one must create at forced-draft the bone structure of a modern nation' (Rostow quoted in Gilman 2007: 155), MacDougall (1976: 1168) praised Suharto's 'technocratic model of modernization' as a 'highly functional strategy of government' which he felt 'recommended itself to like-minded and organized elites confronting similar crises' and Pye, (quoted in Berger 2004: 103)

expressed the need for a 'grand ideological solution' and a 'greater sense of order' in transitional societies such as Burma.

4. Implications and Concluding Thoughts:

This paper has sought to contextualise and interrogate the highly contentious and topical notion of a 'Chinese Model' of development by examining attitudes to emulation in a key country case. An understanding of Kenyan elites' views on this purported model would, it argued, go some way towards grounding current speculations in empirical evidence, while an application of concepts such as lesson-drawing and emulation would lend the debate a greater theoretical foundation.

My findings show that each of the three camps dominating the 'Chinese Model' discussion understands certain aspects of China's development model but misunderstands other aspects. *Advocates* deserve credit for launching the contemporary debate around African emulation of East Asia, but are mistaken in thinking that China—as the largest and most high-profile of East Asia's emerging economies—is necessarily the country elites wish to emulate, as well as in believing China's lessons to be unique. As the concept's *sceptics* have surmised, Kenyan elites are cautious in viewing China's trajectory as an unalloyed success. As we have seen, other countries in East Asia are viewed as more suitable models for Kenya; in fact, a fairly cohesive and high-level cluster of Kenyan planners and technocrats are currently engaged in a concerted effort to draw lessons from this region. Singapore and Malaysia are viewed as particularly suitable by virtue of their 'softer', more market-friendly approach, their shared colonial history and the magnitude of their post-colonial divergence. Sceptics are mistaken, therefore, in their more general dismissal of African lesson-drawing. Fears raised by the concept's *opponents* that political lessons accompany the more palatable economic measures African elites take away from East Asian modernisation are borne out by my findings; these authors train an inordinate amount of their ire on China, however, thereby neglecting the historical factors that continue to constrain elites' choice of model. All three camps neglect to contextualise China's example within the broader concepts of the 'East Asian Model' and the developmental state and—even more importantly—fail to see how this heralds the return to influence of modernisation theory's assumptions and prescriptions.⁸

Kenya's emulation is likely to have a profound impact on the development discourses and policies of traditional donors such as the EU—particularly if further research indicates a similar pattern in other African states and if Kenya's technocrats are able and truly willing to overcome the strictures of their country's famously fractious and corrupt political landscape.

The magnitude of these implications stem from the many differences between modernisation theory and current donor orthodoxy. Whereas modernisation theory was historicist and guided by a grand narrative of staged progression, recent donor practice has relied on ahistorical performance assessment along a standardised set of developmental indicators (Gore 2000: 795). Donors have long stressed the importance of economic growth, but this has been tempered (at least since Stiglitz's (1998) influential critique on the Washington Consensus) with a far greater emphasis on poverty reduction and inequality than that exhibited by Kenya's emulators. The fulfillment of 'basic needs' that comprise the Millennium Development Goals are very different, for instance, from the return to 'trickle-down' evident in Vision 2030 and the ERS. Modernisers' focus on public investment in physical infrastructure, the zealous application of science and technology and attention to other 'hardware' of development contrasts markedly with the current mainstream emphasis on institutions, management processes and the other 'software' of development (Pieterse 2004: 189). Kenyan lesson-drawers' efforts to bring about cultural transformation are a far cry from the bottom-up participation and increased reliance on traditional and indigenous knowledge advocated by the EU.

The roles envisioned for national elites under each paradigm are also very different. Whereas modernisation entailed 'grand long term government-directed designs for whole societies', development policy since the Washington Consensus has been about 'local problem-solving and local social engineering designed to make economic and social institutions "work" better' (Gore 2000: 795). Under the first set of assumptions, economic growth also precedes or at the very least accompanies democratisation; under the latter, good governance is seen as a *precondition* of economic development (Leftwich 1993: 605). The very notion that development is a national project best undertaken by local elites who carefully manage foreign investment while weaning the country from development assistance has profound implications for the EU,

⁸ Only Peerenboom (2007), mentioned earlier, deserves credit for linking emulation of China to an East Asian Model and to the concept of 'modernisation', but his broad-based legal analysis is lacking in applications to specific cases and theories of development.

whose engagement with Africa and Kenya is still primarily based on aid.

This paper has shown elite emulation of East Asia to be an important factor driving an empirically observable paradigm shift towards modernisation theory in Kenya. Specifically, a core group of planners and technocrats choose to emulate those countries in the region that they view as developmental 'peers'. Each of these lessons that these elites draw mirror post-war modernisation theory to a far greater extent than do the paradigm prevalent among the EU and other traditional donors. China's limitations as a model notwithstanding, the return to Africa of a variety of development thinking deeply rooted in modernisation theory's teleological and transformational worldview is likely to have an equally transformational impact on the EU's own engagement with the continent.

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Annex: List of Interviewees

In order to facilitate citation, interviews are cited in the text according to the following code: 'G' signifies a interviewee from the governmental sector and 'N' signifies an interviewee from outside the government. Interviewees are further randomly ordered within their sub-sector. Interviewees G1 to G6, for example, are all elected politicians, ordered at random. In cases where subjects' positions have changed since being interviewed, the position held at the time of interviews is listed, as well as the current position (where relevant and permissible). Interviewees' exact name and title are not necessarily obscured in the text of the dissertation where permission was given to cite them as such.

- G1: Deputy Speaker, National Assembly of Kenya. Nairobi, 29/11/2010.
- G2: PNU (KANU) Representative, National Assembly of Kenya. Nairobi, 22/11/2010.
- G3: Minister of Agriculture; ODM Representative, National Assembly of Kenya. Nairobi, 19/10/2011.
- G4: Minister of Medical Services; Secretary-General of ODM. Nairobi, 30/11/2011.
- G5: Deputy Prime Minister; Minister of Local Development; ODM Representative, National Assembly of Kenya. Nairobi, 28/11/2011.
- G6: Minister of Lands; ODM Representative, National Assembly of Kenya. Nairobi, 08/12/2010.
- G7: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning. Nairobi, 12/11/2010.
- G8: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Regional Integration. Nairobi, 01/12/2010.
- G9: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information. Nairobi, 20/10/2010.
- G10: Economic Secretary, Ministry of Finance. Nairobi, 15/11/2010.
- G11: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industrialisation. Nairobi, 25/10/2010.
- G12: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development. Nairobi, 12/12/2010.
- G13: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Regional Development Authorities. Nairobi, 10/12/2010.
- G14: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Roads. Nairobi, 23/10/2010.
- G15: Secretary, National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Nairobi, 01/11/2010.
- G16: CEO, *Vision 2030* Secretariat. Nairobi, 17/11/2010.
- G17: Director, Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC). Nairobi, 24/09/2010.
- G18: Chair, Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC). Nairobi, 6/10/2010.
- G19: Chair, Committee of Experts on Constitutional Review. Nairobi, 23/09/2010.
- G20: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Constitutional Affairs, ODM. Nairobi, 28/09/2010.
- G21: Advisor to the President on International Development. Nairobi, 23/10/2010.

- G22: Advisor to the Office of the President, Co-chair of the Constitutional Campaign Secretariat. Nairobi, 13/11/2010.
- N1: Senior Editor, *The Daily Nation*. Nairobi, 15/10/2010.
- N2: Editorial Director, Royal Media Group. Nairobi, 10/11/2010.
- N3: Managing Editor, *The Standard*. Nairobi, 08/10/2010.
- N4: Secretary-General, Central Organisation of Trade Unions. Nairobi, 15/10/2010.
- N5: Chairman, Kenya Private Sector Alliance. Nairobi, 26/09/2010.
- N6: CEO, Institute for Economic Affairs. Nairobi, 12/10/2010.
- N7: Chairman, Kenya Employers' Federation. Nairobi, 22/09/2010.
- N8: Senior representative, Kenyan Association of Manufacturers. Nairobi, 08/12/2010.
- N9: Acting Director, Kenya Private Sector Alliance. Nairobi, 09/11/2010.
- N10: Director, Kenya Private Sector Alliance. Nairobi, 13/10/2010.
- N11: National Chair, *Maendaleo Ya Wanawaka*. Nairobi, 24/11/2010.
- N12: Director, Kenyan Human Rights Commission. Nairobi, 07/11/2010.
- N13: Director, Mars Group. Nairobi, 10/11/2010.
- N14: Anti-corruption campaigner; former Chair of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. Nairobi, 4/12/2010
- N15: Senior manager, Community Development Trust Fund. Nairobi, 27/11/2010.
- N16: Director, National Council of NGOs. Nairobi, 10/11/2010.
- N17: Women's rights activist; Vice-Chair, Committee of Experts on Constitutional Review. Nairobi, 15/10/2010.
- N18: Senior representative, National Council of Churches. Nairobi, 09/10/2010.
- N19: Chair, Evangelical Alliance of Kenya. Nairobi, 20/10/2010.
- N20: Director, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Analysis. Nairobi, 8/10/2010.
- N21: Chair, Association of Professional Societies in East Africa. Nairobi, 7/11/2010.