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Applying the Strategic Relational Approach to African States: A Case of Mauritius and Trade Policymaking

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ABSTRACT

The perspective of African states in crisis, together with the examination of African states as neopatrimonial, has been inadequate in providing a useful lens for examining trade policymaking in Africa. The paper considers African states as structures and the contexts within which political actors formulate socio-economic policies and pursue strategies for political, economic and social development; laying the basis for engagement in the international political economy. It uses Mauritian trade policymaking to highlight that trade policy is a political output decided by human actors in the context of state structures that favour certain actors and strategies, as actors engage in a deliberative and consultative manner. This has created a deliberative democratic developmental state that provides contexts for trade policymaking, which forms the basis for engagement in the international trading system. The paper concludes by drawing lessons from the Mauritian experience relevant to trade policymaking in Africa and our understanding of the engagement of African countries in the international political economy.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EPA	Economic Partnership Agreements
EPZ	export processing zone
GDP	gross domestic product
ICT	information and communication technology
JPPSCITI	Joint Public Private Sector Committee on International Trade Issues
SRA	Strategic Relational Approach
TPU	Trade Policy Unit
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

A lot of literature on the engagement of African countries in the international political economy is without much consideration of the domestic processes of policymaking that contribute to how these countries engage with the rest of the world. Examination of these domestic processes and the contexts in which a number of actors besides political leaders (elites, private sector representatives and civil-society representatives) interact reveals considerable insight into the manner in which some African countries relate with the international political economy. It becomes important to address the gap between policymaking and its influence on engagement in the international political economy. Our understanding of the policymaking processes is dependent on our conceptualisation of African states. Yet the views on the crisis of the nation state in Africa remain inconclusive and largely divergent, with a number of solutions emerging – solutions that have not shed much light on policymaking processes. Central to the examination of African states is the wide usage of the concept of neopatrimonialism – a concept that has been under considerable criticism in recent years and indeed a concept that does not give us much in terms of policymaking analysis.¹ This paper seeks to examine African states as structures – that is the contexts within which actors formulate socio-economic policies and pursue strategies for economic and social development as they relate with the state. This allows us a greater understanding of how different African states devise policy, the actors involved and, in some instances, how the policy relates with the world at large.

The paper makes use of the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) as an alternative lens to examine and explain economic policymaking in Mauritius.² It focuses on Mauritius because of three main considerations. First, the atypical characteristics of Mauritius within an African context, (the absence of neopatrimonial forms of governance, relatively higher per capita income, and a strong, capable and relatively autonomous bureaucracy), makes it a good example of a non-neopatrimonial state. Second, Mauritius offers an example of an African country that, in spite of an ‘entrenched dependency’, has made its way up the development ladder to be classified as a middle-income country, albeit through an open trade policy.³ This has helped Mauritius to earn its status as a development ‘superstar’.⁴ Third, Mauritius, unlike other African countries, has a long history of collaboration between government and the private sector in trade policymaking and engagement in the international political economy. This does not mean that all aspects of the Mauritian case can be generalisable to Africa. It is, however, a suitable case in that it tells us something about Africa – making it a useful case study. Trade policymaking in Mauritius is not an output of political leaders alone, but rather an outcome of deliberation and interaction between various actors and the context in which they find themselves. Mauritian trade policy is a political output decided by policymakers, negotiators, political elites, diplomats, civil-society representatives and business representatives through a process of deliberation and interaction; albeit state structural constraints faced by these actors in making such decisions. This ensures that those actors negotiating and promoting the development of the political economy of Mauritius in the World Trade Organization (WTO) act in accordance with wider societal interests (intended or otherwise) and act to advance the development of the country’s political economy.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first provides an analytical perspective for examining African states. The second applies this perspective to explain and identify the

Mauritian state as providing social, economic and political conditions for policymakers, negotiators, political leaders and elites, diplomats, civil-society representatives and business representatives to decide on policy; albeit on uneven terrain. Under such conditions the political elites have limited control over policy formation and impact on authority over the state. Section three examines the deliberative and consultative nature of domestic actors and political processes, and their influence on Mauritian trade policymaking. The paper concludes that Mauritian trade policy is an outcome of deliberation and interaction between a number of actors within an uneven state terrain. Trade policy, as such, is an outcome of inter-subjectivity taking into account interests of various stakeholders trying to transform the state to what they see as meeting (whether intended or otherwise) the wider aspirations and interests of Mauritians. It also draws some lessons from the Mauritian experience relevant to trade policymaking in Africa and our understanding of the engagement of African countries in the international political economy.

AFRICAN STATES AND POLICYMAKING: AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

African states have been described by some as ‘quasi-states’ and ‘failed states’, which cannot meet the criteria for statehood.⁵ They have also been viewed in the context of neopatrimonialism, which entails the furtherance of personal interest of the political elite, often through the employment of coercive instruments of the state to monopolise power and deny or restrict political rights and opportunities to other groups.⁶ Such a view on African states has focused on the ability of state managers to exercise power independently, without influence from the state and other non-state forces, elevating the ‘causal primacy of agency over structure’.⁷ As such, policymaking has been viewed as a prerogative of state managers. Yet a closer look reveals the influence of a variety of agents, such as individuals, pressure groups and social movements, on the managers of the state as well as the ‘complex and ever-changing relationship between the state and society, the public and the private’.⁸

A generalisation of the concept of neopatrimonialism threatens coherent analysis of the states and policymaking, especially when the concept might be erroneous in its application to African states.⁹ Moreover, reliance on the neopatrimonial perception of African states contributes to the weakening of a critical understanding of the different African states and their policymaking processes. Grouping the types of neopatrimonialisms together obscures the empirically varying degrees of badness as presented by each regime.¹⁰ One way to understand leadership is to examine the way societies choose national political leaders, as different leaders are a product of different societies. As such, neopatrimonialism is created contingently by political actors in social, political and economic conditions in which they are situated.¹¹ In recent years there has been the renaissance of African leadership and the proliferation of actors challenging the state and its authority of power, largely following the conjecture of changes in the global economic environment. As a result, some ‘big man rulers’ are facing demise owing to the rise of liberal democratic values on the continent – helping to create a ‘nuanced picture of Africa’.¹² The demise of the ‘big man rulers’ does not in any way assume the total demise of semi-authoritarian and

authoritarian states, which tend to be neopatrimonial in Africa. It is therefore important to re-examine African states in relation to the changes taking place within and outside Africa.

Adopting the SRA when performing a comparative analysis of African states with states elsewhere will allow a movement away from the use of the neopatrimonial term as 'handy labels to describe leaders, regimes and systems'.¹³ The approach enables identification of a particular state for the purposes of a particular analysis. The state is not a 'homogenous and monolithic creation' but is a 'social construct' influenced by the 'societal soil in which it tries to take root and develop'.¹⁴ Use of the SRA enables an examination of different African countries' policymaking processes, policies that form the basis of their engagement in the international system. This is because it offers us the ability to examine individual states as presenting different contexts in which human actors interact as they relate with the state in the processing of making policies. It is therefore important to understand the contextual role of political elites that occur within given configurations of power, authority and legitimacy that is shaped by the structure.¹⁵ The SRA allows us to do this, as we are able to examine different state structures with different sociocultural, economic and political contexts, as well as different ways of policymaking processes.

The SRA starts from the premise that structures and agents are mutually constitutive and their interaction is not reducible so as to treat structural and agential factors separately – inseparable analytically and interwoven practically.¹⁶ Structure entails 'context and refers to the setting within which social, political and economic events occur and acquire meaning'; and agency refers to action or 'political conduct', which entails the 'ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously, and in so doing, to attempt to realize his or her intentions'.¹⁷ It is 'agency – the capacity of actors to exercise genuine choice in a given context – that is the key to the complexity of social and political systems'.¹⁸ However, agency is exercised on an uneven terrain, preferring some interests over others. As such, the SRA is an attempt to examine 'structure in relation to action and action in relation to structure'.¹⁹ This makes it possible to identify a strategic actor within a strategically selective context.²⁰ This means that analytically, structures are treated as strategic in their 'own form, content, and operation, and actions are thereby treated analytically as structured, more or less context sensitive, and structuring'.²¹ Thus structure and agency are related dialectically.²² This gives us the 'very conditions of social and political interaction'.²³ At the same time, structures have no meaning outside 'specific agents' that look for 'specific strategies'.²⁴ However, in the interaction between structure and actors, given structures may privilege some actors, identities, strategies and actions over others when choosing a course of action.²⁵ In this instance, the SRA treats social phenomena in terms of social relations.

African states provide different conditions of social and political interaction because the states differ significantly, given their political, social and economic context in which political actors are situated and devise policy. The SRA allows for an examination of different African states by providing contexts within which political actors are situated analytically, and the institutional landscape which political actors must negotiate. However, the state is strategically selective and its 'structures, practices and *modus operandi* are more amenable to some types of political strategy and certain types of intervention than others'; it is an uneven playing field privileging some interests over others.²⁶ By virtue of its selectivity and specific strategic capacities, the state's power is always 'conditional or relational'.²⁷ This renders it important to treat the 'essential dynamism and complexity

of the state as integral to its very nature'.²⁸ Thus the state exists as a context or 'set of structures' providing the 'very conditions of social and political interaction.'²⁹ State crisis is a moment of transformation, a 'moment of decisive intervention' that must be made and mark the 'periodisation of the development of the state'.³⁰

The SRA also emphasises that the apparatus and practices of the state are 'materially interdependent with other institutional orders and social practices' that can be examined as the sources and product of strategies.³¹ As such, examining African states using the SRA lens allows us to remove ourselves from viewing the African state managers in voluntarist terms. We also move away from dualism, which leads to the privileging of either the state or the actors. This is because the use of the SRA allows us to show that actors, including state managers, are constrained in their actions by the state and that the state is strategically selective, choosing certain strategies and actors over others. This becomes critical at a time when most African states are experiencing the involvement of more non-state actors in modern governance, with the role of the state changing with increased emphasis on the co-ordination of complex modes of governance and less on state monopoly control over legitimate force. It is in this sense that the SRA is applicable to Mauritius in this paper. This is because the Mauritian state is viewed not as a distinct form of authority that is independent of the actors who give effect to its power, as argued by the neopatrimonial approach that looks at the state as synonymous with the rulers or state managers. Instead the paper's adopted approach allows for examination of the relationship between the state, society and actors; largely because the state has no 'pre-given national interest' existing 'only as a theoretical abstraction' and is not a 'unified collective actor'.³² Thus we cannot reify the state but it can be seen as a 'complex ensemble of social relations within given social formations'.³³ Most importantly, the paper looks at the Mauritian state as an uneven playing field that is strategically selective for social, economic and political interaction. Such consideration is important because of its potential to provide valuable insight into not viewing political actors in 'voluntary terms' in control of their destiny, but rather to view actors in terms of their ability to realise their intentions in complex contexts that impose their own 'strategic selectivity'.

APPLYING THE SRA TO THE MAURITIAN STATE

A brief examination of the Mauritian state using the SRA lens enhances our understanding of Mauritian political, economic and social relationships in policy formulation, and how such policy helps our understanding of its engagement with the rest of the world. This is because the approach allows us to examine the Mauritian state as a structure in which actors are involved in deliberation and consultation in the construction of the structure, institutions, policies and the conduct of actors. To this end, this section examines the extent to which policymakers, negotiators, political elites, diplomats, civil-society representatives and business representatives interact within the state and with the state – over which they have minimum control – and the extent to which the same actions are a product of rational intentions by these actors. This examination shows a relationship between the Mauritian state and the actors with the state, providing us the social, economic and political context in which individual actors interact and have a range of potential actions. The Mauritian state should not be seen as existing independently of the activities

it governs; or existing independently of the conceptions of the policymakers, negotiators, political elites, diplomats, civil-society representatives and business representatives of what the state it is. The conceptions of the Mauritian state are due to these actors not having full knowledge of the context but aggregating their interest to determine Mauritian interests and policy through inter-subjectivity. This makes them agents of change, with the state being a creation of the history of ‘struggle’.³⁴ The role of these actors is to try and transform the state to what they see fit in meeting (whether intended or otherwise) the interests of Mauritians, which can only happen through the daily struggles of the people. As a result, to understand the role of human actors in the developmental process of Mauritius, we need to examine the role of these actors in order to critically engage with the politics of economic growth, state building and social inclusion.

The case of Mauritius shows the intertwining relationship between the state and a number of strategically selected actors, and the way that the state favours a deliberative and consultative process of policymaking that does not allow outright domination by the political elite but the involvement of different, interested stakeholders. This means if we are to view the Mauritian state as strategically selective, then its preferred strategy for policymaking is that of dialogue among the major identified actors. Under such circumstances, different groups jostle for voice and presentation, while the state provides a platform for the contest and airing of demands that feed into the policymaking process. In the case of Mauritius, the state does not represent the working class, nor is it a tool of the oligarchy. Rather, the state ‘favours social and economic progress through industrialisation and local accumulation – what can be called “a national logic of accumulation”’.³⁵ Under such circumstances, decision making has shifted from government and state managers alone to include a broader range of actors within the state. Such an arrangement on decision making does not allow the state managers or political elites or any other elite group to hijack the state for its own purpose.

Instead the state selects certain actors and strategies. The Mauritian state has had the capacity to ‘secure favourable opening and to persuade domestic actors to follow’ – ie to be a developmental state.³⁶ Indeed, Lincoln emphasises the stewardship of the state in effecting structural change and economic development in Mauritius.³⁷ The first major structural change Mauritius has embarked on has been transforming the economy from a monoculture exporting economy to an export manufacturing economy through the establishment of export processing zones (EPZs). The second structural change involves transforming the island into a ‘cyber-island’, envisaging a growth in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, ‘both in GDP and employment terms’.³⁸ Thus the Mauritian state has been independent of the interests of capital allowing groups and individuals to shape the history of the country and its relationship in the international system. As early as the time of independence in 1968, Mauritian authorities favoured public–private sector partnership ‘designed to achieve capitalist economic growth and a modern welfare state’.³⁹ It seems Mauritius has been able to do this because the state favours certain actors engaging in a deliberative and consultative manner in the domestic political process. This deep-rooted structural condition of the Mauritian state helps shape the effectiveness of the state power. This demonstrates the existence of a ‘deliberative democratic developmental state’, largely due to the way developmental policies are formulated, which tends to be deliberative and consultative, representing major interest groups in society. Moreover, the developmental state entails government intervention as

a relatively autonomous actor in economic processes to carry out developmental ideals that have been conceived by the state.⁴⁰ It is in this light that the Mauritian state favours a deliberative and consultative strategy for policymaking. This strategy works well in Mauritius because of the presence of a large policy circle with many individuals, groups, and agencies playing a part in decision making.⁴¹ This partnership has its own weakness in that it leaves out large parts of the population. However, the strategy seems to work well in terms of Mauritian trade policymaking as a basis for engagement in the international political economy, as vividly illustrated by the country's trade policymaking process and subsequent activities in the WTO. It is this topic that will now be considered.

MAURITIAN STATE AND TRADE POLICYMAKING

According to the South Centre, a constraint faced by developing countries in developing negotiating capacity in the WTO is incoherence in national policies and in national policy co-ordination.⁴² Indeed, developing countries rarely successfully harness domestic support, including NGOs, to promote their interests in the WTO.⁴³ There are remarkable discrepancies between positions taken in Geneva and positions eventually taken by developing countries' capitals in the ministerial meetings. As the trade agenda becomes more complex, 'explaining how trade policy is formulated and articulated demands that the role and interactions of government and non-governmental actors be taken into account'.⁴⁴

Mauritius, however, presents a different case, with its long history of collaboration in trade policymaking. It is important to note that a number of African countries have made an effort to establish mechanisms for inclusiveness and co-ordination in trade policymaking, but still face a number of challenges.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Mauritius has a tradition of successful collaboration on projects designed to improve the country's economic and trade prospects.⁴⁶ There is close government and private-sector collaboration on policy development in areas of trade negotiation under the WTO auspices, with the private sector fully involved in negotiations at multilateral, regional and bilateral levels.⁴⁷ In pursuit of such collaboration and policy development, a standing committee oversees the work of nine different subcommittees where the private sector and government share responsibility for policy development.⁴⁸ As a result, the Mauritian private sector has a high level of political capacity, which allows it a receptive hearing from the government.⁴⁹ As observed by the President of the Mauritian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the chamber's contribution in developing Mauritian trade negotiating positions and in participating in the negotiations continues to make it the 'common private sector partner of Government in all trade negotiations'.⁵⁰ The chamber remains the focal point for almost all visiting trade delegations to Mauritius. As a result, government and the private sector are embedded in 'networks of social relations' or 'state-society linkages' geared towards providing institutional frameworks for policy negotiations.⁵¹

Given the importance of 'national interests' when engaging in the WTO negotiations, it is interesting to establish how the Mauritian state determines which domestic concerns to take to the international level, especially under conditions where trade policy focuses on balancing the economic interests of a range of domestic constituencies. According to Madan Dulloo, the former Mauritian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration

and International Trade, Mauritius has been able to represent its interests guided by the ambition and vision of improving the livelihoods of Mauritanians.⁵² This is because of the realisation that the WTO trade negotiations involve the interaction of parties in which all sides are expected to defend their countries' interests and 'where diplomats seek accommodation with other parties on the basis of quid pro quo that can be defended to their political masters'.⁵³ Political masters in turn serve the people because, in Dulloo's words, 'it is good that we should listen to the voice of the people, to our constituents. We should put our nation first, our people first'.⁵⁴ But in the case of Mauritius, because many voters are not conversant with the importance of trade in determining whom to vote for and because political parties share very similar ideologies, trade policy is 'unlikely to be determined by politics' but by Mauritian socio-economic contexts.⁵⁵ For example, subsequent Mauritian governments have been worried about growing unemployment owing to the erosion of trade preferences under the WTO.⁵⁶ At the same time, Mauritian industry is concerned with the erosion of preferences *vis-à-vis* global competitiveness, with which the state has to contend. Thus its political arrangement allows the Mauritian state to serve a number of interests rather than only those of the individual political elite and their client patronage. This is one reason why the country has managed to avoid 'the relationship between export orientation and developmental failure' that is stressed by the dependency theorists.⁵⁷ It has enabled successive governments and other stakeholders to be involved in trade policy formulation and its advancement in the WTO negotiations.

To this end, the Mauritian Trade Policy Unit (TPU) has led trade policy formulation in a well-structured and consultative manner. The TPU vision is to 'ensure the smooth integration of Mauritius into the globalising and liberalising world economy' and its mission is to formulate trade policies to ensure that Mauritian concerns are 'adequately reflected in Multilateral and Regional Trade Arrangements and Global Trade rules'.⁵⁸ As argued by Dulloo, the government has 'always pursued a proactive, adaptable and pragmatic diplomacy aimed at promoting the national interests of Mauritius in the global context'.⁵⁹ Under the TPU, the Standing Coordination Committee has the mandate to examine all issues under the WTO Agreements.⁶⁰ The structure consists of a core group with 12 subcommittees dealing with a specific WTO issue or agreement. The subcommittee on services further splits into five working groups, indicating the importance of services negotiations to Mauritius. The working groups report to the subcommittee, which in turn reports to the core group. According to Acharaz and the Deputy Director Trade Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, the meetings are issue-driven, leading to meetings being held on an ad-hoc basis.⁶¹ In most instances, the Geneva diplomats raise an issue with the Mauritian government, resulting in the core group requesting the specific subcommittee meet to discuss the issue until consensus is struck and a particular policy position is adopted in relation to the issue.

For example, on 15 January 2009 the Joint Public Private Sector Committee on International Trade Issues (JPPSCITI) met to initiate discussions among stakeholders on strategic approaches to enhance the participation of Mauritius in world trade in services.⁶² It is important to understand that the JPPSCITI was created to develop strategies on the measures required to cope with challenges of trade liberalisation and to maximise trade arrangements signed by Mauritius. The JPPSCITI devised a roadmap for trade negotiations to set the priority areas in trade negotiations and to 'ensure an all-inclusive approach' in the elaboration of negotiating positions in different trade negotiations.⁶³ The meeting was

also aimed at focusing on strategies to be adopted by Mauritius in the WTO and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations, which included:⁶⁴

the need to balance the offensive and defensive interests of Mauritius, the identification of sectors where Mauritius would be willing and ready to take liberalisation commitments and the need to ensure coherence and consistency to the extent possible in the different negotiations.

Such a domestic approach is meant to 'encourage participative consultations and multi-stakeholders dialogue' in developing Mauritius' 'national services export strategy as well as in developing negotiating positions'.⁶⁵ All strategies are achieved through consultations in the WTO standing committees that come up with ideas that feed into the WTO.⁶⁶ The aim is to forge an 'integrated and multi-sectoral approach to multilateral, regional and bilateral trade negotiations'.⁶⁷

The Mauritian approach demonstrates the 'formal embedded business representatives' in trade policy formulation, which involves the aggregation of public and private interests 'within the state'.⁶⁸ Both the government and the private sector are interested in the integration of Mauritius in the multilateral trade system and enhanced competitiveness that ensures the continued growth of the Mauritian economy in a post non-reciprocal preferences period. Under the Mauritian trade policymaking strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade will focus on the tradability of services that includes market access and trade rules, while the other sectors assume roles in formulating development plans and frameworks in their respective areas.⁶⁹ The private sector is expected to help in identifying priority sectors and subsectors; help government in keeping watching briefs on WTO activities and negotiations in their sectors; and contribute to the preparation of a strong Mauritian service negotiating position in the WTO. For example, Servansingh, writing in the *Chambers News*, observes that Mauritius allows private-sector participation through its representation in determining Mauritian interests and negotiating positions in the WTO services negotiations.⁷⁰ In its effort to see Mauritius achieve an E-island status, the government is giving the ICT sector top priority in the WTO Doha Round of Negotiations for trade liberalisation as part of its international co-operation strategy in the area. As a result, although the capacities of Mauritius are still insufficient and seriously strained, the country is more able to cope with the trade agenda.⁷¹ Mauritius performed extremely well during negotiations for the 2004 July Package because it managed to keep all its preferences on the table.⁷² This has been made possible by its well-established tradition of involving the private sector in trade policy formulation.

However, because of the uneven policymaking terrain, the process of trade policy formation, like that of other policies, has not been smooth. Indeed, the institutional process lacks transparency and has been influenced by the major sectors of sugar, and manufacturing and services, (with services having the least influence).⁷³ In so doing, the process has left out the interests of other people and groups, such as those in informal trading, peasant farmers and craftsmen. A Mauritian delegate to the WTO pointed out that the process of trade policymaking is not inclusive of all interested parties such as small communities and marginal groups, especially when trade is discussed at multilateral levels, because of the lack of representation of these smaller groups. In spite of this,

however, the delegate regards the process as ‘quite representative’ because it is dominated by the large groups who play a greater role in the economy.⁷⁴ The stakeholders concerned have been able to reach consensus on most policy issues that have driven the economic development of Mauritius. Moreover, information on the WTO and trade in general has been disseminated to the public through press conferences and question time.⁷⁵ This has helped the trade policymaking process, and suggests that the process functions well but has room for improvement.⁷⁶ The policymaking process has also contributed to economic nationalism, with the economy becoming more or less a unifying principle at the expense of inter-culturality and identity that might have lead to instability.⁷⁷ As trade liberalisation and globalisation unfold, there have been losers and winners in Mauritius, resulting in unequalisation.⁷⁸ This highlights the need for Mauritius to find new ways to ensure the continued growth of the economy and to maintain the economy as a unifying principle.

CONCLUSION

The paper has used the SRA as an alternative lens to examine African states and to examine the Mauritian state, which is democratic and developmental owing to its deliberative and consultative nature in policymaking – a process that is strategically selected by the state. This has allowed demonstrations of the relationship between agents and the state. Policymakers, negotiators, political elites, diplomats, civil-society representatives and business representatives are involved in trade policymaking at the expense of other actors, such as peasant farmers and informal traders. The Mauritian state allows a deliberative and consultative interaction between actors to decide on Mauritian trade interests, which are then taken into the WTO. Because these actors tend to formulate trade policy on an uneven state terrain, trade policy becomes an outcome of inter-subjectivity through various agents. This has resulted in the political leaders not having outright control of the process. Instead, political leaders try and balance the interests of different interest groups, including the disadvantaged, in an effort to meet the wider interests of Mauritians, leading in some instances to some leaders remaining in power a bit longer. This gives us the first lesson that can be drawn from the Mauritian case, namely the need for African political leaders to attempt to balance the economic interests of different groups or domestic constituencies in an effort to try and determine national interests. The determined national interests will then be advanced in the international political economy for advancing the economic development of their countries. However, this is not easy, as it requires political leaders to encourage processes of ‘path shaping’ that give birth to policy ideas and generate wider interests for economic development. This is particularly true in those African countries where state managers are the dominant decision makers and policymakers.

As discussed, the uneven playing field and the strategic selective nature of the Mauritian state disadvantages certain groups in the trade policymaking process. There remains room for improvement to include such groups as the country seeks to find new ways to ensure continued trade-driven economic growth – allowing the process to address its divergent economic interests in the multilateral trading system. The second lesson that can thus be drawn from this Mauritian experience is that African states should try and include disadvantaged groups in well-structured and consultative trade policymaking processes, as these sectors (for example, informal traders) play an important role in the development of

African economies. This will also help African countries to forge, strengthen and enhance their integrated multi-sectoral approaches to multilateral negotiations in the WTO with the possibility of realising positive pro-development outcomes, as they will be able to build capacities to cope with the negotiations.

Lastly, the third lesson is to follow the example of the political elite and leaders' ability to implement agreed decisions as they shape the development of Mauritius and their ability to negotiate different contexts with the same primary interest, namely the economic development of Mauritius. The export-oriented trade strategy was responsible for steering Mauritius on a development path, together with improvements in the living standards of Mauritians – whether intended or otherwise. This provided Mauritius with a unifying factor in a country that has a number of ethnic groups whose inter-culturality and identity might otherwise have caused instability, as has been the case elsewhere in Africa. As such, the implementation of agreed decisions and policies in Africa cannot be overemphasised, because it is only through these that development can be realised.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Neopatrimonialism entails the furtherance of personal interest of the political elite, often through the employment of coercive instruments of the state to monopolise power and deny or restrict political rights and opportunities to other groups.
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