Neopatrimonial African Capitalism?

Conceptual Adventures via John Kenneth Galbraith

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Scholars have a wealth of riches at their fingertips that can be used to cut through the froth associated with many of the journalistic first drafts of the history of Africa's ostensible economic booms. However, some insightful sources that could potentially help them do so are much less obvious than others. This article explores the prospects for bolstering analyses of capitalism in Africa through engaging with an analytical supplier whose outputs have simply not yet penetrated the market for knowledge on African political economies. It asks what the writings of John Kenneth Galbraith can bring to analytical tool kits already populated with the intellectual legacies of social scientists such as Max Weber. In doing so, it argues that various approaches, concepts, and insights that Galbraith developed or popularized can enhance our understanding of dynamics associated with capitalism in Africa. Employed in tandem with attention to neopatrimonialism, Galbraith can correct overly static representations of African politics and broaden analyses of the exercise of economic power. Africa assuredly has many diverse "capitalisms," and his considerations could potentially have greater applicability in contexts where market forces now durably compete with "big men" to be the drivers of political and economic life. That said, Galbraithian attention to corporate power—and to the conventional wisdom and to poverty—can shed light on numerous pan-African commonalities. Galbraith's work can also be fruitfully applied to assessments of the evolution and dynamics of capitalism in particular country settings that have previously been portrayed as neopatrimonial "paradise."

The article commences below with a brief review of the literature on neopatrimonialism. It then discusses possible pan-African entry points for Galbraith

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through employing aspects of Timothy M. Shaw's outline of the contours of Africa's apparent economic renaissance.[1] The article then presents a preliminary case study of Cameroon's agro-industrial sector. This brief case underscores how Galbraithian attention to only one component of Cameroon's developing agrifood and natural-resource capitalism complements and expands upon analyses that focus primarily upon neopatrimonialism. To do so, it draws liberally upon evidence the author collected over a five-month period on five separate research trips to Cameroon conducted between June 2010 and December 2013. In particular, it makes use of participant and direct observation in the country's development research community and of insights gleaned from many informal conversations with public officials and private-sector managers.[2] The conclusion summarizes possible rationales for greater future attention to John Kenneth Galbraith in the African context.

Neopatrimonialism: An Exceptional Lens on African Politics

The conceptual elaboration of neopatrimonialism has not occurred in a vacuum. As with many other contested development concepts such as democracy or poverty, it has come into use and has been refined within a starkly divided research context. According to one of the concept's leading proponents, scholars of African politics have tended to take one of two approaches. In Patrick Chabal's estimation, adherents to the first of these have tended to employ theories often applied to the rest of the developing world in their studies of Africa's political economies.[3] For their part, members of the second grouping have been inclined to hold that Africa is an exception or a unique case requiring separate study and theoretical development. This latter camp has been the primary source of scholarship that has honed in on neopatrimonialism. It can legitimately claim to have secured the concept's prominence in the literature on African development challenges—or at least in the half of it that treats Africa as a development exception.

At its most straightforward, then, neopatrimonial rule in modern African nation-states is understood to be particularly pervasive within otherwise legal or rational administrative systems and bureaucratic institutions.[4] Patrimonial practices in these systems or institutions are defined as activities that pervert formally or officially allocated powers. Where they occur, official actions are twisted away from the genuine public interest and privately appropriated. Put another way, distinctions between the public and the private break down as the personal agendas of heads of state and government, ministers, elected representatives, permanent secretaries, regulators, and lesser functionaries infuse and distort their public duties. Among other lamentable outcomes, experts in this field hold that neopatrimonialism has been especially conducive to the development of personalized and highly autocratic systems of rule and in-group enrichment.[5] These scholars have also contended that the persistence of this hybrid or parallel governance structure has entrenched patron-client networks as the modus operandi of political and economic business-as-usual in Africa. This MO has in turn driven the appropriation of credit, grant, tariff, and tax income streams as well as the misallocation or disappearance of these funds via personalized disbursements and final consumption: the "eating" that has fueled Jean-François Bayart's "politics of the belly."[6]

Even the most trenchant critics of analyses that play up neopatrimonialism recognize that, at its best, contributions to this literature can offer much more than cynical Afro-pessimism. Aaron deGrassi, for example, has emphasized that users and abusers of the concept have shown an appreciation for "politics as politics."[7] As such, in his estimation, they have contributed to efforts to buck the mainstream US-based political science trend of treating politics as a "subset of abstract" rational-actor models. DeGrassi and others have also lauded the stress that many contributors to this literature have placed on understanding the linkages among states, economies, and societies in particular African places. This emphasis has promoted the development, execution, and publication of country case studies and pan-African research that captures local nuances and general trends associated with the phenomenon. From this body of work, it is clear that scholars who underscore neopatrimonialism have made significant contributions to our understanding of at least four interrelated areas. They have carefully mapped informality and its relations to formal institutions, articulated the centrality and mechanics of resource-redistribution networks, drawn attention to the persistence of corruption and the resilience of impunity, and placed the politics and operations of the state at the core of the analysis of African challenges and opportunities.

Regarding the first broad contribution of this literature, the recognition that formal and informal institutions exist simultaneously in Africa has drawn useful attention to the factors that constrain and enable political, economic, and social development. It has helped to correct unidirectional discourses within and beyond academia that considered African political economies essentially "dysfunctional."[8] In particular, Goran Hyden's detailed effort to map the quasi institutionalization of informal practices in the context of big-man rule is a key contribution to understanding the mechanics of contemporary African economic governance.[9] Through juxtaposing and elaborating the parallel presence of formal and informal African market norms regarding the type of exchange (impersonal versus face-to-face), the approach to rules (rule of law versus rules in use), the nature of exchange (contractual versus noncontractual), and other fundamentals of economic transactions, Hyden has enabled a reinterpretation of economic failure in Africa. In this light, specific African shortcomings or achievements can in theory now be linked to the relatively "successful" operation of particular informal or formal institutions. Articulation of this complex reality has challenged narratives that explicitly assert or implicitly assume that greater reliance on formal (Western) market governance norms will necessarily increase the frequency or extent of development "wins." In the context of the intense new investor interest rigorously documented in the pages of *Jeune Afrique, This Is Africa, African Business,* and elsewhere, this contribution emphasizes that African political economies are highly differentiated. There is simply no guarantee concerning which particular aspect of the hybrid governance grammar will dominate where and when. As such, Hyden's analytical tools could also be used to situate and contextualize the development prospects of Africa's surging growth and the associated optimism in the business press.

Studies of neopatrimonialism have also made a significant contribution to understandings of resource-redistribution systems. In doing so, they have helped refine what exactly is unique about neopatrimonialism and have furthered the conceptual elaboration of associated or subsidiary phenomena such as clientelism, patronage, resource pooling, and self-defense systems, among others. At their best, contributors to this literature have distinguished the ways that neopatrimonial practice differs from patrimonial exchange relations.[10] They have shown that the new aspect of patrimonialism in Africa is that exchanges between "big" and "little" men are generally no longer conducted on face-to-face bases. These exchanges are now typically executed through networks of brokers that link centers of political and economic power to outlying areas and vice versa. Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel have also drawn attention to the need for analysts to move away from using concepts such as clientelism and patronage interchangeably.[11] They have implored contributors to the literature to recognize that patronage entails politically motivated and highly symbolic exchanges between individuals in positions of power to influence groups. On the other hand, clientelism, in their view, should be used to denote classic closed asymmetric exchanges between unequal individuals.[12] Moreover, from William Reno's work, we also know that resource-redistribution systems do not only suck resources from formal economic activities.[13] In some cases, these systems are much more than rent-seeking pursuits that aim to manipulate the social or political context within which formal economic activities take place. Reno has shown that big men in various contexts have made many "successful" efforts to control economic activities through pushing them into the informal sector. The active informalization of markets has enabled high-level gatekeepers to distribute access to opportunities that would not have otherwise existed and to exercise greater control over populations subject to these measures.

The literature on neopatrimonialism has also enhanced our knowledge of how impunity continues to be fostered in the context of systemic corruption—and ultimately our knowledge of the nature of political power in Africa. On the former, contributors have documented the ways that postcolonial administrative systems have underperformed (or performed, depending on one's point of view) vis-à-vis corruption.[14] Scholars have shown the extent to which hybrid states have not assured the independence of anticorruption commissions and judiciaries and the pervasive "corruption with impunity" that has resulted.[15] On the latter, we now know that political power is often "personal power" and that politics is typically considered a kind of business.[16] We also know that these factors work against the emergence of issue-based political campaigns and the capacity, predictability, and reliability of governance institutions. Finally, from Chabal, we know more about the complexity and covert nature of all kinds of informal systems that contribute to giving "African political systems" certain relatively distinct features.[17]

This is not to say that analyses of neopatrimonialism in Africa have been perfect. Contributors to this literature have been called out for occasionally assuming a priori that neopatrimonialism is a consistently prominent phenomenon across each of Africa's 54 sovereign states. Texts that have characterized African politics as essentially neopatrimonial in nature—and those that have used the term as a catchall explanation for Africa's development challenges—have also been subject to increasing challenge.[18] Additionally, critics have raised pointed questions about the empirical grounding of this literature. They have claimed that there simply have not been enough studies of neopatrimonialism to justify the pan-continental application of this concept. Some have also played up the inherent methodological challenges associated with observing and explaining informal activities.[19] In so doing, they have underscored the difficulties of obtaining reliable data on patron-client relations and have raised the specter that some scholars in this context have been prone to stretch or misapply this concept. Critics have also leveled charges of Eurocentrism. Several have detected undertones of Western superiority in accounts that have associated neopatrimonialism with acute political disorder in Africa and that have implicitly assumed that the rolling out of "advanced" rational-legal bureaucracies would be innately preferable to the status quo.[20]

Finally—and perhaps most relevant to the purpose of this article—some critics have also decried what they see as a tendency for contributors to this literature to be self-referential. DeGrassi has characterized the insiders or cognoscenti in this field as an epistemic community. He has raised problems with the ways that the collective gaze of this group has obscured other political and social institutions that might be consequential for Africa's development. Evidence for this characterization can be found in the recent calls to bring other "institutions back into the study" of Africa. In pushing for more historical and institutionalist explanations of African politics and a broadening of the community's focus, scholars such as Stephen Orvis have underscored the intellectual perils of the group's near-exclusive concentration on the development of a master concept.[21]

Applying Galbraith to Africa's Political Economies

This article acts upon critical calls for greater attention to institutions through applying concepts associated with a celebrated economic institutionalist to a context which has typically been subjected to approaches that put politics first and that concentrate on neopatrimonialism. If deGrassi's efforts to remedy the evident shortcomings of this literature have been to engage with another distinct body of work—scholarship on African agriculture—then this approach goes much further afield. It is essentially a preliminary attempt to seed the terrain with a few ideas about how to analyze Africa that might bear fruit but that would not otherwise bloom within a relatively gated epistemic community. The drive to apply several of J. K. Galbraith's concepts to Africa and to Cameroon is rooted in the view that neopatrimonialism has a further shortcoming. Put simply, the self-referential quality of this scholarship has to date continued to preclude the introduction of concepts that could strengthen its analysis of economic power. All roads in this literature, so to speak, have led to the president. It is hoped that employing concepts previously underutilized in the African context could elucidate economic power dynamics that often fly under the radar in politics-first analyses. Through applying these ideas in a country that has been of particular concern to the cognoscenti in the next section, it is also hoped that something can be added to the work that has already been done on the contingent and context-specific neopatrimonial realities of political power in Cameroon.[22]

Through embracing a political economy premise, the article also aims to move beyond a static focus on political conditions and to shed analytical light on the budding dynamism of Africa's (and Cameroon's) political economies.[23] The activities, interests, and linkages between highly entrepreneurial and globally oriented businesspeople on a continental scale are ripe for the application of a Galbraithian lens. Without a doubt, other great Western thinkers have been similarly imported or taken out of context and fruitfully applied to Africa. Hegel, Hobbes, Malthus, and especially Marx and Weber have informed various approaches to the studies of stagnation and the state in Africa. The question, then, is why scholars have continued to restrictively employ the legacy (or interpretations of the legacy) of the same select group of classic and more recent intellectuals. There are many stalwarts of a more modern vintage whose work in other contexts could be drawn upon to enrich analyses of conditions and prospects in the African Century. The attempt to draw upon aspects of one of those vintages articulated below should not be considered an effort to substitute a flawed master concept with an imperfect handful. Rather, this exercise aspires to fill in a few blanks through cherry-picking and employing pieces of Galbraith's legacy.

Interestingly, Africanists who have concentrated on neopatrimonialism are not the only Africanist scholars who have not yet attempted to pick any low-hanging fruit from this garden. Among the political-economy-of-development crowd—Chabal's other group of scholars seeking to understand African politics through employing theories that do not exclusively apply to Africa—even rigorous recent contributions to scholarship have not explicitly drawn upon Galbraith.[24] This oversight is lamentable, but it is also understandable, given that Galbraith's views on American capitalism and on military and corporate power are better known than his perspectives on mass poverty. That said, his assessment of the former is as germane as the latter is to a rough first cut at a Galbraithian take on Africa and on Cameroon.

Galbraith offers a wealth of potential points of departure from which one could attempt to understand the world of political economic power that is increasingly escaping the grasp of big men in Africa. Aspects of his life's work direct our attention to the exercise of power that takes place beyond the strings which connect economic activities and those with ministerial responsibility to presidents, their immediate and extended families, their kin, and their real or imagined communities. To start, however, it must be recognized that this attempt to apply Galbraith in a new spatial and temporal context could pose the same sorts of problems that critics have flagged vis-à-vis efforts to import Weber's patrimonialism to Africa. The notion that this towering figure of twentieth-century Western economic thought could apply at some level in Africa today assumes that his ideas might be workable. Similarly, efforts to resurrect his insights could suffer considerable shortcomings as regards methodology. Users of Galbraith—including the present author—could resort to anecdotal evidence in the absence of difficult-to-obtain hard or reliable data. Moreover, if others were indeed convinced to integrate some of his concepts into their work, there are no guarantees that the ensuing literature would avoid the self-referential qualities noted above.

Given these warnings, at the theoretical level, it seems that certain dimensions of the purported African "renaissance" offer sound rationales for at least considering greater engagement with Galbraith. Timothy M. Shaw has provided a commendable framework for mapping the contours of this renaissance. His work offers a handy guide to possible Galbraithian points of entry on a pan-African scale.[25] For starters, if increasing numbers of African states can be characterized as "developmental," as Shaw suggests, then it is possible that Galbraith's concept of *countervailing power* could have many more potential applications.[26] In Africa's rising economies, consumer, nongovernmental, and worker efforts to challenge or countervail the control that organized economic power exerts over prices or costs are now prominent features of the political economic landscape. The recent South African mining actions and several successful civil society-backed consumer campaigns in stable African states attest that corporate power is being challenged in a growing number of countries where the threat of state failure has receded.

As increasing numbers of public and private companies controlled by or listed in a more diverse array of countries pursue direct investments in Africa, Galbraith can help us understand the similarities and differences between the priorities of these firms and, as a consequence, their possibly divergent implications for development. Put simply, his attention to both the *protective* (earnings) and *affirmative* (growth) purposes that managers serve enhances our capacity to draw better distinctions between direct investors involved in the new scramble.[27]

Take, for example, the recent engagements of the Airbus Group (formerly the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company) in Tunisia and of South Africa's Tiger Brands in Nigeria.[28] In the case of the former, Airbus Group has relocated an assembly plant to a special economic zone, primarily to control its costs and thereby ensure earnings. This investment from a corporation accustomed to exercising a significant degree of control over its suppliers and buyers can be characterized as serving a protective or defensive purpose. Given the protective underpinnings, the prospects for the development of forwards or backwards linkages from this plant differ considerably from those that might be associated with an investment linked more concretely to the growth of the firm through the expansion of sales. For its part, when the agro-industrial Tiger Brands acquired a majority stake in Nigeria's Dangote Flour Mills in 2012, growth was the primary motivator. Through this acquisition, Tiger Brands essentially sought to secure a foothold in one of the fastest-growing consumer markets on the continent. It now commands a platform from which it can seek to increase sales through employing its proven power to persuade consumers to eat more packaged foods. This transaction has enhanced the prestige of Tiger's management and will foster the expansion of Nigerian advertising and distribution firms downstream. The development implications of Tiger's aggressive posture stand in stark contrast to those associated with the defensive and potentially footloose Airbus investment. Attention to these Galbraithian considerations consequently enables the prospects of the current foreign direct investment (FDI) "renaissance" to be mapped more clearly. His insights on management priorities could facilitate the development of more context-specific and contingent answers to Shaw's pertinent question about just whom the African awakening currently serves.

Galbraith's analyses of the multiple dimensions of economic power wielded by corporate bureaucracies can also be used as a tool to differentiate the many "varieties" of corporations that operate across the continent. These varieties are increasingly striking and are worthy of a brief, if incomplete, snapshot:

- South African retailer Massmart has become a creature of Wal-Mart.
- The Algerian (Sonatrach) and Angolan (Sonagol) state-owned oil and gas companies, respectively, command the largest and second-largest turnovers of any enterprises incorporated on the continent.
- Many of Morocco's national champions remain "family affairs."
- Through acquisitions or greenfield investments, publicly traded global telecommunications groups (France Telecom / Orange), consumer and capital goods producers (Nestlé, P&G, SAB Miller, GE), privately held shipping firms (CMA CGM), and transnational commodity traders (Cargill, Olam) have established, expanded, or are in the process of launching large subsidiaries.
- Junior Australian, Canadian, and Chinese (state-controlled) mining firms have led a rush to create new joint ventures.
- An expansionary Togolese bank (Ecobank) now prominently preaches the virtues of "pan-Africanism" in its public relations while global banks (Barclays) and members of the African Private Equity and Venture Capital Association—including the Abraaj Group, Helios Partners, and Bob Geldof's 8 Miles—pursue buyouts across the continent.

Although not all of these "varieties" of corporate entities aim to serve African buyers or consumers, all ultimately are engaged in efforts that seek to secure or grow returns from the sale of goods or services. This reality constitutes a Galbraithian entry point. As more great organizations wish to protect and/or expand their earnings in more African places, one can readily apply Galbraith's efforts to show that power in economic and political life lies increasingly less with the "supposedly sovereign consumer" or citizen.[29] In particular, his insight that the very biggest corporations exercise considerable power over their prices, costs, consumers, suppliers, and governors can be employed to differentiate and develop taxonomies of the corporate milieu noted above. Future cross-sectoral or comparative case studies of corporations that attempt to distinguish companies based upon their capacities to control prices, costs, consumers, suppliers, and governors could yield a more robust picture of the opportunities and challenges facing efforts to make Africa's economic revival more inclusive.

Recent research has indeed touched upon some of these considerations. Studies of the global agriculture industry and of corporate standards and social responsibility in this sector have shown us how corporate power is typically exercised over African agriculturalists *and* consumers of African products elsewhere.[30] There is also a voluminous literature on corporate power and the extractive industry and its implications for governments, citizens, and consumers. That said, less has been written about the power exercised by expansionary retailers and service providers on a pan-continental basis, and no attempt has yet been made to map the multiple dimensions of Galbraith's "forest" of corporate control and its implications for consumer sovereignty in Africa. Given the recent surge of efforts to influence consumption—such as the 2009 Helios-led buyout of a billboard company with a presence in at least 14 African countries—this oversight is no small matter. As increasing attention is drawn to the projection that the African population will grow from less than one billion people today to over two billion by 2050, it no longer seems appropriate to only scratch the surface of understanding the various varieties of companies.[31] The capacity of African firms and global firms in Africa to control costs, plan prices, and influence consumers, governments, and suppliers varies within and between the agricultural, consumer, energy, industrial, mining, service, and telecommunication sectors. Recourse to Galbraith's tool kit in particular places or on a pan-African scale could shed further light on this complexity.

With regard to another of Shaw's renaissance contours, Galbraith also enriches analyses of Africa's new and evermore intensive and extensive financial and trade relations with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) and other emerging powers within and beyond Africa. He consistently argued that market power can be exercised by strong buyers against weak sellers as well as by strong sellers against weak buyers and that efforts to countervail this power are typically a self-generating force.[32] In this light, it is not at all surprising that in 2013 the governor of Nigeria's central bank interrupted a relatively consistent stream of fawning global business media coverage on China in Africa with an inconvenient comment.[33] Encouraging Africans to "wake up" to the neocolonial reality of financial and trade relations with China, Lamido Sanusi urged Africans to fight their status vis-à-vis China as weak sellers of raw materials and weak buyers of consumer goods. To do so, he advised Africans to produce more of what they consume and to consume more of what they produce. Sanusi's intervention was indicative of a bubbling undercurrent of thought on structural transformation that is only starting to coalesce into a movement to countervail the incipient power of Africa's emerging financiers and traders.

Another of Galbraith's political concepts—the concept of *conventional wisdom*—can be employed to explain the seeming lag of high-level government and business community push-back against the disproportionate strength of Africa's new buyers and sellers. Why have African leaders seemingly greeted numerous high-quality and highly critical civil society and scholarly outputs on the topic with a shrug? How is it that repeated International Monetary Fund warnings about the threats associated with Africa's possible overreliance on debt-fueled investments in export-oriented infrastructure have been sloughed off? The Galbraithian answer is that "considerable ritual and sanction" has guided African officials or private-sector professionals to "acceptable" interpretations of the unfolding of events.[34] From the mutual praise and respect offered by officials at the various Summits of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation through the spirited and much-lauded defense of China in Africa offered up by Dambisa Moyo at the 2013 Mining Indaba, the climate of insider, practitioner, and "accepted" opinion has been unequivocally enthusiastic. As with other accepted patterns of thought and belief in social groups, members of this elite policy community have had strong professional incentives to believe in the conventional wisdom that China's African engagements should be celebrated. Sanusi's comment and a series of other intellectual contributions that run counter to this conventional wisdom have been snubbed. Yet, as Galbraith reminds, it remains a distinct probability that a confluence of events or tipping point of contrary knowledge will ultimately outstrip the usefulness of the currently acceptable interpretation.[35] The dam of accepted commentary that currently holds back greater discussion of what is relevant as regards China is not impenetrable. An organized cadre of policy makers, civil servants, regulators, chief executives, bankers, and other potential investors seeking to countervail China's economic power could put the axe to a barrage that civil society and academic heretics have been chipping away at for some time.

Beyond China, other BRICS and emerging powers such as Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have been greeted with similar waves of African and global applause. Galbraith's incisive points on the *myth of the sovereign consumer* and on inequality and poverty enable the contextualization of such praise. These concepts can also be utilized to peel back the dynamics associated with the rise of these powers as sellers, investors, and financiers. On consumption, for example, the bulk of his "writing suggested [that] the obsession with private commodity consumption was an important cultural obstacle to progress."[36] As increasing numbers of firms based in the BRICS or other emerging markets execute their plans to sell more products in Africa, their activities bear increasingly upon consumer preferences. New armies of market researchers and testers, ad developers, sales and merchandising specialists, and product innovators and designers are being deployed across the continent. Their efforts aim to exercise to the extent possible the admittedly "imperfect" power that producers can wield over individual consumers.[37] Galbraith's insight that there are "important difference[s] between the general acquisition of tastes through social interaction and the systematic imposition of tastes to fit the needs of powerful vested interests" is especially germane in this context.[38]

The possibility that big-time sellers of any national or global origin are influencing consumer attitudes and even creating new wants among down-market, middle-class, and high-end consumers in ways that serve protective or affirmative corporate interests cannot be rejected out of hand. If some of these interventions foster new consumer obsessions, they could come at a significant opportunity cost for development—the diversion of disposable incomes away from individual savings or expenditures more demonstrably aligned with national or international social-development objectives. That said, consumer manias are not necessarily costly. Community and social enterprises, for-profit small and medium-sized entities, nonprofits, cooperatives, and bigger firms that peddle wares tailored to serve genuine individual or household needs can cater to real demand. To reiterate, African consumers are not necessarily marionettes. Big sellers of cold drinks, durable goods, housewares, luxury goods, personal-care products, and snacks are simply doing much more these days to affix a few strings to their backs. In a Galbraithian light, then, Africa's vaunted mobile and information and communication technology revolution should not be viewed as a unidirectional engine of consumer choice.[39] It too is a source of new strings. As a new consumer class rises through access to these technologies, it does so along a two-way street that has opened up many new possibilities for corporate persuasion and control.

Regarding inequality and poverty, Galbraith's work in this area could assist efforts to assess and differentiate the footprint of direct investments and of imports and exports linked to emerging and more traditional powers. If his studies of American capitalism belied the notion that the "economic system has a tendency to perfect itself," his writing on unequal development showed that the "system" tends to perpetuate inequitable and unequal outcomes.[40] While Galbraith's writing in this area was not highly original, he wrote with clarity and incisiveness to relate the factors that tend to keep poor people poor. In particular, he adhered to a variant of the poverty-trap perspective on the vicious poverty circle that impoverished people often confront. Referring to this negative feedback loop as an equilibrium of poverty, he argued that those scraping by at subsistence levels could not save enough to invest in innovative practices or technologies that would increase their incomes. In his estimation, any improvement in income among the poorest of the poor was more often than not "nakedly exposed to the [urgent] pressures of consumption."[41] Galbraith built upon his view that "an increase in income could set in motion the forces that would eliminate the increase and restore the previous level of deprivation" through discussing what he considered the principal factor that reinforced this feedback loop: the "absence of aspiration" in poor communities. He argued that "the poor . . . accommodate to their poverty," just as the affluent "have accommodated their thoughts and expectations" to increasing income.[42] In his view, poor people tended to rationally acquiesce to tough luck, but he noted that some even in the worst circumstances will not accommodate and will push to escape their poverty traps. Ultimately, Galbraith's insights on both the *equilibrium of poverty* and on *accommodation* can be readily applied to the analysis of contemporary African knowledge challenges such as the need to know more about the poverty impacts of the growth of FDI inflows in 2012 to nearly $46 billion US.[43]

Returning to Shaw's map, we can productively apply Galbraith to at least one further dynamic of the African Century. Regarding the "uneven regional incidence and impacts of the latest 'global' financial crisis," Galbraith facilitates greater understanding of the possible implications of the new Afro-optimist narrative that the continent is fast becoming *the* global growth engine.[44] As echoes of the crisis continue to resonate, the perception that Africa is booming builds upon the reality that most of the continent's financial services firms have emerged from the crisis relatively unscathed. As such, a Galbraithian supposition in the present context would be that some of Africa's banks (to greater or lesser extents) might have bypassed the postcrash surge of more intensive and extensive bank audits that occurred at the epicenter of the crisis. If research were to confirm the hypothesis that certain big African banking institutions have been subject to comparatively less oversight as new portfolio investments continue to pour in, then conditions could be auspicious for nominal growth in what Galbraith termed the *bezzle*: the stock of undiscovered embezzlement in the system.[45] From this point of view, it is probable that spectacular growth in stock prices, in indices that track Africa's frontier markets, and in Afro-speculation more generally has fueled a surge in the number of individuals who knowingly or otherwise emulate the methods of fraudsters such as Bernard Madoff or Ramalinga Raju. Simply put, Galbraith shows that market forces endogenously generate the bezzle. As such, embezzlement in Africa should not be exclusively viewed through the lens of neopatrimonialism: it can also be a market-driven phenomenon executed independently of relations to political power.

To reiterate, the literature on neopatrimonialism has placed patron-client relations at the core of the analysis of politics in Africa. It has eschewed abstract econometric modeling, mapped the simultaneous existence of formal and informal institutions, and highlighted the importance of redistribution networks linked to centers of political power. In so doing, it has provided an explanation for the resilience or persistence of corruption and presented considerable evidence which suggests that the state in Africa functions in unique ways. Galbraith, for his part, has directed attention to the exercise of market power and the efforts of those that are subjected to such power to countervail it. He has encouraged the analysis of management priorities and called for more assessments of the ways that big firms attempt to control their prices and consumers, influence their costs and their suppliers, and sway those that seek to govern their activities. He has also left us with the concept of conventional wisdom, an explanation for the persistence of poverty, and the idea that markets can self-generate embezzlement and fraud.

A Preliminary Application: Galbraith Goes to Cameroon

This section links the two somewhat disconnected conceptual discussions presented above. It does so through applying analytical insights from both to Cameroon's political economy. Ultimately, it is argued below that attention to neopatrimonial realities—and to Galbraithian considerations—can fuel the development of more comprehensive understandings of the evolution and dynamics of capitalism in Cameroon than exclusive reliance on either approach. The presentation commences with a discussion of the country's economic dynamism and then proceeds to briefly recount political phenomena that scholars of Cameroonian politics are quite familiar with: patron-client relations, formal and informal institutions, redistribution networks, and corruption. Subsequently, Galbraithian concepts are applied to a brief case study of Cameroon's agrifood sector. The ensuing discussion hones in on market power and efforts to countervail this power and concludes with a few anecdotes on conventional wisdom and poverty maintenance. Through first recounting Cameroon's political system and then the politics of corporate power in one of its economic sectors, this approach provides a picture of Cameroon's political economy that is hopefully more nuanced than a politics-first or a solely economistic framework. Spatial considerations ensure that what follows is far from a complete analysis; it is simply a rough sketch of possible entry points to future theoretical and conceptual development.

To start it must be noted that capitalism in Cameroon is increasingly dynamic. This statement might seem counterintuitive, given that the national refinery (Sonara) and national petroleum company SNH remain the two biggest enterprises in the country.[46] Cameroon's continued dependence on its traditional low-value-added export basket of oil, timber products, cocoa, rubber, tea, cotton, bananas, and other commodities also appears to belie this statement.[47] Nonetheless, these relatively static realities of income and wealth generation are not the whole story as regards the prospects for Cameroon's political economy. Changes associated with flows of finance, trade, and direct investment over the past decade have started to shake up Cameroonian business-as-usual. On the former, loans from China Exim Bank have enabled the launch of numerous infrastructure projects, including construction of a new dam and a deepwater port, as well as widening of the principal highway between Douala, the commercial capital, and Yaoundé, the political capital. Beyond China, other "nontraditional" or emerging market sources of finance have facilitated the government's drive to increase the stock of social housing in big urban centers and to pursue its other investment priorities.

In addition to Cameroon's greater reliance on a more diverse array of foreign creditors, considerable shifts have also occurred in the composition and origin of the country's imports. The relatively staid trade in European-origin agricultural equipment that dominated the Douala market for decades, for example, has fallen by the wayside. Fierce competition to sell lower-cost like products now prevails between importers and retailers of Brazilian, Chinese, and Indian-origin farm equipment.[48] Similarly, cheap Chinese-origin motorbikes have largely relegated the Japanese competition to the low-volume higher end of the market and have undercut demand for used-vehicle imports. This change has been associated with a shift in income-generating opportunities as motorcycle taxis compete for business with the country's shared taxi systems. Surging imports of genuine and knockoff versions of leading brand-name and down-market appliances, electronics, handsets, housewares, and clothing have also fundamentally altered the nature of retailing in the country. As the local supply of industrially produced consumer goods and jobs has dwindled, small-scale informal trading has become a source of considerable entrepreneurship.[49] Numbers of small and medium-sized enterprises have accordingly grown, and numerous start-ups have been launched that have aimed to substitute specific imports with locally produced goods. For their part, new entrants in e-commerce have fundamentally altered the ways that many Cameroonians search for and procure higher-value foreign-origin products. As commercial and travel needs have surged in this context, Turkish Airlines has entered the market, and competition to challenge the dominance of Delmas Cameroun, a subsidiary of shipping group CMA CGM, has heated up in Douala.

As regards dynamism associated with FDI, Cameroon is now nurturing an embryonic mining sector. In 2012 the government became a participant in the multistakeholder Kimberley process diamond certificate scheme and subsequently launched production of industrial-grade diamonds through C&K Mining, its joint venture with South Korea. It also signed a mining convention with Cam Iron, a subsidiary of Australian-based Sundance Resources, to develop a massive iron ore project situated at Mbalam near the border with Congo-Brazzaville. Sundance seeks to tap the capital market to pursue this $4.7 billion US project and to secure partners to build the associated rail line and dedicated export terminal. FDI in agriculture has also been scaled up. A presidential decree has permitted Sud-Cameroun Hévéa, a subsidiary of the Singapore-listed plantation group GMG Global (a group that is itself majority-owned by Sinochem International), to develop a rubber plantation near the president's ancestral village of Mvomeka'a. SG Sustainable Oils (SGSOC), a subsidiary of Herakles Farms (an affiliate of New York–based Herakles Capital), is also controversially developing a 20,000-hectare oil palm plantation in the country's southwest region.[50]

Beyond land acquisitions, Somdiaa, a diversified agro-industrial firm, has made considerable investments in the process and production methods and capacities of its Cameroonian subsidiaries in sugar (Sosucam) and in wheat (SGMC). Foreign interest in developing the country's capacity to clean and roast cocoa beans and to produce cocoa liquor and butter has also emerged. Additionally, prominent greenfield investments have also been made by foreign firms in other sectors. Nigerian-based Dangote has constructed a cement plant, and the Cameroonian subsidiary of Viettel has become the country's third mobile network operator after South African MTN and France Telecom's Orange Cameroun subsidiary.

Concepts associated with the literature on neopatrimonialism direct attention to the politics of the statics and dynamics of Cameroonian capitalism. In the immediate postindependence era through the early 1980s, President Ahmadou Ahidjo, a northerner and Muslim of Fulani descent, pushed for economic development through the pursuit of import-substitution industrialization. As this objective was put into practice, a vast patronage network that linked Cameroon's linguistically and culturally diverse provinces to the center of political power emerged and thrived. Even so, a perception developed among many of the country's 250 distinct ethnic groups that the Ahidjo regime's strategy had favored northerners engaged in business and traditional rulers from the north who had become leading government figures. As Paul Biya, a Christian from the south, subsequently took power and applied liberal prescriptions to the economy from the mid-1980s, he directly challenged Ahidjo's system. President Biya systematically shut the old regime's clients out of positions of power and created new income and wealth-generating opportunities for southerners. In particular, new big men from the south gained access to credit, and "kleptocracy" (government by thieves) ensued as loans were not repaid, local banks failed, and hundreds of billions of Central African (CFA) francs leaked abroad.[51] Subsequent privatizations also afforded many of the Biya regime's cronies with new opportunities to produce and capture economic rents as they "ate" (asset stripped) former state-owned enterprises.

The emergence and perseverance of a southern-centric resource-distribution network over the past three decades have had considerable implications for the development of Cameroon's northern regions. The persistence of food insecurity in the North and Extreme North, for example, is indicative of the externalities bred by the southern power base. While these regions experienced climate-related seasonal food-availability shortfalls prior to southern dominance, chronic malnutrition and poverty have become entrenched on pan-seasonal bases across the rural north in areas where these conditions were less prominent in the past.[52] Moreover, if the World Bank's numbers are to be believed, rich southerners who live in cities have been the primary beneficiaries of the government's moves to subsidize fuel and suspend import duties on frozen fish, rice, and wheat in the wake of the global food crisis of 2008 and the outbreak of food-related riots.[53] This urban bias—a trend first identified by Nicolas van de Walle—has also been compounded through a related government response to stock imported foods and hold periodic markets that sell food at prices targeted to undercut going market rates.[54] In the aftermath of a preventable elephant slaughter at Bouba N'Djida national park and a spate of assassinations and abductions linked to foreign Islamists in 2012–13, Yaoundé was also criticized for failing to adequately address other northern challenges such as porous frontiers and social exclusion. Several northerners continue to be captains of industries such as beef and have also been permitted to become noteworthy political figures, but these personalities have not had strong incentives to address growing interregional inequity. Big-man politics in Cameroon have thus far seemed to endogenously generate such unbalanced outcomes.

The neopatrimonial notion that formal and informal institutions coexist in Cameroon similarly sheds light on a world of political economic thought and action that might otherwise remain cloaked in darkness. For instance, although the country is formally bilingual, the informal reality is that English speakers have long been second-class citizens. Anglophone civil servants with leadership potential have historically been shifted around the country to languish in lower-level positions, and the state-controlled education and media systems have aggressively promoted the use of French.[55] On another and perhaps even more consequential front, broad swathes of the potential electorate now consider Cameroon's formal elections a facade.[56] President Biya has been in power for over three decades, and it has been more than 20 years since both Anglophones and Muslims in the western and northern regions rejected the results of the first multiparty election that returned him to power to no avail. Political "exhaustion," "cynicism," and apathy have set in with growth of the perception that informal power has perverted the official electoral system.[57] Along parallel lines, the National Anti-Corruption Commission and corruption crusaders more generally continue to be subject to informal attempts to discredit, marginalize, and otherwise distort their work.[58] In the aftermath of the leveling of corruption allegations at the president's son Franck Biya in late 2012, for instance, contributors to state-controlled media ostensibly competed with each other to bring these claims into disrepute.

Correspondingly, the presidency's campaign to root out high-level grand corruption, code-named Opération Épervier (Operation Sparrow Hawk), has been subject to ongoing political manipulation. Sparrow Hawk has implicated former prime ministers, secretaries-general of the presidency, ministers, and directors and managers of state-controlled agencies, firms, and regulatory bodies in several dozen cases of serious fraud and embezzlement. Over a dozen of these cases have now been tried in front of a judiciary that has been far from independent.[59] Whether or not the anticorruption campaign itself has slowed the frequency of corrupt acts or reduced the number of undiscovered scams in the system (the bezzle) is simply not known. What can be said with certainty, however, is that in light of this reality, many average Cameroonians are questioning why they are paying taxes to a government that continues to chop or devour their money.[60] As noted above, contributions to the political science literature typically treat Cameroon as a veritable neopatrimonial paradise. Very strong reasons exist for continuing to do so. But there are other reasons to think outside the box.

Galbraith famously drew attention to the implications of the market power wielded by the very biggest high-technology, industrial, and financial firms in the United States for the competitive model of the economy. In his estimation, the business of agriculture fell very much within the bounds of the old free-market model that no longer seemed to apply to the operations of the US air and space, automobile, banking, and defense industries. It might therefore come as a surprise for those familiar with Galbraith that his insights can be readily applied to the agro-industrial sector in Cameroon.

In addition to the major players noted above (SGMC, SGSOC, and Sosucam), the sector includes the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the country's biggest employer and most diversified plantation-to-table agribusiness. The CDC's 2011 turnover of $143 million US was about double that of Socapalm, an extensive oil palm operation that is a subsidiary of the Bolloré group.[61] SA (société anonyme) des brasseries du Cameroun, a brewery with a turnover nearly four times greater than the CDC's, also falls within this sector, given its strong backwards linkages to domestic maize. La Société de développement du coton (Sodecoton), Nestlé Cameroun, and the Ferme Suisse oil palm operation round out the principal agro-industrial firms. Additionally, subsidiaries of global commodities traders such as Louis Dreyfus and Olam now source Cameroonian commodities, and Cargill, Sime Darby, and several other plantation specialists are considering investments in industrial-scale oil palm production and processing. Due to the fact that rubber firms are technically labeled as forestry companies, the operations of GMG's two subsidiaries (Hévécam and the new Hévéa Sud) do not fall into this category. That said, their operations and those of the country's new miners as well as its biggest foreign buyers and sellers could also be amenable to Galbraithian treatment.

Briefly then, many firms in Cameroon's agro-industry have made extensive efforts to *control their costs* through nonmarket means. Those that have been granted new concessions for the production of foodstuffs over the past few years, for example, have pushed successfully to keep the fixed costs associated with their land leases and annual taxes below the averages paid in other sectors.[62] Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to food, has also drawn attention to the human rights abuses that have ensued in places where plantation operators have made overzealous efforts to rein in costs associated with alleged crop theft. Worker efforts to organize have also been actively suppressed on numerous plantations where low labor costs currently prevail. Furthermore, most large agro-industrial firms have embraced only the lowest-possible-cost voluntary environmental standards or approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR) to mitigate or eliminate their externalities.[63] On this front, SGSOC, for example, notably pulled out of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil in 2012. This firm now executes a go-it-alone approach to CSR through an in-house foundation. Firms in this sector have also sought to circumvent the one-off and recurrent costs of legal and regulatory compliance through wining, dining, and ultimately capturing ministers and regulators in Yaoundé. Taken together, the exertion of control over costs has predictably spawned a countervailing power. Community-based organizations, civil society groups, and supportive academics, lawyers, and policy advocates have coalesced into a movement that seeks to challenge the power of agribusinesses to minimize costs.[64] Although the particular manifestations of this countervailing power have not yet dented cost-control efforts, they have entrenched an alternative wellspring of information and built a supportive global network.

Firms that produce industrial foodstuffs have similarly strived to *control their prices*. They have pushed hard for the maintenance or expansion of tariff regimes to protect their efforts to substitute prepared food imports with local products. For instance, Alexandre Vilgrain—president of the French Council of Investors in Africa and president and director general of Somdiaa, the parent of Sosucam—made prominent public calls for tariff escalation in favor of industrial food interests early in 2013. Behind the scenes, other Douala-based firms that produce processed, canned, or packaged foods have also sought formal and informal measures to exclude imports of cheaper European- and Asian-origin like products. Some have pushed for greater food-safety oversight of industrial food imports and challenged the "neocolonial" processed food trade through calling for voluntary export restraints. Expenditure-switching policies favoring the development of local industrial capacity, where successful, have generated durable employment and wealth generation. They have also conveniently alleviated or eliminated price competition. In this context, imported beer, canned vegetables, packaged cereals, processed coffee, and other convenience foods that can be produced and marketed locally have become foods for the relatively rich. The prices that average Cameroonians pay for manufactured food, where and when they can afford it, are consequently far from the textbook ideal. The extent of profiteering in this setting is not yet known. As such, the possibility that a disjuncture exists between the imperative of industrial development and its implications for the prices of basic consumer needs warrants further study.

Regarding *supplier control*, several firms have moved to secure stronger backwards linkages with farms or to bring their suppliers in-house. On the former, numerous domestic food-security experts have privately decried the scaled-up efforts of the country's biggest brewers to secure their maize supplies. These individuals suspect that the production, sale, and marketing of maize in Cameroon are increasingly subject to the machinations of supply-hungry brewers. In this light, the private sector's work to quench Cameroon's thirst for beer rests upon market manipulation. Brewers have used their superior buyer power to divert supply to their mashers, boilers, and fermenters, and as a consequence, have raised maize prices for others who do not have as an extensive, well-resourced, or potentially threatening supply network. The maize-consuming public has inevitably suffered. With respect to the other supply-control trend, several agro-industrial businesses have pursued a variant of the CDC's farm-to-table model. Chief executive officers have increasingly made the choice to directly control supply rather than rely on outgrower or contract-based production schemes. The predominant view fueling the land-acquisition trend is that direct control will better deliver the goods. From this perspective, supplier elimination through vertical integration is the preferred route to ensuring the subservience of crop supplies to downstream (industrial) imperatives.

Agro-industrial businesses have also made considerable efforts to *control consumers* in Cameroon. For example, the production, branding, and marketing of sports drinks—a product category that only several years ago commanded a negligible share of the cold drinks market—is now big business. Taking a page out of their beer advertisement playbook, brewers and other producers have filled the country's billboards with sexual imagery trumpeting the purported merits of numerous brands. Given that the World Food Programme has warned that one in three families occasionally skips meals to scrape by, heightened demand for artificially colored, salty, and sugar-laden "premium" sports or energy drinks could be associated with stark opportunity costs. The creation and manipulation of consumer wants have also changed the ways that people access staples. Beyond Nestlé's infamous efforts in this area, increasing numbers of Cameroonians now look to consume sugar that comes in packets and refined cooking oil that comes in bottles labeled with a female superhero. The extent to which these value-added products can be accurately described as conveniences for which revealed preferences exist is dubious at best. Sugarcane grows within a few kilometers of the major cities, and most urban dwellers have strong extended family and kin connections to rural areas where oil is produced at employment-generating artisanal scales.

While not universally malign, the power of private persuasion has had high public costs where and when the force-feeding of new tastes and desires has detracted from the capacity of Cameroonians to meet their needs resiliently. Fancy ads have assuredly sparked new desires that have spurred some individuals to break free from the routines that have fueled their accommodation to poverty. The intensive and extensive growth of Cameroon's food-product advertising has been wasteful nonetheless. To paraphrase Galbraith, organized bamboozlement that has aimed to convince the already hungry to eat has necessarily bred inefficiencies and inequity.

Finally, regarding the *conventional wisdom* about this sector, agro-industrial members of the national business council (Gicam) and members of the French enterprise movement (Medef) have notably pushed for the country to rebrand its investment image. Even among members of the Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale, over the past decades Cameroon has been considered a relative FDI backwater. The regime has moved to countervail this portrayal through drastically reducing business start-up times and creating a one-stop national investment center. Since these reforms took effect, over half a dozen oil palm and other prospective agro-industrial investors have expressed new interest in establishing Cameroonian operations. Additionally, aiming to bury the old image, the government has waged an extensive public relations campaign in the global business media.[65] The business-friendly conventional wisdom underlying this big push has been that agro-industrial investments will necessarily enable the realization of the growth and poverty objectives articulated in its national strategy and in the national "vision" document. Individuals and civil society organizations have unsurprisingly aligned against attempts to label the country an investment paradise. The old wisdom that the place continues to be a paradise for patrons now contests with a highly sanitized, investor-friendly account. More Galbraithian attention to flashpoints in the ongoing contest of ideas about agro-industrial FDI and development could help to inform a more workable and long-term strategy for the country in this area.

Conclusions

As William Easterly reminds, economists have had both adventures and misadventures in the tropics. There are no guarantees that future conceptual adventures with J. K. Galbraith in Africa will avoid unfortunate endings. As with all political economy scholarship, such research would potentially be subject to politicized use and abuse. It might also not tell us very much that is not already known. Scholars applying the legacies of Innis, Marx, or Polanyi, for example, might arrive at (or have already articulated) broadly similar insights to those presented above. The possible range of new ideas that could be gleaned through the further application of Galbraith's "old" institutionalism might also be truncated, given the breadth of new institutionalist scholarship on Africa.[66] Obvious perils are associated with ripping an intellectual resource out of context and processing it elsewhere for a new class of consumers. That said, good reasons exist for pursuing this export "model." If anything, from a Keynesian-inspired perspective, it could at least increase the number of defunct economists, social scientists, and academic scribblers that are regularly conjured into life on the continent.

Galbraith helps to correct overly Afro-centric accounts of African development challenges and opportunities in the global capitalist system. In this manner, his work is far from unique. The "value added" comes from his attention to nominally private sources of economic power and resistance to the application of such power. In the literature on neopatrimonialism in Africa, when it comes to the exercise of power, the machinations of patrons and presidents are considered paramount. From Galbraith we have learned that this perspective might be necessary, but that it is clearly not sufficient. Market forces—and efforts to control those forces—can be and often are generated independently of formal centers of political power. As Galbraith's history of the rise of the US air and space and defense industries reminds, as enterprises get bigger and more complex, they necessarily exercise more power over their buyers and suppliers. Africa is not and will not be immune from the rise of corporate power as its economic reawakening proceeds.

Further, the application of John Kenneth Galbraith's work can draw attention to the management of consumer choice in Africa. His writing also raises the possibility that there is more to growth or shrinkage in the bezzle in Africa than the relative success or failure of anticorruption efforts. As more African entrepreneurs make more public calls for the enabling of market forces, Galbraith directs scholars to identify the ways that businesspeople privately seek to control or even eliminate markets. Beyond these possible avenues for future scholarship, Galbraith's writing on poverty and on the rule of ideas and institutions more generally is a possible wellspring. It is up to others to decide whether or not the African renaissance needs a Galbraithian resurrection.

Notes

1. Timothy M. Shaw, "Africa's Quest for Developmental States: 'Renaissance' for Whom?," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 5 (June 2012): 837–51.

2. The University of Guelph's College of Social and Applied Human Sciences financially enabled the first of the two research trips. A research grant from the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) Africa Initiative program (http://www.africaportal.org) made the latter three visits possible. The author also gratefully acknowledges the help and support of François Evina, Florence Munoh, and Ekane Ivo at the Yaoundé office of the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). Lauren Q. Sneyd, Olufunso Somorin, E. D. G. Fraser, Carolyn Peach Brown, and other individuals who prefer to remain anonymous each made significant contributions to this research. None of the above-listed organizations or individuals bear responsibility for any errors in this text.

3. Patrick Chabal, "Power in Africa Reconsidered," in *The African Exception*, ed. Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olsen (Hants, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 17–34.

4. Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel, "Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered: Critical Review and Elaboration of an Elusive Concept," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 45, no. 1 (February 2007): 95–119.

5. Anne Pitcher, Mary H. Moran, and Michael Johnston, "Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa," *African Studies Review* 52, no. 1 (April 2009): 125–56.

6. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009).

7. Aaron deGrassi, "'Neopatrimonialism' and Agricultural Development in Africa: Contributions and Limitations of a Contested Concept," *African Studies Review* 51, no. 3 (December 2008): 108.

8. See Morten Bøås, "Liberia and Sierra Leone—Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 5 (October 2001): 697–723; and Diana Cammack, "The Logic of African Neopatrimonialism: What Role for Donors?," *Development Policy Review* 25, no. 5 (September 2007): 599–614.

9. Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 84.

10. Erdmann and Engel, "Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered."

11. Ibid.

12. For a discussion of closed, open, vertical, and lateral informal exchanges and their labeling, see Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, on the "economy of affection."

13. William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9.

14. Edgar Kiser and Audrey Sacks, "African Patrimonialism in Historical Perspective: Assessing Decentralized and Privatized Tax Administration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 636 (July 2011): 129–49.

15. Cammack, "Logic of African Neopatrimonialism," 601.

16. Bøås, "Liberia and Sierra Leone," 700.

17. Chabal, "Power in Africa Reconsidered," 23.

18. DeGrassi, "'Neopatrimonialism' and Agricultural Development in Africa," 109.

19. Erdmann and Engel, "Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered."

20. See Pitcher, Moran, and Johnston, "Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa," 138; and, for example, see Chabal, "Power in Africa Reconsidered," 31. One of the implicit targets of these critiques seems to be Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

21. Stephen Orvis, "Conclusion: Bringing Institutions Back into the Study of Kenya and Africa," *Africa Today* 53, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 95–110. Orvis considers institutions to be sets of "rules, norms, or standard operating procedures" that are "widely recognized and accepted, structuring and constraining individuals' actions in a particular arena" (ibid., 98).

22. See especially Nicolas van de Walle, "Rice Politics in Cameroon: State Commitment, Capability and Urban Bias," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, no. 4 (December 1989): 579–99; and Jean-François Bayart, *L'état au Cameroun* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979). For a more recent account, among others, see Piet Konings, *Neoliberal Bandwagonism: Civil Society and the Politics of Belonging in Anglophone Cameroon* (Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group [RPCIG], 2009).

23. For a recent review of the need for more political economy analyses, see Gabrielle Lynch, "The Economic Is Political and the Political Is Economic: Protest, Change, and Continuity in Contemporary Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 39, no. 134 (December 2012): 547–50. For evidence of Cameroon's dynamism, see Business in Cameroon, accessed 31 January 2014, http://www.businessincameroon.com.

24. See, for example, Graham Harrison, *Neoliberal Africa: The Impact of Global Social Engineering* (London: Zed Books, 2010); Marcus Power, Giles Mohan, and May Tan-Mullins, *China's Resource Diplomacy in Africa: Powering Development?* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Gra-

ham Harrison, "After Orthodoxy: Governance and Development in Africa," *New Political Economy* 17, no. 5 (November 2012): 657–98.

25. Shaw, "Africa's Quest for Developmental States."

26. John Kenneth Galbraith, *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952).

27. John Kenneth Galbraith, *Economics and the Public Purpose* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 93.

28. See Frédéric Maury, "Industrie: Sur Les Trace des Pionniers," *Jeune Afrique, Les 500 Premières Entreprises Africaines* 32 (2013): 68–70.

29. Galbraith, *Economics and the Public Purpose*, xi. In this work, Galbraith revised his initial take on corporate power offered in *The New Industrial State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967). Neoclassical economists had criticized his original account for seeming to portray consumers as mere "puppets" of Madison Avenue's (m)ad men. He subsequently endeavored to show that some consumers on "main street" retain their sovereignty some of the time, emphasizing the dual or "bimodal" nature of the US economy and the limits of consumer choice in sectors where the great corporations exercised preponderant control. For an excellent review of this revision and account of Galbraith's contributions and broader legacy more generally, see James Ronald Stanfield and Jacqueline Stanfield, *John Kenneth Galbraith* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

30. For rigorous and more globally oriented analyses of this power, see Jennifer Clapp, *Food* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012); and Stefano Ponte, Peter Gibbon, and Jakob Vestergaard, eds., *Governing through Standards: Origins, Drivers and Limitations* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

31. See, for example, William Wallis, "Africa Calling," *Financial Times*, 11 March 2013, 6; and other contributions to the 2013 "Africa Inc." series of *FT* articles and opinion pieces.

32. Galbraith, *American Capitalism*.

33. Lamido Sanusi, "Africa Must Get Real about Its Romance with China," *Financial Times*, 12 March 2013, 9.

34. Stanfield and Stanfield, *John Kenneth Galbraith*, 97.

35. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 40th anniversary ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

36. Stanfield and Stanfield, *John Kenneth Galbraith*, 231.

37. Galbraith, *Economics and the Public Purpose*, 137. These "armies" are certainly not subject to the exclusive control of the BRICS or other emerging market players. GE, L'Oréal, SAB Miller, and other global firms with Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development roots are assuredly engaged in activities that aim to manage African consumers; as such, they are also ripe for efforts to apply Galbraith's insights.

38. Stanfield and Stanfield, *John Kenneth Galbraith*, 103.

39. For an overhyped take on empowerment as well as information and communication technology, see Katrina Manson, "Continent Takes Lead in Mobile Revolution," *Financial Times*, 15 March 2013, 17.

40. Galbraith, *Economics and the Public Purpose*, 211.

41. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Nature of Mass Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 45.

42. Ibid., 61. See also John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Culture of Contentment* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).

43. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Global Investment Trends Monitor*, no. 11 (23 January 2013): 6.

44. See Shaw, "Africa's Quest for Developmental States," 840. For contributions to this perception, see "Special Report: Emerging Africa," *Economist*, 2 March 2013; and David Fine et al., *Africa at Work: Job Creation and Inclusive Growth* (New York: McKinsey Global Institute, 2013), 1.

45. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash, 1929* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), 133.

46. Bernard Gauthier and Albert Zeufack, "Governance and Oil Revenues in Cameroon," in *Plundered Nations? Successes and Failures in Natural Resource Extraction*, ed. Paul Collier and Anthony J. Venables (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 27–78.

47. World Bank, *Cameroon Economic Update*, no. 3 (January 2012), http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/files/africacan/economic_update_issue_no_3_-_jobs_in_cameroon.pdf.

48. Personal communication, WFP and International Monetary Fund Country Offices, Yaoundé, 3 July 2012.

49. See Republic of Cameroon, *Document de Stratégie Pour la Croissance et l'emploi (DSCE)* (Yaoundé: Republic of Cameroon, 2009).

50. David Hoyle and Patrice Levang, *Oil Palm Development in Cameroon* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: WWF Ad Hoc Report in Partnership with IRD and CIFOR, April 2012).

51. Tatah Mentan, "Cameroon: The Political Economy of Poverty," in *Cameroon: Politics and Society in Critical Perspectives*, ed. Jean-Germain Gros (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 112.

52. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, Addendum, Mission to Cameroon*, A/HRC/22/50/Add.2, 18 December 2012, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-50-Add2_en.pdf.

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